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CAUGHT IN THE CURRENTS:
AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHER TALK ABOUT STREAMING

by

Helen Jean Harper

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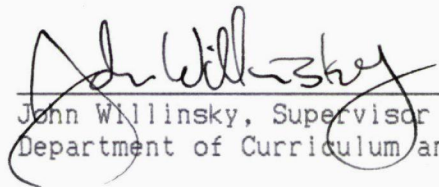
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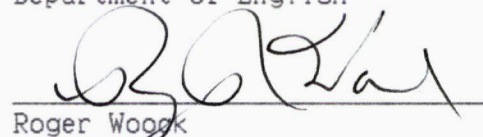
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled, "Caught in the Currents: An Analysis of Teacher Talk about Streaming" submitted by Helen Harper in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.


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Abstract

Streaming is a school organizational practice that sorts students into different programs on the basis of their academic ability and career aspirations. It is used in the vast majority of secondary schools in North America and Great Britain. But despite its widespread use, streaming remains a controversial practice owing to the failure of research to substantiate its basic claims and its apparent conflict with egalitarian and democratic ideals.

This study extends the research on streaming by examining the sense two English teachers made of the practice within their day-to-day experience. The sense these teachers made was recovered through a series of interviews, the content of which was focussed primarily on their observed teaching practices. The teachers' discourse was then examined in terms of the assumptions and beliefs that have traditionally supported streaming and of the research on the practice. The results were explained within a cultural-reproduction perspective of education.

The analysis of the teachers' discourse revealed that the meanings they used to help organize and make meaningful their experience reflected the assumptions and beliefs that have traditionally supported the practice. The basic tenet forwarded in the educational history of streaming and to various degrees in the teachers' talk was that students in the academic stream were the standard against which other students were seen as aberrant.

Reference was made to students' academic capabilities but as well to their social and psychological development. This belief formed the basis of differences noted between the academic and general English programs. In the academic program, the emphasis was on the students' potential to attend university and their English program was referred to in terms of the acquisition of scholastic skills and knowledge. In the general program, English was seen more as a vehicle to address the academic, social and psychological deficiencies apparent in the students.

The differences described in the students and their English programs support streaming but also may have powerful implications for society generally. Researchers and critical theorists claim that streaming functions to maintain the dominant culture and current class structure at the expense of working-class students. The study suggests that teachers through their talk may be inadvertently lending support to a practice that, according to research, may be working against the best interests of students in order to maintain the status quo. The study concludes by recommending that, through teacher education and professional development activities, teachers be exposed to a variety of perspectives concerning streaming and education generally.

Acknowledgements

I realized earlier on in this project that, while I alone was the one banging away on the word pro, that in essence any project like this one is really a group enterprise. Therefore, I wish to acknowledge a number of individuals who have contributed to this thesis.

I wish to thank Linda and David, the teachers in the study, for their warmth, honesty and courage, and particularly their tolerance of both the study and me.

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Introduction

We are all story tellers. In countless forms, stories or the seeds of stories lie everywhere, even in the most objective writing. This thesis can be considered a story--a story of two English teachers and the sense they make of a school organizational practice known as streaming. More generally, it is a story of how teachers come to understand their work and of the powerful forces that control or influence it. In the end, this is a political story for it examines the relationship between power and knowledge as it applies to teachers and also to society, generally. Although it offers no grand solution, no true resolution, it is a story that provides a description, an explanation, hopefully an understanding. And of course, understanding is the first step in gaining some measure of control.

To an outsider, a teacher's world may look like an exhausting cacophony of experience. Secondary school teachers may have over a hundred students in and out of their classrooms, in and out of their lives, every single working day. And with a new semester comes a different hundred to get to know, to understand, and to work with. In addition, there are parents, principals, and colleagues also to get to know and to work, if not argue, with. As well, there are ever-changing and ever-conflicting ideas about education, about subject matter and about students that contribute to the din. This means there are workshops, conferences and conventions to attend, journals and newsletters to read, courses or committee work for those

who are particularly keen. And as if this were not enough, there are always new textbooks and curricula with which to become familiar. It is a busy, hectic world. There are rules and procedures and a thousand administrative details to be remembered: attendance policies, supervision schedules, dance regulations, dress codes, discipline procedures, etc. to know and enforce. There are memos, forms, slips, surveys to be filled in. Technology too has added new machines that one needs to learn to operate or at least jam. These things are all a part of or in addition to regular classroom teaching and often some extra-curricular activity one is required to organize and supervise. And all is done to the sound of bouncing basketballs, slamming lockers, occasionally the scrawl of pencils and, perhaps worst of all, the relentless ticking of the school clock.

However, even for the outsider, it does not take long to recognize that there is an order placed on what might first seem like chaos. There are patterns and routines of action and thought that structure and make meaningful a teacher's world. The most obvious organizers are those concepts or structures that physically divide up school experience. For example, classrooms divide and organize space; class schedules divide time. There are many organizers created and imposed by the school system or by the teacher. One that seems particularly central to teachers' and students' lives is a practice referred to as streaming or tracking.¹

Streaming is an organizational practice that divides students, by sorting them into two or more programs on the basis of some perceived

similarity in their abilities or career aspirations. Though recently prohibited in Sweden, it is widely used in North America and Europe (Goodlad, 1984, p. 297). In Alberta, students are streamed at the secondary level generally into two programs. Those students deemed academically capable and who plan to go attend university take academic or what is sometimes referred to as matriculation courses while others of average or below average ability who will be attending vocational school or seeking immediate employment after high school take what are known as general or diploma courses.² Students in the academic program require, among other subjects, English 10, 20 and 30 and those in the diploma program, English 13, 23 and 33 (Alberta Sr High School Language Arts Curriculum Guide, 1982). One of the intentions of grouping students in these courses is to reduce the diversity in any one class so that a teacher may more efficiently address students' needs. There are other reasons for streaming, but as a way of making teaching less chaotic, more organized, it seems rather innocuous.

However, streaming appears to create more powerful meanings and greater impact than the simple sorting of students might suggest. Researchers in Great Britain, the United States and Canada have found that the label of being an academic or a general student or of teaching an academic or general program has tremendous significance to those involved. For students, such labelling affects their self-esteem, academic performance, social relationships and ultimately their futures; for teachers, their status, their job, and their

relationship to their students is affected (Jackson, 1964; Hargreaves, 1967; Schafer and Olexa, 1971; Findley and Bryan, 1975; Rosenbaum, 1975; Baksh, 1980; Oakes, 1985; Gamoran, 1987; Radwansky, 1988).⁴ In the general or lower streams a sense of inferiority seems pervasive; in the academic stream, superiority. This appears to be particularly true in terms of students' self-esteem as indicated in a 1975 review of the literature by Findley and Bryan:

The effect of ability grouping on the affective development of children is to reinforce (inflate?) favourable self-concepts of those assigned to high-achievement groups, but also to reinforce unfavorable self-concepts in those assigned to low-achievement groups. (p. 15)

An individual's status in school is dependent to some degree on scholastic achievement and ability. And although low ability students may have a low status even in unstreamed classes, Ogletree and Ujlaki (1971) suggest that streaming exacerbates this situation:

Slow pupils have always had a lower status in regard to academic achievement even in random groups. Upon placement in a low status group noted for low achievement, the slow learners not only perceive their role and self in terms of their low ability peers but also in relation to the social order in the entire school as well. Their status is public and becomes school news. (p. 116)

For teachers too there is a different public status attached to teaching each of the streams. David Hargreaves (1967) indicated that those who are more competent, more experienced are often assigned the upper stream classes as a reward for good teaching, but "when a teacher is allocated to low streams, this is perceived as a recognition of his limitations as a teacher" (p.103). Evidently then, whether a teacher or a pupil, one's self-concept and one's status in

school is tied up with the meanings of superiority and inferiority that seem associated with streaming.

Obviously, an individual's status and self-concept would have repercussions on many if not all aspects of one's life. Research indicates that when students are streamed there is a decline in achievement in those placed in the lower streams. I.Q. scores and grade point averages fall for this group (Rosenbaum, 1975; Schafer and Olexa, 1971). Attitudes towards school and teachers are less favourable (Hargreaves, 1967; Baksh, 1981; Oakes, 1985). Personal friendship patterns are affected and generally there is more animosity between upper and lower streams (Hargreaves, 1967; Ferri, 1975, Newbolt, 1975). Behaviour, school attendance, extra-curricular participation are also negatively affected for those in the lower streams (Schafer and Olexa, 1971; Rosenbaum, 1975). Obviously working with these students would be much more difficult than with the upper streams.

In what will undoubtedly become a classic study, Oakes (1985) described differences in English and Mathematics programs offered in thirteen streamed secondary schools based on the perceptions of students, teachers and outside observers. Meaningful differences were noted in the type of knowledge imparted to the various streams and in the general class climate. Oakes found that what has been called "high status" knowledge, that is knowledge that will secure an person's position in the middle or upper classes, was given to those in the upper streams. Low status knowledge was given the others. In

addition there was less instructional time and less homework given the lower streamed students. Teachers spent more time disciplining students in the lower streams. As in other studies, students in the lower streams perceived their teacher and classmates less favourably than in the upper streams. In general the class climate seemed less conducive to learning. Oakes interpreted the results of her study in light of the work of critical theorists of the 1970's and specifically of structural-functionalists Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis who along with others offer quite a different perspective about schooling.

Traditionally school has been viewed as a politically neutral enterprise, capable of redressing social inequalities. However in the early seventies greater attention was directed towards another perspective. Critical theorists suggested that school reproduced the inequalities of society partly through practices such as streaming. Bowles and Gintis (1976) among others, postulated that those students in the lower streams are educated, indeed socialized, for positions in working-class segments of society and those in the upper streams are prepared for upper-class occupations. Since working-class children are over-represented in the lower streams, school can be seen as simply reflecting and perpetuating the social and economic inequalities present in society, ensuring the maintenance of the status quo. The differences in the school experience of those placed into upper and lower streams that Oakes described can be seen as insuring this differentiation. The few students who may benefit from schooling are seen as anomalies; most are trapped. Thus, it is a very

pessimistic and perhaps overly deterministic view of the meaning and significance of schooling and of streaming. It would also seem a particularly damning picture of teachers.

However, proponents of this view do not suggest that the intent of teachers is to restrict the learning opportunities and futures of their students. It is believed that teachers want their students to realize their full potential. But in the current culture, teachers seem to become unwitting agents of the state and are themselves caught in the dominant class structure: "Even though teachers are understood as agents of capital and the state within structural-functional theory, they are also recognized more sympathetically as victims of exploitation and oppression themselves within the hierarchical, bureaucratically-organized school system" (Carlson, 1987, p. 289).

There seems a certain passivity on the part of teachers and students in the structural-functionalistic perspective. Teachers, to some degree unaware of the effects of school practices such as streaming, blindly impose views of the dominant culture which students blindly accept. Paul Willis, Michael Apple and others offer a more optimistic, less deterministic view. In what is referred to as the "class cultural theory" (Carlson, 1987) or the cultural reproduction theory, it is suggested that the dominant culture is actively being produced or reproduced and that in the process there are instances of resistance to the established order. Willis (1977) in his book Learning to Labour describes the construction of a counterschool culture by a group of delinquent working-class boys, "the lads," who

seem to gain some measure of autonomy from school and its dominant class ideology, but paradoxically their counterschool culture locks them into the hierarchy and working-class positions. Carlson (1987) suggests Willis' view can be applied to teachers:

The class cultural theory, which Willis applies to working-class students, may be applied as well to teachers. Its relevance is in understanding the everyday practices and beliefs of teachers as they "make" their roles in schools and classrooms, both as they resist their treatment as proletarianized functionaries of the state and also as they participate in, or acquiesce to, existing relations and ideologies in schooling. (p. 293)

The dynamics of resistance and acquiescence in everyday practices and beliefs holds open the possibility for change or at least modification at the level of the individual. And teachers' actions and speech become much more significant in the creation and understanding of meaning in the classroom, particularly in reference to streaming which appears so central to school experience and from a critical view to society in general. Yet most of the research in streaming has focussed on statistical descriptions (Kulik and Kulik, 1982; Vanfossen, Jones and Spade, 1987; Gamoran, 1987) exclusively or occasionally mixed with qualitative accounts of students and teachers' perspectives and experience (Jackson, 1964; Hargreaves, 1967; Oakes, 1985). There would seem to be a need to focus on teachers' meanings concerning streaming.

Those working in the area of teacher thinking would advocate such a focus. These researchers also support the idea that teachers are significant in the creation of classroom meaning. Indeed, the major premise in teacher thinking is that much of what happens in classrooms

is mediated even determined by teachers' personal and professional understanding of their role and of the dynamics of teaching and learning. Teachers are seen not as technicians or agents simply implementing the prescriptions of others but as "reflective professionals" (Clark and Peterson, 1986). Of course, it needs to be emphasized that the meanings teachers impose are constructed within their personal experience but as well within the social history of their profession and more generally of their society.

If teachers are significant in creating classroom meaning, and if indeed streaming is as powerful a practice as it appears to be in the lives of students and teachers, it would seem important to examine teachers' understanding of streaming. That is, how do teachers make sense of this practice that is imposed on their professional lives and that may have negative consequences for their students? It is a question that has received superficial attention in the research so far. However this thesis will attempt to redress this through a study of two teachers and the meanings, the stories, they use to make sense of streaming. In addition, the teachers' meanings will be situated within the history of streaming and also of English as a discipline. The history of English is significant in this study because it will be English teachers who will be participating.

The decision to use English teachers exclusively stems from the nature of the subject and historically the special mission, some would say burden, that English teachers have traditionally been allotted. English as a school subject concerns not only literacy but "the

personal development and social competence of the student" (Mathieson, 1975, p. 11). Indeed with the decline of religion and the classical curriculum, English was and continues to be seen as "central to children's moral and emotional development" (p. 11). For example, in an 1871 report, Matthew Arnold referred to literature as "the greatest power available in education" and later wrote specifically in terms of poetry and its importance to education:

Good poetry undoubtedly tends to form the soul and character; it tends to beget a love of beauty, of truth, in alliance together; it suggest, however indirectly, high and noble principles in action, and it inspires the emotion so helpful in making principles operative. Hence its extreme importance to all of us, but in our elementary schools, its importance seems to me at present, quite extraordinary. (Arnold, 1880, in Mathieson, 1975, p. 37)

The concern for the affective development of students is seen in more recent educational documents. The 1982 Alberta Language Arts Curriculum guide refers to academic objectives but also to "humanistic" goals:

Neither stream must neglect either development of communication abilities or the pursuit of humanistic goals, both of which are equally important in the development of fully functioning members of society regardless of vocation. (p. 6)

English teachers themselves recognize the importance of humanistic goals in their classrooms, as indicated by a teacher in a recent issue of Alberta English (1988):

What my students learn is not the subject matter or skills I thought were important. What they really learn in school and in my English classroom is about life and the self that lies hidden within. I may be educating my students in the discipline of English each term, but what they are learning is all about themselves, the world and life, and this discipline has no end. (McGuire, 1988, p. 21)

Thus in English, perhaps more than in any other discipline, teachers have a particular responsibility for the affective development of their students. Conceivably then, they may address more than just the academic objectives of their students in making sense of streaming. As well, if streaming has serious affects on students affectively as well as academically, this would seem to place English teachers in conflict. So although streaming is meaningful to all teachers who are instructing such a curriculum, considering their special mandate, it would seem a practice of particular concern to English teachers. This study, therefore, concentrates on the meaning English teachers make of streaming.

Meaning can of course be expressed in many ways. However, this study will focus on the meanings teachers are using to make sense of streaming at the level of discourse. This would seem appropriate. Words are the medium in which English teachers in particular are immersed and would likely feel comfortable with. And of course whether spoken or printed, words can be powerful in influencing what we think and do. The major assumption that underlies this study is that teachers' theories, their words about streaming, may affect what happens in their classrooms.

It is important at this point to clarify my use of the words teacher "meaning," "thinking," "belief," and "sense." All are used interchangeably in this thesis and are used in the conventional sense. Although identical to terms used in the area of teacher thinking, in the context of this thesis they do not have the specific technical

definitions that are associated with them in that field of study (Clark and Peterson, 1986).

There are limitations in the study which, too, should be mentioned at this time. One limitation that needs to be acknowledged is that the words, the stories that are examined in this study, are those that the two teachers used when speaking to a researcher whom they did not know well. Although I believe that both teachers felt very comfortable with me, particularly after the first interview, the discourse would still be affected by this context.

Another limitation is that the meanings gleaned from the teachers were based on three interviews each, five class periods of observation, some conversations, and school documents gathered over a six week period. It is a rather short period of time and so represents a static picture of the most dominant images and meanings being used at that time. As well, there are only two teachers involved in this study so that it is important that specific content not be generalized beyond them.

Finally, it should be recognized that the examination of historical meanings about streaming is confined to educational and research documents. It would seem logical that such documents, particularly prescriptive documents, would be influential in teachers' thinking. Of course there are, in all likelihood, other sources which may have had considerable influence but which have been excluded. For example, popular culture, i.e. movies and novels, may have created and affected the meanings and images about students. However, nothing,

neither a movie script nor an educational statement, is created in a cultural vacuum; so that while the scope of historical documents appears limited, the meanings present may nonetheless be indicative of those generally available. Also, although a study of the meanings evident in popular culture about streaming would be interesting, I shall, if simply to keep things manageable, leave such an investigation for another time.

I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter that this thesis is a story of two English teachers; however, there is a third lurking about--the narrator. Although perhaps more accurately described now as a researcher, I was a secondary school English teacher for a number of years in a small rural high school where I taught, almost exclusively, the general English program. One of my reasons for returning to university was a concern that something needed to be done to make learning easier for general students; that somehow we weren't doing right by these students or at least I wasn't. My first plan was to look specially at students' characteristics. But within a short period of time, my reading of David Hargreaves (1967), Jeannie Oakes (1985), and Michael Apple (1979) and my course work and conversations with faculty advisors led me to consider a different path. Rather than examining the characteristics of students directly, I chose to look at what happens within schools and with teachers in regard to imposed school structures, in this case, streaming--with the

perception that there is some deficiency in the system in which we educate general students.

This lens through which the narrator views reality as well as the assumptions and limitations of the study need to be kept in mind as the story of the two English teachers and the sense they make of streaming unfolds. As with any story, there is structure to it. The first chapter will briefly outline the history of streaming, to determine dominant meanings, perspectives and images that historically have been associated with the practice and that may continue to influence teacher talk today. The second chapter will review the research literature on streaming. Chapter Three describes the research methodology concerning the recovery of the teachers' sense of streaming; Chapter Four consists of the teachers' stories in the form of two vignettes; and finally, Chapter Five examines the similarities between the meanings used by the teachers and those used in history and in the research. Further to this, an explanation will be offered which will speak not only to the meanings concerning streaming, but as promised, to an understanding of teacher knowledge and what may control or influence this knowledge.

Notes

1. Several terms have been used to describe the practice of sorting students according to ability and career aspirations. In Great Britain the practice is referred to as "streaming"; however, in the United States the same practice is known as "tracking," while in Canada both terms have been used. Furthermore, streaming has also been referred to as ability grouping, although this may be a somewhat inaccurate usage. Generally the distinction made between ability grouping and streaming is that ability grouping is implemented informally by teachers within their classrooms, whereas streaming is school-based and formally prescribed by provincial curricula.

Adding to the confusion is the fact that, in addition to the practice been known as streaming, the programs into which students are divided are referred to as streams. So that, students are streamed into streams and somehow all of that has nothing to do with decorating gymnasiums.

In this thesis I have chosen to use the term "streaming" as a reaction to what I see as the continued and pervasive Americanization of Canadian thought, although I certainly recognize that using a British term is hardly any more "Canadian."

2. Students may opt for a program consisting of both academic and general courses. It would seem difficult to categorize their program as matriculation or non-matriculation. However, depending on the nature and number of academic courses, it is unlikely that such students would be able to meet university requirements and so they may in essence be considered general students.

3. In this thesis I will refer to those taking the diploma stream as general or nonacademic students. "Diploma students" is a relatively new term used only in Alberta. Interestingly enough the teachers in my study never used this new term and more often used "vocational student" rather than general or nonacademic. There are also a number of other words and phrases used in research to refer to these students. The lack of a common term for this group may be indicative of their role and identity within the school structure.

4. Somewhat contrary conclusions are drawn by Kulik and Kulik (1982).

Chapter One

The History of Streaming

Streaming has been a tradition in British and North American schools for nearly a hundred years. Since the turn of the century, this tradition has received the support of a majority of educators and the general public--support that has lead to its widespread use. This chapter will briefly outline the history of streaming in Canada, the United States and Great Britain and in doing so attempt to extrapolate dominant meanings, perspectives and images that have historically surrounded and supported the practice. The sources referred to are primarily educational documents: reports, statements, speeches, curriculum guides and texts that have had considerable influence on the thinking of those directly and indirectly involved in education and ultimately on the schooling students have received.

In addition to providing a general picture of the history of streaming, this chapter may help situate specific aspects of the teachers' current knowledge about streaming. For, if teachers draw on the traditions of their profession and of their society, some of the meanings, perspectives and images evident in the historical documents may yet persist in teachers' knowledge today. So that along with their papers and books, along with their own personal histories and personalities, such meanings would be a part of the baggage teachers carry with them into the classroom, a part of the context from which they understand their work. Therefore, it would seem important to examine the history of streaming in order to fully understand

contemporary thinking about this practice, and specifically for this study, the teachers' sense of it.

Streaming was introduced to school systems at the turn of the century as a solution to a number of problems facing educators at that time. The problems involved a sudden and dramatic increase in the number and diversity of secondary school students who began to attend, as well as in the purposes the schools were expected to fulfil. In terms of the enrolment, in 1890, the number of students attending high school in the United States was 202,963; by 1920, the number had risen ten times to 2,200,380 (Spring, 1986, p. 194). In Canada between 1900 and 1930, high school enrolment increased five times as quickly as that of the elementary school (Phillips, 1955b, p. 58). The Alberta figures were particularly dramatic. Secondary school enrolment went from six hundred in 1905 to nearly thirty thousand in 1934 (Patterson, 1968, p. 38).

In Canada and the United States, the increase was due primarily to a wave of immigration from southern and eastern Europe. However, even in Britain where the population was relatively stable, enrolment in secondary school increased. In England, secondary schools numbered 482 in 1903 but by the fall of 1907 there were some 794 recognized secondary schools (Kazamias, 1966, p. 147). While only 5.6% of British elementary students went on to secondary school in 1914, by 1921 the number had increased to 9.7% (Wardle, 1976, p. 35).

In Britain these increases occurred because the public, particularly the middle-class, began to view secondary education "as a means to social mobility and improved status within a society that was becoming complex, diverse and democratic" (Davies, 1975, p. 14). In North America too, education became seen as a bridge to prosperity. As well, stricter enforcement of anti-child labor laws and of compulsory school attendance laws ensured children remained in school at least until their middle teens both in North America and Great Britain. In addition, the lack of work for adolescents, the upgrading of educational requirements for job entry and the declining need for teenagers to contribute to the family income made high school an attractive option. All of this meant that school systems had the task of organizing and managing rapidly increasing numbers of students, and streaming, whatever else it may effect, is basically an organizational device, a way of sorting large numbers of students into manageable units.

However more importantly, streaming was a way of coping not only with increasing numbers of students but with what was perceived to be the very different kinds of students who began to enrol at this time. Prior to 1890, those in secondary school were affluent Anglo-Saxon males, many of whom went on to University--two thirds in the United States (Schafer and Olexa, 1971). However, the predominance of the white upper and middle-class student disappeared in many schools with the influx of poor and lower-class students, and in Canada and the United States, with the arrival of eastern and southern European

immigrants. The extent of which is evident in a 1909 report from the United States Immigration Commission that stated that 58% of the children in a survey of America's largest cities had foreign born parents (Cremin, 1961).

A similar situation existed in Canada, particularly in the western provinces. C.E. Phillips (1957) has noted that the greatest wave of Canadian immigration occurred "between 1903 and 1915, the peak being 402,432 in 1913 . . . one third [of whom] could not speak English when they came. One township in Saskatchewan had at one time 102 children of school age, not one of whom could speak the language of the country" (p. 166). The difficulties in educating immigrant children appeared to involve more than language: "The problem went beyond language, for each new language implied a unique heritage and unique attitudes toward teacher, parents, schoolmates--indeed toward the school itself" (Cremin, 1961, p. 72).

The immigrants were seen not as simply different but often as inferior, and the point of schooling was to stamp out their "uniqueness," that is to make them American, as Ellwood Cubberley, a prominent educator, indicated:

These southern and eastern Europeans are of a very different type from the north Europeans who preceded them. Illiterate, docile, lacking in self-reliance and initiative, and not possessing the Anglo-Teutonic conceptions of law, order, and government, their coming has served to dilute tremendously our national stock, and to corrupt our civic life. The great bulk of these people have settled in the cities of the North Atlantic and North Central states, and the problems of proper housing and living, moral and sanitary conditions, honest and decent government, and proper education have everywhere been made made difficult by their presence. Everywhere these people tend to settle in groups or

settlements, and to set up here their national manners, customs, and observances. Our task is to break up these groups or settlements, to assimilate and amalgamate these people as a part of our American race, and to implant in their children, so far as can be done, the Anglo-Saxon conception of righteousness, law and order, and popular government, and to awaken in them a reverence for our democratic institutions and for those things in our national life which we as a people hold to be of abiding worth. (Cubberley, 1909, in Oakes, 1985, p. 26)

With the diversity of students, teachers and school boards could no longer make educational decisions based on the assumption that those in their care were upper and middle-class Anglo-Saxons; instead, they were faced with the problem of suddenly having to educate children whose characteristics, backgrounds, abilities, and interests were seen as quite different and often inferior. Most importantly, these students' educational needs were also seen as quite different from those who had traditionally attended.

Streaming appeared to provide a solution to this problem by eliminating, or at least reducing, the large diversity within a class. This presumably would make teaching more effective, for the needs of each group could be more specifically addressed. Capable students going on to university could be catered to in their class, while the needs of the immigrants could be addressed in theirs, and slower students could receive the attention in their segregated group that they might miss in a regular classroom situation. This line of thinking is evident in the 1919 British Board of Education Memorandum on Promotion through Elementary Schools which praised a school for devising a system where the "bright" and "not-so-bright" would be identified and taught separately. The board stated that such a system

could "render possible a better classification of scholars and . . . secure a more rapid promotion through the schools on the part of children who give special promise, thereby facilitating their transfer to Secondary and Central Schools" (Board of Education, 1919 in Davies, 1975, p. 14).

In addition to helping meet the apparently very different academic needs of the students, supporters of streaming stressed the psychological benefits for students. They argued that the "slower students develop more positive attitudes about themselves and school when they are not placed in groups with others who are far more capable" (Oakes, 1985, p. 6). As well, the more capable students would not be bored or indifferent owing to a lack of competition.

Another problem educators were facing early in the twentieth century, was that the diversity of students was matched by the diversity of purposes ardently proposed for secondary school by various groups. The universities and colleges wanted secondary schools to provide standardized precollege education. Business wanted the schools to provide more productive and better educated employees. Organized labour wanted to control the schools' training of workers. The middle-class wanted free and accessible public education; the poor and new immigrants wanted social and economic benefits for their children; all seemed to want the Americanization of the hordes of new immigrants in the country (Oakes, 1985). Curriculum committees which normally had consisted of university and provincial/state officials began to include representatives from many different groups. The 1924

Alberta secondary school curriculum committee is a case in point. The committee included representatives from farmers' organizations, women's groups, labour, trade, commerce, as well as trustees and teachers--each group confident that its interests could and should be met through secondary education (Phillips, 1957).

Thus, the early part of this century proved a difficult time for school authorities as they reeled under the pressures of an expanding and increasingly divergent school population and of meeting the variety of purposes demanded by society. Some have called it a time of "educational renaissance" (Schlesinger in Graham, 1974) but others have suggested, more appropriately, that it was a time of school crisis.

In the United States and Canada the response by educators to the crisis was to establish comprehensive public high schools. State supported, these schools would offer a variety of programs into which students would be assigned according to their perceived abilities and vocational aspirations. In other words, streaming or tracking would become the norm for secondary school students in the United States and Canada. In Britain, too, students would be streamed, although initially the plan was to establish several types of high schools, each with a particular bias--vocational, academic, technical--into which students would be divided.

Of course, there were alternative and, in hindsight, more effective solutions to the problems educators were facing, but streaming became the accepted practice primarily because it was

founded on a popular ideology of the time--Social Darwinism. At the turn of the century Darwin's concept of evolution was proving very influential, as Cremin (1961) has noted: "Virtually every field of knowledge was quickened under the influence of science in general and Darwinism in particular. Psychology, social theory and philosophy were deeply affected as physics, chemistry and biology" (p. 90).

Social Darwinists held the belief that "the laws enunciated by Darwin in terms of natural selection had their parallel in the social realm" (Kliebard, 1986, p. 25). This meant that those who were successful in society were the "fittest," that "their survival in a competitive social environment was proof enough of their evolutionary superiority" (Oakes, 1985, p.21). Social Darwinism gave a scientific credibility to viewing and treating groups of people as inherently different and some as distinctly inferior, particularly the new immigrants. The influence of Social Darwinism is evident in the description of immigrant children given by a member of the Boston school committee in 1889:

Many of these children come from homes of vice and crime. In their blood are generations of iniquity. . . They hate restraint or obedience or law. They know nothing of the feelings which are inherited by those who were born on our shores. (Lazerson, 1971 in Oakes, 1985, p. 21).

In education, one repercussion of this line of thinking was that streaming, which ensured different educational treatment of what believed to be very different groups of people, was scientifically or at least biologically, justifiable. In the minds of many conservative Social Darwinists, the schools could not hope to overcome evolution;

rather they must simply cope with what evidently was the reality of social world. In other words, groups of students were seen as inherently and unalterably different and rather than attempt to change these students, the system had simply to cope with them. And streaming seemed an obvious and acceptable method of doing just that.

Despite the justification that Social Darwinism lent streaming during the early years of this century, there were some individuals for whom the practice was neither obvious nor acceptable. One most notable individual was Charles Eliot, president of Harvard University and chairman of the 1892 National Educational Association's Committee of Ten. Eliot and his committee of prominent educators advocated a common secondary school curriculum providing, for all, regardless of career aspirations, "an education for life." Furthermore, "education for life," these educators maintained, is education for college and the universities should accept a good education for life as the proper preparation for the rigors of college" (N.E.A., 1893 in Kliebard, 1986, p. 12). Eliot believed that most students could handle an academic curriculum: "We Americans habitually underestimate the capacity of pupils at almost every stage of education . . . It seems to me probable that the proportion of grammar school children incapable of pursuing geometry, algebra, and a foreign language would turn out to be much smaller than we now image" (Eliot, 1892 in Kliebard, 1986, p. 12).

In reaction, Stanley Hall, a vocal proponent of streaming and a highly respected developmental psychologist, suggested that Eliot and

his committee were ignoring "the great army of incapables" (Hall, 1904 in Oakes, 1985, p. 23) that were attending school in increasing numbers. Furthermore, Hall charged that Eliot was only masking a curriculum meant for college students by proposing that such a curriculum was meant for everyone. Eliot's response was to suggest that the general public would accept the practice:

Those thoughtful students of . . . Psychology of Adolescence [Hall's book] will refuse to believe that the American public intends to have its children sorted before their teens into clerks, watchmakers, lithographers, telegraph operators, masons, teamsters, farm laborers, and so forth, and treated differently in their schools according to these prophecies of their appropriate life careers. Who are we to make these prophecies? (Eliot, 1905 in Kliebard, 1986, p. 15)

Who indeed? Psychologists in the early decades claimed they could fairly and scientifically make such "prophecies" based on new theories and discoveries in the area of human intelligence. In 1904 Charles Spearman developed the theory that there was an inborn general intellectual ability and then Alfred Binet worked out a scale that could measure this ability. American psychologists Goddard, Thorndike, Terman and others took up the work of Binet. In their assessments of the population, they found what they believed to be evidence of wide inherent intellectual differences. These psychologists maintained that the differences they detected had little to do with the social environment in which individuals were raised as Terman stated:

Practically all of the investigations which have been made of the influence of nature and nurture on mental performance agree in attributing far more to original endowment than to environment. Common observation would itself suggest that the social class to

which the family belongs depends less on chance than on the parents' native qualities of intellect and character. . . . The children of successful and cultured parents test higher than children from wretched and ignorant homes for the simple reason that their heredity is better. (Terman, 1916, in Gould, 1981, p. 183)

It was believed that the education one received ought to be directly connected to one's intellectual capacity. Terman in particular began to promote the use of intelligence tests as a means of determining vocation and therefore curriculum:

At every step in the child's progress the school should take account of his vocational possibilities. Preliminary investigations indicate that an IQ below 70 rarely permits anything better than unskilled labor; that the range from 70-80 is pre-eminently that of semi-skilled labor, from 80 to 100 that of the skilled or ordinary clerical labor, from 100-110 or 115 that of the semi-professional pursuits; and that above all these are the grades of intelligence which permit one to enter the professions or the larger fields of business This information will be a great value in planning the education of a particular child and also in planning the differentiated curriculum here recommended. (Terman, 1916 in Oakes, 1985, p. 36)

Not only did the psychologists believe that individuals could be identified as to their future vocation and therefore their educational needs, but large groups of people, indeed entire races and nationalities could be categorized using intelligence tests. Terman, in an 1922 article, claimed that "the immigrants who have recently come to us in such large numbers from Southern and Southeastern Europe are distinctly inferior mentally to the Nordic and Alpine strains we receive from Scandinavia, Germany, Great Britain, and France" (Terman, 1922 in Springs, 1986, p. 241). Goddard suggested that "we cannot escape the general conclusion that these immigrants were of surprisingly low intelligence It should be noted that the

immigration of recent years is of a decidedly different character from the early immigration . . . We are now getting the poorest of each race" (Goddard, 1917, in Gould, 1981, p. 167). Goddard prescribed the educational treatment of those he determined were intellectually inferior, "Treat them as children according to their mental age, constantly encourage and praise, never discourage or scold; and keep them happy" (Goddard, 1919 in Gould, 1981, p. 164).

One result of intelligence testing was that educators could justify the sectional treatment of individuals and of groups. At first, supported by notions of Social Darwinism, students were streamed on the basis of their ethnic, racial and economic backgrounds (Oakes, 1985); however, using I.Q. tests lent an air of objectivity and efficiency that silenced criticism that began to arise concerning the practice. Such tests helped explain why in the United States "vocational training at either the high school or pre-high school level was generally found most frequently in those schools and areas in which the poor and the immigrants lived" (Graham, 1974, p. 20) and of course why social classes and nationalities were over-represented in one program or another.

The confidence these psychologists had in their abilities to assess children seems remarkable, particularly in light of the fact that 80% of the immigrants Terman tested were determined to be feeble-minded (Oakes, 1985, p. 36). And the claims for the tests went beyond measuring mental capabilities to character. Goddard suggested that intelligence tests "indicated how well an individual could

control his or her emotions" (Spring, 1986, p. 238). Another prominent psychologist, Edward Thorndike, suggested "that ability to do well on tests gives evidence of justice and compassion" (Spring, 1986, p. 238). It seems incredible, yet I.Q. testing was, and perhaps continues to be, accepted by the academic community and by the public at large, and was responsible in part for the acceptance of streaming in the school systems.

In Britain, the use of I.Q. tests to determine stream began during the 1920's. Several schools began to divide students into three categories, super-normal (I.Q. over 110), normal (I.Q. to 110) and sub-normal (I.Q. below 90). Praising the work of these schools, the British Education Board in 1927 recommended in its Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers a treble-track system that identified the "backward, ordinary and quick student" (Davies, 1975). In the United States, psychologists continued to press to have all children tested: "Testing soon became a multimillion dollar industry . . . The Army Alpha [test] initiated mass testing but a flood of competitors greeted school administrators within a few years after the war's end [WWI]" (Gould, 1981, p. 177).

The connection between I.Q. and streaming was evidently still strong in Canada in the 1950's as indicated in a report from the 1959 Royal Commission on Education for the Province of Alberta:

A point of view which enjoys considerable currency is that countless pupils of university calibre are diverted into other pursuits, and that this situation is in itself deplorable. The Commission is not prepared to espouse a hierarchy of school

programs which is based upon a hierarchy of I.Q. scores.
(Cameron: Alberta Royal Commission on Education, 1959, p. 136)

The fact that such a statement had to be made in the report speaks to the strength of the view that I.Q. and streaming were inextricably connected.

In spite of the apparent validity of intelligence testing, the idea of the differentiated educational treatment of individuals and of large groups or social classes of students, raised concern with some who questioned how democratic such a practice would be. Ellwood Cubberly suggested as much in 1909 when he wrote about the urban comprehensive school:

Our city schools will soon be forced to give up the exceedingly democratic idea that all are equal and our society devoid of classes . . . and to begin a specialization of educational efforts along many lines in attempt to adapt the school to the needs of these many classes Industrial and vocational training is especially significant of the changing conception of the school and the classes in the future expected to serve.
(Cubberly, 1909, in Oakes, 1985, p. 34)

The response to Cubberly and others with the foresight to see the results of streaming was to argue that democracy would be served by streaming. The superintendent of the Boston school district was one of many who would suggested this:

Until very recently [the schools] have offered equal opportunity for all to receive one kind of education, but what will make them democratic is to provide opportunity for all to receive education as will fit them equally for their particular life work. (Oakes, 1985, p. 34)

This concept is taken up by Stanley Hall and his Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education. The Commission's 1918 report The Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education stated that,

"Education in a democracy . . . should develop in each individual the knowledge, interests, ideals, habits, and powers whereby he will find his place and use that place to shape both himself and society toward ever nobler ends" (In Spring, 1986, p. 203). For the committee this meant a differentiated curriculum was democratic since it allowed the individual to develop his/her specific abilities. In other words, democracy would be assured through educational "specification."

In addition, the committee recommended that high schools be comprehensive in nature. This would apparently result in the social mixing of students separated by streaming. The report suggested that this "unification" of the school population was "part of the ideal of democracy that brought people together and gave them 'common ideas, common ideals, and common modes of thought feeling and action that made for cooperation, social cohesion and social solidarity'" (Spring, 1986, p. 203). This meant that extra-curricular athletics, the school newspaper, student government, clubs and assemblies were viewed as extremely important in breaking down the barriers between groups of students who were otherwise separated by differentiated programs. This would allow "a close a relationship between the future professional man, the future craftsman, the future manager of industry, the future labor leader" (Conant, 1967, p. 62). Extra-curricular activities then were organized not simply for students' enrichment, but to safeguard democracy and its ideal of the classless society. Therefore, it was argued, streaming, particularly when practiced in a comprehensive school with its principles of

unification and specification, could not be thought of as undemocratic.

With this difficulty apparently resolved, streaming gained further approval. And why not? For besides being efficient and evidently democratic, it solved the dilemmas facing educators of the time, by sorting out large numbers of students, and eliminating the vast and apparently significant diversity of student backgrounds, abilities, and vocational aspirations. Furthermore, the differentiated educational treatment of children was supported by the theory of Social Darwinism and justified by research in intelligence testing. And so the school systems of the United States, Canada, and Great Britain abandoned the optimistic idealism of Charles Elliot and his notion of a common curriculum and instead embraced streaming and its differentiated treatment of students.

In Britain, there were two significant policy papers that ensured streaming would become the standard organizational practice: the Hadow Report of 1926 and the Butler Education Act of 1944. The Hadow report established the priority of "secondary education for all" and made the first formal recommendation for the sectional treatment of students:

All normal children should go on to some form of post-primary education; . . . it is necessary that the post-primary grade of education should include other types of post primary schools, with curricula varying according to both (a) the age up to which the majority of pupils will remain at school and (b) the different interests and abilities of the pupils to which the bias or objective of each school will naturally be related. (Hadow, 1926, p. 77)

The need to stream students, the report suggested was because of the variety of abilities or "gifts":

There are diversities of gifts, and for that reason there must be diversity of educational provision . . . education should not attempt to press different types of character and intelligence into a single mould, however excellent in itself it may be, but should provide a range of educational opportunity sufficiently wide to appeal to varying interests and cultivate powers which differ widely, both in kind and in degree. (Hadow, 1926, pp. 78-79)

The report recommended two types of secondary schools: the grammar school for the bright students, and other institutions for "those who could not profit from academic education" (Passow, 1961, p. 45). The "other institutions" included junior technical schools, trade schools and modern and central schools all of which would have a practical bias in the curricula offered. Students were to be channelled into the "appropriate" school at age eleven:

While we think all children should enter some type of post-primary school at the age of 11+, it will be necessary to discover . . . the type most suitable to a child's abilities and interests, and for this purpose a written examination should be held, and also, wherever possible, an oral examination. A written psychological test might also be specially employed in dealing with border line cases . . . (Hadow, 1926, p. 38)

Undoubtedly the psychological tests refer to I.Q. tests. On the basis of such tests and examinations students would be streamed, not into separate programs within a school, but rather to completely separate schools.

The Hadow report laid the foundation for the formal legislation: The Butler Educational Act of 1944. With this legislation, streaming became standard practice, so that by the 1940's even primary school

students were streamed (Davies, 1975). Streaming continued in the '60's. In a 1964 survey of 660 schools in England and Wales, 96% of students were streamed by the time they were ten (Jackson, 1964). Streaming became more controversial in the late '60's and '70's but was revitalized under the conservative government in the 1980's. As early as 1969, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher called for the revitalization of the grammar school (Lewis, 1983) and in July 1987 introduced legislation allowing for greater financial autonomy for schools in an effort to increase competition among schools (Manchester Guardian, July, 1987). This competition will result in greater differences among schools so that students will be streamed in schools that will not be standardized, that will in effect be streamed. While this occurs to some extent already as the schools reflect the community that they serve, this legislation will encourage this phenomenon and intensify educational inequality. Thus, streaming continues and has in fact been re-emphasized in Britain today.

In the United States streaming was established more quickly within the school systems. The National Educational Association Committee in 1918 officially endorsed streaming, referring, not surprisingly, to differences existing among students. In a statement that rings of Social Darwinism, the committee stated that "The character of the secondary school population has been modified by the entrance of large numbers of pupils of widely varying capacities, aptitudes, social heredity, and destinies in life" (N.E.A. 1918 in Tyack, 1967, p. 397). Further into the committee's report there is

mention again of the need to recognize differences among students. The educational psychologists are said to be emphasizing "individual differences in capacities and aptitudes among secondary-school pupils. Already recognized to some extent [by educators], this factor merits fuller attention" (N.E.A. 1918, in Tyack, 1967, p. 398). The recommendation of the committee was the establishment of comprehensive schools which would offer a wide spectrum of programs; "Differentiation should be, in the broad sense of the term, vocational . . . such as agricultural, business, clerical, industrial, fine-arts, and household curriculums" (N.E.A. 1918, in Spring, 1986, p. 202). With this support, streaming was established in American schools in the 1920's (Findley and Bryan, 1975). In the 1950's, in the wake of the Sputnik crisis, American educators again stressed curriculum differentiation and ability grouping as a way to strengthen the educational system. James Conant 1959 report on comprehensive schools was particularly influential:

In the required subjects and those elected by students with a wide range of ability, the students should be grouped according to ability, subject by subject . . . one for the more able in the subject, another for the large group whose ability is about average, and another for the very slow readers who should be handled by special teachers. The middle group might be divided into two or three sections according to the students' abilities in the subject. (Conant, 1967, p. 30)

Streaming continued in the 1960's. A 1968 survey indicated that 77% of American schools use the practice; of that number approximately 90% were high schools (Vanfossen, Jones, Spade, 1987). And today it

continues to be the dominant organizational practice used in American schools.

In Canada, initially secondary schools offered only one academic curriculum. However, as in the United States, Canadian educators were soon supporting streaming and differentiated curricula. By the 1930's, it was "a widely accepted objective to offer five different secondary school programs--in agriculture, commercial work, home economics, academic studies and technical subjects" (Phillips, 1957, p. 449). A 1944 report from the Canada and Newfoundland Education Association indicates the traditional academic high schools had proved unsuitable for the great majority of students and that "Accordingly an alternative type of secondary school was introduced early in the twentieth century, and schools of this type--commercial, technical, and agricultural--have multiplied since, so that in industrial parts of the country about one-third of secondary school pupils are enrolled in vocational courses" (C.E.A. 1944, p. 29). As well, efforts were made to add more subjects of general interest to high school curricula across the country.

In Alberta, although vocational schools were in existence in 1913, the major emphasis then and now continues to be on the establishment of composite high schools. The 1924 Alberta Curriculum committee suggested that the composites offer "a choice of six high school programs: matriculation, normal school entrance, agricultural, commercial, technical, and general (Phillips, 1957, p. 444). Prior to this time, Alberta had had only one secondary school program. As in

other provinces and states, the educability of the rapidly expanding secondary school population was an issue. In 1936, for example, Nellie Aylesworth described two-thirds of secondary students in Alberta as incapable of handling the traditional academic curriculum. In a Master's thesis she indicated social class made the difference:

The social level of our high school population has changed; 67% of the students do not belong to that social class which considers high school and more advanced education a matter of social necessity. Many of our students have neither the native ability, nor the desire to master abstract or academic subjects. There has also been a change in student attitude towards high school work. The average student sees no adequate reason why he should spend the evening in home study when such a feast of entertainment has been spread before him, as the picture show, the automobile, the radio. (Aylesworth, 1936, p. 62)

Evidently the differences required a differentiated curriculum and specifically the six programs. As in the United States, the six programs were to be offered in composite high schools rather than in separate vocational, technical or academic schools. The Report of the Royal Commission on Education in Alberta (1959) indicated dissatisfaction with the notion of separating students into different types of high schools: "the organization of secondary schools for distinctive educational or vocational purposes is more controversial than the diversification of courses, and . . . the public at large supports the latter" (R.C.E, 1959, p. 82). As in the United States, the concept of streaming students into differentiated schools and what education in a democracy should mean appeared to be at odds. Dr. T.C. Byrne, Chief Inspector of Schools in Alberta

describes the benefits the composite schools offer students and a democratic society:

Perhaps the major advantage to the student resides in the rich extra class life which the Composite School provides. His choice of activities is widened, his opportunities for leadership enhanced and his knowledge of people deepened. Students with diverse interests and abilities, with wide range in vocational destination, with varied social and economic backgrounds remain under one roof during their most impressionable years. This may prove quite significant in a democratic society. (Cameron, 1959, p. 434)

While the composite high school has remained the Alberta standard, by 1940 the six designated programs were dropped and schools were returned for a time to a core curriculum with a wide slate electives. This occurred for practical rather than for philosophical reasons. The multi-tracked system required large school populations and an extensive teaching staff with a wide range of specializations. The schools in Alberta, particularly the rural high schools, had neither the numbers of students nor the qualified staff to teach six different programs. In 1935, for example, over 65% of the province's classrooms were still located in one-room schools making it unfeasible to offer anything more than basic academic education (Titley & Miller, 1982). As well, vocational education was an expensive program that few rural school boards could afford. More important for students, those trained in vocational or technical programs were not stepping into positions any more rapidly than those who were academically trained. Industry simply did not recognize the specific education of the vocational student (Oakes, 1985, Greer, 1972). Understandably, then, there was a lack of student interest in the vocational and

technical programs. And so the six differentiated programs were soon abandoned.

For a time, then, students in Alberta were not streamed in the true sense of the word since all were required to take common core subjects. However, streaming existed with electives. Students were divided into elective subjects designated as academic, business or vocational, but complete program differentiation was not in effect. However, this began to change in the early 1960's.

As in the United States, the apparent threat of communist advancement in science and technology shifted attention to education:

In 1957 Canadians and Americans learned a new word over their morning coffee--Sputnik, the first satellite, a product of Russian education, was orbiting the earth. Near panic, particularly in the United States, replaced complacency overnight, and more attention than ever before was suddenly directed to education. (Wilson, 1970, p. 390)

One of the results of this "crisis" was a reemphasis on streaming as an apparent means of developing student potential. This is evident in the enormously influential documents coming from the 1962 Second Canadian Conference on Education (Wilson, 1970). One important paper was entitled The Development of Student Potential. As in Britain and the United States, this document stresses the enormous differences existing among students: "Experience indicates that individuals differ widely in both the quantity and quality of their intelligences and aptitudes . . . [and] for students in the secondary school individual differences are chiefly met by diversifying the curriculum into

courses and by offering optional subjects within each course" (Beattie, 1961, pp. 3, 47).

In response to the cry to diversify the curriculum, the Alberta Department of Education began dividing core subjects into separate courses and programs. In English, for example, by 1964 students were streamed into a matriculation or non-matriculation program. Matriculation was intended for those going on to university and consisted of English 20, generally taken in grade eleven, and English 30 taken in grade twelve. Those not intending to go to university opted for English 23 and English 33. However, there was more involved than vocational aspirations as the 1964 curriculum guide indicates in its description of the English 33:

English 33 is a five-credit course for non-matriculation students who will not be required to write the Departmental Examination in English 30. It is possible that many students who elect this course may do so because they have experienced difficulty with English in previous years, or because they have not yet developed an absorbing interest in English. It may therefore be necessary for the teacher of English 33 to give much attention to student motivation, to the improvement of fundamental reading and language skill, and to the development, in students, of a positive attitude toward English. (Alberta Language Arts Curriculum Guide, 1964, p. 53)

Clearly English 23 and 33 were developed as remedial courses for students who were seen as different and more particularly lacking in skills and attitude. Because educators were of the opinion that more remediation was required, English 13 was developed and implemented in 1969. Thus, by the seventies there were two distinct English programs offered secondary students--English 13-23-33 and English 10-20-30. These programs continue to be the fare for Alberta teenagers today.

And it is the distinction between the two programs that teachers in this thesis refer to in making sense of their practice.

It is interesting to note that five years elapsed between the development of English 23/33 and English 13. It has been suggested that the delay in designing and implementing English 13 occurred because "the general aura that surround the non-matriculation English pattern, tended to classify students who entered the program as being academically weak, and the Department was attempting to avoid this 'second-class citizen' identification" (Kahanoff, 1972, p. 177). This so-called aura was reflected in curriculum documents and other sources which made it quite clear that students who would elect the non-matriculation program would be not only academically weak but would lack motivation, good work habits, proper behavior, and good self-concepts. The 1964 curriculum guide previously cited indicates this as does the 1972 Secondary Language Arts Handbook. The handbook gives specific guidelines for teaching English 13:

Students' self-confidence should be fostered. Students should be enabled to increase their sense of responsibility. Student discussion should be encouraged through both large and small group situations. Students should be taught to listen carefully and courteously to each other and to the teacher. (Secondary Language Arts Handbook, 1975, p. 2)

Such guidelines seem to suggest student deficiencies in these areas. It is significant that the course descriptions of English 10-20-30 do not have similar guidelines. Further to this, in the introduction to New Voices, a text recommended for English 13-23-33, the description given of the students is that they "originally wanted to learn, but

for one reason or another have become discouraged--even geared for failure" (New Voices, 1982, p. 3). The textbook begins by handily typifying nonacademic students in terms of their personal and educational "handicaps":

The student tends to live a day at a time and is frequently absent. (All work may be done in class. Homework is not a prerequisite)
 The student is impatient with lengthy, detailed text explanations/exercises and has no appetite for technical terms per se.
 The student is handicapped because of a limited vocabulary.
 The student has a limited capacity for developing and organizing ideas. (New Voices, 1982, pp. 4-5)

While individual differences may have been the reason for differentiating the English program, it appears that those students in the non-academic stream are being stereotyped negatively, not only in terms of ability but also in terms of character. Obviously the Department's fears of "second-class" status for these students were well founded. Fortunately, the most recent Language Arts curriculum guide seems less negative about the students, focussing primarily on their vocational aspirations:

The diploma stream (13-23-33) has been designed as an alternative program for many students and the most appropriate one for the skill level of many high school students. For students of average ability either stream may be acceptable depending on the student's interests, attitudes and future plans. The English 10, 20, 30 stream is more appropriate for students intending to pursue further academic studies at the university level, while the English 13, 23, 33 stream is more appropriate for students intending to go to vocational school or to seek employment immediately after leaving high school. (Sr. High L.A. Curriculum Guide, 1982, p. 6)

However, the guide in which this statement appears also recommends the New Voices series previously cited.

Educators in Mathematics, where students have been streamed into three programs since 1969, also depict students in the non-matriculation program as deficient in ability and character. Of some surprise, the 1969 curriculum guide speaks also of a problem in the organization of previous courses:

The Mathematics 15-25 sequence has been designed as a program for the students of low achievement. In the past, many students have not attained a measure of success due to the difficulty of the material in relation to their ability, to lack of motivation, to ineffective work habits, and to the rigidity of course organization. (Curriculum Guide for Math 15-25, 1969)

The most recent Math curriculum guide suggests that deficiencies in students' affective traits, more than their academic ability, accounts for their enrolment in Math 15:

Many of the students who enrol in this program [Math 15] possess the ability to achieve but may lack the motivation or interest to succeed to their fullest capacity. It is the responsibility of each teacher to arouse the student's interest and adjust the program to meet individual needs. (Mathematics 15-25 Curriculum Guide 1982, p. 2)

The curriculum guide for Science 11, a terminal program for those in the non-matriculation route, also seems to hint at psychological deficiencies of general students. In a list of the major objectives of the program the first one addresses the students' affective development:

To enhance the student's self-image and develop a positive attitude toward science.

The students should: a) pursue areas of personal interest
b) participate in activities in which
he/she can experience success.

(Science 11 Curriculum Guide, 1977, p. 1)

In the Science and Mathematics guides, as well as in the Language Arts guide of 1964, there is a suggestion that past school experiences are responsible for students' negative attitudes; and such experiences, rather than their vocational aspirations, explains why they are in the non-matriculation route. Thus, across subject areas, general students are viewed as academically and psychologically deficient apparently because of a lack of success experienced earlier in their schooling.

In terms of program, the English and Mathematics secondary curricula simultaneously maintain the streams yet often blur distinctions between them. The rationale given in the most recent Language Arts curriculum guide states that two distinct program are to be offered and that, "It is not intended that one stream be a waterdowned [sic] version of the other." The streams are to be "two equally viable alternatives designed for different purposes"; one to emphasize life skills and the other "academic background and skills." Yet the guide indicates that there is to be "a certain amount of flexibility in transferring from one stream to another" (L.A. Curriculum Guide, 1982, p.6-7). The similarity between the programs is to be such that out of the twenty-seven concepts to be learned by those in English 10-20-30, twenty are identical, two are similar and five are additional to those listed for English 13-23-33. There exists between Math 10-20-30 and Math 13-23-33 what is specifically referred to as common core content. So while several core subjects

were streamed in the 1960's, a clear distinction between the streams is less defined in terms of official program goals and objectives.

In the 1980's, with Alberta's economy in decline, education again became the focus of public attention: "The quality of education was questioned by business, by the universities and by the public in general. A 'back to the basics' movement had begun" (Nancy Sheehan, Review of Secondary Programs, 1985, p. 7). The results of this movement include a return to departmental examinations, an increase in the number of required courses for graduation and an increase in streaming. A 1987 Alberta Education report entitled Proposed Directions for Senior High School Programs and Graduation Requirement recommends that social studies be streamed into a 10-20-30 program and a 13-23-33 program, and that science be streamed into General Science 12-22 and General Science 10-20-30 as well as Physics 20-30, Biology 20-30 and Chemistry 20-30. If these proposals are enacted, and this seems likely, it will mean almost complete program differentiation for secondary school students in Alberta. Only Physical Education 10 and a proposed course tentatively entitled "Careers and Life Management" will not be streamed.

Thus, for Alberta secondary students now and particularly for those in the future, streaming will be an integral part of their educational experience--their education and, ultimately, their lives will be affected by this practice.

It is evident, then, that streaming was not a temporary solution to educational problems existing at the turn of the century. Indeed, it has become a permanent organizational practice, firmly entrenched in the school systems of Britain, the United States and Canada even to this day. It was and continues to be an answer to many concerns about education. As we have seen, streaming has been an answer to managing large numbers of students, to Americanizing new immigrants, to remediating low-ability students, to stimulate intellectually capable students, in fact, to developing each student's individual potential; it has been the answer to providing business training, vocational training, and college preparation; and it has been seen as a boon to democracy, a means of fighting communist technical advancement, and a part of the conservative "back to the basics" movement.

Streaming is a solution based on the idea that categorization and specialization ensure efficiency and quality in education. As was indicated, the belief that categorization is required depends on the notion that students and their educational needs are seen as significantly different. Initially Social Darwinism provided the foundation for such a belief, later supported by developments in intelligence testing. But what seemed to underlie all of this was a simple but powerful belief in inherent Anglo-Saxon superiority. Today it would be unacceptable to speak of inherent racial and class differences. Instead educational documents refer to an individual's

past experiences and present dispositions; that is, to students' environment and psychology rather than their biology to explain many of the differences. But whether inherent or not, differences are seen both in students' affective development and in their academic development and are considered meaningful within the school context. Such differences can play a significant part in the lessons students learn about themselves and English and how teachers understand their role and function.

These, then, are the traditions and the meanings that historically have surrounded and supported streaming. They form part of the landscape that modern-day teachers walk into when they begin their practice. And, inevitably, streaming becomes one of the ways in which teachers have to think about their students, their programs and the nature of their work.

This is not to say that streaming has received or continues to receive the complete support of educators. There have always been those who have doubted the value of the practice. However, the one-hundred-year tradition of streaming in the schools and all that it entails seems to have muffle the voices of dissent, for streaming continues unabated in schools today.

Chapter Two

Streaming Studied

Almost since its inception, streaming has been the focus of a number of research studies. These studies have failed to substantiate the assumptions and beliefs that have historically supported the practice. In this chapter I will briefly summarize the research findings--findings that provide a different perspective from which to view streaming and to understand the sense English teachers might make of this practice.

From the previous chapter, it is apparent that the fundamental belief supporting streaming is that students are significantly different in their educational needs. In addition there are specific assumptions which have supported the tradition. These have been summarized by Oakes (1985):

1. Students can achieve higher academic success if grouped with those of similar ability and vocational aspirations since methods and materials can be customized to their specific needs. This would be of particular benefit for high and low-ability students whose academic needs are apparently quite different from other students.
2. Students would be psychologically better off in a streamed class. They would feel better about themselves, the subject matter and school in general without having to face constant competition from more able peers or the possible antagonism from those less able.
3. The placement of students into the various streams is fair, accurate, and to some degree flexible.
4. Streaming contributes to the democratic nature of public education.
5. It is easier and more satisfying to teach streamed classes where there is less diversity in students' educational needs.

In terms of the first assumption, studies over the last twenty-five years in Britain, the United States, Canada and Sweden have provided no consistent evidence that streaming enhances the academic performance of students (Baksh, 1980; Findley and Bryan, 1975; Esposito, 1973). As was mentioned earlier, part of the particular promise of streaming is that high and low-ability students will experience greater academic achievement since class time can be devoted to addressing their specific needs. But again, research has not borne this out. In some studies, high-ability students have shown slight gains in streamed classrooms (Kulik and Kulik, 1982); however, many other studies and reviews have shown these gains to be temporary or simply non-existent (Svensson, 1962; Borg, 1966; Ferri, 1971; Findley & Bryan, 1975; Newbold, 1977). The achievement of low-ability students has either been found unaffected by streaming (Kulik and Kulik, 1982) or negatively affected (Borg, 1966; Jackson, 1964; Findley and Bryan, 1975; Newbold, 1977; Vanfossen, Jones, Spade, 1987). In addition to this research, there have been a number of correlational studies that have examined the achievement of secondary students once they have been streamed into academic and nonacademic classes. Findings have indicated that even when I.Q., SES, and previous achievement are controlled, students in the nonacademic classes experience greater decline in their achievement, and generally lower achievement than those in the academic stream (Schafer and Olexa, 1971; Rosenbaum, 1975). Thus, according to research, it would appear that streaming students will not, of itself, improve the

academic performance of students, whether they are high, low or average achievers and particularly not if they are streamed into nonacademic class.

Research also fails to support the second assumption. Studies indicate that students in a nonacademic classes develop unfavourable attitudes towards self and school whereas those in academic classes develop more favourable, possibly inflated, attitudes towards self and school (Findley and Bryan, 1975; Esposito, 1977; Baksh, 1980; Kelly, 1975). It might be argued that low-ability students would have a poorer self-concept even in a heterogeneous class since "status in school is always linked to successful achievement in the classroom" (Ogletree and Ujlaki, 1971, p. 255). However, the stigma of being in a low stream class is apparently more debilitating than low achievement in a heterogeneous classroom as Ogletree and Ujlaki (1971) have indicated in a quote previously cited, but which bears repeating:

Slow pupils have always had a lower status in regard to academic achievement even in random groups. Upon placement in a low status group noted for low achievement, the slow learners not only perceive their role and self in terms of their low ability peers but also in relation to the social order in the entire school as well. Their status is public and becomes school news. (p. 255)

Unstreamed students appear to develop better or certainly more realistic attitudes towards self and higher self-acceptance (Lichens and Lichens, 1948; Borg, 1966).

David Hargreaves (1967) found in his study of a British secondary modern school that the higher the stream, the more positively the students viewed their teachers and school. The lower groups became

alienated from the school and school values. He noted the higher incidence of misconduct, which has been confirmed in other studies, as well as higher dropout rates, delinquency and a lack of extra-curricular participation (Schafer and Olexa, 1971; Rosenbaum, 1975; Kelly, 1975).

Studies have also indicated that students in a streamed situation develop stereotyped images of their peers in other streams. Those in the upper streams are seen as "snobs," "brains," "conformists," whereas, those in the lower streams are seen as "tough," "dumb," "hard" (Hargreaves, 1967; Rosenbaum, 1975; Martin, 1980)¹. A number of studies of students' friendship patterns have shown that in streamed schools there is less mixing of students from different ability groups and social backgrounds than in unstreamed schools (Schafer and Olexa, 1971; Ferri, 1971; Rosenbaum, 1975; Newbold, 1977; Vanfossen, Jones, Spade, 1987). Thus the stereotypes remain fixed. Some studies have indicated that teachers hold and reinforce stereotypes of the students on the basis of stream, contributing to the students labelling of themselves and their peers (Hargreaves, 1967, 1971; Rosenbaum, 1975). Taken as a whole, research suggests that neither teachers' nor students' attitudes are being enhanced through streaming. Quite on the contrary, it would seem seem that streaming is working to the detriment of the school population in this regard.

The belief that the placement of students in the various streams is fair and accurate and to some degree flexible has also been

challenged by many research studies. Studies have indicated that racial minority groups and lower socioeconomic classes are over-represented in the nonacademic streams (Douglas, 1964; Goldberg, 1966; Findley and Bryan, 1975; Schafer and Olexa, 1971; Esposito, 1973; Kelly, 1973; Rosenbaum, 1975; Vanfossen, Jones, Spade, 1987). This occurs even when I.Q. and previous achievement are controlled. Studies have also indicated that oldest children within an age group tend to be in the upper streams (Pape, 1956; Jackson, 1964; Barker-Lund, 1965). As well, there is some indication that girls are placed in an upper or academic stream more often than boys (Jackson, 1964) though an exception was noted in the Rosenbaum (1975) study. At the school where Rosenbaum conducted his researching girls were more often channeled into the business-secretarial program rather than the academic program. The over-representation of different groups in certain streams makes the practice of streaming appear less than meritocratic.

The criteria used to place students in the various programs are not always systematically applied, a fact that became apparent in Cicourel and Kitsuse's (1963) study of the process:

Schools are rather haphazard about the way they implement school criteria, unsystematically choosing among various official criteria and subjective impressions in making placements. (in Rosenbaum, 1975, p. 12)

Canadian studies indicate that principals and counsellors use both objective data and subjective impressions in selecting a student's program (Breton, 1970). The objective data can include marks from

previous grades, results from standardized achievement tests and/or I.Q. tests. Of course, previous achievement on standardized tests does not necessarily indicate learning potential, so that students, particularly underachievers, can easily be placed in the "wrong" stream. It is only I.Q. tests that claim the distinction of being able to measure learning potential and because of this have a particular and often unacknowledged significance in the allocation of students to streams (Rosenbaum, 1975). However, it hardly bears mentioning how problematic I.Q. testing is. The cultural bias that exists with these tests is particularly disturbing and may explain in part why racial minorities, new immigrants and students from working class homes do poorly on such tests and end up over-represented in the lower streams. As well, it is important to acknowledge that I.Q. tests, like standardized achievement tests, are designed to differentiate students. To what degree the differences noted require different programs has not been established: "we continue to interpret large test-score differences to mean large absolute differences which demand educational differences" (Oakes, 1985, p. 11). Even if the tests were measuring a significant difference, there would exist a 10% statistical error which would result in many students being mis-streamed (Yates, 1966; Baksh, 1980).

But the problems of objective data, although serious, pale in comparison with those of the subjective impressions. The subjective impressions of teachers, principals and counsellors are very important in supplementing or replacing objective "test" data (Oakes, 1985;

Cicourel and Kitsuse, 1963). As important as this information is, often teachers, principals and counsellors are expected advise students--some of whom they will have known, if at all, for only one semester--concerning their educational capacity, aptitudes, attitudes, and character. It is not surprising, then, that research has shown that educators use student's dress, general appearance, language, behaviour and/or family history as criteria for placement into the various streams (Douglas, 1964; Goldberg, 1966; Cicourel and Kitsuse, 1963; Schafer and Olexa, 1971). Obviously, such criteria may result in students being placed in inappropriate programs. This may explain why, regardless of ability, past performance or vocational aspirations, white middle-class students are more likely than minority or working-class students to be placed in academic programs (Schafer and Olexa, 1971; Vanfossen, Jones, Spade, 1987).

Despite these problems, research indicates that students are rarely transferred from one stream to another and those few who do change programs more often shift to lower-ability classes than to higher (Schafer and Olexa, 1971; Kelly, 1973; Rosenbaum, 1975). It is with good reason, then, that Kelly (1973) has described the situation as a "virtual caste system," or as Rosenbaum (1975) has suggested, a tournament where once you lose, you lose forever.

Evidently then, the premise that the placement of students into various streams is fair, accurate and flexible is undermined by research. In addition, this "caste system," which locks working-class and/or minority students, regardless of their ability, into

nonacademic streams and ultimately to lower status jobs, can hardly be considered part of the democratic ideal with its promise of social mobility. Furthermore, the belief of some educators discussed in the previous chapter, that the elitist nature of streaming could be overcome by the social mixing of students in a comprehensive school, also proves naive in light of research findings. As mentioned earlier, there is less social interaction between students of various backgrounds in a streamed school than in an unstreamed school. It would seem that extra-curricular activities cannot be counted on to help bond the student body. Studies have indicated that nonacademic students participate very little in extra-curricular events and clubs as compared to academic students (Rosenbaum, 1975; Schafer and Olexa, 1971), and those few who do tend to become involved in sports or music clubs, whereas academic students are found more often in student government, on the school newspaper, in political clubs and on the executive of school clubs and organizations (Rosenbaum, 1975; Vanfossen, Jones, Spade, 1987). Streaming practiced in a comprehensive school or any school is not likely result in Conant's "close relationship between the future professional man, the future craftsman, the future manager of industry, the future labor leader" (1967, p. 62) and, more importantly, it appears to exaggerate and perpetuate social inequalities in school and society. Research suggests it is erroneous to believe that streaming can provide a strong educational leg for democracy to stand on.

The last premise, that it is easier and more satisfying to teach streamed classes, has not been directly addressed by researchers. In terms of managing classroom instruction and in meeting special student needs, it may well be that it is easier to teach a streamed class (Oakes, 1985). However, it should be noted that teachers, particularly secondary teachers, are not trained to instruct mixed ability groups so that an unstreamed class would prove more difficult (Kelly, 1975). Also while it may be true that teachers in their own personal assessment find it generally more satisfying to teach streamed classes, there is evidence in the research which suggests that it might be less satisfying to teach in the lower streams. Hargreaves (1967) found that teachers were "rewarded" by being given the A (highest) streams and that those teachers who were inexperienced and less qualified were given the lower ability classes. He suggested this allocation reinforces a teacher's sense of his/her own competency:

When a teacher is allocated to mainly high stream pupils, this is perceived as a reward to his competence to teach, and because it is easier to teach the higher streams, where the children are more motivated to work hard and not misbehave, the competence will increase. When a teacher is allocated to low streams, this is perceived as a recognition of his limitations as a teacher, and the lack of interest in academic work and tendencies towards misbehaviour evidenced by lower stream pupils reinforce the teacher's sense of his own incompetence. (Hargreaves, 1967, p. 206)

Further to this, if achievement was the criterion on which a teacher based his/her competency, the decline in the grade point averages of nonacademic students noted by Schafer and Olexa (1971)

certainly would not contribute to a teacher's sense of satisfaction or competency. As well, the teacher-student relationship in nonacademic classes appears much less positive than in academic classes, which might lead one to conclude that it would be a less satisfying job emotionally. Hargreaves (1967) indicates that students in the lower streams "not only regard their teachers less favourably but also perceive their relationship with teachers as much less adequate" (p. 20). Nonacademics, in comparison with academic students, perceive their teachers less favourably, seeing them as more punitive, and less enthusiastic (Hargreaves, 1967; Martin, 1980; Oakes, 1985; Vanfossen, Jones, Spade, 1987). Caught in a situation where the school and the students have negative opinions about the teacher, it is difficult to imagine how one could feel positive about one's job. Interestingly enough, a survey of 655 teachers working in streamed British primary schools seems to reflect the lack of satisfaction teachers note about working with the lower streamed classes. One question asked was what the results would be if schools were unstreamed, to which 40% of teachers replied that the morale of A stream staff would deteriorate, whereas 21% of teachers replied that the morale of B stream staff would improve (Jackson, 1964). It would appear that in comparison to teaching the academic streams, teaching the nonacademics may be less conducive to producing job satisfaction; thus, the assumption that teaching streamed classes is easier and more satisfying may not be true for all teachers and all streams. This last premise, then, along with the others, remains, in general, unsubstantiated by research.

Some of the studies concerning streaming have been focussed on specific subject areas. Since high school English teachers will be participating in this study, it would seem important to examine the finding of those studies which have centred on secondary English. Two studies are of particular significance: Oakes, (1985) and Willinsky (1984).

But before discussing these studies, it would seem necessary to review what is unique about the teaching of English. As with other teachers and other subjects, English teachers work within a discipline that has a set of historical assumptions, beliefs and practices which to various degrees have become naturalized.² One assumption, dominating the ideology, is that, as a school subject, English has a special moral mission to develop student character. Although all teachers share a concern with the affective development of their students, "English has come to be seen as central to children's moral and emotional development" (Mathieson, 1975, p. 11; my emphasis). It is part of the content of the subject as stipulated in the most recent Alberta Language Arts curriculum guide, "neither stream must neglect either the development of communication abilities or the pursuit of humanistic goals both of which are equally important in the development of fully functioning members of society" (L.A. Curriculum Guide, 1982, p. 7).

The effects of streaming on this moral mission have been noted in a study by Oakes (1985). Part of her study involved interviewing Math and English teachers in thirteen streamed high schools about learning

outcomes. From the data, it was apparent that teachers differentiated character and behaviour objectives for each of the streams. Teachers of academic classes emphasized independent, creative behaviours, i.e. critical thinking, independent work, active participation, self-direction, and creativity; whereas, teachers of nonacademic classes emphasized conforming behaviours, i.e. getting along with others, working quietly, improving study habits, punctuality. It would appear that the character traits to be cultivated depend on the stream. Bowles and Gintis (1976) suggest that in the case of the upper stream classes, the attitudes and behaviours emphasized are those required by leaders and professionals; in the lower stream classes, those attitudes and behaviours required of workers. Unfortunately, Oakes did not ask the teachers to account for the difference in the behaviour objectives. She, along with others, speculated that teachers are unaware of the possibility claimed by Bowles and Gintis. Exactly what sense at least two teachers make of the difference will be answered by this thesis.

Oakes also examined the types of subject-related skills and knowledge and materials being used in the various English streams. She found that what has been called "high status knowledge" being taught in the academic streams. This is the knowledge that is required of those going on to university and that secures one in the middle or upper social classes. In English this meant, among other things, studying standard works of literature, writing expository essays and research papers, and practicing vocabulary and

comprehension questions for the College Board Entrance (SAT) examinations. Students in the nonacademic streams rarely were exposed to "good" literature. Functional literacy was the focus and often this was taught by means of workbooks, kits and reading texts. Writing often consisted of simple, short narrative paragraphs with an emphasis on the acquisition of standard English.

Standard English was the focus of Willinsky's (1984) study of general and academic English classes in a Nova Scotia high school. Willinsky found that teachers distinguished the streams, not in terms of career aspirations or general abilities, but rather in terms of the students' character, culture and specific competencies. The teachers in the study spoke of the students in the the academic stream as having mastered the mechanics of writing and generally liking literature. In contrast, those in the general stream were seen as lacking enthusiasm and experiencing difficulty with the mechanics of standard English. These assessments were matched by an emphasis in the general program on surface features of the language. The error-free sentence became an end rather than a means in this class. In the academic classes students were encouraged in the art of rhetoric. They were allowed to develop their voice, to fashion arguments, whereas the general students, according to Willinsky, were impeded in this regard by the adherence to formalities.

These differences that have been found between the streams and in the English classroom seem to have had some effect on the acceptance of streaming, though only recently. Surveys conducted in the 1960's

found that teachers overwhelmingly supported streaming, accepting the premises listed at the beginning of this chapter (Findley and Bryan, 1975; Jackson, 1964; Arbeau, 1963). The Arbeau study is of particular interest since it surveyed Alberta teachers and principals. The survey indicated that Alberta educators gave their support to statements which reflected the first two premises:

In the opinion of [Alberta] teachers the major strengths of present pupil grouping practices are, in rank order: (1) that they provide for differential rates of progress in accordance with pupil ability, (2) that they permit the teachers to give pupils more individual attention, (3) that they facilitate good remedial practices, and (4) that they reduce pupil frustrations. (Arbeau, 1963, p. 130)

More recently, however, there have been indications of dissent in educators and the general public. In a major conference of English educators held in the summer of 1987, a conference which has been described as the "first full-fledged effort to shape English studies since a conference at Dartmouth College twenty years ago" (The Chronicle of Higher Education, August/87, p. 10), teachers passed a resolution condemning streaming. More recently a group known as the American Alliance of Educators have called on secondary schools to offer "a liberal education to all high-school students, not just to those who are college-bound," (The Chronicle of Higher Education, May, 1988, p. A33). This, in essence, demands the end of the curriculum differentiation that constitutes streaming. Articles in The New York Times, The Globe and Mail, and The Calgary Herald have reported on the growing number of research studies which have failed to support streaming.³ The much-publicized Radwanski (1987) report also was

critical of streaming. The report, initiated by the Ontario Ministry of Education, recommended, "That the current policy of streaming high school students into academic, general and basic courses of study be abolished, and replaced by provision of a single and undifferentiated high-quality educational stream for all students" (p. 163).

It would seem research is to some degree eroding the support streaming has depended upon. Yet, as was indicated in the previous chapter, streaming has most recently been increased, not decreased, in Alberta schools. It would appear that the practice will not be stopped easily .

It would appear that there two mutually exclusive stories being told about streaming: research suggests students' academic and affective development is not enhanced by streaming--indeed, it is detrimental to students. On the other hand, the assumptions and beliefs that have traditionally supported the practice indicate that streaming is beneficial for students in that it allows their individual needs to be addressed specifically. What remains unanswered is what stories teachers tell about streaming. This study examines the content of the stories two English teachers' relate about streaming, as they understand it in their day-to-day experience.

Notes

1. One particular term for those students who seen as school conformists was coined by "the lads," a group of working class students in Paul Willis (1978) study Learning to Labour. They used the term "ear'oles" or "lobes" for those students who did not resist the rules and regulations of school.

2. I am using the term "naturalized" in the sense that Pierre Bourdieu uses it, that is that the ideas have become to some degree an unconscious, unquestioned, durable way of viewing reality. "History turned into nature" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 78).

3. The articles to which I refer include "Education system falls short: Ontario study," The Calgary Herald (Feb.16, 1988), p. C15; "The Tracking Controversy," The New York Times (May 1988), p. Edu 57; "Ahead to Basics," The Globe and Mail (Feb. 17, 1988) p. A6.

Chapter Three

The Design of the Study

As mentioned previously, this research study is an examination of the stories two English teacher's tell about streaming. This chapter concerns the procedures used to recover and interpret the stories, as well as the methodological issues that arise from these procedures. A final section will summarize the specific work undertaken with each teacher.

To begin with, the task of recovering the sense teachers make of any particular part of their practice can be difficult since one must enter into the psychological world of the teacher. It is a world understood by some researchers to consist of theories and beliefs that are for the most part implicit and so difficult to "get at." Previous studies in the area of streaming have attempted to recover teachers' perceptions by using methods associated with ethnography--interviews and observation (Hargreaves, 1967; Willinsky, 1984; Oakes, 1985). The interviews can be particularly useful in the recovery of meaning, as Hargreaves (1971) has noted "when a person speaks the richest source of potential information becomes available" (p. 21). Peter Holse has described how speech is an avenue to the mind, though the destination is never quite reached: "Speech is an important source of information about the machinations of the mind. Self report is one way of attempting to perform the highly desirable but impossible feat of getting 'inside someone's head'" (Holse, 1986,

p. 201). Besides speech, actions too convey meaning so that observation is also significant.

For this project I followed the lead already established in previous research in streaming. However, owing to the purpose of my study, I conducted more interviews with each teacher than has previously been done in these studies.

The Teachers

Originally three teachers participated in this research; however, one, much later, withdrew after reading a draft of his section. Interviewing and observing this number of teachers provided certain advantages. One of the advantages was that it allowed for a more detailed investigation which seems essential in the recovery of teachers' constructions. More time was spent with each teacher and so more data collected. As well, a stronger relationship was established between the researcher and the teacher, which, I believe, engendered more discussion and perhaps more intense discussion than what might otherwise have occurred. In addition, the context in which the teachers taught could figure much more prominently in the data than might had there been more teachers involved. This seemed important and so was viewed as another advantage.

I decided, rather than conduct a single case study, that I would involve several teachers so that there might be some small indication of the range of possible meanings and perspectives teachers use to make sense of streaming. In addition, using a small number of

teachers allows the uniqueness of each to emerge and so provides some evidence of the effects of the personal background and experience on teacher knowledge.

Of course, it could be argued that using a small sample size, whether it be one subject or three, limits the generalizability of the study. If the intent of the study had been to determine what the majority of teachers think about streaming, this might prove discouraging. However, the purpose was to determine the specific understanding two teachers have about streaming and to place their knowledge within the context of those meanings and perceptions available. The type and purpose of this study, then, makes generalizability less an issue.

This is not to say that the specific sense the teachers made of streaming would be necessarily and entirely idiosyncratic. The teachers who participated operate under general conditions similar to other teachers in the province, if not the country. Further to this, I would add that there was nothing in the interviews or in what I observed which would lead me to suspect that the teachers or the conditions in which they teach were extreme or uncommon.

The teachers were not randomly selected. One had been recommended as a participant because of her interest in streaming, by a professor who had been her instructor and who knew of my research proposal. The other was suggested by another teacher whom I knew. They were teaching both academic and general English courses at the time in urban senior high schools.

The teachers were contacted and agreed to participate in the study. Because of concerns raised about teacher consent (Noddings, 1986), it would seem necessary to outline what constituted informed consent for this study. The teachers were made aware in writing and in conversation of the topic of the research and the conditions under which they were agreeing to participate. As well as being informed as to the specific acts required of them, the teachers knew that in the thesis they would be given pseudonyms and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Although initially they were not told of my particular perspective concerning streaming, both of the teachers learned of my opinions about the topic in our informal chats and discussion. The Marxist interpretation of the data, that developed over the course of the thesis, was not well established in my mind at the time of the interviews and so did not enter into any discussions I had with the teachers.

The Interviews:

The teachers in the study were required to participate in a series of interviews. The interviews were intended to allow the teachers to discuss and to work through their understanding of teaching English in two streams. While the interviews were structured in that a number of questions had been prepared in advance (see appendix), there was an openness, a flexibility in the interviews that allowed the teacher's voice or perception rather than the researcher's, at least at this stage, to become established.

Considering the purposes of the study, I considered this an advantage. Frequently the interview deviated from the set questions and at times became much more of a dialogue than an interview. As well, teachers were given an opportunity to elaborate on or alter previous statements and to add to the agenda of the interview. Initial questions and discussion were often specifically related to events that had been observed in the classroom, so that the interviews were quite different for each teacher.

The interviews were held during lunch hours, preparation periods and after school. Although they were intended to last less than an hour, this time was frequently exceeded for after some initial nervousness, mine and theirs, the teachers seemed to have little difficulty talking at length about their practice. Indeed it seemed a welcome and novel experience for them.

The interviews were taped and transcripts were made available to the teachers prior to the next interview. Occasionally they commented on previous statements. The participants were interviewed a total of four times. The final interview was simply an open discussion of the last transcript and of the tentative descriptions, as opposed to hypothesis, that I had developed at that time.

It should be noted that besides the interviews, I had frequent informal chats with the teachers during free moments between classes and at lunch hours and after school. These talks undoubtedly had some effect on the stories. However, the information from these situations does not appear as part of the formal data unless I reintroduced the topics into the interviews, which I did if I felt it was of particular

significance for the study. Nonetheless, the informal chats should be recognized as contributing in some way to the study

Observation

The observation of the teachers' classroom practice was included because of a particular view of the relationship between theory and practice. The dialectic view, one of four suggested by McKeon (1952), sees practice as theory in action. The two concepts are seen as inseparable. This means that theory can be expressed not only in words but in actions. Therefore, another way of getting the theories and knowledge a teacher is working under is to observe his or her practice. However, more often in this study, the actions observed in the classroom were a source of questions for the next interview. This helped to tie the teachers' talk to specific classroom practices.

I observed a total of ten class periods per teacher, five with an academic English class and five with a general English class. The number of class periods were set arbitrarily. The exact class periods were scheduled so that none of my visits were a surprise. I believe this made the teachers more comfortable with my presence in the class. The observation periods were scheduled over three weeks and were interspersed with interview times.

The original plan was for the researcher to be a passive observer in the classroom, simply recording events that occurred. I did sit in on teachers' classes, making extensive notes on the content and style of the lesson, the teacher's conversation with students, and the

teacher's nonverbal behaviour. However, I was not truly a passive observer. While I never actually taught a class, I found myself frequently being drawn into class discussions, answering questions students put to me when the teacher was otherwise occupied, bringing materials for class, discussing how the class went with the teacher afterwards and so becoming more involved than I ever intended. Even had I not, my presence in the classroom, as would anyone's, changed to some extent the dynamics of the classroom. It became clear to me that I was a participant-observer, to some degree as much a part of the events in the class as a recorder of those events.

Documentation:

In the course of doing research with the teachers I was given many materials and documents that had been handed out to the students by the teacher and in some cases given the teacher by the English department or school. These materials included reading assignments, worksheets, course outlines, and handbooks. Collecting these materials, sometimes called site documents, is considered an integral part of ethnography (Erickson, 1986). Furthermore, researchers in teacher thinking have suggested that documents such as the ones I was given can be analyzed for specific expressions of the theories and beliefs teachers hold. Document analysis provided another method of recovering the theories and beliefs that the teachers held about streaming. The documents also provided information about the school context in which these teachers worked.

The Interpretive Process

The transcripts, field notes and school documents provided specific pieces of information about the sense the teachers made of streaming. But the transcripts were the primary source of data. To make meaning of these snippets of information, a researcher needs to analyze or interpret the data in what Polanyi (1958) has described as a heuristic act: an act of innovation and discovery.

Erickson (1986) has outlined this process. To begin with, all the data is reviewed to generate through induction what has been called assertions or descriptive statements. The data is then repeatedly reviewed to test the validity of the assertions. As well, during this time connections and patterns in the statements are sought so that increasingly more general statements and hypotheses can be forwarded. This continues until the exhausted researcher is satisfied that a valid meaning has been secured.

As with any research, other sources such as research studies, historical data can be used to inform and support the validity of the meaning and/or to direct the search for meaning. The research findings and historical assumptions concerning streaming as outlined in chapters one and two are included partly for this reason.

This, then, was essentially the process I followed in making sense of the data, although it was a much more difficult and time-consuming endeavor than may be evident in the description. Undoubtedly part of the difficulty I experienced was due to my relative unfamiliarity with the interpretive process. As well such a

process requires an intense search for deep meanings and connections, a critical reading, and there is nothing simple about such a task. In addition, it should be noted that while in describing this process I have separated the recovery stage of the research with the interpretive processes, in reality they overlap to some degree. So, intentionally or not, the researcher is already formulating hypotheses when collecting data. This complicates the procedure and may affect the ultimate results. Another complicating factor is that researchers come to a project with assumptions, perceptions and purposes implicitly and explicitly already at hand which may affect both the recovery and the interpretive processes. I had, for example, read a number of research studies before embarking on the recovery of the teachers' stories, and prior to interpreting the stories, had completed the historical examination of the practice given in chapter one. Extraditing the researcher from the researched would seem impossible.

Researchers have recognized this and rather than attempting to minimize the role of the researcher many have acknowledged the centrality of the researcher and his/her values and purposes in research projects (Clark and Peterson, 1986). Some researchers have specifically highlighted the knowledge and beliefs of participant and of the researcher. Following this lead, I have included a section in the introduction outlining my own perspectives and purposes concerning streaming.

The entire study took about six weeks. By the time I had finished collecting the data, I was able to give the teachers back some

description and some generalizations that I had worked out so far. These were very limited and certainly superficial but I shared them during the last interview. Basically, the interpretive stage was done on my own. The final drafts were sent out to the teachers for their comments and reactions. Some minor changes were made, differences were noted; however, in effect, the final analysis is not a shared meaning between researcher and teacher.

Again, it is important to acknowledge that both the context and my perspectives help to shape the questions and ultimately the interpretation of the teachers' words. The teachers' words, that is, the transcripts of the interviews, formed the text of this study. And while the teachers had opportunity to review and modify the text, I was responsible for the interpretations and implications of the text. The interpretation and the implications developed through close reading and rereading of the transcripts as indicated previously, supported and enhanced by my historical and theoretical reading on streaming.

I did not involve the teachers more in the final interpretation process because of the approach of critical ethnography that I chose to use. Critical ethnography "refers to studies which use a basically anthropological, qualitative participant observer methodology but which rely for their theoretical formulation on a body of knowledge of theory deriving from critical sociology and philosophy" (Maseman, 1982, p. 1). Paul Willis' (1978) study Learning to Labour is an example of critical ethnography. One of the assumptions of this type of research is that participants may not be totally aware of the

dialectic between their behaviour and social and organizational structure. Maseman explains more:

Critical approaches are distinguished from interpretive approaches primarily by their connection to theoretical perspectives which are linked to a general theory of society and a concept of social structure which exists beyond the actor's perception of it. (1982, p. 9)

Thus, the final analysis must be worked by the researcher.

What follows now is a summary account of the specific work done with each teacher.

Linda

Because of her interest in the treatment of general and academic students, Linda was recommended as a subject for the study by a university professor. Linda had just completed a course in which she had distinguished herself by conducting a research project, comparing the written praise she gave her general students to that she gave to her academic students. Perhaps because of this work, Linda seemed interested in my study and, despite some initial qualms about being observed, she agreed to participate. Linda was first contacted by phone and later we met to discuss the finer details concerning her participation.

At the time of the study, April, 1987, Linda had been teaching high school English for some nineteen years. She had taught in a number of different schools and in a number of provinces. At the time she was teaching at a very large urban high school known for its

ethnically diverse student population. She had been at the school for five years, teaching both academic and general English courses.

During the first meeting I had with her it was decided that I would be observing her English 23 and English 30 Honours classes. As indicated in the introduction, in Alberta schools English 13, 23, and 33 are part of the general stream; English 10, 20, 30 comprise the academic stream. English 30 Honours was an enriched academic class for those students who had previously demonstrated a high level of ability in the subject. Besides deciding which classes were to be observed, the observation and interviews times were tentatively scheduled. A total of ten periods were observed, five of the English 23 class and five of the English 30H. Four interviews were set up though the last one was more of a summary discussion than an interview. The interviews were held at lunch hours in a small room off the teachers' cafeteria or in Linda's classroom.

Linda was given my tentative descriptions or conclusions verbally during the fourth interview and we discussed these first findings. Months later she was given a draft of her section of chapter four and asked for her comments and reactions. Her response is included in the appendix.

David

David was recommended by the English Department Head of his school, who knew of my study. The Department Head spoke first to David about participating and I later phoned then met with him.

At the time of the study David had been teaching at the same school for some twenty-one years. During those years, he had taught Social Studies and more often English, at both the academic and general level. David seemed very interested in talking about his teaching and preferred not to know too many of the details concerning the study, though I managed to impress upon him the purpose of the study. It was decided that his English 10 and English 13 classes would be observed and that the three interviews would be held after school in his classroom. The interviews lasted up to an hour and a half and were taped. The final summary interview was held in a staff lounge during David's prep period. I was also fortunate enough to sit in on a department staff meeting and included it in the observations.

Like Linda, David was given my tentative descriptions during the last interview and much later given his section of chapter four and asked for comments. He did not submit a response orally or in writing to the chapter.

This, then, was the work undertaken with Linda and David--how their stories were collected and analyzed.

Chapter Four

The Teachers

Linda

Linda was the first subject to be interviewed for the study and perhaps owing to my inexperience as a researcher and interviewer, the sense she made of streaming proved to be the most difficult to interpret. Ultimately, however, I believe Linda's story is the most telling, so I begin with her¹.

From the first meeting I had with Linda, it was apparent that she is a kind and giving person, sensitive to the feelings and needs of others whether students in her classroom or a researcher from the university whom she barely knew. Professionally, Linda has extensive teaching experience. Indeed she began her first interview by saying, "This is my nineteenth year," and after a momentary pause added, wryly, "I'm old." Linda is not old, but she has taught high school English, almost exclusively, over the last nineteen years, in a number of schools and provinces. For the last five years she has been teaching at a large urban high school where her assignment has been divided equally between academic and general English courses. Although she has been teaching a long time, Linda's positive attitude and active involvement in her profession belie any stereotype of the "burnt-out" veteran. Her interests and energies have led her to work on several school committees and to take on special school projects. She continues to be an active member on provincial education committees. In addition to her teaching and her committee work, Linda

has been taking university courses and is currently completing a graduate degree in education. It would certainly appear that Linda is immersed in her profession. She continues to be highly involved in educational discourse and the production of educational meaning at a number of levels. In terms of this study, this means that Linda had a variety of sources of educational meaning to draw on in order to make sense of streaming.

The school where Linda teaches has close to 1700 students, over 100 teachers and offers over 160 different courses.² The English department offers courses in both the academic and nonacademic streams. The school registration guide (1987) provides indication of one way streaming is understood within the department, part of the context in which Linda makes sense of her practice. The guide, given students to help in their course selection, indicates that English 10, 20 and 30 are designed for those "who are very likely to proceed to post-secondary educational institutions which require an academic command of language, literature and composition" (p.5). The guide goes on to outline the general content of these courses, emphasizing their difficulty:

The 10-20-30 courses will STRESS such items as:

1. Written work which follows the demands and conventions of a professional career, especially that of formal, expository writing. Accuracy of spelling, punctuation, maturity of expression, an increasing sophistication of ideas; and logical, clear expression of thought will all be a part of written work.
2. Understanding and appreciation of a wide range of literature including such challenging materials as Shakespeare's plays in depth, full-length novels, traditional poetry; modern drama . . .

3. Analysis of ideas and techniques that underlie written thought. (p.5)

Evidently, the emphasis peculiar to the 10-20-30 program is that the materials will be "challenging" and studied in depth, and that students will learn to analyze and express ideas in a formal, logical and increasingly sophisticated manner. This section ends with the suggestion that students who have experienced difficulty in reading and writing should be considering the nonacademic route.

The English 13, 23, and 33 courses are described as being for those "who are very likely to proceed into careers that do not require the academic kinds of written expression and literary analysis demanded by the English 10-20-30 courses." In this case, the students and their careers are described in terms of what they are not--not professional careers--not vocations requiring academic expression and analysis. Exactly what these careers require is unstated, as is the content of the 13-23-33 courses. Instead, what follows this statement is a description of how students may transfer from the nonacademic route to the academic route.

The guide also indicates that the school offers two special courses: English 30E, a senior honours course for students of above average ability and English 33-30S, a course for students who wish to transfer into the academic program in grade twelve.

Another document emanating from the English department of Linda's school that has some significance with regard to streaming is a common course outline. The outline given students in both streams and all three grade levels indicates department expectations concerning

evaluation, and general course content, textbooks, etc. Such a document emphasizes the similarities between the streams.

The importance of transferring across streams, the lack of identity for the nonacademic stream, the emphasis on the futures of academic students evident in these documents are echoed in some of what Linda says as she talks about streaming.

To fully understand Linda's sense of streaming, it is necessary first to acknowledge that she found this a difficult study to take part in. The information asked of Linda in this study often required her to generalize about students and program on the basis of stream, and this was not easy for her. In her speech, she frequently and consciously avoided making generalizations. At times Linda managed this by referring parenthetically to the other stream. This is most apparent when she was asked why she thought English 13 was emotionally demanding to teach:

. . . Plus they're grade ten and all grade ten classes are a bit more hyper, more active. Some, and that's going to be in English 10 as well, some of them just don't want to be in school but they're not sixteen yet and they can't quit. (my emphasis)

While Linda freely stereotyped "all grade ten classes" as "hyper," she carefully avoided stereotyping the streams. It is also interesting to note that she avoided generalizing on an aspect about which it would be easy and even logical to do so--quitting school--since more general students drop out of school.¹ Yet even on this issue, Linda sought to recognize and express a balance between the streams and to avoid categorizing the students.

There are other instances where Linda avoided categorizing students and programs. For example, she spoke often of specific groups of students within a class rather than generalizing about the whole class, as when she refers to "some of them" in the quote cited above. Another example of this occurs when Linda was asked whether her class of English 30 Honour students would have an established reading habit:

Some of them would; some of them wouldn't so for me that's a focus all the way through, but less with the Honours because they are, for the most part, well read. (my emphasis)

When asked to compare the reading habits of a regular English 30 and an English 33, Linda simply stated outright the difficulty she has in categorizing students:

It's hard to pigeon-hole them . . . You are going to have kids in both groups who are avid readers and other kids in both groups who will only read what an English teacher makes them.

Linda's reluctance to generalize about students on the basis of stream extended to teaching methods and approaches as well. She often spoke of goals and approaches that could be applied to both streams. One of the goals she stated was "I want to make them think--right across--[the streams]." She indicated that for literature in both the streams, "I'm trying to show it has some relevancy in their [the students'] lives." She speaks, too, of how thematic units can be applied to both streams:

Again we can cross at any point . . . not so much from the honours 30 but if you took a regular 20 and a regular 23 I'll bet you could cross over a number of them [the themes].

By attributing similar goals, methods and students to both programs, Linda minimized differences between the streams. This is in

accordance with the curriculum guide but also reflects her own concern about being fair to her students. Fairness and equity were themes that ran through her conversation and were embodied in aspects of her practice. For example, Linda gave students in both programs a say in many of the decisions concerning them. Often students were allowed to vote on issues such as their participation in the study.

But her particular reluctance to stereotype the streams may also have been due to a research project Linda conducted prior to this study for a university course she was taking. The project involved comparing the written praise she gave her academic classes to that she gave her general classes. The fact that Linda chose this particular project out of a number of possibilities indicates, among other things, a concern for the fair treatment of students. As well, it should be pointed out that her project and the reading that was no doubt a part of it may have alerted her to possible injustices that streaming may incur. This may then have affected the sense or, at least, her expression of the sense she made of streaming.

Although Linda perceived similarities between the streams, it is my contention that her sense of the streaming still spoke to inescapable and significant differences: differences in some of the characteristics of the students and in their academic and affective needs. These distinctions in turn affect the nature and objectives of the two English programs Linda teaches; specifically, the meaningfulness of the content, the relationship between the subject matter and the course, and the immediacy and nature of the overall goals. It should be noted, however, that for Linda the differences

between the programs are matters of degree and so the streams cannot be represented as opposites for her but rather as points on a continuum. However, the differences evident in her comments are, nonetheless, meaningful.

To begin with, Linda recognizes a difference in the students' intellectual abilities and needs. This was apparent when she was asked why school systems should stream if materials, goals and approaches could be applied to both programs:

. . . because of ability . . . some of the kids in that English 23 are working to full capacity and getting 55% and if they suddenly were thrown into longer novels, full-length Macbeth, as opposed to the short Macbeth, they're dead, they're absolutely dead . . . I think a lot of those 23's . . . half would be absolutely lost with the full version. The other half are fine and probably five of them will go on to 30 [English 30] later on.

Again Linda is not going to generalize about the intellectual abilities of a class of 23's. However, she understands that there is a group of students who are intellectually incapable of handling work demanded of the academic program, a deficit which presumably cannot be overcome. And it is the needs and abilities of this group that determine the type of literature chosen for the entire program. Also the emphasis on the length of the reading material seems to suggest a connection between intelligence and perseverance. Apparently half the class would not be able to achieve 55%, a pass, if "thrown into longer novels," if given the "full-length Macbeth as opposed to the short Macbeth." For Linda, then, longer novels and plays imply more difficult literature for the general students.

The academic students evidently have the intelligence and perseverance to read difficult, lengthy selections. However, there is

another concern which guides the literature chosen for these students.

This is evident when Linda outlines how she chose A Man for All

Seasons for her English 30H class:

When I pick anything [for English 30] I'm looking at the diploma exams. I look at some of the old topics they've had. Could this book have slotted in with some of those topics because I don't want to give them something that doesn't give them scope. So that while we're looking at this in terms of conformity and nonconformity, it could be looked at in terms of political, cultural, religious influences . . . I am conscious of that as well with the 30's--that it has to be something that would give them scope to write on.

The academic students because of their exams and ultimately because of their futures require literature that is rich with meaning, offering a variety of perspectives and observations about life they can think and write about. By implication this means that the reading material of the general students can be much narrower in focus, much more limited in meaning. Their abilities and futures appear to make the study of literature that has "scope" both unrealistic and unnecessary.³

Consequently, it would seem that the choice of literature may broaden the experience and knowledge of those students in the academic stream more than that of students in the general program.

Linda attributes other characteristics to the students in the general stream. She mentions in the first quote cited that half of the students in the general stream would experience little difficulty with the longer, richer novels of the academic stream. Yet these students who can handle the work of the academic stream are found in the general program. Linda's explanation as to why this is so indicates another important characteristic of some general students:

I think there is another group in there [English 23] who don't need to be there--and we've talked about this before--they shouldn't be there yet usually because of attitude or poor attendance records or for whatever reasons, they are there . . . They just need a good boot and they're in both--both the 23's and 20's.

Linda knows there are students in both programs who are intellectually capable but who have poor attitudes towards school and attend irregularly. Although such students are in both programs, it is those in the general program who are a particular problem for "they shouldn't be there." And as will be shown, Linda concentrates more effort on improving attitudes so that these students may realize their potential and, most importantly, transfer into the academic stream.

Several times in the transcripts Linda refers to the idea of transferring general students into the academic stream. It is with a certain amount of pride that Linda states, "We run two full classes who are going on from 33 to 30." She indicates further her support for what has apparently been a controversial practice:

But in this school . . . we almost never say no to a kid for example who say comes from 33 passes it and wants to try 30 . . . and we have battles over it because lots of schools in this province aren't allowing kids to do it because it affects their averages on the [provincial] exams but our principal is adamant and I think he's right . . . if they want to try it, why not.

In Linda's classes the need to prepare students for a possible switch to the academic stream is so important that it provides a rationale for some of the content, specifically the literature, of the general program:

The other reason why I bring them in [literary terminology] is the same reason why we do Shakespeare here in 13-23-33 because lots of schools don't, is . . . that a lot of kids at Glendale go 13-23-33-30.

For Linda, the primary significance of teaching some of the literature and literary terminology to the general stream is that it is also taught in the academic stream.

But besides exposing students to knowledge that might be required in the academic stream, Linda attempts to improve student attitude and behaviour so that students may be in a position, psychologically as well as intellectually, for a possible switch to the academic program. This is evident in Linda's explanation of one of her teaching practices. She had given a short objective quiz on literary terminology to her English 23 class and, when asked about the significance of the terms and the test, Linda spoke of attendance and indirectly of attitude:

English 10-20-30, the first thing they do in September or in February is go through all the terms because they are terms they deal with a lot . . . I deliberately have not brought them in before now because I don't think they are the same focus as the academic students part of what I am doing [the quiz] is just trying to encourage the idea attendance is important and if you come everyday maybe there will be something here that you'll pick up and then be rewarded at a later date. So that part of this is just to try to get attendance going, that it is worth being here because you could have had some marks today that weren't very hard to get. But then where I'm going next is to get them to apply those terms so they aren't just isolated terms. Can you spell protagonist [one of the questions on the test]; I mean, who cares?

As Linda understands it, literary terms are used extensively in English 10-20-30 and so form part of the "language" of the academic stream. The "language" of the academic English class consists not only of literary terminology but, as indicated earlier, of longer, richer novels, and full versions of Shakespearean plays intended to provide students with a wide range of ideas to explore. As noted in

this and the previous quotation, general stream students are taught only a rudimentary form of that "language": fewer literary terms, shorter versions of Shakespearean plays in the important though unlikely chance that they may transfer to the academic stream and require that language.

However, it becomes apparent that, while important, this is not the only reason for teaching literary terms, though it is perhaps the only objective where the terms themselves have any significance for the general student. Linda indicates that the terms, the information itself, is secondary, even "meaningless". The real aim is to provide a context where students can develop a sense that there is some value in attending school, that it is "worth being here." According to Linda what might make attending school worthwhile for these students is immediate tangible rewards--marks. The students will get some easy marks today and as well "be rewarded at a later date." The later reward for the general students is undefined here and seems problematic for Linda and I would suggest for the entire teaching population. It may be that for those students who have the intellectual potential and who improve their attitudes and attendance, the later reward is entrance to the academic stream and a future that such a program prepares one for. However for the other students, who evidently belong in the general stream, the later reward for learning academic content seems less apparent. At this point I would suggest that if there is no ultimate goal or reward, and if the content is so meaningless, then immediate tangible rewards become essential to keep even those who belong in the program motivated enough to attend.

Whether it is to improve students' attitudes so that they might transfer into the academic stream, or simply to keep all students motivated to attend, Linda seems particularly committed to ensuring school is as positive an experience as possible for the general students. This can be seen in several other of her teaching practices besides the quiz and its immediate tangible rewards. For example, her evaluation of the students' written and oral work reflects a concern for developing positive attitudes in the general student. This was apparent when Linda was asked how she approaches formal and informal language:

L: I'd probably let more go by in the 23's. I'm much tougher on the 30's. I will for the most part circle almost every mistake they make, whereas with the 23's, partly, if you have a student who is a bad speller, you are going to have the entire page circled.

H: And bleeding--

L: Yes, that is why I mark in green rather than red. No, I'm much, much tougher on the 30's.

It is important for Linda that academic students develop precision in using language and so she circles every mistake. However, precision is less significant in the general program. The infinite number of mistakes--"you are going to have the entire page circled"--might prove discouraging and so Linda will "let more go by." This is more evident when Linda explains why she chooses not to correct oral speech very often, "because they're [the students] embarrassed so I don't want to embarrass them unless it is something really serious." In the academic stream nearly every mistake is "serious" and so one has to be "tougher" on them, but not so for the general stream. It would appear that the accurate attainment of the content in the general program is

not as important as making school as positive an experience as possible, a place where they won't be "embarrassed" or criticized or discouraged. No doubt Linda believes this is important for all her students but it seems particularly crucial in the general stream.

Another of Linda's teaching practices that demonstrates how important the affective needs of the students are in the general program is in the "special" assignment she gives her English 23 students. In connection with the literature they read, the general students choose and complete a project from a list Linda has developed. The list includes constructing a model of some significant object or scene from the literature, writing a letter from one character to another, conducting an interview, creating a bulletin board display or drawing a sketch of the setting or a character. Many of the choices were nontraditional for an English course in that they involved little writing or reading. Linda indicated that such an assignment allowed students to "shine in their area of strength." She explained further:

The writing is always there for the ones who learn best by writing and others may have some skill in art. And so I think to be able to take a page of Steinbeck's book, for example, and convert that onto a page or a model is a real skill because you have to understand the script and figure it all out in proportion--that's a skill too.

Linda admits it is not common to give such projects to the academic students. She says, "I don't give them [30's] very much opportunity to do nonwriting things, particularly since we are into Diploma Exams." While the English 33 students also have to write provincial examinations, exams that involve extensive reading and writing, it is

more important to Linda that the horizon of skills recognized and rewarded be extended, so that these students can "shine." While it is important for all students to have a positive experience with school, again it seems absolutely essential for these general students. The question seems to be why is it so essential for these particular students.

Before addressing this question, I would like to point out several other differences in the two programs evident in the quotation. One difference is in the connection of the courses to the subject matter--English. It would appear that if English is traditionally understood to be a subject concerned primarily with the development of reading and writing skills, recognizing and rewarding other skills such as art, would seem to indicate that English is less a focus in the general stream than it might be for the academic stream. The academic stream rarely does "nonwriting things." So it would seem that the academic English program deals more intensely, more traditionally, with the discipline of English than does the general English program.

It is interesting and important to note that Linda uses the word "skill" in speaking of the general program, yet it is a term she rarely uses with regard to the academic program. Three times she uses "skill" in the quote cited above and it is emphasized later when she explains that the intent of the general stream is to look "at more functional skills like writing letters, filling out reports." Skill would seem to refer to something specific and practical that will be taught, practiced and applied, like letter writing or filling out

reports. Training students to do a specific skill would seem a much narrower, albeit necessary, lesson than teaching students literature, where there is a greater opportunity for reflection and discussion. The former seems a lesson, the latter an experience. As well, skill does not imply an understanding of the processes or principles or reasons involved but simply an ability to conduct a procedure. Driving a car, for example, is a skill one can master without understanding the mechanical principles and properties involved, a fact I can certainly attest to. It may be that, as Linda understands it, the general stream is characterized by a greater emphasis on teaching skills than is the academic stream, and that this means a different kind of learning experience, perhaps more limited and easier in some respects.

There are other differences in the learning experiences offered to the two streams that are evident in the nature and organization of the thematic units Linda uses. And as was noted previously in several other teaching practices, the nature of the thematic units indicate a particular need to make school a very positive experience for the general students. Linda speaks of this when she explains why she chose "Wheels" as a unit for her English 23's: "but you know, you can only do so much heavy academic stuff and then you've got to do something more, more concrete." Later she says that the "Wheels" unit is not only more concrete but more fun:

L: . . . probably if the regular 20's were telling the truth they'd rather be doing "Wheels."

H: But yet we don't give them "Wheels." We give them--I don't know what we give them.

L: Genre. Just genre . . . in 20 in this school you'll do Canadian poetry.

H: Genre--Canadian poetry?

L: Yes, I guess in part what I am saying is that the academic kids have this [provincial] exam and they have to work towards it and part of my job is to prepare them for it. For 13-23-33 they don't have as much pressure on them so we can have some fun. Now there that ought to stir things up a bit, but it's not fair because the other kids ought to be entitled to some fun too.

School for the academic student is serious business. There is "pressure on them" to learn the skills and knowledge or, as Linda puts it, the "heavy academic stuff" that constitutes the language of their program. There is no such pressure in the general stream, so they "can have some fun" with concrete, more entertaining units. Again it seems apparent that learning specific academic content is less a priority than providing positive, even entertaining, school experiences for these particular students.

Without the pressure to learn specific content, there is greater flexibility in teaching the general program to the extent that Linda is free to change the agenda of her program. This occurred when both Linda's English 30 and English 23 students complained about the depressing nature of the literature they had been reading. Although both groups complained, it was the program of the 23's that was altered, as Linda explained:

I certainly did not have an intention of trying to do a humour unit with period 2 [English 23], but I just felt the way the discussion went that one day and they were talking about everything being gloomy and morbid and depressing and can't we ever do anything that is upbeat. And I said the next unit was to be "Disasters" and the universal displeasure--and so I changed midstream and went to the unit on humour.

With less "pressure" to teach academic content, Linda has the opportunity to cater to the interests of the general students. She

can be sensitive to the "universal displeasure" and switch units. It should be noted that Linda is, of course, concerned about providing interesting material for her academic students but student interest does not appear to be as crucial as with the general students. The content of the general program can be negotiated or re-negotiated immediately on the basis of the students' interests alone. There does not seem to be any long term goal that a teacher must build towards in terms of the content. However with the academic stream there is an ultimate goal, as Linda sees it, to prepare the students for the provincial examinations--"the academic kids have this exam and they have to work towards it and part of my job is to prepare them for it"; but the examinations for the general students do not provide such direction for Linda: "I don't know--you try to gear them [English 33] for this exam yet nothing you do all year is on the exam. It's an odd situation.⁴"

This lack of direction, this lack of meaning, may explain why, despite all of Linda's efforts to make school an interesting positive, entertaining experience the general students are not committed enough to complete homework. The only time she stereotypes students occurs when she explains why she doesn't give homework in the general program:

Mostly because they don't do it anyway so what's the point in getting upset. I know lots of teachers in this school give homework and check it everyday and the kids start to do it and that's fine with them and all the more power to them, but I just don't like running around doing homework checks and most of the time they just copy from someone else anyway so I give almost no homework.--like if they have an assignment, as with the gold sheet, now they've had over a week on that and what, I had four

in today . . . partly that's because I haven't been giving a lot of class time to do it.

Although later Linda did say that there were students who lack commitment in both programs, here she speaks of the failure of the entire class, even those with good attitudes, to do homework--the ultimate test of commitment. Even if teachers press students to do homework, those in the general program will, according to Linda, ignore or sabotage those efforts; they won't do it or they'll "copy from someone else."

Without a definite future goal, an ultimate reason for the content, the immediate situation alone must provide the interest and purpose for the students. Therefore it becomes critical that the learning experiences are positive and interesting. Yet apparently from Linda's perception that isn't enough, at least in terms of getting students to complete homework. Nonetheless, there are meaningful moments, short lived though they are, where general students show an interest in and commitment to the lesson. Linda indicates as much when she describes two of her most memorable teaching moments during the time of the observation. The first concerned a class discussion about profanity:

L: One of the questions I asked on the test was that some people consider all the swearing in Of Mice and Men to be offensive. . . . Why do they think Steinbeck used the swearing: . . . So when we were taking up the question I asked what about all the swearing I hear in the halls day after day here and we ended up in a discussion of one particular four letter word . . .

H: So what made that successful was?

L: So many of them, so many of them were involved. I think over half the members of the class had something to say about it.

H: They certainly perked up. I know I perked up.

L: That's right. It's something real. It's part of their real lives. That's the most animated they've been over the last two weeks.

Another high point that Linda mentioned was another class discussion that initially addressed the treatment of minorities in Of Mice and Men but evolved into a discussion of the social and racial groups within the school. Again many of the students participated. Linda explained the reason why she thought the lesson went well:

I think because we hit upon something that they [English 23] really felt they knew a lot about--that they were really interested in--the day to day interaction with different kids in the building. Plus the fact that so many of them had taken part [in the discussion].

As Linda indicates the lives of these general students and their schooling intersected during these special moments. School becomes "part of their real lives" and so takes on meaning and this is involving. For these students the meaning must relate to their immediate situation, to "the day to day interaction," for there is no obvious meaning, there is no particular connection between their futures and the content of their schooling. In my opinion, this is in direct opposition to academic students whose immediate reality, ultimate futures and schooling are tightly braided together.

It is also important to note that the English as subject matter disappears in the two class discussions with the general students. As was mentioned earlier, traditional English seems much less a focus in the general stream than the academic stream. What seems to form the "language" of the general stream is what I will term "the personal." Linda attempts to define the "personal" when discussing the problems with English 33 provincial exam:

L: You try to gear them [English 33 students] up for this exam yet nothing you do all year is on the exam. It's an odd situation. I understand why it is that situation because teachers do such diverse things and we're not doing analytical skills so you can't say pick two characters you studied this year and analyze their approach to problems or whatever because that's not the way people teach 33 . . .

H: You don't teach analytical skills?

L: I don't think they do to the extent they do in English 30 so to make that the focus of an exam for 33 is an error because the focus in 33 is more human-based than analytical-based . . . They're still analyzing but not a motivation but looking at their own opinion and that's what I mean I guess when I said human based--that might not be the right word but it's more based on their own life experience rather than Sam's [a character] . . . half the final mark is that exam and yet the things you are doing, yes, are indirectly going to be there--do you know how to write a sentence; can you put together a story; can you write a letter--are there but they're not there to the same degree as with the 30. (my emphasis)

Linda is having difficulty here making sense of the differences in the examinations. But as she seems to understand it, although general students acquire certain functional skills and knowledge, and a rudimentary form of the scholarly knowledge of the academic class, the fundamental language of the general program concerns reflecting on and understanding self--"the personal." They look "at their own opinion," and "on their own life experience." The lives of the students become the text of the course "it is human-based." And since the lives of the students are the text, specific reading materials aren't that important; as a result teachers can do "diverse things." With the academic stream, knowledge and analysis of specific literary selections is required for provincial examinations and thus form the basis of the course.

The difference in the languages in the two streams can be seen when Linda speaks more specifically about literature. She sees

literature as a springboard into reflection and discussion for both groups but there is an extremely important difference. In outlining her purposes for introducing the play A Man for all Seasons to English 30 there is an analytical, objective approach:

I want their focus to keep coming back to what happens when someone does not conform and why does this man not conform . . . So while we're looking at this in terms of conformity and nonconformity , it could be looked at in terms of political, cultural, religious influences . . . And I would hope that we may get lucky over this and have a few battles over this and I hope we have a few people who think Thomas More is an absolute fool and others that will have great respect for him.

In the quote and in the discussions I observed in the 30 class, the focus was on determining what happens when "someone" is a nonconformist, on understanding the influences affecting the characters in the play and on judging the actions of characters. However, the discussion did not shift into a reflection on what principles the students themselves would sacrifice their lives for, or what specific influences were affecting their own conformity or lack of conformity. Rather, the focus was dispassionate, analytical and textually-based, at least to a degree not present in the two class discussions in the English 23 course described earlier. The difference is also apparent when the quote cited above is contrasted to Linda's statement concerning the focus of the novel Of Mice and Men for the general students:

'then if we see George and Lennie [characters from the novel] in their environment and their environment affects them then does my environment affect me and if so how?' . . . No, I am hoping they [English 23 students] will see if there are any parallels between George and Lennie's situation and their own.

The question "does my environment affect me?" speaks to "the personal" language of the general stream as opposed to what are the "political, cultural, religious influences" affecting Thomas More, the "analytical" language of the academic stream.

In a later interview, Linda was asked more directly about choosing literature that paralleled the general students' experiences:

L: [Literature] that they can relate to--I'm thinking of Macbeth, that's an extreme example but we talk about how power corrupts and we talk of other situations where people allow power to go to their head and you get all the way down to the babysitter who gets mean and the big brother or sister, mum or dad, the teacher, the boss. We brought all that in. So I think I try to bring their lives into what we are doing but I don't know that I necessarily pick something that would parallel but we are always looking for what's the universal nature of this.

Linda hopes to "bring their lives into what we are doing" and indeed as I suggested earlier it is an absolute necessity if school is to have any meaning for the general students.

There is another side to the language of the "personal" that dominates the sense Linda makes of teaching the streams. The students are to become more sensitive and better behaved human beings. I do not doubt that this is a goal for the academic students as well. However, it is a goal which appears to receive more attention in the general program. At one point, when Linda explains why she brings in a unit on "Disability" to the general program, this goal of "humanizing" students is apparent:

I slip in a "Disability" unit which is probably of more interest to the girls than the guys and partly to create some sensitivity, some consciousness raising activity.

Notions of developing "sensitivity" and of "consciousness-raising" appear again later when Linda was asked what she hoped the students would learn from a letter writing project on Of Mice and Men:

I would hope that they might get some insight into what it is like to be mentally handicapped because unless they try to get into Lennie's head they can't write a letter to Aunt Clara telling her about the rabbit and mice . . .

Finally, in the last conversation which I had with Linda, she mentions another goal for English 13 which speaks to the development of sensitive human beings with regard not only to how they think and what they say, but to how they act. She says that she wants the students to wait their turn and not speak out and say "please" and "thank you." Nothing comparable to these goals appears in Linda's discussions about the academic stream. This leads me to suspect that for Linda the academic stream and the general differ significantly on this aspect of manners. It may be that, as Linda sees it, this group of students needs to develop "sensitivity," needs to have their consciousness raised and needs training in manners. I believe these are important concerns for Linda, as she is a polite and sensitive individual herself, who would include these types of lessons more directly in the academic stream if she thought they were necessary. Though this is somewhat speculative, it might indicate another difference in her perception of the students in the two streams.

To summarize, it would appear that "the personal" language that dominates the general stream is centred on improving social attitudes and behaviour, and on improving and understanding oneself psychologically. As mentioned previously, the text of the program is

the students' own lives. In essence the general English class becomes a guidance class, the connection of English to the program becoming much more tenuous than with the academic stream. Of lesser importance, the general students learn a variety of functional skills, as well some rudimentary elements of the academic English program, literary terminology, short or shortened versions of literary classics. Overall, the general program is characterized by less pressure to get through specific content, less stringent evaluation, less abstract academic material. Some might consider it easier, more immediately relevant, and possibly more entertaining than the academic program.

The "analytical" language, as Linda calls it, dominates the academic stream. Driven by the need to prepare students for provincial examinations and for university, scholarly skills and knowledge form the basis of the program. This means that English, as specific literary works, remains always in focus at the centre of the program. Because of the importance of the content there is more pressure on students and teacher to complete the program. Immediate personal goals seem less significant.

At one point Linda was asked why the "language" of the two streams differ; that is, why the "personal" dominates the general program and the "analytical," the academic. It was easy for her to explain the analytical:

The ones who are doing all the analyzing because we rightly or wrongly say when they get to Mount Royal or the University they have to analyze, to be able to . . . find symbols and motivation and other things of that nature and write it up in a very set way.

It seemed obvious: the scholastic futures of the academic students demand such a language. But Linda struggled in explaining why "the personal" was the focus for the general stream and in the end did not come up with an answer that she found acceptable:

Good question. Are we partly assuming they [the general students] will be getting into the real work world more quickly and so therefore they will have to know how to get along with people and how to understand what other people are doing, but that's not right. The others will be in the work force too. I don't know.

There seems no ultimate reason to separate from the academic stream that would explain the difference in the two programs. What Linda does know is that it is extremely important to provide positive, interesting learning experiences for her general students; what may skirt around the edges of her awareness is that the "personal" language provides immediate personal relevancy for these students and that alone keeps them in school.

It is important to point out that Linda seems vaguely discontented with general program and specifically with the goal of simply keeping students in school. It is a goal that seems insufficient. This is apparent when she was discussing the parallels between lives of the general students and the characters in Of Mice and Men. She mentions that three of the students in the general class are on "student financing". When asked what that meant Linda indicates the criterion on which it is based:

They are being paid as long as they go to school . . . the families can't afford it without some help so every month they come along and I have to fill out a form to say how many absences they have because that's what it's based on. No one asks what their marks are, which is interesting.

There is a note of dissatisfaction in Linda's voice when she says the last sentence. If Linda completely accepted the notion that keeping students at school and improving them psychologically and socially were the major purposes of the program then I doubt if the issue of marks would have been raised. To raise it, suggests that students should be achieving something more than good attendance. Yet as previously mentioned, content, that is academic skills and knowledge, are not the focus of the general program. The obvious question becomes what else should general students be achieving?

To conclude, Linda does not like to generalize about students or programs on the basis of stream. Certainly she recognizes many similarities. However, it is apparent that she understands there exist sometimes obvious, sometimes subtle but certainly meaningful differences between the two programs. Linda's sense of teaching English in a streamed curriculum is analogous to a calm clear lake. The surface is an unrippled, unbroken, smooth sheet; there are no distinctions, no differences in her experience of teaching English. But underneath this smooth surface, somewhat visible, move two distinct currents, the two programs, which ultimately head off in different directions, providing distinctive learning opportunities and experiences for the students. And while Linda feels she must see and appreciate the surface, her practice takes her to the currents below.

Notes

1. Linda was asked to review her section of this chapter. As indicated in her letter (see appendix) she was in general agreement with my interpretation. However, I have footnoted those ideas where she either disagreed or where she added further information.

2. These statistics come from the school's 1987-88 registration guide, p. 1.

3. In her review Linda indicated disagreement with the statement: "This would not be my sentiment." In her letter Linda wrote, "It was my intention to imply that books selected for the academic students must have scope for analytical writing. Books with meaning and scope are also important for the general students, but more frequently as a spring board for personal response writing as opposed to analytical."

4. Linda added a post script to this statement: "This is beginning to change somewhat as in 1988, there have been some alterations to the format of the English 33 Diploma exam."

David

David, the second teacher in the study, described himself as "unstructured," as someone who "shoots from the hip"; his students described him as "cool" and his department head speaks of him as "laid back" and "easy to talk to." During the study, David was all of these things. His intelligence, quick wit and direct manner made him both "easy to talk to" and "cool" and that, together with the confidence garnered by twenty-two years of teaching experiences, allowed him to feel both comfort and delight in deviating from set lessons plans and texts when the direction of the class demanded it.

David has taught English and Social Studies at the same urban high school for the last twenty-two years. It is a long time to spend at one place, but David says the school, the staff and students are continually changing, and so he "watch[es] the parade go by" with a certain amusement and detachment. David's teaching assignment has changed somewhat over the years. Initially, he taught Social Studies and English 13-23-33 and then for ten years he taught English 30. For the last five years, David has again been teaching general English courses, that is English 13, 23, and 33 or what he sometimes refers to in his comments as "Vocational English." More recently his teaching assignment has included an occasional English 10 class.

David is less involved than Linda in extra-curricular professional activities so may not have the university, governmental or A.T.A. experience to draw on that Linda has. However, David's extended tenure at one school and in one school division has given him more intensive experience with the sources of educational meanings

available in such a context--sources that he draws on to make sense of his practice and specifically for this study, of streaming.

One particular source of meaning available to David is the English department of his school. Through its policies and procedures, the department generates official meanings about a number of issues concerning English including streaming. A handbook produced by the department provides some indication of the meanings surrounding streaming. The first section outlines the general objectives of the department and then advises students concerning course selection. It states that there are "common features" but "crucial differences" between the academic and vocational streams. The choice of stream depends on the students' future plans but it is noted that the academic program demands "fundamentally sound reading and writing skills," and is focussed on "abstract-theoretical matters and the writing of more formal compositions than may be required of the student in English 13-23-33" (Handbook, 1987, p.2). Other than the absence of these characteristics, there is no indication of what is entailed or required in the vocational stream, other than to say it is not "inferior." This is similar to the statements made in the Registration Guide given students at Linda's school and may be indicative of a general problem with the identity of the vocational stream. Similar too, is the emphasis on the opportunity students in the general stream have to transfer into the academic stream:

Some students - those who achieve exceptional results in English 13 or English 23 or English 33 - may be recommended by their instructors to take parallel courses in the academic stream (from English 13 with a high mark to English 10 for example). (in the school's handbook, 1987, p. 2).

In addition, the department offers, as they do in Linda's school, a special course, English 33X-30, for students wishing to switch streams in grade twelve.

Further into the handbook, there are other indications of the department's meanings concerning streaming. In the Statements of Content listed for each course, the goals for English 23, 33, 10, 20, are 30 are identical; however, those for English 13 are quite different. The first seven address the development of skills and attitudes specific to English. The last goal is more general and speaks not only to learning strategies, but to character development:

- to develop the following learning strategies: the organization of self, materials, and time; the analysis of tasks, expectations, and results; participation; the demonstration of responsibility, trustworthiness and co-operation; perseverance; self-reliance.

- * It is to be understood that the above goals are part of the entire English 13-23-33 program.
(in the school's handbook, 1987, p. 10)

There would seem to be an emphasis on character development in the general program that is not stressed in the academic program. It would appear, then, that in at least one source of the official meanings emanating from the English department of David's school, there is an attempt to recognize commonalities between the streams, an indication of the problematic nature of what the general stream entails other than to state deficiencies and to emphasis on character goals. These meanings are all a part of the context in which David makes sense of streaming in his practice.

In understanding the sense David makes of streaming, it is important to note first that David had little difficulty speaking in

generalities about students and programs during the interviews. While he recognized that he was doing so--he indicated at one point, " . . . but we are generalizing"--at no time did his statements reflect the urgent need to avoid stereotyping that so characterized Linda's interviews. From the very beginning David readily dichotomized the streams in many respects, some of which could be considered highly contentious. This was evident early in the first interview when David was asked if he had a preference for teaching academic or general students. His reply was lengthy and revealed much concerning his understanding of streaming and so deserves close analysis:

Teaching the traditional [academic] stream . . . [had] advantages in terms of how other teachers viewed you--if you teach an academic course, especially English 30--wow, you must be a terrific teacher or they wouldn't give it to you, as opposed to a teacher of several classes of 13's whom you have to train first and civilize into the high school behaviour and bring up to some level of expectation. But I think that is the challenge for anyone who wants to teach those [general students] because when you do make some progress with them you get a lot more satisfaction than from those who are innately intelligent to begin with. I think it's easier to teach somebody who is intelligent but it's quite another thing to motivate somebody who just as soon wants to turn off and not want to learn--and continue to stay with you in class and drag them through six months and teach him something or--make them like you so he sees school isn't so bad after all.

Here David distinguishes the streams in terms of teacher status, student characteristics and the ensuing nature of teachers' work. In terms of teacher status, David begins with the common perception that there is a higher status granted to those who teach academic classes. However he points out that there is little recognition of the different and difficult kind of work being done by the teacher of the general program. According to David, English 13 as compared to

English 30 is a "challenge" to teach although it provides "a lot more satisfaction" for the teacher. In David's experience the general stream is a challenge not because of the content or what I have previously called "the language" of the course, but rather because of the characteristics of the students. In the quote, he describes students in the academic stream as easier to teach since they are "innately intelligent to begin with"; those in the general stream are described as unmotivated students "who just as soon want to turn off and not want to learn." There appears to be a tacit assumption that motivation and intelligence are related, perhaps even synonymous, for David. It seems important at this point to reiterate that David, in the context of this research, is under pressure to generalize about students and programs. He may be exaggerating. Yet it is these generalizations that distinguish for David the academic and general students and that he uses to explain the difficulty inherent in the undervalued work of the general stream teacher: the job is tough because the kids are tough.

In addition to the difficulty of the job, David speaks of other differences between the work of the general and academic teacher. He indicates that with English 13 students, "you have to train first and civilize into the high school behaviour and bring up to some level of expectation." In a later interview David amended his statement about civilizing and refining students to refer to attitudes rather than behaviour. Yet whether it has to do with their behaviour or attitudes, there remains this additional task or "challenge" with the

general students. And apparently this task is to be done prior to getting on with the actual content of the course.

Further, I think it is significant that David uses the word "train" to describe what a teacher must do with the general students. It is a word he uses several times in reference to the general students but not with regard to those in the academic stream. Training as opposed to teaching would seem to imply a slightly different kind of task. Training, as in training an athlete or training the mind, would seem to suggest a more repetitive, less intellectual, and perhaps more restrictive act than does the word teaching. For example, an athlete in training is, through repeated practice, educating the body to perform a certain manoeuver in a very specific way. The mind needs to be focussed but not fully engaged intellectually. Even in the example of training the mind, the notion is that through repeated mental exercise the mind is being educated to think in a certain specific way and no other. Indeed, it would seem that training means less an exploration of ways of thinking or doing and more a challenging of the mind or body to follow one restricted path.

In terms of instructing English as a school subject, common usage would suggest that an individual teaches English, that is an exploration of the subject matter, more than an individual trains students to do English. So that the word "teach" seems more closely bound to subject matter, specifically English, than the word "training." However, training seems more connected with an individual being educated, as in we train athletes rather than we train

athletics. If this is true, the fact David uses the word training with the general, but not the academic students is unusual and I believe reveals a telling difference. For what he may be implying is that teaching the academic stream involves an exploration of the subject matter; whereas, the task with the general students involves an inculcating of limited meanings and behaviours less specifically connected with English but more closely tied to the individual. For students, the former may be a broadening experience, the latter, more restrictive.

This distinction between the two streams is at this point based only on the slightly different and not entirely universal connotation of the words "train" and "teach" that David chooses to use. But there is further evidence that such a distinction exists. David mentions that another difference between the task of the academic stream teacher and that of the general teacher is that the latter must be concerned with motivating students. He says the teacher must "motivate somebody [the English 13 student] who just as soon wants to turn off and not want to learn--and continue to stay with you in class and drag them through six months and teach him something or make them like you so he sees school isn't so bad after all." It is important to note that the first goal is to get them to stay in school and to do this involves not the subject matter but the teacher. According to David the students stay "with you" the teacher, not with the subject, and they find school is agreeable when you "make them [the students] like you." For the general English program, then, the course is more teacher/student-centred than subject-centred. Indeed the actual

content of the subject matter is the indefinite "something" as in "and teach him something." There is obviously a distancing of English, a vagueness about the actual subject matter, in David's reference to the task of motivating general students, as was implied earlier by his use of the word "training."

David's remarks strongly suggest that his perceptions of students' abilities and characteristics determine a very different and difficult task for those who teach the general program. And as we begin to look further at David's perceptions of students' characteristics, of his utilization of class time and of specific English content, three major themes, hinted at in the first quote, emerge with greater force. These themes include the exploration of meaning versus the restriction of meaning, privileging the discipline versus focussing on the individual, and teaching meaningful course content versus meaningless content in reference to the students. I will use these themes to weave David's story together, for they seem to form his sense of what it means to teach English in a streamed context.

To begin with, when asked about his specific goals, David describes further his perceptions of the general students and the nature and task of teaching them:

My goals with the 13's are simply to bring their reading and vocabulary level up and their writing level to a functional level . . . This takes training so that most of my assignments are short--two or three page things from Voices with three or four questions all designed to see if they have understood the point of the story. And most of them do quite well. Well, they may not do too well on the first three or four but by the time you are five or six they are getting the hang of it . . . Then their marks start improving and so they feel better about that, but if

you let loose on them with some twenty page tome or something they just want to quit. They aren't in the habit of reading something more than four or five pages--it's too much concentration, too much to remember. They haven't got the discipline.

According to David, students in the general stream have a very low degree of literacy so that his task becomes one of bringing their reading up to a "functional level." This perception is so strong that he is surprised when there is evidence to the contrary, as he indicated later, "I was astonished at how well some of them could read." Yet it is David's general perception of the students' deficiencies, albeit inaccurate for some of them, that determines the "training" the students receive. And "training" here clearly refers to repetitious exercises intended not to explore literature but to improve students' ability to answer questions about the point of a story. Students need only to "get the hang of it," that is of answering questions, so their marks improve and "they feel better" about school. There is nothing in what David says to indicate that the training may at some point later turn into teaching, that is, to a greater exploration of the ideas evident in the work. Of course, it may be that David wants or expects this to happen but what is certain is that he does not speak of this possibility.

A similar line is drawn in terms of the form of the training given the students. The form is dictated not by the students' skill levels but by their lack of self-discipline, their inability to remember detail and to concentrate. In practice this means David will give the students shorter assignments. And while there is a suggestion that the students will improve their reading and feel

better about school, there is no indication here that David is interested in developing the students self-discipline so they can read longer pieces of literature. Rather, it is as though a teacher must consider these traits or deficiencies as givens and accordingly customize the school work assigned.

The characterization of the general students as lacking concentration and self-discipline is very powerful for David. For example, class time is one element that he treats differently in each group. In David's class the general students are given unstructured time in class. He suggests that the time off-task is necessary because of the students' lack of concentration and persistence:

I think that's good and healthy too [giving students free time] because they [the general students] have been up nine years of junior high with someone beating on their heads and trying to get them to do certain things and now we have a new set of expectations in high school. And I don't want it to be more enforced time because their attention span is low . . . We try to keep them on track for twenty minutes or half an hour or in this case an hour . . . You could lose them very easily if you don't loosen up and allow for time shifts, for some free time.

David implies that the general students have been in some way injured or damaged by nine years of experience with a school system that had "someone beating on their heads and trying to get them to do certain things," presumably scholastic tasks. What is "good" and "healthy" is that the teacher recognize that breaks from school work are necessary for the general students because of their shorter attention spans. I believe there is also a suggestion here that teachers are not to get general students to "do certain things," presumably scholastic tasks. Yet somehow teachers are "to keep them on

track" doing something. What exactly the general students are to be doing is unanswered.

It is important to note that in David's class free time is also allotted to the academic students, but with a significant difference:

They [English 10] get free time but unfortunately the way I see it a lot of them do waste it. The better motivated ones who want to succeed, who want to go to university, make much better use of their time. The others who happen to find themselves in the academic stream but who haven't the self-discipline to use the time to their advantage--you can't make them.

Regardless of how the general students use their free time, it is never wasted since the break, the free time, is itself necessary because of their particular characteristics. However, the academic students evidently do not share the same characteristics; their free time has no value unless they are using the time for their studies. In other words, free time for the academic students means a study period; for the general students, it means a break from studies.

More than this, however, academic students are expected to use their time to advantage, to secure a successful future. Those who "want to go to university," who "want to succeed" have much to do and can't waste "free time." General students, handicapped by their past and their particular characteristics, do not have the pressure of such a future and so according to David need not, indeed cannot, be pushed by the teacher. For these students there seems little connection between their class time, the content of their lessons and their future careers.

The other purpose free time serves in the academic class is that it sorts out true academic students from those masquerading as such,

who, by inference, should be in the general stream. This speaks to how rigidly David views the distinction between the ways students are to use class time.

The free time David allows his general students is supplemented by class periods where students are released from their regular school work and treated to something special. One such class occurred during the time of the study when David brought in a videotape of a recent boxing match as part of a unit on the novel The Contender. Later when asked about his purposes, he indicated that the videotape was a reward:

I viewed it as freebie for them [English 13 students] because they were so good for the rest of the novel and we had been doing it for three weeks and that was my way of paying them back. I said we don't have to work every period. We can do something that doesn't necessarily have to do with learning, just pure interest. I don't mind that with the vocational kids. I find I get better results with them.

The general students deserved the special treat, the "freebie" for "being good," that is, for persevering with the novel for three weeks. In addition to "paying back" students for their past labours, the reward seems to serve as an incentive, in order for David to get "better results" from the students in the future. From what David says the content and process of learning itself generate insufficient interest to be an incentive. Indeed, working and learning are at odds with something that is of "pure interest." This is particularly evident when David says, "We don't have to work every period. We can do something that doesn't necessarily have to do with learning, just pure interest." The adjective "pure" suggests that the interest is unsullied, uncontaminated by an expectation to learn. Since the

students would be learning something even when watching a videotape, David must be referring to the traditional type of learning promoted in the schools: learning that demands scholastic work and demonstration at some point and that involves specific content from the English program.

Further to this, I think it is significant that David says that it "was my way of paying them back" for being good. One way of looking at this is that the general students are working not for their futures or because of an interest in the subject matter but rather for their teacher. The conclusion seems to be that the teacher has to pay them back because schooling itself will not. School is securing futures for academic students but is less connected to the futures of the general students.

In the academic stream, schooling seems to have a particular significance and getting through the content of the course takes priority. According to David, the pressure to get through is relentless. In the first interview he says, " You always have your back against the wall trying to teach this course [academic course] and teach this unit at this time." Later, using a delightful image, he indicates that he did not have as much class discussion as he had hoped for in the poetry unit, "because Shakespeare is breathing down my neck." The next unit was to be Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. The students, of course, experience the same pressure. David describes the English 10 students as initially "shellshocked" because "They are just getting used to the semester system and realizing half the work needs to be done at home and I can only do so much in the classroom."

There is no similar sense of urgency spoken of with regard to the general program. Allowing students in the general stream time away from their studies as a reward when work is accomplished, seems far more crucial than getting through any particular content in their course, at least when compared with the academic students. According to David, their character traits--lower ability, shorter attention spans, and lack of self-discipline--necessitate this. And, as mentioned earlier, David implies that school's lack of significance to the personal and career interests of these students creates such a situation. For the general students learning English seems secondary, or as Linda suggested in one of her interviews, "meaningless."

Another distinction David makes between academic students and general students is the degree to which they enjoy reading. While he hopes to instill a love of literature in all his students, it is nonetheless a criterion he uses to differentiate the two groups--academics like to read; general students do not:

D: I would like to get them to the point where reading is pleasurable . . . rather than I'm only going to read what he asks me to, only do what he tells me to and boy at the first chance I'm going to shut this down.

H: Again is that for the academics and nonacademics both?

D: That's right. Although the academics are more careful in stating that; they imply--their actions belie their words

H: So what are they showing you?

D: . . . that they want to do as little reading as possible. These are ones who are not sure they want to do this academic stream, but mom and dad want them to and their brothers and sisters have gone through it, too, but really they are communicating to me that they aren't in love with it. They are only doing it because they have to.

Although their actions betray them, students who are in the academic stream only because of family pressure avoid saying what for

the academic student must never be spoken--they do not love reading. For David, true academics can't simply "like" reading or "tolerate" reading, they should "love" it. For the general students what is more critical is that they love their teacher. As discussed earlier, it is the teacher for whom they work, not their own self interest.

Therefore developing and maintaining a relationship with the general student is part of the task, the challenge, of those teaching the general program. David mentions this several times. At one point when speaking of some of the character traits of English 13 students, he speaks of how crucial the student-teacher relationship is:

They [English 13 students] lack a lot of self-respect; they are being put down a great deal by teachers, by peers, by parents and they get a lot of negative stroking and if you [the teacher] can stroke them when they are doing something right they can really respond to you. You can get angry at them and they'll forgive you . . . 'he's [David] is an okay guy. He's got a right to be angry.' If you can get them to that point I think you are reaching them, where you can teach them something but if they turn you off because you're just a nerd--a mean, old teacher, you're just putting us down all the time--then you've lost them . . . that's where you are playing the psychologist.

Later David repeats this, saying, "It's the motivational problem, isn't it? How do you motivate them? First of all, I think you have got to show them that you care about them; you are really interested." From what David says the teacher must gain the trust, if not the love and respect, of the general students before one can hope to teach them. The English teacher becomes a "psychologist" with the general students, but a lecturer with the academic students. This is also evident in that David spends much more of his time formally lecturing the academic students; whereas, with the general students, he stresses more individual interaction, both verbal and nonverbal, and much less

formal teaching. While there are a number of ways to interpret this, it seems plausible that this difference is related to David's distinction between the role and task of the teacher of the general stream and that of the academic stream. Thus, there is further evidence of the distancing of the subject matter in the general stream as opposed to the academic program.

Further to this, there are different objectives in choosing literature for the two streams. David indicates his objectives for the academic stream when discussing his reasons for choosing to use the poem "My Last Duchess" with his English 10 class:

First of all it's a poem that intrigues me. I always loved it for the reasons that I get new insights into it every time I read it. . . . The last batch of 10's [English 10] I had--several came up with angles I hadn't seen before and I praised them for it and I said you will teach me things I hadn't thought of before . . . I may be staid in the way I look at it and I am closed to some possibilities and you'll surprise me by coming up with some new angles and insights. I like that when it happens to me.

Even when teaching familiar material, there is a joy in learning that is intrinsically motivating for David. Undoubtedly he conveys this "joy" to all his students. But as was noted earlier, learning seems less interesting, less motivating, less "joyful" for the general student because what these students learn in school and what they are really interested in seem at odds. As well, what is apparent here is that the academic students are to expected to explore a variety of meanings in their literature. They are "praised" for finding new insights. Yet what the general students are rewarded for, as in the "freebies" mentioned previously, is "being good" by tolerating three weeks spent on a novel. It would seem that learning for the academics

may be a more positive experience and one that leads them to an exploration of meaning. For the general students, learning is less connected to personal interest, and minimally connected to English; it seems somewhat more restrictive in terms of the exploration of meaning. To return to a statement made at the beginning of David's story, it would appear that the teacher more often "teaches" in the academic English program but "trains" in the general English stream.

David does get new insights from the general students, but not concerning literature. He explains this:

I get new perceptions from them [English 13 students] because I'm not coming from that background so they are constantly recharging my batteries with the way life is really being lived out there by them . . . They are actually living it [life?]

He reiterates this point later saying, "I think it has something to do with the vocational kids having their noses to the grindstone, knowing what reality is like outside of school. They are exposed to more experiences." In David's perception these students are experts on life "out there" and this means a different focus in their literature study. The general students will examine literature in terms of their own experience. David explains this when he was asked about his approach to English 13 students:

What I tend to do more with the 13's is find some aspect of their own existence so I would come up and tell a story of something that happened. I would then try to justify some of the stuff they were asked to read and write in terms of their own experience and that's the challenge of 13. Some times it works and some times it doesn't and they let you know very quickly that you're off in left field, that this isn't going to work.

Even though the general students are in David's estimation "experts on life," it is significant that David must make the connections between literature and life; whereas, the academic students are to come up with the connections. This seems to hint at the limited intellectual abilities by which David characterizes the general students. As well, it is important to note he must "justify" school work to the general students. It would seem that David must personally try to convince these students of the value of this work. And he attempts to do so by deliberately showing them a connection between their lives and their school work, perhaps, as indicated earlier, because the connection is more often nonexistent, or at least not directly apparent. Unnecessary with the academic students, this seems yet another variation of the special task or "challenge" of teaching the general stream and again points to the less meaningful content general students are being exposed to.

David, of course, wants both academic and general students to recognize the relevancy of great literature. Thus, the job of the teacher, regardless of the stream, is "to place it, literature, in some meaningful context in the time we are living." However, for the general students their study of literature remains sharply focussed on their own personal lives. For example, David chooses to do The Contender with the general students. The novel is about a poor, black boy who develops self-esteem by becoming a contender in the world of boxing. Though the protagonist never becomes a champion, the self respect he gains gives him the confidence to go back to school and make something of himself. When David was asked why he chose this

particular novel he replied that "I love The Contender for mainly ulterior motives because The Contender is all about is really what they [English 13] are lacking. They lack a lot of self respect." Clearly, David has chosen this novel that so parallels their lives in that they will never be champions in the eyes of the school, in order that they may improve their attitudes about themselves. The choice of literature and the focus of its study remains focussed, for the most part, on the individual and on improving the "self" psychologically.

The academic students are not excluded from improving or understanding themselves through the study of literature. David mentions this when asked about his objectives in teaching Shakespeare's Julius Caesar to English 10:

I would like them [English 10] to realize that Shakespeare is speaking to us as much as he was to the Elizabethans in his time. . . . The same problems that Elizabethans faced, we face today . . . They are the same human problems seen from another perspective and it forces the kids to think about their own situation."

Yet the objectives go past thinking "about their own situation"; academic students are to be introduced to their historical and cultural past. David says he is a history buff and another reason for doing Julius Caesar is that "I can get to talk about the roots of our civilization . . . so that now I get a chance to talk about where Western civilization came from, the Romans, the Greeks, the Egyptians. [I] get to tell the stories of history." However, more than simply being introduced to these stories, students are to be made comfortable with them. David speaks of this objective in reference to Shakespeare:

Well, I would like them not to be alienated by the language so much. I would like them to become more familiar with it . . . I realize many of them will not pursue it at a level past high school but at least if they know the story of Julius Caesar and they hear a reference to it, if they do any reading they will have the happy situation where they can say that I know that, I took that, it's not completely alien to me.

For academic students the study of literature involves more than understanding or improving themselves psychologically; it involves enculturation. But not so for the general students. It seems for them literature must be tightly wound around their immediate personal circumstances and so they seem isolated from their traditional literary heritage.

David makes a further distinction between how literature is treated in the two streams when asked about how he teaches

Shakespeare:

I do that [lecture] at the beginning. I'm not going to continue to do that for the whole play. I will only discuss difficult passages and make connections with them . . . but I'm going to set them loose and then they're going to have to dig and come up with their own possibilities because I want to catch them. I want them to dig their fingers into the plot and get them going.

As noted previously with Browning's "My Last Duchess," what is going to "catch" the academic students is finding new insights, connections and possibilities. In a wonderful image David says he is going to free them, "set them loose," to dig around like archeologists, or gardeners, immersed in the medium to do so. From what David says academic students are free to explore meaning in literature.

The general students do not seem to share a similar degree of freedom in the way English is approached. This seems particularly apparent when David talks about his approach with the 13's:

If it [writing, reading] can be generated from their own backgrounds, their own histories, from their own home experiences, working lives as much of that should relate because if you look at the themes we are exposing them to, it ties in. I want them to get the idea that life has consequences and effects and if you do silly, thoughtless things, there are consequences and you have to pay for them and you may not want to but that's the reality of life. I think that idea is more important.

David is generalizing here, but the dominant meaning he speaks of for the general students is that there are consequences and effects in life. This message inhibits rather than frees these students, for rather than being encouraged to dig in, they are cautioned away: "you have to pay" a price for exploring the world. As well, it is interesting to note that David says that the subject matter is generated from and confirmed by the students' "own histories" which is in direct contrast to the earlier quote where students are enculturated in the "stories of history." Again, it would appear that there is a greater restriction in the general English program, according to David's sense of it.

In his approach to writing, there is further evidence of David's perceptions of the students and the programs. He spoke first of English 13:

D: I have the 13's write journals and they get a chance to bare their souls there.

H: Personal writing?

D: Yes, personal writing generated by things that have happened to them. Those who take it seriously, it gets quite interesting because they open to an extent that is unbelievable.

Later, David speaks specifically of his objectives with these students: "An improvement in that they understand what they're reading . . . To be able to clearly express what they are thinking." The general students seem to need only basic functional skills and the

topic is again themselves and their experiences. Also, it would appear that to David these students need to "bare their souls." This seems to imply, as was evident earlier, that these students are psychologically damaged and that this writing is somehow therapeutic. When marking their writing, one of David's criteria is that the students reveal themselves honestly: "the expression is more important, not the spelling. We all make spelling errors. What you [the student] are trying to say is more important, how honest you can be." The general students need to express themselves clearly, but more importantly, what they say must be sincere, be "honest." It is difficult to say why there is this emphasis on honesty unless the therapeutic value of the writing is lost if students do not take their writing seriously.

This is in sharp contrast with the writing objectives of the English 10 program as David understands them:

The goals there in the 10's are more in the way of expository. It seems to me that the whole academic stream to a large extent is based on their ability to fathom, to understand and be able to respond to written material and that requires techniques which needn't be honed to the same extent in the 13's; especially critical response for example, all is generated by material they encounter in short story, poetry, Shakespeare; organizing this material, arguing, having reasons for, making a case for with certain statements justifying it, supported with detail from the material itself and summarizing up clearly.

For general students the main focus is on personal writing for psychological improvement, but for academics the emphasis is on expository writing. It would seem that, according to David, academic students are not damaged psychologically and so they do not need the therapy of personal writing. In addition, it is apparent that

academic students are doing much more than just expressing their thoughts; they are using writing to argue, to justify, to support, to summarize, to understand. They are learning the power of writing to explore meanings and to persuade others of meanings. General students are restricted to ensuring they can be understood, perhaps because of the perception of their abilities.

It is apparent, then, that, for David, differences between the streams in the personal characteristics of the students dictate differences in the nature of their writing and reading experiences. David also includes social class as a significant factor. He suggests that general students are more often from the working-class and this affects their abilities, ambitions and ultimately their school program. This is evident when he outlines what he understands their lives to be like:

One working mother. She's having a tough time keeping the family together. Father not around. They all have to shape up and do a little to keep the unit functioning. They have to get part-time jobs to support their families and so may come to school and fall asleep first thing on Monday morning because they've been working till midnight . . . they can't concentrate, they haven't had breakfast . . . The fact they are sticking around long enough to complete the general diploma is somewhat of a miracle with those kids because they are doing it at great odds because they have part-time jobs, some full time throughout school and still try to get grades to get that piece of paper.

In contrast, David believes the academic students, who are more often from the middle-class, have an easier life:

The kid who takes it [their lifestyle?] for granted whose father generates enough income so that they can have a comfortable middleclass life, whose mother doesn't have to work, with middleclass expectations. They [their parents] just want them to perform and get on with their lives academically.

For the general students "supporting their families" takes precedence over schooling and education means "sticking around long enough . . . to get that piece of paper [diploma]." For the other students school is important, and they need "to perform and get on with their lives academically." For David, there seems to be an activeness and a meaningfulness for those students who perform academically; a passivity, and a meaninglessness for general students who merely have to stick around for a piece of paper. Education for general stream students is achieved truly "at great odds" and the task of teaching these students English, is both different from and more difficult than teaching academic students.

There remains one final point about the David's perception of the task of teaching English in the streams. As with all teachers, David teaches attitudes as well as content, and, to his credit, he recognizes this. David understands that there is a very different mindset directly related to streaming, one he must deal with, and to some degree promote. He speaks first of the academic students:

Yes, they're [English 10] somewhat shellshocked because of the expectations in the academic stream. It seems to me that they are fighting the semester system, the load, the demands we are making of them and until they internalize that and get used to it, they have to live with it and they tend to balk, to howl and whine.

The academic students have to "internalize" their scholastic position and the expectations of that role to the point where it becomes natural. According to David, what the general students must internalize is something quite different:

H: You also said that you have to train and civilize the 13's [English 13's] first and you talked about an almost psychologist's role. Is that how you see yourself?

D: I think what I meant by that was that in the junior high level, they don't have a division of more academic and less academic and they have to internalize that to a degree. It's a psychological problem for them [English 13's] because they have to live with the stigma now that they are not high-achievers. They are 13's and we have a special class for them so there's a conscious division made. Some of them can internalize that positively; others have enormous difficulty with that . . . The kids themselves have difficulty with that and so what I meant is you have to acclimatize them to that. Those who don't have any difficulty with that are easy to get on with and work with them, which is what I hinted at.

David recognizes that streaming creates a situation where students in the general stream must learn to cope with of the stigma attached to being a low-achiever. They must become accustomed to that label. Indeed the task of the teacher according to David is to "acclimatize them" to it. The negative consequences of this situation David limits initially to students who can neither internalize the label nor its stigma positively. They become difficult to "get on with and work with." It is not surprising then, that David speaks several times of students' anger, although he does not relate it to the stigma of being a general student.

However, David does note that the the mindset of being a general student affects more than just the student who cannot internalize the label positively. He mentions this when discussing the English 13's and their writing:

They [English 13] are verbal but something seems to happen when you ask them to put it on paper--many things--there seems to be a block . . . they start to internalize their own weaknesses and shortcomings and that makes this mental block to writing.

It would appear that general students are "acclimatized" to a label that defines them as students with deficiencies and the stigma attached to such a label inhibits their learning. Academic students, on the other hand, must become comfortable with a label that recognizes them as students with potential and that drives them to "perform academically." Although all labels are inevitably restrictive, being labelled a low-achiever seems particularly limiting. The task of the general-stream teacher, then, is to try to get students to internalize this label positively--undoubtedly a difficult task for David and other teachers of nonacademics.

To conclude, it would appear that from what David says, general students, handicapped by their personal characteristics and social class backgrounds, cannot play the same scholastic game as academic students. Therefore their English program must be quite different. The general program focuses the 'students' psychology rather than on the acquisition of traditional English subject matter. Their program does address basic literacy but, from what David says, seems restrictive in terms of the exploration of meaning and their literary heritage. Generally, for academic students there is a point to winning their game--their futures. For general students the point is to participate for immediate interest, for winning seems less meaningful in terms of their futures. And from the words, the story David tells about streaming, the difficult task of the general teacher is to encourage students' participation and make them feel comfortable with the game assigned to them.

Chapter Five

Conclusions

Having presented each of the teacher's stories, I turn now to an examination of what these stories reflect in terms of the history of streaming and the research into the practice. I will begin by briefly summarizing the sense Linda and David made of teaching English in the two programs.

Linda saw streaming as a necessity but attempted to minimize many of the differences or effects that she believed resulted from the practice. For example, she preferred to view differences between the two groups of students and their programs as matters of degree rather than as extreme opposites. However, she certainly recognized that there were at least "relative" differences. The academic students were seen as having greater scholastic ability, more positive attitudes towards school and better social behaviour than the nonacademics. Much of the course work in the academic stream was understood as preparation for provincial examinations and, ultimately, for university. The nonacademics had to write provincial examinations as well, but these exams were not the driving force behind their program. Instead, as Linda described it, the emphasis was more on the students' personal development and self-improvement with regard to their attitudes towards school and their understanding of themselves and others.

The difference in the focus of the programs meant significantly different experiences with English for the students. The academic students were exposed to a text-centred course that consisted of

longer, richer literary selections, literary terminology, and formal expository writing; in other words, a more traditional academic English program. For general students, English was not seen as specific content but as a vehicle for personal development and improvement. Thus, for these students English class resembled a Guidance class more than it did for the academic students. Literature for the general students was chosen in consideration of the limited abilities of the class and often in terms of the potential of the literature to humanize students. Immediate personal relevance was very significant in order to motivate general students. As well, in attempting to improve attitudes, a wider number of skills were recognized and rewarded, evaluation was less stringent, and keeping the interest of the students was a prominent concern. Although Linda could describe the personal development focus, the reason for its particular emphasis in the general program eluded her. However, the scholastic futures of the academic students readily explained the academic focus of their stream.

However, there seems a contradiction in the sense Linda made of teaching English in a streamed context. For Linda, the relative differences that exist between the programs seemed very significant to the kind of English experience her students received. Yet these differences as Linda understood them are to be minimized in accordance with her own values, with the school's philosophy and with the provincial curriculum--a curriculum which dictates the existence of two separate English programs yet blurs distinctions between them in the official statements of objectives, as was indicated in chapter

two. Linda appears caught between admitting important distinctions and minimizing them.

For David there seemed less sense of contradiction. In the context of the study, he more readily characterized the streams as opposites. In generalizing about the students, he described the academic students as intelligent, motivated and university-bound. The nonacademic students had low literacy rates, were unmotivated, and lacked self-esteem. As David understood it, these students were from difficult working-class homes where education was less a priority. Consequently, these students often held full or part-time jobs while going to school. Their home and work lives made them "experts on life" according to David. In addition, he believed that the general students had been damaged to some degree by a school system which hitherto had not considered their personal characteristics nor the socio-economic conditions in which they lived. For David, these characteristics, rather than the ultimate futures of general students, seemed to dictate the nature of their program.

According to David, the difficult and undervalued task of the nonacademic teacher was to consider the students' circumstances and attempt to motivate and acclimatize them to high school and the label of being a nonacademic student. To accomplish this, what seemed particularly important in the nonacademic stream was that the students learn to like and respect the teacher, for, according to David's comments, neither the subject itself nor schooling generally was sufficient incentive. On the other hand, David indicated that the task of academic teachers, who do not have the extra challenge of

motivating students, was to accustom students to the demands of the academic program. The student-teacher relationship was not as crucial to this task since the rewards of graduation spoke for themselves.

Like Linda, David considered the focus in the general English program to be on improving basic literacy skills and on developing students psychologically. Literature was examined in terms of the students' own experience. Personal writing was emphasized. There was less pressure to get through specific content; there was less urgency in terms of class time. For the academic students, learning specific literary content was a primary focus. In their study of literature, these students were exposed to a wide range of meanings beyond those comprising their own immediate situation, their own times. This way students were acculturated into the traditional English literature. As well, they were taught to use language as a device of power and influence, whereas with the nonacademics the goals with regard to language were much more modest. The primary goal was for this group was to express themselves clearly and correctly. For David, the divergent characteristics of academic and general students demanded these two very different programs.

Evident in chapter four, but perhaps less so in the summaries given above, are the unique qualities of each of the teachers' sense of streaming. However, what is more significant for this study are the similarities that exist between the stories. And, I might add, to my own, for I found much of what the teachers said disturbingly familiar to that which I had heard or said during my own days in the teaching profession. What is even more remarkable are the

similarities that exist between the stories of the teachers and the meanings present in the history of streaming. The next section of this chapter will delineate and discuss specific commonalities between the history and the teachers. But before doing so, it seems necessary to draw attention to two possible interpretations such commonalities suggest.

One interpretation is that the similarities in the ideas, beliefs, and images found in the history of streaming and the teachers' stories have been arrived at, for the most part, independently. This similarity serves to validate what is said about students and streaming. So that if teachers speak about academic students as having greater commitment to school and the same idea has been forwarded at various times in the historical documentation about streaming, then perhaps there is an ongoing truth to such an notion. A different interpretation is that specific ideas about students and streaming have been passed down and incorporated by educators without really being tested in a systematic way. If, rather than an absolute truth, a perception or interpretation of reality is being perpetuated, then reasons for its continuance become very significant. These two possibilities need to be kept in the foreground as we turn now to specific commonalities apparent between the teachers and the history.

One of the major tenets in teachers' stories concerned the characterization of differences among students taking one stream or the another. David described very pronounced differences; Linda noted less extreme differences. Throughout the history of streaming reference is made to the differences among students. In 1918, a

document from the National Education Association Committee suggested there should be greater emphasis on "individual differences in capacity and aptitudes among secondary-school pupils . . . this factor merits fuller attention" (N.E.A., 1918, in Tyack, 1967, p. 397). In Britain, the Hadow report of 1929 stated schools "should provide a range of educational opportunity sufficiently wide to appeal to varying interests and cultivate powers which differ widely, both in kind and in degree" (Hadow, 1929, p. 78-79). More recently James Conant speaks of "students with a wide range of ability" (Conant, 1967) and Albertan T.C. Byrne, describes the school population as "students with diverse interests and abilities with wide range in vocational destination, with varied social and economic backgrounds" (Byrne, 1959, p. 434). Of course, this emphasis on differences among students provides much of the rationale for streaming as indicated in the most recent Language Arts curriculum guide: "In order to accommodate students with a wide range of abilities, needs, interests and aspirations, the two-stream concept has been maintained" (Sr. High L.A. Curriculum, 1982, p. 6).

The question that needs to be raised about this tenet is whether differences among students have been over-emphasized, exaggerated or created in order to perpetuate the practice of streaming. In other words, it may be a fact that students are different, but is the meaning attached to that difference--that students are so different as to require streaming--a fact or an interpretation? An answer to this question comes in the analysis of a more specific tenet concerning the image of students.

The teachers in the study, in addition to viewing students as different, generally recognized academic students, across a number of measures, as "the standard" and nonacademic students as deficient by comparison. Deficiencies were understood to exist in the general students' intellectual ability, psychological makeup, social behaviour and attitudes. David believed these differences were due to social class background and negative experiences in previous grades. Linda hinted at such during the interviews and in conversations with me. The identity of the general students appears to be that they are both different and deficient. I feel it necessary to point out that the teachers were never derisive when making such a judgement and often it was followed by a statement which attempted to mitigate the effect of what had been said.

The view of the academic student as the standard and the general student as aberrant is not a view exclusive to these two teachers. It is evident in their schools' statements as well as in educational history, and research documents, generally. One particular instance occurs in the labelling of the students in the two programs. Over the years students in the upper stream have been called matriculation students, academic students, college-bound students, etc. Students in the "other" program have been labelled nonacademic students, nonmatriculation students, non-college-bound students or have been referred to by such non-descript terms such as general students, diploma students, vocational students. In the first set of labels, "other" students are referenced by what they are not--not the standard--not academic students. In the second instance they are

given terms so general they could apply to any student. So that even in the words used to describe those in the 13-23-33 program, there is a lack of identity for these students, other than to say they are different and deficient by comparison with academic students.

But more than just in the names given to students, this meaning has existed if not dominated educational thought since streaming began. As reviewed in chapter two, upper-class Anglo-Saxon males destined for university formed the majority of students attending secondary schools in the nineteenth century. Although this changed dramatically in the early twentieth century when females, ethnic groups, and other social classes were admitted, upper-class males still constituted the standard against which others were judged inferior. To emphasize this point, I will repeat a quote I cited in chapter two that seems particularly representative of this view. The lines were written in 1909 by Ellwood P. Cubberly, a prominent educator:

These southern and eastern Europeans are of a very different type from the north Europeans who preceded them. Illiterate, docile, lacking in self-reliance and initiative, and not possessing the Anglo-Teutonic conceptions of law, order, and government, their coming has served to dilute tremendously our national stock, and to corrupt our civic life Our task is to break up these groups or settlements, to assimilate and amalgamate these people as a part of our American race, and to implant in their children, so far as can be done, the Anglo-Saxon conception of righteousness, laws and order, and popular government . . .
(in Oakes, 1985, p. 26)

Considering the general societal views of the time that espoused Anglo-Saxon superiority, supported by notions of Social Darwinism and new developments in intelligence testing, streaming was perhaps

inevitable--as was the perception of the academic student as the standard by which to compare others as different and deficient.

As discussed in chapter two, an analysis of more recent history provides evidence that the view of general students as different and deficient by comparison with the academic students continues. The 1964, 1969, 1975 Alberta curriculum guides in English and Language Arts indicate as much, although the most recent guide does not explicitly do so. To remind readers, in the 1964 curriculum guide English 33 is described in terms of deficiencies:

English 33 is a five-credit course for non-matriculation students who will not be required to write the Departmental Examination in English 30. It is possible that many students who elect this course may do so because they have experienced difficulty with English in previous years, or because they have not yet developed an absorbing interest in English. (Alberta Language Arts Curriculum Guide, 1964, p. 53)

In 1965 in the Senior High School Curriculum Guide the Department of Education indicated that meeting the objectives of English 23 would require "An understanding teacher who would: 1. appreciate the students' problems . . ." (in Kanhanoff, 1972, p. 179).

The 1975 guide provides guidelines exclusive to English 13:

Students' self-confidence should be fostered.
Students should be enabled to increase their sense of responsibility.
Students should be taught to listen carefully and courteously to each other and to the teacher.
Students should be taught to correct written and oral weaknesses.
(Alberta Language Arts Curriculum Guide, 1975, p. 2)

Academic and affective deficiencies are explicitly or implicitly evident in these descriptions. The most recent curriculum guide, 1982, does not outline specific weaknesses; however, New Voices, a

recommended text for the program, certainly does. As indicated in chapter two, the text describes the students for whom the text was designed as having a limited vocabulary, a limited capacity for developing and organizing ideas, difficulty with writing, etc. The obvious comparison here as in other documents and in the teachers' talk is that general students are limited in comparison to others.

There is, of course, some objective data to support the idea that general students are deficient in comparison with academic students. For example, the students coming into David's school have some of the lowest reading scores in the city. However, it is difficult to believe that all deficiencies noted here have supporting data. For example, there are no studies that indicate academic students are more responsible than general students or that academic students are more courteous than general students. It may be that a single notable deficiency has been exaggerated to include all or a number of skills or characteristics. And even if there are numerous differences or limitations that can be clearly established, the interpretation of the differences is entirely subjective. Therefore, the designation of one group as normal and the other as abnormal may be seen as an interpretative framework. And as a result of using such a framework, it becomes customary to speak of one group's deficiencies rather than their strengths.

If the image of general students as deficient was particularly powerful in the minds of educators, it would stand to reason that teachers might not recognize a strength or might alter it in some way. Interestingly enough this happens. One strength mentioned in New

Voices, is the students' "experiential sophistication." This characteristic is similar to David's designation of the students as "experts on life" outside the classroom. This seems to suggest that one image of the general student is that they are basically deficient except for the romantic notion that they have actually tasted life, not simply read about it. To me, it is an image associated with pirates, hobos, and adventurers as opposed to accountants, clerks and teachers--in other words, people whose lives are set on the physical as opposed to those whose work is intellectual. And this is of course exactly the dichotomy the streams are to address and perpetuate in terms of occupational preparation.

Further to this, as "experts" these students have done more than simply sampled life; they have drunk it to the lees and in a way that academics will rarely experience. Therefore, David believes general students can teach him about "the way life is lived out there." There is no naivete, no innocence, about life for these students. And while there is a positive, perhaps patronizing, side to the depiction of students as active, tough, hedonistic individuals experiencing but not reflecting on life, there is another darker side to such an image. David speaks of how the experiences of life have damaged general students. Their home lives and their previous experiences with school have left these students lacking in skills and abilities, academically, socially, and psychologically. The 1964 curriculum also speaks to "previous difficulty with English." Thus, the one strength conceded general students in the "experts on life" image can be twisted to something that works against them. The experiences these

"experts on life" have undergone can be used as a reason to explain the deficiencies and differences in programs.

I would like to reiterate one point concerning the students' experience. According to the teachers, the negative experiences of the general students have in part come from their home circumstances. David was the most explicit, indicating that difficult home conditions interfered with the schooling students' received. He specifically spoke of working-class families where economic conditions made it difficult for students to complete their education. The social class, and the families of these students, then, were seen as inadequate in terms of supporting the aims of the school. This idea was prevalent at the turn of the century, but particularly in the 1960's when children, because of their home situation, were labelled "culturally deprived" and projects such as "Head Start" were implemented.

The image of the general student as different and deficient is evident in the teachers' description of their English programs. The program of the academic students is based on their strengths--their potential to go to university and the skills and knowledge this will require. Rather than on their future careers, the general program appears to be based on the students' weaknesses--their social, psychological and academic deficiencies. As noted in Willinsky's 1984 study, the teachers made little reference to the ultimate careers of the general students.

To a degree this is also true of the many educational documents. In the description of general programs, many educational statements and documents make reference to students' deficiencies. Initially

there was a concern for addressing the deficiencies in immigrant students who would be entering the general stream. Oakes (1985) comments: the "inculcation of the American way into the minds and actions of the immigrants was to be accomplished by the American public school. And so Americanization became a major function of turn-of-the-century schools" (p. 27). In the British and Canadian documentation there is reference both to deficiencies in ability and to career training. However in the Alberta English curriculum guides of 1964 and 1969, cited earlier, descriptions of the general programs make reference to student weaknesses but make no references to specific career preparation. This is reversed in the most recent guide. Yet the teachers in the present study have focussed more on the more established meaning to make sense of their practice.

Thus, the image of the general students as deficient continues in educational documents. It would seem an all-encompassing image that eclipses other perspectives. For general students it turns even apparent strengths into weaknesses. Also, the possibility that this image might be self-fulfilling for students is alarming as is the possibility that teachers, believing the labels, might inadvertently reinforce them.

Again I state that there may be a factual basis to this "deficient" image; however, any interpretation of whatever data might exist is entirely subjective. In other words, there may be truths about students and streaming being passed down or independently arrived at, yet the framework in which we choose to understand or make sense of reality is imposed or created. The intent of this thesis is

to expose, examine and explain those frameworks or interpretations used by educators to make sense of streaming. And I would suggest that the image of general students as being different and deficient in comparison to academic students is a particularly powerful framework and one that remains fundamental to streaming.

Related to this framework is another that is specific to the teaching of English and common to the teachers in the study. For the general program, both teachers described English as a vehicle to humanize students, that is, to develop their moral character and their understanding of themselves and others and to improve their attitudes and behaviour. In the academic program, English as a discipline involved the transmission of traditional academic English knowledge. Using Eliot Eisner's terms, an academic rationalist approach dominates the curriculum of the academic stream; a personal relevancy approach dominates the general stream (Eisner and Vallance 1973). And both of these approaches are a part of the history of the subject (Mathieson, 1975).

Perhaps this duality in approach exists because of the apparent social and psychological weaknesses of general students and the academic needs of the students bound for university. David suggested as much. However, Linda was not completely certain as to the reason for the difference in the approach in the two programs. It was easy to suggest that the students' academic futures dictated the approach in their program, but Linda found it difficult, indeed impossible, to explain the affective/personal relevancy approach in the general program without stating outright that general students were deficient

psychologically and socially. To remind readers, when Linda was asked directly why the emphasis was on the "personal," she had difficulty coming up with an answer she found acceptable:

Good question. Are we partly assuming they the general students will be getting into the real work world more quickly and so therefore they will have to know how to get along with people and how to understand what other people are doing. But that's not right. The other academic students will be in the work force too. I don't know.

Clearly differences in the students' future cannot explain the focus on "the personal." And evidently when asked directly, psychological differences in students, for Linda, also cannot comfortably explain the difference in their programs. Yet as I have shown the differences between the streams have traditionally been explained by the variance, particularly the deficiencies, noted in students. Obviously there must be another explanation for this difference and more generally another reason for the practice to continue. The analogy might be made that the argument for streaming is like an arch in which the perception that students are different and deficient is the keystone. If, however, there are indications from research on streaming and from some educators that the keystone isn't strong, isn't solid, indeed, that differences among students might be exaggerated or created, then there must be something else helping to support the structure in order for the practice to continue. One answer to what that is support might be can be discovered in critical theory and in the cultural-reproduction perspective on education.'

School has been generally considered as being a politically neutral enterprise, capable of redressing social inequalities. However, since the early '70's greater attention has been directed towards a cultural-reproduction perspective of schooling. Schools are seen as societal structures that reflect the capitalistic values of the larger society and operate to maintain present social order. Rather than a ladder for social mobility, these critics hold that, "schools then serve to reproduce the current inequalities of our social, political and economic systems" (Oakes, 1985). According to this perspective, what schools do is instill a particular way of thinking about the world that seems natural and correct and that maintains the status quo without direct coercion. Apple (1970) indicates that "institutions of cultural preservation and distribution like school create and recreate forms of consciousness that enable social control to be maintained without the necessity of dominant groups having to resort to overt mechanisms of domination" (p. 3).

More than just a way of thinking or a consciousness, schools are said to be incorporating an absolute, self-confirming, lived sense of reality that supports the dominate culture. School practices such as streaming and the meanings associated with it would be part of that reality. The term used most often in the literature is Antonio Gramsci's "hegemony." Raymond Williams (1976) best defines it:

[Hegemony is] a whole body of practices and expectations; our assignments of energy, our ordinary understanding of man [sic] and his world. It is a set of meanings and values which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in society, a sense of absolute because experienced [as a] reality

beyond which it is very difficult for most members of a society to move in most areas of their lives. (p. 205)

According to this sense of reality, all the meanings, values and practices become accepted and valued by "most members of a society," even by those who do not benefit by such a perspective. Williams then goes on to describe how a set of meanings and practices supporting the dominant culture continue to prevail:

We can only understand an effective and dominant culture if we understand the real social process on which it depends: I mean the process of incorporation The educational institutions are usually the main agencies of transmission of an effective dominant culture Moreover, at a philosophical level, at the true level of theory and at the level of the history of various practices, there is a process which I call the selective tradition: that which, within the terms of an effective dominant culture, is always passed off as 'the tradition,' the significant past. But always the selectivity is the point; the way in which from a whole possible area of past and present, meanings and practices are neglected and excluded. Even more crucially, some of these meanings are reinterpreted, diluted, or put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the effective dominant culture.

The process of education; the processes of a much wider social training within institutions like the family; the practical definitions and organization of work; the selective tradition at an intellectual and theoretical level: all these forces are involved in a continual making and remaking of an effective dominant culture, and on them, as experienced, as built into our living, reality depends. If what we learn were merely an imposed ideology, or if it were only the isolated meanings and practices of the ruling class, or of a section of the ruling class, which gets imposed on others, occupying merely the top of our minds, it would be--and one would be glad--a very much easier thing to overthrow." (p. 205).

If schools are "agents of cultural and ideological hegemony" (Apple, 1979) or in Williams' words, agents of "selective tradition and cultural incorporation," then the practice of streaming could be seen as part of this political project and part of the "selective tradition" including those perspectives, meanings and images such as

the different and deficient image discussed earlier. Thus, what might be supporting the arch mentioned earlier, wedging in the image of the different and deficient student that ensures that streaming continues, is the conservative thrust for the continuance of the dominant culture and current class structure. This would make the practice of streaming seem a natural and correct way of organizing school and so this practice and the assumptions and beliefs that support it become difficult to question, let alone discard.

To get a clearer understanding of all of this, it is necessary to look at how streaming functions to maintain the power relations in our society. British sociologist Michael Young (1971) has suggested that certain groups in society have power because they have access to certain types of knowledge which they can define as high-status knowledge. Because these powerful groups control institutions which transmit this knowledge, they can ensure that high-status knowledge is distributed disproportionately to those already in power. Apple (1978) has suggested that high-status knowledge in our society is that knowledge often generated and preserved in universities. For secondary schools high-status knowledge is that which gets one into university. Oakes (1985) indicated that high-status knowledge in English class meant students studied standard classic and modern literature, traced the historical development of literature, analyzed the characteristics of literary genres, analyzed literary elements, and did a great deal of expository writing. Much of this is precisely duplicated in the descriptions given in curriculum guides and by the teachers in my study.

This high-status knowledge is reserved for those in the upper streams. Research as previously indicated has shown that middle-class and upper-class students are over-represented in the upper streams, where they are given knowledge that will assure them power and position in society, as it did their parents. Immigrant and working-class students are found in the lower streams where they have less chance of escaping their current social class. Thus, the access students have to certain types of knowledge insures that schools reproduce the current social structure.

Bowles and Gintis (1976) claim that, in addition to the differences in knowledge, students tend to be socialized into different attitudes and perspectives according to the occupations they will be expected to assume. Oakes (1985) found that conforming behaviours tend to be emphasized more in the lower streams than in the upper streams; and independent types of behaviour more in the upper streams than the lower. She suggests that such behaviours and the attitudes are what differentiate between what is expected of a good worker, the conforming behaviour, and a good leader, the independent behaviour. It would seem that both in behaviours and attitudes instilled in the various groups of students as well as in the type of knowledge imparted, streaming serves to reproduce the current social structure.

Furthermore, students come to accept the hierarchy of the streams within the school and the social classes within society generally as legitimate and natural because of what Bowles and Gintis have called the "illusion of a meritocratic education system." Because streaming

employs what appear fair and objective means by which to sort students, at least according to the dominant culture, students may learn to internalize their failure within school and society as an individual rather than a social problem (Apple, 1978). The hegemonic response then is to accept streaming and the current societal class structure.

None of the critical theorists have suggested that teachers intend to be unfair or to restrict students' potential. Michael Apple, for example, maintains that "inequities stem from the cultural context and systemic properties of schools rather than from the intentions of the adults within them" (in Oakes, 1985, p. 212). I, too, am convinced that teachers in general as well as the two in my study want the best for all their students. But the stories they tell about streaming reflect the societal assumptions and beliefs that support a practice that may work to the detriment of a number of students simply for the continuance of the status quo. The stories the teachers in my study tell about streaming serve to organize and make meaningful their hectic teaching practice. I do not believe that they recognize other implications, political functions--suggested here--that their stories might have. Although I cannot say what these teachers actually believe in the privacy of their own thoughts, certainly there is nothing in their words that indicated as much. Therefore, I chose to cast these two teachers, as the unwitting agents of the state, as teachers, in general, have been labelled by critical theorists. This is of course a label that teachers would find very uncomfortable.

This is not to suggest that teachers are the only unwitting agents of the state; indeed, as Williams indicated earlier, the vast majority of society in some way carries and transmits state hegemony. But of course, teachers are not like other members of society for they are directly involved in the indoctrination of future citizens as well as possessing a deep concern for the welfare of their charges. This concern and responsibility must at times conflict. Also by referring to the teachers as unwitting state agents, I am not suggesting that they are in every teaching moment imposing state doctrine or what was referred to earlier as the "selective tradition." It has been suggested that in the everyday practices and beliefs of teachers there are both acts of resistance and acquiescence to the existing relations and ideologies (Carlson, 1987). There was, with both of the teachers in my study, some signs of both conflict and resistance, or at least the precursors of such. Linda's attempts to minimize differences and to avoid generalizing about the students, David's efforts to find strengths in the weaknesses of general students, speak to a discomfort with streaming and the labelling of students. And while it didn't stop the stories, it would seem an indication of the uneasiness which would seem the beginnings of a counterhegemonic response. Rather than view teachers as as passive inculcators of state beliefs, it is possible to see there are dynamics about their role that hold out the potential for change.

But whether teachers accept the cultural-reproduction perspective of schooling or not, simply to make school a more equitable place for all students would seem to demand that they, along with others

concerned with education, should be working to eliminate streaming. If, as suggested earlier, streaming is part of the selective tradition, a part of the dominant culture, it will be difficult to dismantle but certainly not impossible in light of recent recommendations against the practice. The Radwanski Report (1987), the English Coalition, the American Alliance of Educators, along with other researchers and educators, have called for the elimination of the practice.

However, an easier first step would be for teachers to change the stories they use to construct and make meaningful the practice of streaming. It should become as unacceptable to speak of the differences and deficiencies in nonacademic students as it is to speak of ethnic, racial or gender stereotypes. The stories, whether in our curriculum guides, in our textbooks or in our teacher talk should remain on students' needs generally, and should speak of all students in terms of potential. It may not change what happens in the classroom: this study does not examine the relationship between teachers' talk and their actions in the classroom. Still, we need to alter the stories if only for the political and social inequalities that are implied. English teachers can be in the forefront of such change, for they especially know the power of language and of story.

Although changing our stories about streaming will be easier than the elimination of streaming, it will not be without difficulty. Such action is dependent on knowledge that there are other stories that can be told; it depends on the recognition that the one story is not necessarily the most natural or correct, as Williams indicated

earlier. Perhaps what this means is that teachers need to be armed against becoming "unwitting agents" by being exposed to a large number of perspectives or stories, not only about streaming, but about education generally. This speaks to teachers' professional development and to teacher education.

It is impossible to say how much difference changing and increasing our stories about streaming and about education will have or will be allowed by society. But, even if one does not accept the cultural-reproductive perception of schooling suggested here, it would seem a most honourable and worthwhile task even if there exists only a possibility that it will help secure a more equitable school experience for all students.

I began this thesis by suggesting that it was a story of two English teachers and the sense they made of streaming. I have perhaps at this point committed the ultimate sin in research by generalizing from the particular. However the very fact that streaming continues to dominate the school systems of Canada, the United States and Europe suggests that there must be similar stories about streaming in existence. The glimpses of teachers' understanding of streaming evident in the Hargreaves (1967) and Oakes (1985) studies add to this possibility. So that while I can speak to the data given by the two teachers in my study, I feel I can also at least speculate about the forest from the trees.

I also began this thesis by suggesting that it was a story that provided a description, an explanation, and an understanding of

streaming as it figures in teachers' knowledge, and in the play of power and knowledge in our society. I also said it would offer no grand resolution. Although I have stated some recommendations, it is too complicated a story for simple solutions. But what has been offered is an analysis of the stories told by two English teachers concerning how they make sense of streaming--an analysis that would seem to indicate that the stories these teachers use are in essence those that have supported the practice traditionally but whose underlying premises and beliefs are questionable and unacceptable according to researchers and some educators. I suggest that the stories, the words, teachers use to organize and make sense of their practice inadvertently lend support to a practice that helps to maintain the current social structure and works to the detriment of students. Moreover, it appears that the dominant culture may be a powerful influence in teachers' words and knowledge about streaming and, one might speculate, about education in general. And perhaps knowing this can empower teachers and other educators to step back from the din, back from the cacophony of their practice, and with greater independence, greater control, write their own stories of streaming and of teaching.

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Appendix

1. Interview Schedule

1. Background information
 - a) How many years have you taught?
 - b) What subjects and levels have you taught?
 - c) What was your major in university?
2. A quiz and review of literary terms were part of an English 23 lesson
 - a) What are your purposes in having students learn these terms?
 - b) Do the same purposes and emphasis exist in your English 30 class with regard to these terms?
3. Novel
 - a) What procedures and considerations went through your mind when you selected A Man for All Seasons for your English 30 class?
 - b) What were your considerations when you selected Of Mice and Men?
4. Reading
 - a) Is it common for you to have the students read aloud in parts?
 - b) Why do you have the students read this way?
 - c) How do you select the students for the parts?
5. Special Assignment
 - a) Your special projects for English 23 involve a number of media. Do you often give out this type of assignment?
 - b) Why do you include such diversity, such nontraditional kinds of assignments?
 - c) Is this type of assignment common in your academic classes?

Appendix 2: Transcripts

Linda

Second Interview

Helen: I was going to ask you for your comments about the last transcripts but we can leave that until you have a chance to go through them a bit more thoroughly. But, I have a few things I want to ask about the transcripts. One thing--I asked you what split you had between the academic and the nonacademic but then I didn't follow it up with do you have a preference--

Linda: I don't prefer one over the other. I have certain courses, for example, I like English 30 but I don't want to teach English 33; I like English 13 but I don't want to teach English 10. And so for about three years now I have not taught English 10. I taught them before, English 10 and 33, but given a choice, which generally we have here as long as there is still the balance between academic and nonacademic, I stay away from English 10 because I could never find them. It's the weirdest experience. The first year I was here I taught English 10 and 13 and the 13--it's always exciting because we're "zinging" around the room doing whatever--but I could always find material they were interested in; whereas, with the 10's I never found their wavelength at all. I don't know why that was. I taught 10's before, not in Alberta so maybe it was partly because I was dealing with a new curriculum, but that whole semester we never once hit the same wavelength. The only time we came anywhere near ties in with that discussion we had today with humour and depression. We did Arsenic and Old Lace. They thought it was the greatest thing going and I hated every minute of it. But they thought it was wonderful so at least we found something. It was the oddest experience, whether it was just that group--but the result as been that I have not been eager to rush into English 10.

H: The same reason for English 30 and 33?

L: The 33--how do I explain it--I think it's partly since the Diploma exams came in that I don't want 33. I used to teach them all the time before the Diploma exams. I don't know. You try to gear them up for this exam yet nothing you do all year is on the exam. It's an odd situation. I understand why it is that situation because teachers do such diverse things and we're not doing analytical skills so you can't say pick two characters you studied this year and analyze their approach to problems or whatever because that's not the way people teach 33. And you have such a range of books that nobody in Edmonton would have half the books.

H: You don't teach analytical skills?

L: I don't think they do to the extent they do in English 30, so to make that the focus of an exam for 33 is an error because the focus in 33 is more human-based than analytically-base, maybe I'm wrong.

H: What do you mean when you say human-based?

L: I think it's like asking what does Sam do rather than why does Sam do that and then, do you agree. In 33 you ask--do you agree--whereas with the 30's, you'd ask for a four-page essay explaining Sam's motivations; whereas in 33--Do you agree with Sam, why or why not. They're still analyzing but not a motivation but looking at their own opinion and that's what I mean, I guess, when I said human-based. That might not be the right word but it's more based on their own life experience rather than Sam's.

H: and what's in the text?

L: Yes, and we around and around in the Diploma exams because I know the people in Edmonton get a lot of flack from teachers saying 33 is too easy. They do nothing all year and I give them 45% and then they get 75% on your exam and we look like fools--so they get flack and I know because I'm on one of the committees but what do you do? You can't suddenly say every kid in English 33 is going to read this play and this novel and read from this short story book and then we're going to ask about some question that will gear into that because then you're running English 30 so I appreciate the dilemma but I--

H: You want to stay away from it.

L: Yes, because it must be a very frustrating thing to gear kids up when half of the final mark is that exam and yet the things you are doing--yes, are indirectly going to be there: do you know how to write a sentence; can you put together a story; can you write a letter--are there, but they're not there to the same degree as with the 30.

H: Another thing I wanted to probe a bit more, when we were talking about reading aloud, you were saying it was a common practice, you reading aloud to the kids, you said that it was part of getting kids engaged, getting them started, partly because there is a lot going on in their lives. When you were saying that were you thinking of the nonacademics?

L: All of them.

H: So you believe the 30's need a little extra push to get them engaged?

L: Some days I don't do it but I think we all need that. I haven't seen them for twenty-four hours and if it's over the weekend, I haven't seen them for forty-eight hours so to suddenly come in cold and say, well let's pick up on Act II, scene ii of Hamlet without any kind of: do you remember where we are, does anyone remember the name of the play--

H: That would be one way of handling it but you chose to read it aloud with the 30's.

L: Yes, mind you, it has to do with the play A Man for All Seasons. It's bad enough we're using it as literature. They should see it on a stage acted but at least if they hear the different voices it helps, with drama that's the place for it.

H: Another thing that came up--we were talking about books and you said "one of my main goals is that I want the kids to enjoy reading. I want them to go away from an English class thinking they might read a book on their own." When you were saying that goal were you thinking of the nonacademics? Wouldn't the 30's already be doing that?

L: The Honours 30's yes, the ordinary 30's, no.

H: They wouldn't be reading books on their own, in your opinion?

L: Some of them would, some of them wouldn't so that for me is a focus all the way through but less so with the Honours because they are, for the most part, well read. At least they are much more extensively read than regular kids.

H: Than the nonacademics?

L: Regular 30's.

H: And the regular 30's and 33's?

L: It's hard to pigeon-hole them because in my 23, period four, I have four kids who are always reading, who love to read and they don't think we're reading nearly enough in here. They'll say have you read this and have you read that, and I haven't, part of that is I don't read as much as I should, so you're going to have kids in both groups who are avid readers and other kids in both groups who will only read what an English teacher makes them so that's a goal right across.

H: Yet it's an academic class--why are they there if they don't like to read? What's happening there?

L: A lot of things are happening there. Some of them want to go to University in other areas. They may love chemistry or math but English isn't their favourite. Some of them have no intention of going to University but they like the advanced diploma for a variety of reasons.

H: Not innate interest.

L: Pressure from mom and dad--a whole range of reasons but partly to because this school is not a highly academic school. This isn't C.W. This is not C.W. School running the Baccalaureate program, so we would have in general a lower percentage of students who are highly academically motivated. But in this school we encourage these kids to try these things--who want to. We almost never say no to a kid, for example, who say comes from 33, passes it, and wants to try 30. And we have battles over it because lots of schools in this province aren't allowing kids to do it because it affects their averages on the exams but our principal is adamant and I think he's right. If they want to try it, why not.

H: Another thing that came up--on page 9 you said when you were talking about what you wanted the kids to get out of the projects--you said "when we started this and we were putting all this stuff about the thirties on the board: how hard times were and how nobody had jobs, I mentioned how some people think we are almost back then right now and a number of them said, 'yea, my dad lost his job or my brother can't get work' or whatever so they may in part think of that, although that might be going a bit far." What did you mean "although that might be going a bit far"?

L: I think it goes back to the sentence ahead of it which said "they should maybe be seeing how the environment those two men lived in influenced their environment and in turn maybe they could look at whether there is anything affecting me." If we see George and Lennie [characters in Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men] in their environment and their environment affects them then, does my environment affect me and if so how?

H: So if they go that far, great, but if they don't--

L: That's what I think I was saying because definitely people said my brother lost his job or my dad did--that's very real but a lot of these kids themselves are on student financing. At least three in this class are on student financing.

H: And student financing means--

L: that they are being paid as long as they go to school.

H: Their families can't afford it?

L: Yes, the families can't afford it without some help so every month they come along and I have to fill out a form to say how many absences they have because that's what it's based on. No one asks what their marks are, which is interesting. But I am hoping they are able to--

H: to apply it to their lives--but that's not necessary?

L: Right and some will be able to and some won't be able to do it. Maybe some live up in Edgemont and have really nice houses and a dad with a big job and they have three cars and this won't apply. They might still be able to say that's too bad some people have to live like that but it doesn't have any direct connection to them; whereas, with the others it's right there. No, definitely I am hoping they will see if there are any parallels between George and Lennie's situation [in Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men] and their own.

H: We were talking about how you decide what books to choose or what plays you'll do and one of the reasons you said was whether it fits into the theme or what themes can be pulled out of it. How do you decide what themes you want to do, for example, how did you decide on "Goals and Dreams" or the "Disability" unit?

L: Okay with the 13-23-33, my core book is the Connection series, Imaging, Relating, Discovery, so generally I and many people in the school use their themes. With 13 we went with the "Against All Odds" section in Imaging and that was our starting point so that's where I got that one from and there's one on animals and I use that again. So that is your starting point and then you can branch to the library or what the kids may have at home or whatever else may be around. Same with the 23's, I start with "Crimes and the Criminal" then there's one on "Understanding Differences" which has a general focus in the Relating book but I've narrowed it to the physically handicapped. The one in the book deals with different colours and customs and things but I've just done it on the physically handicapped.

H: Yes, but why would you pick "Diasters" or "Wheels"? What is it about the kids that made you make that decision as opposed to others?

L: Well, the whole thematic idea people started kicking around five, six, seven years ago. I really like that approach. I think we should be using it with everybody because it's more interesting for the kids to get a variety of stuff on a topic that is interesting to them.

H: So why did you pick "Wheels" for example? What is it about the kids? Or what about "Diasters"?

L: Okay, okay. "Wheels" came about because the librarian came to me and said "Hey, the librarian at Ernest Manning has been working with an English teacher there on this unit and says it's great. It's on wheels--about cars--" So she asked if I was interested and I said yes it sounded really interesting--I think because I tend to think a lot of the kids have cars and I think probably more kids, and maybe I'm wrong, more kids are into shop courses than in an academic class, so you are going to have more expertise which you need to run a unit like this. But you know, you can only do so much heavy academic stuff and then you've got to do something more, more concrete.

H: Yes, now the the 30's, the Honours 30's, the theme was "Conformity vs. Nonconformity", which is quite abstract--

L: Yes, so why am I doing that? I must feel there are different things the kids are interesting in and that they can handle, again we can cross over at any point, not so much from the Honours 30 but if you took a regular 20 and a regular 23, I'll bet you could cross over a number of themes and probably if the regular 20's were telling the truth they'd rather be doing "Wheels."

H: But we don't give them "Wheels." We give them--I don't know what we give them?

L: Genre. Just genre. Here if you're going to give them any thematic in 20 in this school, you'll do "Canadian Poetry." They'll look up a Canadian poet--

H: Genre? Canadian poetry--

L: Yes, I guess in part what I am saying is that the academic kids have this exam and they have to work towards it and part of my job is to prepare them for it. For 13-23-33 they don't have as much pressure on them so we can have some fun. Now there that ought to stir things up a bit, but it's not fair because the other kids ought to be entitled to some fun too.

H: You had the 23's see the film "Of Mice and Men." You had them see it after the test, why after?

L: I pretty well always do that because I want the kids to read the story or the play. I don't have them just going on the basis of the film. So partly because it makes them read the book but also because a film director will make significant changes and so the kids don't know that's the film director's and not the author's. I think they should have the author's ideas first and then compare.

H: Was it in any way a reward?

L: No, I don't think so. For so many years in teaching we didn't have films so it's exciting to have them and it's more for comparison purposes instead of turn-off your brain, here's a reward. I want them to be thinking like with these discussion questions I am going to use. One of the things I want them to tell me is how come when George goes to shoot Lennie, the whole focus is on George's face, how come? The kids would have loved to have seen it.

H: Of course, all the blood and guts.

L: Yes, yes. I want them to talk about stuff like that and who they'd pick for Lennie--Like before they watched the film on Thursday, I had them pick who'd they pick for Lennie, who'd they'd pick for George, what scenes they'd have to have in it, where in Calgary they would film it. Partly I am bringing in the viewing strand.

H: What was the high point of the week or two weeks you spend on Of Mice and Men? Is there an incident or a time that sticks out in your mind, a memorable teaching moment?

L: That bit this morning with the profanity really sticks out.

H: Why don't you tell me about it. I know we've discussed it already but I would like to have it on tape.

L: Okay, well one of the question I asked on the test was that some people consider all the swearing in Of Mice and Men to be offensive. Why do they think Steinbeck used the swearing. There were a variety of reasons, but it kept coming back to, for the most part, to make it realistic because ranch hands, all the men who live in the bunkhouse, talk rough, and then a number of them said that it was that way back then, implying that it was the middleages back then. So when we were taking up the question, I asked, "What about all the swearing I hear in the halls day after day here?", and we ended up in a discussion of one particular four-letter word. And I think the consensus was that the word doesn't have the meaning for kids that it has for adults and also they feel as long as you were with peers and they were all using the word and if you weren't using it, well, T. said, "You're a nerd. It's like going to a party where everyone else is drinking beer and you're drinking orange juice." It's interesting because he wears a T.A.D button--Teenagers Against Drinking. I thought he would have said, "and that's changing too." I was surprised he didn't.

H: So what made that successful was--

L: So many of them, so many of them were involved. I think over half the members of the class had something to say about it.

H: They certainly perked up. I know I perked up.

L: That's right. It's something real. It's part of their real lives. That's the most animated they've been over the two weeks. Now I'm hoping again with these questions that we may get into that again. I also am going to ask them, for example, George can be charged with murder and now if George goes into court will he be found guilty or not guilty. I think I'll save the discussion for Wednesday to see if anything happens. It may not. They may sit there and not say anything.

H: I noticed you don't correct the students' speech, at least I haven't picked up on that. Is that a policy with you--a rule in the back of your mind?

L: I never thought about that. I correct them at my desk. They've heard this a million times when they ask--Can I go to the bathroom and I say, I don't know can you? You'd think by now they'd heard it enough times that no one would do it but anyway then they say--May I and say--yes you may-- That one happens at my desk daily but I guess in part maybe it's that I don't want to embarrass them but if someone comes out with some swearing I would stop them but the world wouldn't stop or they wouldn't be kicked out the door depending on how it's used. No, you are right, I don't do it very often.

H: In their written work--

L: Oh sure, and if a kid's reading and has trouble with a word that is fairly important to the meaning I will say the word but if I think it's a word everybody else in the room knows, I let it go by, so it doesn't matter if a student mispronounces it because sometimes you can be stopping them at every word or every third one. But I don't know, I haven't thought about it much.

H: Well if something comes to mind, we can always add it. About homework, I noticed with the 30's, they had to read a book over Easter holidays and they had some homework assigned last time I was here. What is your policy about that and in comparison with the two groups?

L: I give almost no homework in the vocational courses.

H: Is that because you don't have to?

L: Mostly because they don't do it anyway so what's the point of getting upset. But I know lots of teachers in this school give homework and check it everyday and the kids start to do it. And that's fine with them and all the more power to them but I just don't like running around doing homework checks and most of the time they

just copy from someone else anyway, so I give almost no homework. Like if they have an assignment as with the gold sheet, now they've had over a week on that and what, I had four in today--that's terrific. Partly that's because I haven't been giving a lot of class time to do it. Normally they would have a bit more time.

H: I noticed when you talked to C., who obviously did have his assignment done, you didn't get angry about that. You were very calm and tried to get him focussed.

L: No point in getting angry. They lose 10% per day, so I don't nag people--they lose 10%, they lose 10%. I've probably changed a lot in the last few years. I try not to be a nag.

H: Same with the 30's?

L: That's part of why I brought in the 10% per day because it works for both groups and they know what will happen. But this is probably the poorest in terms of getting stuff in that Period Two has ever done. Usually they have time in class and last week I didn't give them much, so suddenly they have to do some at home and they aren't use to it.

H: And that 10% works as affectively with the academic as the nonacademic?

L: Yes usually, but this is unusual, as I said, to get this less in from this group, especially this group.

H: Okay we'll stop here.

Appendix: Linda's Letter

June 1, 1988

Dear Helen,

Thank you for the opportunity to read the section about me in your thesis, "Streaming and the English teacher".

As you know, I enjoyed taking part in your study and feel that you have captured the essence of our discussions well.

I would express major concern with only one paragraph. This is indicated on page 5 of Chapter 4. It was my intention to imply that books selected for the academic students must have scope for analytical writing. Books with meaning and scope are also important for the general students, but more frequently as a spring board for personal response writing as opposed to analytical.

All the best on your thesis defence in July!

Yours truly, _____