USING THE VIEWS OF MARGINALISED STUDENTS ABOUT EFFECTIVE TEACHING

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Schools often find problem behaviour difficult to address due to an overabundance of research and methods in this area. For a variety of reasons, wavering on this matter is based on multiple reform initiatives that compete and intersect. A solution to this indecisiveness finds a high proportion of adolescents, who are considered to be deviant by their teachers, excluded from mainstream classes and placed in alternative learning environments. These placements promise academic intervention, but tend to only address issues of self-esteem through behaviour modification. As a result, these students remain in a skills-deficit position that threatens their self-esteem and provokes their original deviance. The study reported in this thesis considers this issue and its relationship to student voice. In so doing, it challenges exclusion as a way of addressing negative behaviour by looking at school experiences from the perspectives of students considered to be deviant to discover and examine the common places where they have found success.

Bearing this argument in mind, this one-year study set out to find areas in a school in the United States that students labeled with a behaviour difficulty might identify as positive learning environments. The specific focus was designing and implementing a methodology that used action research to more accurately identify literature to address the specific needs and concerns of the students under scrutiny. It used school tours to help participants identify areas of success, as a basis for interviews, and as a direction for teacher observations. The voices of these marginalized students produced common categories that identified possible paths to reform. They were able to identify several successful components of lesson planning and general concerns that challenged the school’s culture. The implications of these findings are a significant step forward to what we know about the workings of inclusive classrooms, the teachers who find success in them, and how students come to be labeled with a behaviour difficulty.
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DEDICATION

to my new friends overseas, thank you for making this feel like home

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I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisors, Professors Mel West and Mel Ainscow and the staff members of The School of Education for their patience and dedication to my work. I would also like to thank the students and teachers whose voices were the foundation and inspiration of this study. I would also like to thank my new English, Scottish, and Irish friends who went out of their way to support me, especially Alan, Steven, Dave, Mat, Tracy & Andy, John & Annette, Peter, Fevronia, Irene, Hannah, and Emma. Thank you for taking this journey with me.
Introduction

Eighteen years of teaching English in middle schools, high schools, and even alternative high schools have convinced me that student exclusion is a common, yet furtive practice. Although never openly sanctioned by teachers, there were methods discussed within department offices of provoking troublesome students to get administration involved. Perhaps the most common way was to write a letter to the principal using the word “endanger” and describing the student as “unsafe”. The assistant principal would then appear, course change slip in hand, to reassign the misbehaved student to an alternative education program like mine.

The effects of this type of exclusion could be felt in my daily attempts to create meaningful learning activities for my secondary students who were often absent and who were subject to an inconsistent learning environment: It was a near impossibility to implement the types of lessons that were supported by prior knowledge from previous lessons. After approximately ten years of teaching in this environment, I gained experience and developed the ability to successfully engage these students through cooperative lesson planning. I can attest that successful lessons were those that gave direction to the students’ interests and impulses, “and then through criticism, question, and suggestion bring to consciousness what [they] have done, and what [they] need to do” (Dewey, 1915/1990, p. 40).

An example of one of these lessons was a ghost-hunt my students and I conducted after reading and discussing haunted places in New England. My students made arrangements to visit one of these places found in their readings (that happened to be in walking
distance from the school) to determine whether the place in question was really haunted. To collect data, they learned how to use ghost-hunting equipment that a student discovered on a television show and I purchased on-line. Using this information, my students wrote a collective research paper based on literature they read in class, the specific types of data they collected, and a diary about their experiences. I remember my students presenting their data and being quite curious about what they found. In doing so they perhaps sensed my own curiosity and I considered the possibility that my lesson planning was more responsible for the positive relationships I’ve had with my students than my disposition.

The benefits this type of lesson provided posed the question of whether these students “owned” their deviant labels, or whether they “acquired” them through the response of teachers who found it difficult to teach them. Though it would seem beneficial to my colleagues (and perhaps a wise career move) to publish and present these lessons, I felt that reporting successes with my students would provide evidence to my school that their way of excluding students showed merit. This would find me less eligible to purchase additional materials designed to integrate the types of lessons I knew were successful with strategies that would address deficits in my students’ abilities to read and write.

As I became more confident to argue that those lessons helped to spotlight my students’ strengths so that they could acknowledge and accept those things they find most difficult, I also found that it was rare to find students who were willing to work harder than their peers by committing to a rigorous schedule of practice. I could have planned many ghost-hunts, but I believed my students needed a collaborative group of teachers who
were experts in their respective fields, sympathetic to these students’ situation, and willing to challenge the deficit assumptions made about marginalized students.

A strong feeling of isolation hindered these thoughts and ideas. They led me to believe that research into this matter would be rooted in the same variables that comprised what my school believed was the basis of my students’ aversion to school: parenting, pathology, various addictions, etc. These were areas school administrators recommended I address in the context of my lessons, yet these were areas over which I had no knowledge or control. As a result, my school began to invite school psychologists, substance abuse counselors, karate instructors, and educational technicians (from special education) to visit my classroom. Those in charge of reform efforts in my school were becoming less interested in addressing the low self-esteem of my students through the acquisition of knowledge, and more interested in teaching my students how to become more tolerant of an environment that tended to exclude them.

After years of being part of exclusionary practices that remove students from mainstream classes, I left my teaching position to study at the University of Manchester. There I intended to look further into this matter by exploring the voices of those I believed to be marginalized through a methodology rooted in action research and heuristic inquiry. In doing so, I put myself in a position where my perspective would affect and form part of the data, a feature of heuristic research. Through my experiences, course work in qualitative and quantitative methods at the university, and a pilot study, I constructed a methodology to find where students labeled with a behaviour difficulty find success.
The research design in this study also followed my successful lesson planning experiences by combining power, freedom, and responsibilities “giving them [the students] exercise along certain lines” (Dewey, 1915/1990, p. 173), with every adolescent’s “desire to ‘mess around,’ perhaps to imitate the activities of older people” (Ibid, p. 38). The research design was constructed in the spirit of those lessons, so that the participants would have the opportunity to collaborate with adults, using their voices to implement change. This study also proposed to solve real problems using a holistic approach involving students and educators as active participants (Prosser, 1998).

I returned to the United States to conduct research with 20 participants at the school of my last employment (School #1) and at another with a smaller sample size (School #2). I generated common categories across a triangulation of qualitative methods (school tours, interviews and observations) to better analyse the data and to reduce a wide range of literature “idiosyncratic to that institution” (Hargreaves, Hestor, & Mellor, 1975, p. 30). This method not only provided opportunities for students to discuss specific teacher strategies, teacher behaviours, and school climate, but also helped me observe the most common places identified by the participants for validation. Follow-up interviews with the participants and teachers identified by the participants as “effective” were also conducted to see how both parties accepted the findings.

The methodology provided important new perspectives and insight on the schools under scrutiny and how students labeled with a behaviour difficulty experience them, and I examined ways to improve the use of this approach. I also illustrated how the methodology could organize a wide range of literature that examines behaviour
difficulties in adolescents so that it was more instructive to those in a position to create change. However, I also found it important to examine whether my colleagues at School #1 would constructively consider testing the methodology in this way.

**Purpose of the Study**

Failure to recognize that most students possess the ability to think critically and make informed choices and an unwillingness to accept the student’s reality is an important factor preventing the value of the student’s perception being utilized. Despite the potential for data to be improved in this manner, there are implicit problems in the process such as pupil bias and limited background knowledge (Filer & Pollard, 2001).

Meighan (1978) states:

> Children assess their teachers almost as a matter of course. It does not follow that they are the best judges of the effectiveness of their teachers or their schools... However, these perceptions may have some valuable information, especially if they can be converted into some easily available, and relatively systematic, form-otherwise the opinions of a few vocal individuals can all too easily be misinterpreted as representative (p. 101).

Having examined qualitative research in student voice, I believe that there have been many successful advances in understanding the classroom experiences of marginalized students. However, my thoughts are with Conroy et al. (2008) who argue that, “a number of methodological issues continue to limit findings” (p. 2) because, according to
Fielding (2004), “too much contemporary student voice work invites failure and disillusion, either because its methodologies and contextual circumstances reinforce subjugation, or because its valorization pays too little attention to the extent to which young people are already incorporated by the practices of what is cool or customary” (p. 296).

The purpose of this study, then, was to construct, test and implement a methodology that would identify positive aspects in the daily school experiences of secondary students labeled with a behavioural difficulty by connecting successful strategies and positive behaviour management through their voices. It was designed to explore a wide range of variables that may have influenced these pupils’ behaviour by finding locations in their school where they feel valued, observing those places to better understand their selection, and identifying the common characteristics of those places through observation. We can then discover what students labeled with behaviour difficulties see as a supportive learning environment and how might knowledge obtained in this way could be used to facilitate improvements.

If this can be achieved, then observing teachers who foster a method of teaching that is experiential, multi-leveled, and meaningful will contribute to our knowledge of a successful inclusive classroom. I will also help to give voice to marginalized students and encourage the collaboration of those who teach them successfully. It will allow teachers “to examine their own contributions to pupils’ behaviour and gain a clear sense of achievement in circumstances that sometimes demand the highest levels of professional competence and commitment” (Miller, 2009, p. 36).
Thesis Format

The construction and reporting of the dissertation is unorthodox because it primarily focuses on the testing of a methodology. Whilst most theses begin with a literature review to justify a methodology, the literature that focuses on the characteristics of EBD students and student voice in this thesis led to studies that justified and helped to construct an improved methodology for working with students labeled with behavioural difficulties. As the thesis progressed, I demonstrated that a strong methodology aims to spotlight literature that is specific to the schools under scrutiny. As a result of this format, the literature is reported in three sections: literature about EBD students and student voice, literature that examines research paradigms and qualitative methods in order to construct a methodology, and instructional strategies, school culture, and school environment reviewed as a result of the methodology. The thesis is organized as follows:

Chapter 1: Thinking about Students Labeled with an EBD: This chapter presents an introductory literature review around the themes of the study and leads to a summary of existing work on student voice.

Chapter 2: The Development of a Methodology for Exploring Student Voice: This chapter presents the formation and implementation of a research design leading to a pilot study. Using a combination of heuristic inquiry, action research, and empirical evidence, it demonstrates how the pilot study was improved and led to the design of a study that was conducted in two schools.
Chapter 3: Planning My Inquiry Part 1: The Context: This chapter provides profiles of the schools chosen for the main study, as well as additional information about the participants and how they were selected for the study.

Chapter 4: Planning My Inquiry Part 2: The Research Design: This chapter illustrates how the pilot study influenced the formal research design. It shows how lessons learned from the pilot and variables within the new schools selected for the main study led to several adjustments to the formal procedure.

Chapter 5: Design Implementation: This chapter explains the design implementation so that the reader can observe how the study unfolded through data collection using two participant case studies, a teacher observation, and a participant group interview.

Chapter 6: Analysing the Findings: This chapter uses categories created from school tours, interviews, and observations to narrow a wide range of literature aimed at school improvement that is exclusive to one school in the study.

Chapter 7: Discussion: This chapter shows how, as a result of this filtering, data collected in the methodology could instruct the teachers, participants and administration under scrutiny in this study to better understand the areas recommended for improvement. The study results recommend short and long-term goals for one of the schools based on the information provided by the participants and the supporting literature. This chapter also considers adjustments to the research design based on experiences whilst attempting to report the data. It also summarizes my conclusions in relation to my research questions.
Chapter 8: Reflections: In this chapter I review and evaluate the study in terms my own development as a teacher and researcher.
Chapter 1: Thinking about Students Labeled as Having Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the literature that examines emotional and behavioural difficulties in adolescents in order to draw out themes that are relevant to my research. Because there are many variables that lead to student misbehaviour and withdrawal in schools as well as a wide range of generalizations made about marginalized students, I focus specifically on three forms of relevant literature: sources that attempt to define EBD by variables teachers can control; those that examine the general characteristics of students with EBD, over which teachers have no control; and research that utilizes the voices of students to implement change. By looking at literature in these ways, the reader will not only better understand how a student comes to be labeled with an EBD, but also why it is important to narrow an extensive literature base in this area of research by gaining new perspectives through the voices of the students it most affects. Before exploring this literature, however, I consider these themes from the point of view of my own experiences.

Students on the Margins

Years of teaching mainstream high school students, particularly those students separated from mainstream classes due to perceived behavioural issues, afforded me the opportunity to experience marginalization and exclusion from different perspectives.
There was a time early in my career when I would have recommended certain disruptive students be removed from my class in order to protect more manageable students from disruption. This was perhaps due in part to the reputation of the program to where these students would be placed. At staff meetings, teachers who directed programs for disruptive students (alternative education) would often celebrate classroom successes through written student testimonials and power-point presentations that displayed them hard at work on various projects. Though these teachers never provided the program’s philosophy or goals to us, I was convinced that alternative education showed merit. I was also pleased to see pictures of former students working and smiling as they proceeded through their day.

As a result of these experiences, I began to feel more confident about my choice to remove students from my class and my feelings about disruptive students carried over to my own research. A paper I submitted early in my career not only encapsulates my thoughts and feelings about exclusion, but also the type of research I might use to support my arguments:

*When dealing with behaviour problems, role constraints should be established. Teachers may not have the necessary credentials or qualifications in dealing with particular problems. Other agencies are needed to intervene in order to implement an effective treatment program. Once the plan is formulated, boundaries must be respected. Strategies should not be imposed that would be contradictory to ongoing treatment* (Walls, 1999, p. 3).

This excerpt demonstrates my willingness to allow other more qualified staff members deal with behaviour issues in my classroom. However, whilst conducting research for a
master’s degree years later, I happened upon an article that linked illiteracy with student discipline where I discovered the term *EBD* (emotional and behavioural difficulties). Intrigued by the notion that this was considered an important field of research, I began to investigate more articles using *EBD* as a subject term and my own curiosity began to gravitate in this direction. I was curious to examine how researchers and other teachers might define this group of students and if there were others who shared similar experiences teaching them.

I discovered that part of my frustration as an educator of marginalized students was trying to find a singular representative voice among such a wide range of personalities, emotions, experiences, and abilities in an environment that intended to treat them all the same. Through this inquiry, I found that there was no clear definition of EBD and reform efforts by schools to improve the education of marginalized students seemed mired by an overabundance of information and the tendency to investigate areas of research that do not give teachers opportunities to assess their charge. This investigation and my teaching experiences inspired me to think more about my students in the context of voice.

An excerpt from a paper I submitted at a later stage of my career shows a change in perspective:

*The literacy education program allowed me to pull from theories and research to enhance my daily lesson plans and validate a notion that I had suppressed for years: Success with my students is not solely based on my demeanor, it is methodical, experiential, and planned. Perhaps this is why I do not find at-risk students “risky”* (Walls, 2004, p. 2).
As I began to critically evaluate my school’s exclusionary practices, I also noticed a discrepancy between research and what students labeled with an EBD were saying about their academic experiences. When I examined this matter further, I considered the possibility that information about students with EBD used to steer school reform efforts in my school were perhaps one-sided. These perspectives, which were interested in reaching solutions through limited viewpoints, supported and managed the alternative education program.

These feelings were validated when I later accepted the position as an alternative education teacher. I found that my principal and I both agreed that low self-esteem was a source of negative behaviour, yet the research areas we chose to address this issue were quite different. For example, when university instructors agreed to work with my students to address gaps in their reading ability, my principal, who instead arranged for my students to attend self-esteem training with a karate instructor, denied the plan. It was clear that our attempts to address my students’ self-esteem issues were supported by very different areas of research, if in fact they had self-esteem issues at all. Self-esteem improvement through self-defense instruction is not an unreasonable idea, but it was obvious to me that my principal’s plan was likely supported by generalizations made about EBD students (males with external behaviour difficulties) than for the (mostly withdrawn female) students in my program.

This information prompted me to look further into the source of this matter. I started by investigating the concept of behavior difficulties in the United States context at the
federal and state levels (specifically in Maine). In the section that follows, I also examine how this influences the concept of the alternative programs in School #1.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education (IDEA), a federal law in the United States passed by Congress in 1975 to make certain that children with disabilities have the opportunity to receive an equitable public education, also specifies characteristics of an emotional and behavioural disorder as conditions exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree, adversely affects a child's educational performance:

- An inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors;
- An inability to build or maintain satisfactory relationships with peers and teachers;
- Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances;
- A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or
- A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal and school problems (IDEA, 2004).

Students with these delayed skills or other disabilities might be eligible for special services that provide individualized education programs (IEP) in public schools in the United States. The updated version of the IDEA gave parents of students with special needs to opportunity to become part of their child's education team. The IEP describes the goals the team sets for a child during the school year, as well as any special support needed to help achieve them. If a student’s behavior makes it difficult for her/him to learn with other students, the IEP team should have a plan to help the student deal with behaviour difficulties.

IDEA and, indeed, several researchers recognize that there are two general types of
behavior difficulties: external (aggressive, disruptive, acting out) (Achenbach, Dumenci, & Rescorla, 2003) and internal (withdrawing from social situations, low activity levels, depression) (Cowan, Cohn, & Cowan, & Pearson, 1996). Quay (2003) classifies both types into the following four categories: conduct disorders (attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, anxiety disorders, depressive disorder, substance use) (Loeber, Burke, & Pardini, 2008); personality disorders (avoidance, anxiety, difficulty managing negative feelings) (NHS, 2010); immaturity (difficulty getting along with peers, poor coping skills, irritability) (Fischer, Welsh, Shillito, & Winston, 1990); and socialized delinquency (involvement in gang subcultures) (Quay, 2003).

According to IDEA (2004) “if it has been determined that the behavior of the student was not a manifestation of a disability, disciplinary procedures applicable to students without disabilities may be applied” (para. 4). However, according to The Maine Department of Education (MDE) (the state where this study took place) in accordance with IDEA, it is possible that students with disabilities and students without disabilities could be placed in a temporary alternative educational setting. However, The MDE recognizes that this setting may be a “type of environment, not a specific place” (Morely, 2007, para 1). It states:

*Interim Alternative Educational Setting – An appropriate setting determined by the child’s IEP team in which the child is placed for no more than 45 school days. This setting enables the child to continue to receive educational services and participate in the general education curriculum (although in another setting) and to progress toward meeting the goals set out in the IEP. As appropriate, the setting includes a functional behavioral assessment and behavioral intervention services and modifications to address the behavior violation so that it does not recur* (Maine Department of Education, 2006, para 6).
The MDE also describes the characteristics of students who are eligible for alternative education as follows: *Students who are considered to be candidates for alternative education programs typically are not viewed as students with disabilities and, therefore, they are not generally eligible for special education programming services. Thus, in some ways, these are the students that tend to fall between the cracks of both the regular education and the special education systems.*

However, elsewhere on the same website the MDE points to Fizzell (1990) who defines alternative education as:

*...a perspective, not a procedure or a program. It is based upon the belief that there are many ways to become educated, as well as many types of environments and structures within which this may occur* (para 1).

It seems, then, that alternative education (as a setting and a perspective) and the characteristics of alternative education students can be misleading at the state level. Indeed, one could argue that the tenuous parameters that surround alternative settings (or alternative education) provide schools in Maine more opportunities to ensure that those students who have been identified as having behaviour difficulties (identified by special education or not) will succeed in school. However, my experience reminds me that programs like alternative education, that intend to accomplish several educational and behavioral goals within the same environment, must be clearly defined so teachers are adequately prepared and students are appropriately identified and suitably placed. For instance, if a student’s negative behaviour issue is a response to a lack of structure, then alternative education may be an inappropriate placement, since some members of the same class might be “placed for no more than 45 school days” (MDE, 2006, para 6) and
thus the learning environment is rarely static.

There is also a similar vagueness about the identification of student EBD and this is an issue generating some negative attention over the past decade. Because practitioners tend to rely on medical definition when making eligibility decisions, the identification of emotional and behavioral disorders has been criticized as being unsound as has its “treatment” with drugs (Flora, 2008). More recent methods for establishing eligibility based on behavioural norms have been lacking in validity, and as a result, leading to many students being over-identified or misidentified as having an EBD (Landrum, 2001). Some special educators have supported a medical model (physician consultation) for determining eligibility because in this approach, an informed diagnosis will dictate treatment, relieving educators of these decisions (Maag & Katsiyannis, 2008). This method, however, continues to be a cause for concern for some researchers (Kavale & Forness, 1987) because of what they see as unintended consequences for students. For instance, girls appear to be underrepresented, and African Americans appear to be overrepresented (Quinn et al., 2001) in EBD totals when this approach is used.

To address these identification issues, Barnett et al. (2006) described a response to intervention (RTI) to be conducted by a school psychologist or counselor and based on teacher observations, classroom observations, or standardized observation systems. They argue that in order for interventions to help manage students' challenging behaviors, we need to be clear about what their behaviours are and how they can be managed. Consequently, we need to strengthen the identification process, which must show validity and the flexibility to deal with many variables. Like alternative education and the EBD category itself, the process of entry into alternative education in School #1 is also very
subjective. According to a list provided to me by the guidance office at my school, students must be enrolled in alternative education based on the following:

- Academically frustrated, bored, or disengaged
- Retained; failing grades
- Work completion issues
- Socially withdrawn; overwhelmed by large classes
- Detached; difficulty relating to adults
- Non-traditional learning and assessment styles
- Seemingly apathetic; lack of motivation
- Mental health issues; mild learning disabilities
- Socio-economic stress; living in poverty
- Little routine or structure
- Truant, inconsistent attendance
- On probation or involved with the juvenile justice system
- Lack goals (academic, social, career, or higher education)
- Lack positive role models
- Transient or homeless
- History (personal or family) with substance abuse
- Other responsibilities (caring for child, siblings, or family member)

With my experience as a teacher/researcher of marginalized students, I argue that most of the items on this list that describe these students (though in general terms) are those that can be controlled and improved through better learning environments and the participants would seem to agree. In casual conversations about their daily experiences, they were able to identify traits that comprise what they consider to be elements of good teaching. I have heard alternative students insist that their distractions are borne out of insufficient classroom instruction; therefore, it seems that what is lacking from this list is the perspective of the students themselves.

I also observed inconsistencies in my students’ behaviour under different conditions. For example, an excerpt from my journal (Ainscow, 1999; Fielding & Bragg, 2003) revealed that an alternative student (MD) had no diagnosis of pathology nor did she come from a
poor or maladjusted home, but had been placed in an “alternative” learning environment. It poses the possibility that if she was displaying negative behaviour to better control her environment, the school could have assigned her a new learning environment where more appropriate behaviour would eventually emerge. Therefore, an investigation of the research that examines successful inclusion strategies for EBD students is needed.

This excerpt from my journal provided even more direction for examining her situation:

**Data Diary: September 2007**

*MD’s guidance counselor described her as “well-behaved and pleasant” whilst at the same time “explosive and unpredictable” by her teachers with a tendency to wander around the school during class. I remembered, however, that when she was leaving and we were finished making small talk about (for reasons I cannot recall) the price of coffee, she was met at the doorway by a friend who began to tease MD about her “Employee of the Month” picture at the local Wal-Mart. I wondered if MD had the ability to be in control of her behaviour and was choosing to access this control under different conditions.*

Though MD’s behaviour and daily experiences were important to this study, the behaviour of the guidance counselor who believed MD to be unpredictable and explosive was important too. Because the guidance counselor’s descriptions were only based on monthly meetings (the well-behaved and pleasant) and how MD was described by her teachers (explosive and unpredictable), it is an interesting and relevant phenomenon when a Wal-Mart (large convenient store in the United States), that has more and consistent access to MD’s behaviour, had rewarded her motivation and employability skills.
This entry from my journal influenced my decision to better understand how my school
defined “negative behaviour” and how in the past they attempted to correct it. Several
researchers suggest, “that there has never been a clear-cut, agreed definition for particular
kinds of behaviour in school” (Mongon & Hart, 1989, p. 27) and that “there is an
enormous grey area in which behaviour is treated as disruptive in one school or even in
one department within a school, will not be treated as such in another” (Ibid, p. 29). An
example of this can be found with researchers such as McMicheal (1979) and Scott
(1981) who believe that poor learning is a result of an initial disorder whilst Charlton and
David (1994) suggest that, “it is a common observation that continuous academic failure
can lead to behaviour problems” (p. 86).

The literature that addresses the causes of deviant behaviour would seem to offer a wide
range of explanations. There are those who believe that the way “pupils behave is
importantly affected by both the general ethos of the school and the approach to
classroom relationships characteristic of the classroom teacher” (Mongon & Hart, 1989,
p. 12) and that “due to their limited behavioural repertoires, many react to external
stimuli in stereotypical patterns: labile, aggressive, impulsive, inadequate, and/or
inappropriate behaviours that carry with them considerable ‘response cost’” (Polsgrove &
Smith, 2004, p. 401). Other literature suggests that deviant behaviour is “continuous
academic failure” (Charlton & David, 1994, p. 86), “the values acquired in the home and
the values held by the peer group” (Hargreaves, 1972, p. 168), or “persistent pattern in
which the rights of others or societal norms or rules are violated” (Furlong et al., 2004, p.
245).
My thoughts about this, however, are sympathetic with Gardner (1978), who believes that “when pressed to define precisely the criterion reference used when describing a child as having difficulties in these behavioural areas, the educator discovers that his impressions are quite qualitative and relative” (p. 107). The literature that defines the characteristics of disruptive students is also be broadly drawn: “social isolation and withdrawal” (Gresham, Kern, & Quinn, 2004, p. 270), “unauthorized student talk” (Cooper, 2000, p. 10), and “coercive or aggressive behaviour” (Hunter-Carsch et al., 2006, p. 102).

The literature seems to be divided whether students labeled with an EBD demonstrate variables (pathology, social anxieties) outside the school environment or whether the school’s environment influenced their behaviour. This argument, as Polsgrove and Smith (2004) point out, “often lies at the crux of acrimonious exchanges in the literature on special education concerning the human dignity of individuals with disabilities and their rights to self-determination” (p. 400). According to Miller (2003) differences in perspective exist in four areas - the identification of problematic students and their associated behaviours; the source of these problematic behaviours; adult responsibilities as a result of taking action; and methods of discipline.

With this in mind, it is important to note that whilst there is a wide range of literature supporting each side of this unresolved debate, schools are similarly divided. Miller (1996) found that teachers rarely identify the same student as having behaviour difficulties and Kagan (1992) suggests that this is due in part to teachers processing and interpreting their pupils’ actions according to their own professional and social experiences. As a result, a behaviour one teacher is able to ignore during a lesson can be considered a distraction with another (Molnar & Lindquist, 2009). Similarly, there also
seems to be little agreement among researchers on the nature and definition of emotional and behavioural difficulties (Achenbach, McConaughy, & Howell, 1987).

Kavale, Forness, & Mostert (2005) state:

_Basically the definitions offered lack precision and this creates vague boundary conditions among categories. Consequently, the high-incidence, mild disabilities tend to demonstrate more similarities than differences which makes it difficult to reliably differentiate among them_ (p. 45).

Some researchers like Glasser (1988) support the idea that “when a student is doing badly in school, we too often point our fingers at a dismal home when the reason really is that the student does not find school satisfying enough for him to make an effort” (p. 23).

Others believe that “weak natural advocacy systems” (Ashcroft, 1999, p. 84), maladjusted homes or pathology characterize a group of students who should be placed together in separate learning environments. However, recent literature does suggest a compromise of sorts in this area, that “whether the emotional dimension follows from behaviour, or precedes the behaviour, it is often emotional difficulties that provide the stimulus for developing defensive and offensive behaviours” (Hunter-Carsch et al., 2006, p. 2). However, Verhulst, Koot, & van der Ende (1994) argue that if data from several researchers and teachers that offers several perspectives is brought together, students with behavior difficulties are more likely to be accurately identified.

With this knowledge, I concluded that a systematic method was needed to extract what is known about academic intervention and to discover what areas need further study, especially regarding literature on student voice and academic interventions shown to have
positive effects on academic results for students labeled with an EBD in general education classrooms. I also considered ways to better understand the correlation between what my school considers to be the characteristics of a behaviour disorder and what research describes as common threads in EBD. I was able to begin by dividing research from my past feelings about students labeled with an EBD (based on outside perspectives), and my current feelings about them as their former teacher and researcher.

Organizing the literature in this way allowed me to separate topics by the issues that I could address through teaching strategies (lesson planning, social interaction, school culture) and topics over which I have no control (IQ scores, family issues, pathology). This supports my argument that interacting with students labeled with EBD leads to new perspectives to learn about them, and that these perspectives might provide more appropriate paths to improving their daily experiences.

Bearing this argument in mind, in the next section, Factors That Lead to Marginalization, I examine research on adolescent behavior in schools that considers the possibility that factors within the school can lead to low-self esteem and misbehaviour. Then, in the section that follows, Being Defined as Having EBD, I show the generalizations made about these students. I use this information in later chapters to explore how school administrators and school researchers tend to rely more on oversimplified data about EBD students and less on the need to investigate teacher preparation and attitude, school climate, and school culture. Finally in the section titled, Listening to Students, I examine current research that utilizes the voices of marginalized students.
Factors That Lead to Marginalization

According to Johnson and Johnson (1999), “a substantial number of children, teenagers, and young adults feel isolated, disconnected from their parents and peers, unattached to school and career, without purpose and direction and lacking any distinct impression of who and what kind of persons they are” (p. 4). Researchers such as Baumeister and Leary (1995) find that this isolation can be linked to many negative effects on health, regulatory skills, and self-esteem: “an indication of the need for attention regarding some facet of social experience” (Hunter-Carsch et al., 2006, p. 41).

A person’s judgment toward himself and whether or not he considers himself to be valuable or competent (Anderson & Olnhausen, 1999) is measured by how he deals with the inconsistency between his actual and his ideal self (Harter, 1982). Those who have positive self-esteem deal with these inconsistencies with realistic goals to achieve a balance between their actual and ideal world and as a result, feel that they have some control over their lives. The adolescent who believes they do not belong or feels isolated from his peers has come to this conclusion through the culmination of many scenarios that are used to gauge and deal with new ones. They tend to deal with this imbalance with needs found in “power, security, conformism and traditional values…and attribute importance to values that represent material resources, stability and predictability” (Bilsky & Schwartz, 1994, p. 163).

Research suggests that these needs become inactive when the disparity between the person’s perceived actual self and the ideal self is eliminated. This can be achieved through positive feedback that will “provide cues that help describe the type of person he
(the child) is, that define the boundaries of his involvements and commitments and that underlie the assumptions he makes about how he should treat others and be treated by them” (Coopersmith & Feldman, 1974, p. 202). Those who seek a balance between the ideal self and the actual self tend to shift their attention from family and make attempts to form relationships with teachers during their adolescent years (Jerslid, 1952). It is argued that learners who succeed in forming these relationships demonstrate higher degrees of self-esteem.

However, though students might find a positive influence in their teacher, other variables within the school such as poor climate, inappropriate tracking systems, and what is seen to be irrelevant curriculum, could negate the impact of such relationships. Furthermore, these students, who are challenged by the social and academic aspects of inclusive learning environments, are “prone to automatically respond to ‘provocative’ stimuli impulsively and inappropriately, often with little awareness or concern for the long-term consequences of their behaviour” (Polsgrove & Smith, 2006, p. 404). They can “keep to themselves and refuse to interact with their peers” (Putnam, 1991, p. 115), may be “inattentive, hyperactive, disruptive, and distractible” (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1977, p. 13) and present “unpleasant situations to their teacher that their presence- or rather their behaviour, with which the teachers cannot adequately cope” (Woody, 1969, p. 1).

Quite often these students are labeled with an EBD and placed in segregated classes or exclusive programs designed to deal with negative behaviour and “it has been found that under-achievers (in these classes) tend to have a low self-concept which often results in lack of motivation from cognitive learning” (Charlton & David, 1994, p. 87). I agree
with Lawrence and Steadman (1984) who argue that at the heart of this dilemma are teachers who are reluctant to admit that the foundation for a student’s misbehaviour could be in their teaching and not in the student’s inability or unwillingness to learn. As a result, teachers will, in my experience, adopt counter-productive strategies and promote disagreeable learning environments. As these students move into secondary schools and they realize that some of their teachers actually “regard them with contempt, they will tend whenever possible to respond aggressively. The elite, in turn, try to impede the process of popular emergence” (Friere, 1974, p. 49). This can often lead to a population of students who are at high risk of failure and dropping out of school and who are also at high risk for maladjustment in adulthood (Kazdin, 1987).

Though some teachers will investigate whether troublesome behaviour is due to boredom, a reaction to disciplinary strategies (Woody, 1969) or academic anxieties, there are others who “may ‘cope’ by falling back on defensive control just to ‘keep going’; feeling anger about their competence under attack, and their best efforts frustrated by seemingly unresponsive pupils who make them feel useless” (Hunter-Carsch et al., 2006, p. 146) and impede the delivery of curriculum. They have been known to “take the easy option” (Gray & Noakes, 1987, p. 23) and recommend that their disruptive students join isolated programs that deal with deviance or follow a judicial process that will eventually lead to the student’s removal from class.

In this scenario, it seems that “the child is disturbed when an adult authority says he is, i.e., when the child’s behaviour is seriously discrepant from that desired by his adult caretakers” (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1977, p. 140). The decision to exclude the student
only adds to the elements that comprise their negative feelings about school: “The paradox is that the social reaction, which was intended to control, punish or eliminate the deviant act, has come to shape, stabilize and exacerbate the deviance” (Hargreaves, 1975 et al., p. 77).

Therefore, before understanding how a student comes to be labeled with an EBD and how this affects their education, it is important to report what research says are the generalizations that have been made about them. These include demographic information, lack of academic and social success, post-school outcomes, and internalizing and externalizing disorders (Merrell & Walker, 2004). Reporting the literature in this way supports my later arguments that reform efforts that rely on generalizations about students, especially those labeled with an EBD, might worsen current social and academic anxieties, provoke those that the student was able to self-manage, and create new ones by convincing the student they exist.

**Being Defined as Having EBD**

McLean (1987) found that disruption in schools is often analysed in terms of individual pupils and the causes are generally located within the child and the child's family background. Similarly, Royer (2005) noted a gap between research and practice in this area: “there remains a very strong tendency to target the EBD student or his family as being the problem” (p. 373). Research suggests that the within child model (Ellins & Porter, 2005) continues to be very prevalent in schools (Ibid) and though there are a wide range of factors that contribute to this, such as teaching styles and “inappropriate
curriculum” (Davies, 2005, p. 306) school leaders are under pressure to locate the cause of behaviour issues within individual students instead of examining teaching methods, organization, and management (Galloway & Goodwyn, 1987).

Davies (2005) has found that there has been research that utilizes the voices of mainstream students for academic reform, but “very few authors have focused on pupils with EBD” (p. 302). Consequently, I argue that the research some schools choose to utilize in hopes of improving the educational and social lives of their disruptive students tends to examine involuntary qualities of the student, such as IQ (Kauffman, 2005), gender (Cullinan et al., 2004), internalizing/externalizing disorders (Lund & Merrill, 2001) family background (McLean, 1987), peer interaction (Moore & Simpson, 1983), and other variables out of their control. For instance, there is data that shows that students with EBD differ as a group demographically from the general student population regarding gender, as males comprise a majority of the EBD population (Cullinan et al., 2004). Rice, Merves, and Srsic (2008) point out that a “myriad of factors contribute to the underidentification of girls for EBD services” (p. 550) largely based on developmental differences in females during adolescence and the distinct relationships teachers have with similar or opposite genders.

There is also research that suggests that students classified as EBD differ as a group demographically from the general student population regarding intelligence scores. Though some students have IQ scores that range from mentally challenged to gifted (US terminology), most EBD students fall between average and lower than average intelligence (Kauffman, 2005). Students with low IQ’s are more likely to receive special education assistance in self-contained classrooms, whilst students with low to average
IQ’s, who also exhibit external behaviours, are more likely to be educated in alternative settings due to disciplinary infractions (Furlong et al., 2004). Some of this information is often disputed. Woody (1969) suggests that “in areas unrelated to the unacceptable behaviours, may be quite normal and possibly superior to other children” (p. 7) and there is further research that suggests, “the externalizing problem behaviors of students with EBD appear to be related to language functioning” (Benner, Allor, & Mooney, 2008, p. 308).

Other characteristics of externalizing disorders include aggression (Xie, Cairns, & Cairns, 1999), disruption (Scott & Shearer-Lingo, 2002) and violent behaviour (Gumpel, 2008). Characteristics of internalizing disorders include anxiety, depression (Davis, Sheeber, & Hops, 2002) social withdrawal (Sutherland, 2000), and mood disorders (Kauffman, 2005). However, much of what is known about making improvements for students classified as EBD tends to be based on externalizing behaviour. This is perhaps because those behaviours tend to cause teachers more difficulty whilst internalizing behaviours tend to go unnoticed (Gresham, Kern, & Quinn, 2004). Consequently, mainstream teachers and administrators tend to only recommend students for special services who display externalizing disorders. An example can be found in the Student Risk Screening Scale (SRSS). A one-page screening instrument designed to allow teachers to assess the degree of risk, the SRSS tends to report externalizing more than internalizing behaviours (Lane et al., 2005).

Despite these efforts, however, students who are segregated for special services in the form of self-contained alternative settings or special education programs (in the United
States) tend to be unsuccessful academically and adopt anti-social behaviours (Landrum et al., 2003). Whilst there are studies that positively support the inclusion of these students into mainstream classroom, (based upon self-esteem, academic outcomes and dropout prevention), there are others that do not (Morin, 2001). Nevertheless, the population of these students being educated in mainstream classrooms is growing (Sawka, McCurdy, & Mannella, 2002). Yet, mainstream teachers report feeling unprepared to teach these students (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996) and as a result, they are more likely to exclude students reported as having an EBD from their classrooms (Schumm & Vaughn, 1991; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). However, there is evidence to suggest that alternative programs that remove students from mainstream classes increase self-esteem (Lange & Lehr, 1997; Strathe & Hache, 1979). Though there has not been a considerable amount of research in this area, some researchers have found these positive effects are related to features of alternative classes such as, smaller class size (Flower, McDaniel, & Jolivette, 2011), more opportunities to access the teacher (Lamperes, 1994), improved relationships with teachers (Natriello, 1998), and professional development (Aaron, 2006). However, Quinn & Poirier (2006) argue:

*Many of these characteristics are in need of empirical study and hence questionable: it is unclear whether these characteristics produce positive outcomes or are generally correlated with positive outcomes. Further, in most instances the characteristics are discussed in a descriptive context without any discussion of their relationship to program or student success academic outcomes show mixed to negative results* (p. 16).
There is also only a small amount of research that examines alternative classes and their academic outcomes (Lange & Sletten, 2002). A few studies in the United States showed a majority of standardized tests scores declined (Carruthers & Baenen, 1997; Dugger & Dugger, 1998) and that these students make “progress whilst enrolled but regress(ing) when they return to a more traditional school” (Arnot, 2006, p. 5). Consequently, I agree with Davis, Brutseart-Durant, & Lee (2002) who argue there needs to be a “comprehensive and rigorous mechanism for admitting the ‘right students’ to the program” because, as the National Center on Educational Outcomes states: “information on alternative routes is not always easily accessible, and that once found, it is still not always easy to find some of the most basic information about the route” (Thurlow, Vang, & Cormier, 2010, p. 1). The inability to collect relevant data on academic outcomes in alternative programs is perhaps due to teachers who “implement grading strategies that allow for recognition of the achievements of the individual in relation to how far he has progressed, rather than how he compares with the rest of the group” (Zeller, 1966, p. 31).

The research presented thus far only represents a small portion of the research on the factors that lead to the marginalization of EBD students, the characteristics of EBD students, and the characteristics of their learning environments. However, it is clear these sometimes conflicting, competing, and overlapping areas of research could be misleading if they were used to guide reform efforts, and perhaps this ambiguity is the source of marginalization for these students. For instance, Davis, Sheeber, and Hops (2002) identify depression as a characteristic of EBD, yet a critical analysis of related research would be necessary to help determine the cause and symptoms of depression in a particular school. Only considering research that emphasizes variables outside the school
might encourage those who lead reform efforts to rely on outside agencies to counsel students or encourage the teachers who manage them to address this issue within their curriculum. On the other hand, if school leaders identify variables within the school as a source of depression, then they might address this issue by examining the daily experiences of their “depressed” students, re-evaluate how they characterize and manage them, and support these efforts with relevant literature.

With this in mind, I felt that it was not helpful to investigate deeply EBD as a field of study to determine the best routes to reform. Instead, I argue that the only way to accurately determine what area of research is most appropriate for examining the characteristics associated with EBD is to utilize the perspectives of the students labeled as such. My own experiences remind me that the consequence of conducting research about students before consulting them is the students are used to validate what has already been determined about them. For example, when my principal sought to address self-esteem through self-defense, many students were punished for not participating. He concluded through this experience that my students’ self-esteem was perhaps lower than he had expected and measures should be taken to address this “level” of depression. However, when I asked my students why they refused the self-defense lessons, their answer for not doing so was simple: They did not want to be seen leaving the school as a group in front of their peers. Investigating these comments further would perhaps lead to these students’ thoughts on their identity within the school than it would causes of depression outside the school.
Listening to Students

Over the past ten years, as a result of programs like No Child Left Behind in the United States, “the field of EBD has been engaged in an effort to define itself as a set of standardized, evidence-based practices and to countering the effects critiques, and faulty interpretations of data” (Sasso, 2004, p. 60) by examining classroom practice, especially in areas of behaviour difficulty and student voice (Mitra, 2008). Student voice and the teaching strategies that utilize these skills have been considered, attempted, assessed, and reflected upon by researchers: “If we want to nurture students who will grow into life-long learners... then we need to give them opportunities to practice making choices and reflecting on the outcomes” (Schneider, 1996, p. 26). Rudduck and Flutter (2000) also argue:

*The traditional exclusion of young people from the consultative process, the bracketing out of their voice, is founded upon an outdated view of childhood that fails to acknowledge children’s capacity to reflect on issues affecting their lives. The need to take student perspectives into account when planning school improvement is pressing* (p. 80).

Lately teachers are beginning to accept the importance and usefulness of listening to their students and the benefits of doing so. Researchers have started to focus on students communicating with teachers, administration, and with each other (Johnson, 2009; Rayyes, 2009). Researchers such as Fielding (2011) suggest that that a majority of students desire stronger connections with adults and also desire to be consulted in the educational process in and out of the classroom. Researchers argue that one way of achieving this is
to raise students’ responsibilities in the school and community (Golombek, 2002), as they have been successful in raising the attitudes of students and teachers (Morgan, 2001). This method not only helps students develop a sense of connection, it is also recognized as an important element in the introduction of new educational programs (Ericson & Ellett, 2002).

Other studies that examine the incorporation of student voice in the educational process showed increased student motivation (Furrer & Skinner, 2003), a heightened sense of work ethic (Morgan & Streb, 2001), improved leadership abilities (McKibben, 2004), and an increase in classroom participation (Mitra, 2003). By consulting students in lesson preparation, teachers create a cooperative learning environment (Seiler, 2011) that improves students' confidence in teachers as leaders as well as teachers’ confidence in students’ ability to enhance their curriculum and participate school-wide research (Wilson & Corbett, 2001).

The thoughts, feelings and opinions of students in regard to their education has also been the focus of much research over the past few decades and may reflect an important awareness for listening to adolescents to influence school policy, curriculum, and classroom management. Whilst Cooper (1993) suggests that student voice “provides us with a richly textured account that is available from no other source,” (p. 129) there are those who tend to dismiss this trend as a passing educational fad or devalue these voices by giving more weight to particular students’ perceptions and less to others.
This is especially true for students labeled with an EBD, whose voices might be
disregarded due to their perceived emotional deficiencies. If a teacher or administrator
only considers the generalized characteristics of an EBD student (low IQ, low self-
esteeem, depressed, and aggressive) I argue that they would be less likely to consult them
in areas of school reform that provoke their negative behaviours: curriculum, class size,
graduation requirements, access to technology, etc. Researchers such as Flutter (2006)
point out that when these students “are not consulted about proposed changes to their
learning environment, their response to ‘improvements’ can sometimes be oppositional”
(p. 186).

When voice is considered in this context, it is aimed more at the improvement of the
whole school than it is for “at risk” groups or individuals (Fielding, 2004). This is
especially frustrating to researchers such as Cooper (1993) who believe that “the pupils’
perspectives taken in conjunction with other evidence can help us to identify models of
good practice that enable us to develop deep insights into the nature and treatment of
EBD” (p. 129). When the voices of teachers and students are not considered to be
authentic in the research process, some researchers have argued that the planning and
implementation of reform “correspond(s) to their own view of the world, but not that of
the people” (Freire, 1970, p. 75).

Because voices of marginalized students have rarely been acknowledged in research,
there exists a lack of a refined methodology, especially ones that employ dialogue to
identify and connect successful strategies and positive behaviour management through
their (the students’) eyes. Yet, as Freire (1970) points out, “dialogue cannot occur
between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming-
between those who deny others to speak their word and those whose right to speak has
been denied them” (p. 69). There are researchers, however, who believe that though
student perspectives might challenge those of teachers and faculty, differing perspectives
can offer paths to a better understanding of student behaviour. Once the perspectives and
opinions are free from “right” or “wrong” labels, a gathering of viewpoints can enhance
information being used in decision-making: “The fact that pupils and teachers may
describe the same event in different ways does not mean that either description is false”
(Galloway, 1982, p. 48).

Though literature that examines these issues suggests that strategies for utilizing the
voices of marginalized students is difficult to find (Rubin & Silva, 2003), there is student
voice research that offers insight into approaches and explores various themes in this
area. The following researchers inspired me to think about strategies for extracting
student voice in the context of my own teaching experiences. These researchers explore
communication between students and teachers to examine role expectations and student
voice research, challenge educational standards and classroom strategies, connect student
voice and self-esteem, and examine the role school hierarchy plays when employing
student voice as a foundation for research.

By transforming parts of a traditional secondary school in the United States into small
learning communities, Rayyes (2009) examined the relationship between students’ sense
of belonging and academic achievement. The small learning communities implemented
cooperative lesson planning, allowed students to have more access to their teachers, and
provided students the opportunity to help design the curriculum. Comparing the academic success of the small community students to their mainstream peers showed the importance of students working together in this type of environment and the power of students as decision-makers. A similar study by Nieto (1994) found that when students who were known for being disruptive were given the opportunity to take part in school reform, they felt an increase in their sense of self-worth and belonging.

In his investigation into student voice, Beresford (2000) used data generated from surveys in 40 schools across the United Kingdom to suggest pathways to curriculum reform related to classroom conditions and to provide a focus for communication. His findings include:

- Students of both genders highlight the high frequency of behaviours over which they feel they have some control;
- Students find it difficult to accurately assess how well they are doing, and how they can improve;
- There are few opportunities for independent learning;
- Teachers use a restricted teaching repertoire.

Cook-Sather (2002) argues that in order to involve students in school reform, surveys and studies should be abandoned in favor of asking them directly and by creating activities that challenge framework of schools. Ericson and Ellett (2002) argue that “students are as causally central as educators in bringing about higher educational achievement” (p. 31) and challenge the conceptual framework of the current educational reform by arguing that it might actually be promoting indifference. Using the voices of students as a foundation for research, these authors also argue that removing grades and other forms of reward,
though radical, should be at the heart of educational reform. Though their research seems to challenge the current trend to “mandate” education standards useful in society and business through standardized tests, Kurth-Schai (1988) proposed that re-conceptualizing the roles of the role of youth in the classroom, areas of curricular emphasis, and the role of the school in society have powerful implications for schools. They state:

Yet, regardless of social and historical context prevailing adult expectations exert significant influence on the range and nature of thought and action expressed by children. It is therefore essential that educational policies and practices are developed on the basis of expectations that are both realistic and non-limiting, thereby allowing young people to express their full potential in supportive and safe environments... this essential issue seems to have been repeatedly overlooked (p. 115).

Kushman and Shanessey (1997) use several qualitative data-gathering methods to analyse the voices of a wide range of students from across the United States. In reference to students’ perspectives about school reform, the authors conclude that the participants provide meaningful answers to questions about their experiences, that they are aware that though reform is occurring in their schools they are rarely consulted, and that there are many ways to access and implement student and teachers’ voices. Lincoln’s (1995) research emphasized the significance of using multiple perspectives when considering the role of student voice in school reform and Cook-Sather (2002) also conducted similar research in this area. She argued that “authorizing student perspectives means ensuring that there are legitimate and valued spaces within which students can speak, re-tuning our
ears so that we can hear what they say, and redirecting our actions in response to what we hear.” (p. 4).

After an inquiry on the current use of student involvement and voice, Levin (2000) argues that:

- School reform requires participation and support from students, teachers and administration and therefore students should be involved in formal reform processes;
- Students offer new and unique perspectives that can lead to more accurate reform and should be provided training in doing so;
- Students and their collective voices have power within the community and can provide the opportunity for bringing many more perspectives into the process;
- Constructivist learning requires collaboration between teachers and students.

Another researcher conducted a comparative analysis of two schools that attempted to engage students in school reform by identifying and testing successful and failed strategies (Mitra, 2003). Her study sought to remedy the discrepancy of information by making parallel the roles of students and teachers, who often are the least informed, about school reform. Oldfather (1995) offers a variety of perspectives on student voice, using students’ perceptions to strengthen the argument for student involvement. The stories told here encourage educators to seriously engage students “to participate in the construction of their own learning environments (but) as research partners in examining questions of learning” (p. 131) whilst at the same time warning them that they must resist the temptation to exploit student voices. Reed (1998) examined a school that involved students, teachers, and administrators in dialogues about school reform. Through a wide
range of qualitative methodologies, he found that anxiety due to role expectations and administrative pedagogy set the tone for student involvement.

Rubin and Silva (2003) found that using student voice, especially those students who do not experience inclusion in school reform is not only rare; but also, is reported in a language that tends to misrepresent them when it does happen: “Yet, more often than not, the student perspective is often represented in fixed and uncomplicated terms that undermine the true agency and diversity of students and student experiences” (p. 1).

Rudduck and Flutter (2004) successfully explored diverse groups of young people who were trained in basic research methods and spent six weeks in teams looking at eight schools. This project demonstrated that students are not only taking different roles in schools, but that it is also important to think and reflect on aspects of learning that are important to them.

Based on the three-year study conducted in five Philadelphia low-performing middle schools, Wilson and Corbett (2001) offered a broad account of what middle school students think about their education. The authors argue that student input will result in change that is noticeable by students and teachers where as other types of reform tend to only affect teachers and administration. Tolman et al. (2003) provided a summary of current youth-centered school reforms taking place around the world intending to connect the components by detailing how this reform is happening in a variety of settings.

Kellett (2006) implemented an action research project that examines the involvement of pre-adolescents in action research. Her findings show that student engagement in school
reform, especially when they are given the opportunity to choose their roles, provides student ownership that leads to an elevated sense of self-esteem. However, she states:

This new era has seen children invited onto steering groups and involved in some aspects of data collection. However, criticism is still leveled at the tokenism of this participation, the adult manipulation, unequal power-relations and the adult focus of such research. It is the adults who frame the research questions, choose the methods and control the analysis. For the most part, children are unequal partners (p. 2).

Similarly, Thomas (2007) recounts a collaborative research project with marginalized students that did not run to plan because (in her opinion) the school’s hierarchical framework led to negative feelings about student voice.

**Summary**

Research that incorporates student voice a foundation for school improvement aims to provide new perspectives for more accurate school reform. These voices challenge structure and school culture whilst providing teachers with practical advice and student participants a new sense of ownership that improves self-esteem. However, having examined the literature on student voice in research, I agree with researchers such as Cooper (1993), Fielding (2004), and Flutter (2006) who believe that when the voices of marginalized students are used to examine and resolve issues, only the expressions of certain students and faculty members tend to underpin this effort, and the route to school improvement is therefore inconsistent. In this way, we could also draw a parallel
between researchers who employ student voice as part of school reform efforts, and the
tendency for schools to favor research that spotlights variables they cannot improve.

With this in mind, I considered the following questions:

• Can we access the voices of students marginalized with an EBD more
effectively?

• Can data generated by research into the perceptions of these marginalized
  students lead to improvements in the academic and social experiences of
  students labeled with an EBD?

The next chapter addresses these questions through the formation and implementation of
a research design.
Chapter 2: The Development of a Methodology for Exploring Student Voice

Introduction

Having outlined the theoretical context for the study, in this chapter I explain how I developed an appropriate methodology for carrying out the research. In so doing I make use of relevant literature about qualitative approaches, specifically action research.

The issues I discuss are summarized in the following narrative diagram:

I began *Exploring Action Research* as a possible research model. I then examined the *Theoretical Underpinnings* of action research and considered heuristic inquiry as a foundation for investigation. I then *Designed an Action Research Model* in the United Kingdom where I employed a triangulation of methods in a *Pilot Study* and found success. Time to examine the *Pilot Study Results* prompted a *Pilot Study Reflection* where I considered the *Limitations of the Study* before I conducted a formal study in the United States.

Exploring Action Research

Action research involves a range of approaches all of which set out to understand social situations within their own context in order to improve them (Winter, 1989). When used in education, action research can generate knowledge by bringing theory and practice together, putting the teacher in the “dual role of producer of educational theory and user
of that theory” (Bostock, 2006, p. 1). Within the context of this study, the goal of action research and its process become the same entity: “The practice of teaching others becomes the process of learning about oneself. The process of learning about oneself becomes the object of research” (McNiff, 1993, p. 59).

Some researchers have argued that data gathering becomes more authentic when pupils are involved in the research process and information is gathered that could align their social and cognitive worlds (Fielding & Bragg, 2003). For example: “Asking students for their views about what would increase their performance... could re-inform current educational reform discussions or advance educational practice” (Iceman-Sands et al., 2007, p. 324). It should be noted, however, that if the weight of participation between teacher and student is not balanced, “their capacities for participation become limited” (Frost, 2007, p. 442), hindering any benefits that might be gained and could lead to improvement in the wrong direction.

According to Shor (1987), “once we accept education’s role as challenging inequality and dominant myths rather than as socializing students into the status quo” (p. 15), schools can achieve what some researchers refer to as “mutual humanization,” an effort by which teachers and students make personal connections by way of critical thinking (Friere, 1970). Knowledge must be obtained by active dialogue (Giroux, 1988) with a “profound trust in people and their creative power. To achieve this, they must be partners of the students in their relationships with them” (Friere, 1970, p. 56) in order to develop a language that deals with issues that students experience in their daily school lives, especially in the classroom. These “hidden voices” (Ibid) are “essential for educators to
uncover, as they have the power to block learning” (Wallerstein, 1987, p. 35). However, this type of research with adolescents, who display behaviour that is difficult to manage, may be neglected, due to an inability on the part of teachers and researchers to accept their voices as being of value (Lubbe, 1986).

Additionally, Arnot and Reay (2007) point to Moore and Muller (1999) who believe that developments in this type of research undermine scientific research because they rely too heavily on “oral, context-dependant and segmentally organized local knowledges” (p. 312). Though recent research in student voice has addressed these concerns (Woods, 1990; Ruddock et al., 1995; Burke & Grosvenor, 2003; Flutter & Rudduck, 2004; Flutter, 2006; Gunter & Thompson, 2007), student voice research is still lacking in methodological strength. According to Smith and Duniac (2004), this is due to “the delicate balance of conducting research with sufficient external and social validity (i.e., feasibility, sustainability, and practical significance across real classroom settings) whilst maintaining adequate internal validity (i.e., scientific rigor)” (Conroy, Stitchter, Daunic, & Hayden, 2008, p. 211).

Whilst there are researchers who recognize that a student who has been labeled with a behaviour difficulty might be someone who is being provoked by “a temporary or transitory problem” (Woody, 1969, p. 7), qualitative research that examines the daily school experiences of marginalized students can be quite difficult: “There is a need for the adult professional conceptualization of the student to be both challenged and informed by how the students understand themselves and how they experience school” (Gunter & Thompson, 2007, p. 183). This is especially true when one considers that the
way a student perceives himself is not always related to his real performance (Dunning, 2005).

Often personal narratives have been used as a vehicle to investigate student experiences to “portray the world with immediacy as they see it, to create a monograph on meaning in which youngsters are conscious collaborators” (Ayers, 1990, p. 272). Though this type of self-expression can be valuable in the context of a lesson, they can be especially difficult for teachers who intend to investigate the school lives of students, but who might not have the ability to analyse and communicate what they intend to find (Bernstein, 1990) and who must distinguish between student voice and student talk. There is a need “to develop more subtle research methodologies which can elicit the tacit rules or transmission and the tacit voice of a particular social category, rather than its surface expressions in student talk… which only certain social groups have access to and can employ when consulted” (Anrot & Raey, 2007, p. 323).

These students, referred to by Bernstein (1990) as the “yet to be voiced,” often do not recognize themselves as competent students, yet find themselves under scrutiny to improve classroom management. Therefore, the data collected in qualitative studies into the school experiences of students who have been labeled with an EBD can be difficult to analyse. For instance, in the context of classroom management, this type of inquiry could lead to results that merely answer whether a strategy worked, but not look into a deeper understanding of its generalizability. Therefore, I found it necessary to incorporate a type of inquiry that utilizes several perspectives during analysis including my own.
Theoretical Underpinnings

Though the study borrowed qualitative methods (interviews, observation, field notes) and approaches (phenomenology, ethnography, hermeneutics) from the interpretive paradigm, it used participants as researchers to implement change within the environment under scrutiny. This is underpinned by the idea that “knowledge is derived from practice, and practice is informed by knowledge, in an on-going process” (O’Brien, 1998, para. 18); therefore, it is closer to the paradigm of praxis. The foundation of action research is an ongoing cycle of planning, action, monitoring, and reflection (Kemmis, 1998). The methodology in this study also intended to follow suit with a cycle that brings together a triangulation of methods designed to check one another as they proceed. Also rooted in the notion of heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1994), the study was designed to explore the places identified in their school where students feel valued, to observe those places to better understand their selection, and to identify the common characteristics of those places through observation.

The research design was also inspired by the idea of heuristic research, where “the essences of experience rather than measurements and explanations” are explored (Moustakas, 1994, p. 21). This approach favors a type of inquiry that is based on perspectives more than outcomes, allowing the researcher and the participant’s perceptions of an experience to drive the research. This validates Moustakas’ belief that at the center of self-awareness is the incorporation of knowledge, experience, and behaviour. When this belief is the foundation for inquiry, the researcher also exists at the center of investigation, to the extent that he or she is also considered to be a participant.
(Moustakas, 1994). In this way heuristic research distinguishes itself from other qualitative methods that tend to reject the influence of the researcher.

At the heart of my experience as a teacher and researcher is the idea that self-awareness leads to empowerment. Therefore, the heuristic themes that underpin this study would seem to be logical. Quantitative methods would appear less suitable, given the nature of this research project, as they would be unlikely to support a “reflection on experience as the basis for development” (Ainscow, 1999, p. 40). In keeping with heuristic inquiry, occasionally the reader will find excerpts from a data diary, as recommended to me by my supervisor. The original function of this diary was to inform the university of progress whilst conducting fieldwork. In this chapter, however, the excerpts are used to demonstrate to the reader the influence of self-inquiry on the research model (Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991). The next section demonstrates how I used self-inquiry, experience, and theory to create a research model.

**Designing an Action Research Model**

The following sections describe how my research design was formulated in the context of theory (learning about myself through experience) and the cyclical foundations of action research. McNiff (1993) gives an example using the model proposed by Kemmis (1988) to illustrate what this involves (Figure 1):
In the following two sections *Cycle One: Informal to Curiosity* and *Cycle Two: Curiosity to Questions* I revisit and examine my early thoughts about my students and effective lesson planning through the lens of action research. In so doing, I argue that the way I planned lessons and attempted to resolve issues of clarity in my own teaching environment resembled the cyclical components of action research and therefore was an appropriate way for me to conduct research. These sections also demonstrate how these early curiosities and thoughts about my students resembled the cycles of action research and how these cycles led to a pilot study.
Cycle One: Informal Observations to Curiosity

One example of a collaborative lesson found my students reading about haunted places in New England. After spending a day telling each other ghost stories and personal experiences of the supernatural, I arranged a class outing to a “haunted place”. A student suggested the use of ghost hunting equipment to determine whether the place was really haunted. The students became empowered and with the guidance of the teacher (researcher), it began to resemble a research project.

Some members of staff reduced the lesson to a novelty without considering its educational value. Others however pointed out the cyclical nature of the way the students directed their curiosities: They watched a documentary on ghost hunting and their interest inspired them to construct a logical way to undertake their own study. But instead of inquiring about the collaborative nature of the classroom to enhance their own practices, some colleagues seemed to see in my program a justification for exclusion, making it an easier and perhaps guilt-free option. The following diagram represents my thoughts during this time using an action research cycle (Figure 2).

This experience evoked my curiosity regarding the benefits of including student voice in the context of lesson planning. It also introduced the question of how some of the students arrived in this class, and why there seemed to be a curious need among other teachers to have them excluded from their classes.
I came to recognize that through this type of lesson planning, my students showed as much interest as any students I had taught previously, perhaps more so. Further investigation into the process by which students were placed in this program revealed “conflicting objectives” (Woody, 1969, p. 7) as teachers appeared to have been coerced into supporting a “form of exclusion by which schools persuade both parents and the students themselves to collude in their exclusion” (Stirling, 1992, p. 128).
Cycle Two: Curiosity to Questions

Dick (1997) points out that in research “intention or planning precedes action, and critique or review follows” (para. 11). Though there was no plan at this point to conduct a formal study, a cycle of research had begun to emerge based on a curiosity: *Why is my school spending so much money hiring outside agencies to manage alternative students when we already have staff who manage them well?* Gerald Susman’s (1983) more detailed action research cycle encompasses the situation in the school that inspired this study as it provides more room to categorize the scattered and nebulous nature of my thoughts (Figure 3):

![Diagram of Action Research Cycle 2: “Curiosity to Questions”](image-url)

*Figure 3: Action Research Cycle 2: “Curiosity to Questions”*
An excerpt from my data diary will show the reader how this first cycle of curiosity led to
the idea of doing a formal study:

**Data Diary: August 2006**

*My recommendations, based solely on teaching experience, suggested that perhaps these students gain social deficits because of inadequate teaching, and that we should use our resources to learn from teachers who already manage these students well. At that point in my career I had not done much research into what other schools were doing to better understand the management of students with behaviour difficulties and what I considered to be the negative effects of exclusion. Though some of my colleagues believed my ideas made sense, they were not interested in how we manage EBD students as much as they were annoyed at the mismanagement of school funds.*

Kleinman and Copp (1993) suggest that, “sometimes we are unaware that our setting has a stigma in the professional community until our colleagues and friends react to it” (p. 6). Though they are referring more to the role of an established researcher, I began to notice that even at this level of inquiry (dialogues with colleagues and administration), my motives were perhaps seen by my colleagues as self-serving. This was not entirely untrue as there was no real concern about funds and the amount the school was spending on outside agencies; I simply knew how to appeal to my colleagues in a way that would get their attention. Though there was a strong urge to achieve this attention in the context of my observations and concerns, I began to see that without a plan and without pulling myself out of context this would be an impossibility.
Pilot Study

With the idea of “pulling my self out of context” in mind, I gained permission to leave my school for the purposes of study at the University of Manchester. The rationale for leaving the United States and moving to England was based solely on the idea that it would take me out of the environment that influences the way my school behaves. For instance, my colleagues produce high levels of learning, yet many of them do not consider their work as “knowledge generation” and often, for a variety of reasons, seek out external research and advice. I argue that when this occurs, they tend to rely on inconsequential rather than significant solutions and, consequently, become disconnected with the changing culture of their school. To address this issue, School #1 needed to find ways to reduce the disparity in instruction across classrooms by encouraging teachers to investigate their own the best practices. My role as researcher and change agent, then, was to demonstrate how gaining a new perspective outside classrooms, but within the school, can help teachers develop strategies that are necessary to go from informed prescriptions to informed professional judgment.

Whilst offering a new perspective and a chance to see a part of the world that has always been a curiosity, the on-line credentials of the researchers at the University of Manchester seemed to be more rooted in practical solutions for school improvement.

This became even more evident to me after listening to a lecture at the university from Ian Kaplan whose work using participatory photography was an influence for the development and implementation of a pilot study:
Students can use cameras to take their own photographs as a way of considering their perspectives about school and inclusion. Their photographs can be a form of evidence, but also a means of reflecting on and sharing their experience of school and education: a way of making their ‘voices’ heard (Kaplan, 2006, para. 5).

What was appealing about Kaplan’s work is that whilst it gives students an opportunity to use their voices in a creative way, it is also designed to consider the perspective and interpretation of teachers and administrators. It was, therefore, helpful as I developed my approach. At the same time, Doucette’s (2004) “Walk and Talk” therapy “designed to provide a support network that encourages youths… to discover solutions by way of simple interventions whilst experiencing positive regard in Rogerian fashion” (pp. 375-376) also had an impact of the design of the methodology. The following extract from my research diary, illustrates how, through a university course that required me to observe practices in one particular school, I set about constructing the beginnings of an appropriate methodology:

Data Diary: February 2006

My tour guide, feeling perhaps that I was uncomfortable, introduced me as an American from the university. As we progressed down the various corridors of the school, she would frequently stop by the doors of her favorite teachers and staff members to introduce me, and the unprompted narrative she provided at each stop was intriguing. Quite often through this tour she would tell me about a teacher she liked and the things that occurred in that class: ‘I love her, we made dinner in that class and the teachers ate it.’ Sometimes she would be more specific: ‘She’s so nice, she helped me with my reading,’ and sometimes we would skip over rooms entirely. I realized that if I had the opportunity to interview her, if she had been on the headmaster’s list, she was providing me with an excellent
prompt for doing so. In this school for (mostly) boys with behaviour difficulties my tour guide showed me that empowerment through role reversal, where the student has the knowledge and the teacher is curious, leads to a self-discovery that can begin to provide a deep understanding on the daily school experience of a student.

Hegarty (1997) argues that “teacher as well as peer attitudes have been studied over and over again from the standpoint that they constitute the main reason why social integration fails” (p. 28). A study by Werthman (1963) suggests that students labeled delinquent often create difficulties for some teachers and not with others based on the student’s ideas of authority, fairness, and justice. Therefore, the strategies of the teachers with whom these students find success are often go unexplored: “There was no research that focused on what schools were already doing to create conditions that would engage all students – especially those most vulnerable to exclusion – more productively in all areas of school life” (Cooper, 2000, p. 4).

It was through my teaching experiences, Kaplan’s participatory photography work, and the triangulation of methods found in action research that the formulation for a methodology began to emerge (see Figure 4). It was a visit to a school for (mostly) boys with behaviour difficulties that helped me put this together. I extracted data from a collaboration of observations, interviews, and school tours with students as “active participants in research methods” (Prosser, 1998, p. 235) in the pilot study. It offered an interpretation of data concerning student voice and investigation of whether there is a “gap between what they say and do” (Shipman, 1988, p. 74), with the intention of identifying through their voices where, in their daily school experiences, they find success.
School Tours

Interviews

Map Analysis

Thematic Coding

Observations

Thematic Analysis

Student Lesson Plan

Figure 4: Pilot Study Methodology

Pilot Study School Information

My pilot study took place in an English special school that I will call Westside. It caters for 55 students (ages 9-16) with emotional, behavioural, and social difficulties. Fifteen teaching staff members and 14 support staff give a 7 to 1 student-teacher ratio. Community relationships, parental involvement, staff commitment and training, plus partnerships with other agencies have earned Westside two “good” Ofsted reports, three Investor in People awards, the European Eco Award, the School Achievement Award and Schools Curriculum Award.

The curriculum at Westside allows its students to experience a wide range of subjects. A core curriculum is supported by electives that include technology (food technology, ceramics, resistant materials), modern foreign languages, emotional literacy, and Young
Enterprise. All classes are equipped with modern technology: interactive whiteboards, computer clusters, digital cameras, and updated educational software.

Six participants were invited to provide me with a tour of the school and were asked to show me places that they considered to be a good representation of their experiences. To help them in the decision-making process, they were only allowed five minutes (to avoid places like storage rooms, toilets, and laundry/kitchen facilities). Using a topographical map of the school, the progress of the tour record was recorded by applying numbers to represent chronology. Where Kaplan’s work focused on the results (student photographs), this was an attempt to focus on the process (the tour) and the results (the maps). This would provide an individualized script for the interview and the opportunity to better see the places identified by the participant.

Figure 5: Pilot Study Map (Participant #1)
The maps of all six participants were compared to identify common places. The locations were considered a valid map entry based on the following criteria:

- Did the participant physically stop at this location?
- Did the participant talk about his experiences in this location?
- Did the participant introduce a teacher or staff member in this location?
- Did the student make an effort to notice if the location was being recorded?

The common places at were the ICT Room (computer lab), the art room, Mr. 1, and Mrs. 4. The school tours provided an excellent script for interviewing. The raw data is represented in Table 1. Each column represents the progress of one student (represented by their initials) through the school tour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DS</th>
<th>JC</th>
<th>DC</th>
<th>RF</th>
<th>DD</th>
<th>JW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Ent.</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Mrs. 4</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Mrs. 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall</td>
<td>(In) Garden</td>
<td>Mr. 6</td>
<td>Mrs. 4</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Mrs. 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. 3</td>
<td>Mrs. 4</td>
<td>(Out) Garden</td>
<td>Mr. 6</td>
<td>Main Ent.</td>
<td>Mrs. 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Out Rm.</td>
<td>Mrs. 3</td>
<td>Mr. 1</td>
<td>Mrs. 2</td>
<td>Mrs. 4</td>
<td>Mrs. 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(In) Garden</td>
<td>Leaver’s</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Leaver’s</td>
<td>Mr. 8</td>
<td>Leaver’s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Mr. 5</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Mr. 1</td>
<td>Mr. 1</td>
<td>Mr. 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. 2</td>
<td>Mr. 1</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Mr. 5</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Play Room</td>
<td>Headmaster’s</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Pilot Study School Tour Data*

Five-ten minute interviews were conducted immediately after each tour. Participants were informed of their role in the research process and were aware that interviews would be tape recorded and transcribed. Questions were based on the school tour and concerned the rationale for each stop and or teacher/staff introduction. Interviews were transcribed directly after. Examples of typical questions used in the interviews are:
• You passed by many rooms, but stopped in the ICT room. Why?
• Is this a class you look forward to attending?
• Do you talk to this teacher even when they are not teaching?

After an examination of the interviews, the following themes emerged: *choice*, *fairness*, *independence*, and *humour*. An example of dialogue that comprised the *humour* category is:

I: *Why, if you don’t like art, what is it that you like?*

*DD:* The teacher. She’s got one hell of a sense of humour.

I: *So if you’re in a bad mood, is it guaranteed that she can pull you out of it?*

*DD:* Um, no. I’ve got an advanced defense system against that.

I: *(laughing) But she tries right?*

*DD:* Yeah, they all try. They all try.

The goal of the next few stages was to validate whether these categories exist or can be found in the areas identified by the participants. Table 1 showed that one of the most frequently identified places was the art room. An observation at that location provided evidence to validate three categories, *independence*, *fairness*, and *choice*. In the following set of observation notes, I demonstrate how these categories were identified. The left column is an abridged version of my observation notes and the right side displays my commentary with the corresponding category.

**Westside School Observation**

Art Room, 16 April 2006, 10 am
The clay is for Student #1 who rarely participates. The assistant is aware that S1 must complete this clay assignment for his portfolio and that time is running out as the end of the year approaches. The assistant tells me that if S1 watches him working with clay for fun, it may encourage S1 to model his behaviour. She is putting different materials together for each student since they are all at different points in their portfolios. I ask her if it can be confusing to keep track of students at different stages. She nods and retrieves a binder that has class records for all of her students. This book is like a narrative grade book that shows a progression of knowledge, work accomplished, and behavioural objectives. She explains that when a student completes an assignment, it is recorded and evaluated based on personal objectives. Behaviour, she explained follows suit. She points to S1’s page and to a list of objectives that will earn him a score for each objective. If he reaches a certain score at the end of the week (including scores from other classes), S1 will be allowed to participate in a choice-based activity period on Friday afternoons.

Fairness: S1 seems to believe that if others are working it is okay for him to work.

Independence: Students are all working separately and understand what is expected of them.

Independence: Students are evaluated by a progression of knowledge and personal objectives.

Choice: Students have the freedom to choose an activity on Fridays.

The lesson plan stage of the pilot study consisted of a group interview of three students from the same school: First, a group discussion allowed students to discuss what they considered to be a good lesson. The transcriptions followed the same scrutiny as the interview stage and were analysed using the same categories. The purpose of this stage was to validate the previous stages so that if a student describes a lesson that includes such codes as humour, independent activities, praise, and rewards, these would answer
the research questions and validate the data *only* if they are evident at the each stage.

This thematic structure developed was used to “elaborate a small set of generalizations that cover consistencies discerned in the data” (Robson, 2002, p. 459). The following excerpt demonstrates DS, RF, and the interviewer trying to better understand the category *independence*:

*I:*  
So you want teachers to just leave you alone? How would you get information?

*DS:*  
Well they could divide it up, you know? First part, teach and then leave us alone to work on our own projects.

*I:*  
Would the projects all be tied in together? Like a common theme? You couldn’t learn about molecules in science and then start dissecting an earthworm, right?

*RF:*  
(Laughs) No, we could all have parts to something bigger.

**Pilot Results**

The data generated from the pilot study showed that students at Westside School believed *choice, independence, fairness, and humour* are qualities that affect their daily experiences. Interviews indicated that the places identified in the school tours do reflect places where these qualities exist and confirm that these are places where students feel valued. Though the data showed that the school tours were only successful when combined with observations and interviews, they provided common ground between
researcher and participant, student and teacher offering a basis for discussion about the positive aspects of the school.

An observation in a student-identified area (the art room) validated the school tour, interview, and thematic coding stages of the pilot study. At the observation stage the art room teacher was not intimidating or strict, yet still enforced her classroom rules concerning swearing and negative attitudes. Though her students did antagonize and tease, they were more interested in completing their individual assignments and reaching their personalized behaviour goals. This supports the idea that independence and fairness are contributing factors to the success of students with social and emotional difficulties. This would suggest that these students “do not behave badly with all teachers or merely with the ‘soft’ as opposed to the strict teachers” (Hargreaves et al., 1975, p. 20). As a result of experiencing and reflecting on the pilot study I agree with Blumer’s (1966) statement:

The methodological or research side of the study of action would have to be made from the position of the actor. Since action is forged by the actor out of what he perceives, interprets and judges… one would have to take the role of the actor and see his world from his standpoint (p. 535).

Reflections on the Pilot Study

The overall goal of the pilot study was to develop a methodology able to capture the participants’ educational experiences through their own eyes and then use this data as a basis for discussion. Not only did the data collected in the pilot study provide a
foundation for discussion in Westside, the notes I made contemporaneously about my procedure also provided me with starting points for the examination of components of the methodology that could be improved. In what follows, I examine these components to consider advantages and areas that require further examination.

The School Tour

I found the participants at Westside to be very enthusiastic about contributing to the pilot study. Because all of the participants recognized the school tour as a collaborative effort, I was not surprised to find that their choices of locations to visit were not arbitrary but ones that were meaningful to them. However, I did not expect the sense of pride that I observed the participants had for their school. This was made clear to me by their positive attitudes, the choice of words they used to describe their surroundings, and the thoughtful expressions on their faces. For the most part, I found the participants at Westside to be very respectful of the “tour” and very responsive to the opportunity to share their experiences of schooling. I believe this was due to the “degree to which the child sets the agenda and/or pace (for example, those in which the child has a comparatively free rein such as using observation, mapping, photos, drawing; contrasted with those in which the child is primarily responsive to the interviewer/researcher such as prompted interviews)” (Lewis & Porter, 2006, p. 13).

However, after examining my notes and transcripts, I considered the following adjustments would further improve their activity. Flick (2009) refers to the materials produced by activities like schools tours as objects of retrospective inspection: where
“you can support the interviewees in recalling a specific situation by using materials and corresponding questions” (p. 151). However, though the school tour maps would serve as an excellent “script,” participants could become too dependent on the process and, as a result, they might not introduce their own topics in the interview. Flick (2009) also points to Merton and Kendall (1946) who argue that some materials “cannot be matched in every situation” (p. 154) and suggest that success using these materials “depends to a great extent on the actual interview situation... and the researcher’s competence” (Ibid).

Therefore, the school tour leading to interviews should be well-rehearsed, yet retain spontaneity, so the participants have the freedom to guide the researcher around the school without interruption, whilst at the same time having the freedom to speak freely during the interview without time constraints.

With this in mind, I support my decision to follow up the school tour immediately with an interview for the following reasons:

- Participants will remember the purpose of the activity;

- Participants will be able to remember the actual tour and discuss it with clarity and this will prevent the loss of valuable information;

- Conducting the tour/interview in one session prevents further disruption to the participant’s schedule;

- If the desired effect of the participant feeling comfortable with the researcher is achieved, it could be lost if parts of the activity are carried out at different times.

However, I also considered the following limitations associated with conducting the interview after the school tour:
• Participants might recall experiences that could influence their mood during the interview;
• Participants find might the transition from tour to interview confusing;
• Participants who take too long to complete the tour will be unable to give the interview sufficient time;
• Some participants have schedules that change daily; therefore, some participants would have to be excused from classes (instead of study halls) to complete the interview.

To prevent these difficulties from occurring in the main study, I reminded the participants at the start of the school tour that the specific focus of the first two stages of enquiry was to identify and discuss areas of their school where they have had positive experiences. By doing so, I hoped that the participants would recognize that my role as researcher was to learn about their successes; therefore, it was less likely they would seek out areas where they have had negative experiences. Informing the participants about how the beginning stages function also prevented time constraints and confusion in the main study, especially when I allowed the participants to lead the school tour.

*Interviews*

The school tour allowed me to ask questions based on the participant’s common experiences and “to understand the phenomena in their own terms” (Kvale, 1996, p. 2). In effect, this also empowered them to set the stage and decide on the “best linguistic form for presenting the ideas” (Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh, 1993, p. 105). A scripted
interview or even open-questioning could mislead a researcher in a school where many students might use the same few words to describe their surroundings, as their limited vocabulary may hide differences in perception as much as it reveals them. Also, though open-questioning gives participants the freedom to express their views in their own terms, “open questions used in a semi-structured interview approach can cause confusion either because of the lack of understanding of the question by the informant or by the lack of understanding of the respondent's answer by the interviewer” (Wimmer & Dominick, 1999, p. 140). So that the participant is allowed to shape the experience by way of his own judgment, common words like *nice*, *funny*, and *cool* must be carefully analysed so that their true meanings can be ascertained and seen in context.

Another limitation of interviews is that they do not easily evoke visual aspects of the environment, such as posters. Even a participant’s description of a classroom with several posters on display might overlook these, because the participant might not think it to be worthy of mention. But having the school tour in place and using it as a guide for the interview allowed the interviewer to see the school as the participant does and to draw on the participants’ holistic descriptions of what they are seeing and feeling. These feelings, often experienced quite vaguely, can then be further explored to establish true meanings. This search for “meaning” is not simply academic. A teacher who displays their students’ work, for example, might be described as *nice* by the participant simply because she chose to display her poster, not because she is overly pleasant. When considering the research questions in this study, it is important to recognize that being *pleasant* is difficult to transfer to other places in a school, displaying students’ work is
On the other hand, *nice* could be the accurate description for a particular teacher or staff member. If the participant is describing an office worker who greets her every morning before school, then this description is probably more accurate. In this case it is then possible to explore aspects of the morning exchange that might, for example, allow the researcher to consider *unconditional positive regard* as a common attribute among all of the people the participant identified on the school tour. Similarly, if the participant spends a significant amount of time on the school tour with a certain person or at a certain place, then more valuable data will emerge when they are investigated deeply. When doing this, “it appears that pupils, whilst being able, to some degree, to give a general account of classroom rules, find it easier to give an account by making comparisons between different teachers” (Hargreaves et al., 1975, p. 41).

A technique similar to the use of key visuals (maps from a school tour) in an interview is “photo elicitation,” which Harper (2002) defines as “the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview” (p. 13) to stimulate questioning. He argues that this method has several benefits, most notably:

- Images may help to ground the interview questions and provide meaningful context for discussion;
- Stimulating the interviewee to engage visually with familiar settings may help them discuss things they take for granted in different ways;
- May stimulate the interviewee to remember people or events that might otherwise have been forgotten.
Though there are many benefits to this reflexive and collaborative approach (Pink, 2001), Harper (2002) recognizes that presenting participants a key visual during an interview could also be confusing, especially if the visuals are too recognizable and as a result, less reflective. Flick (2009) also identifies “problems of reactivity” (p. 246) that can lead to assumptions during analysis when utilizing this approach. For instance, if a participant spends time on the tour identifying places instead of people, this may be significant. Thus for example, when the computer room, the study hall, and the after school gymnasium are the only other places identified on the school tour map, one might conclude that the participant feels more valued by teachers who have small classes, a common misconception for those who manage students who have been labeled with an EBD, when in fact it is the activity that engages the student.

However, further analysis using Werthman’s symbolic interactionism that emphasizes “the pupils’ definition of the situation, the pupils’ interpretation of the teacher’s activities and the pupils’ conduct as an organized, rational response to their situation” (Hargreaves, et. al., 1975, p. 20), allows the researcher to realise that the student could actually prefer to work independently under conditions that would allow him more choices. When an interview is based on the school tour and the researcher and the participant share it, the researcher is provided with a deeper understanding of the participant’s daily school experiences. Consequently, what the participant describes in a classroom can actually be seen by the researcher and, through further discussion and analysis, the gap between the participant’s descriptor nice and the researcher’s observation of the teacher’s behaviour could be bridged.
Observations

The categories produced from the interviews, such as nice, friendly, mean, or strict could also influence my observations in the classrooms of the teachers identified by the participants in the study. It was difficult to remove these descriptors during my observation in the art room and consequently, instead of achieving a critical distance (Flick, 2009) in order to remain impartial, I considered the possibility that in the main study I could be influenced by descriptors such as nice during teacher observations if I did not allow time to pass between the interviews and teacher observations. In the main study I allowed several weeks to pass before teacher observations.

Analyzing the Data

Interpretation and analysis of dialogue is often considered both a strength and a limitation of qualitative research. One of the strengths of this research design is that it incorporates “another methodology as well to allow for more accurate results and greater understanding” (Oatey, 1999, para. 15). However, I believed there were other limitations that might affect the reader’s confidence in the research design. Because action research and heuristic inquiry allowed my perspective to be included during data collection and analysis, issues of objectivity and bias needed to be addressed before the implementation of a formal study.

Limitations of Action Research

Kleinman and Copp (1993) point out that “readers tend to expect a sympathetic account of the life of the underdog” and “portray participants as gritty, savvy, and streetwise,
responding in creative ways to bad situations” (p. 14). Similarly, when considering subjectivity as a possible limitation of action research, the reader might consider the researcher in this study more likely to be sympathetic to EBD students, having been witness to the effects of exclusionary measures on their education.

Whilst it seems true that for these students, “the school simultaneously exposes them to middle class values and deprives them of status in these terms… it is at this point that they begin to reject the values because they cannot succeed in them” (Hargreaves, Hestor, & Mellor, 1975, p. 174), I am sympathetic only in the sense that they have not been afforded a variety of teaching styles to discover how they learn best. Hunter-Carsch et al. (2006) point to Carnine’s (1995) idea that, “the common explanation for a student’s failure to learn is based largely on characteristics such as poverty, disability, ethnicity/language and family, and rarely on the use of ineffective or inappropriate practices” (p. 33). Therefore, it was inevitable that my perspective would affect and form part of the data, a feature of action research that is often rejected by other approaches to of research.

As a teacher in one of the schools chosen for this study, objectivity could be a concern in both the way the data were collected and analysed. However, one of the main features of action research that separates it from other methods is that it “makes no attempt to remain objective but openly acknowledges bias to other participants” (O’Brien, 1998, p. 3). Consequently, researchers can participate “as part of their normal activities,” (Dick, 1997, p. 6), a feature that would appeal to those students and teachers who are already inundated by the commitments of their daily routines and for whom ‘bias’ is an inextricable aspect of their practice.
Summary

In this chapter I have described how my desire to examine how I could utilize the voices of excluded students and students labeled with an EBD to bring about improvements in their school experiences. With this in mind, I invited students in an English school for (mostly) boys identified with behaviour difficulties to try out a methodology in order to identify areas where they have had positive experiences. By doing so, I discovered they were more articulate and introspective than I had expected. In particular, they were able to identify “good” teachers who “taught them a lot” and “bad” teachers who “just sat around and made jokes.” They were also able to recognize differences between teaching strategies designed to keep them busy and strategies that encouraged them to think critically. This posed the possibility that their insight into exclusion, classroom behaviour, and teacher preparation showed value. It also reminds us that although there is quite a lot written about students described as having EBD and efforts to improve their academic experiences, it is largely written from the point of view of teachers. In the next chapter, I describe how I built on the lessons of the pilot study and modified its components in order to carry out a more thorough investigation of this issue.
Chapter 3: Planning My Inquiry Part 1- The Context

Introduction

At the end of my first year at the university, I gained permission to continue research back in the United States on a larger scale in two schools. It is through one of the schools under scrutiny that funding was provided for the research. I was employed full time to construct, coordinate, and implement the alternative education program for freshman (ages 13-15), and received a yearly salary and course reimbursement to fund the study. This chapter gives the reader an overall sense of each school’s student population, culture, climate, and socio-economic status through information obtained from school and state websites. It also provides additional information about the participants in each school and how they were selected for the study.

School Information

I agree with Hargreaves, Hestor, and Mellor (1975) who, “preferred to work in two schools rather than one, since this would reduce the demands that we would inevitably make on a school” (p. 30). Therefore, using the findings and experience of the pilot study as the basis for methodology, two schools were selected for data collection with 20 participants at School #1 and 6 at School #2. I arranged research in School #2 in case I was unable to continue my research at School #1. Therefore, much of what is reported in the remaining chapters tends to focus on data collected in School #1. Both locations are mainstream secondary schools in the United States that have previously attempted to establish segregated programs for students with behaviour issues. In both schools these
programs were referred to as *alternative education*, though both have been disbanded due to poor leadership and lack of staff support.

**Profile: School #1**  

The following data provides a snapshot of the city’s per pupil spending for the 2007 school year. The city allocated 52.2% of local property tax and this represents a decrease from the 53.1% allocated the previous year. The per pupil expenditure was $9053 in 2007, whilst the average state per pupil expenditure for 2007 was $9370. The city has been consistently below the state funding average. Private resources have provided 7.7% to school funding.

The average dropout rate over the two years up to 2007 was 5.13%, whilst the student daily attendance rate has averaged 95%. This school does not formally retain students, as graduation is based on credits earned. Presently, each student is required to earn 26 credits. Students who are deficient may earn additional credits through adult education, vocational classes, or summer school. The teacher attendance rate is 87%.

The percentage of seniors who have graduated had declined from 79.4% in 2006 to 76.3% in 2007. Of those graduating, 45% attend four-year institutions (bachelor’s degree), 18% attend community/junior colleges (typically associate degrees and trade-related certificates), 2.5% enroll in business/technical schools, whilst 23% attend school on a part time basis or delayed entry plan. Seven percent seek immediate employment and 5% opt for military service. There has been a gradual increase in the number of
students attending four year and community colleges over the past three years. Students who attend School #1 are afforded the opportunity to enroll in courses at several nearby colleges and universities to further enhance their high school education.

The former alternative program was individualized to meet and maintain each student’s comprehensive school schedule as closely as possible. In addition to the requirements for graduation, students were to participate in an experiential education program that offered them the opportunity to experience real-life encounters; that would provide opportunities to develop and challenge students to become responsible citizens of their school and community; and that would provide an opportunity to allow students to increase their technology skills within the school environment.

At present (2007) mainstream classes are grouped according to levels: 300, 200, and 100. The 300 levels are designed for students who are presently performing significantly above grade level, the 200 level is designed for students who are performing at or slightly above grade level, and the 100 level is designed for students who are performing below grade level. Remedial and developmental classes are also available for students who are performing well below their grade level. Fourteen percent of students are enrolled in special education courses, less than 1% in ESL (English as a Second Language) courses, 23% in upper level courses, and 11% in the lower level classes. In order to provide additional information about the school, I include an analysis of a school climate survey (Appendix A, p. 348) that was conducted in 2008, as well as segments from the student handbook (Appendix B, p. 351).
Participant Selection

I start from the assumption that the management of students labeled with a behaviour difficulty within a particular school is influenced by the way the causes and characteristics of deviant behaviour are perceived by the staff. Therefore, I felt it was important for the school involved to select the participants for the study. In this way I hoped to “examine how the dynamics of schooling may be contributing to ‘problem behaviour’ and what might be done to ease the problems pupils are currently experiencing, and where possible, to prevent the same problems arising” (Mongon, 1991, p. 35). Based on this comparison, I anticipated that I would be able to draw conclusions about whether the management students with EBD was successful or unsuccessful due to:

- a “disjunction between teacher and pupil values” (Hargreaves, 1972, p. 171);
- “a disorderly school environment with vague rules and expectations” (Furlong et al., 2004, p. 254);
- the teaching staff “prepared personally and professionally to help the student with numerous concrete and abstract situations” (Woody, 1987, p. 5);
- “teacher’s ability and willingness to create a successful learning situation appropriate to the pupil’s needs” (Charlton & David, 1994, p. 92).

Because the three guidance counselors at School #1 meet regularly with students to discuss current academic progress, future aspirations, and personal/social competencies, consulting them to recommend participants was a logical way to proceed. I met with the counselors individually to discuss the purpose and goals of the study and allowed them to recommend students based on this information. From these meetings, I generated a list of
28 names and asked the vice principal (responsible for managing disciplinary infractions) to examine the list to perhaps provide additional information. He was able to reduce the list to 20 students based on their inability to participate due to suspensions, expulsions, and chronic absences. The following table (Table 2) offers information about the participants in the study. The first four columns identify the participant by initials, age, gender, and grade, whilst the remaining columns provide course information by level (100, 200, 300) and whether they are enrolled in alternative education courses and (or) School #1’s job skill training course. Additional narrative information about the participants can be found in the appendices (Appendix C, p. 357).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Course Level</th>
<th>Alt. Ed.</th>
<th>JMG/Job Skill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100/200</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>TL</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>100/200</td>
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<td>No</td>
</tr>
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<td>DB</td>
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<td>100/200</td>
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<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>12</td>
<td>100/200</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
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<td>100</td>
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<tr>
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<td>No</td>
</tr>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>12</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SM</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100/200</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BB</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100/200</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>11</td>
<td>100/200</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AF</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SL</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100/200</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SM2</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Participant Profiles School #1
Table 2 shows that the average age of the participants is 17 years old and the average grade level is 11. All 20 participants were enrolled in 100-level classes, whilst nine had experience in 200-level classes. Table 2 also shows that all of the participants were registered in programs that required some form of behaviour difficulty to qualify for enrollment: two students were enrolled in alternative education, 12 in the job skills course. Four participants were enrolled in both.

An excerpt from my data diary provides additional information about the job skills course and the requirements for enrollment:

**Data Diary:  September 2007**

A majority of them (the students) seemed to be coming from a job skills course designed to make students more employable after graduation. After talking to the teacher about the criteria of this course, he shared with me how students come to be placed in his course. He said that students are generally recommended to him based on certain criteria, such as low academic achievement, behaviour issues, and unsecure living situations. He also said that for the course to be funded there is an interview process that the students must go through to meet certain requirements to be considered for the course. He shared with me the interview form (Appendix D, p. 363). The reader will note that teachers are allowed to determine whether students have an emotional disorder (line P.3).

Since the students in these courses must be interviewed and accepted into these courses based on academic and social deficits, I compared the requirements that would allow entry into both courses to see where they intersect. The following table (Table 3) shows
the similarities between the requirements for entry into alternative education and the job skills course at School #1. They are failing grades, retention, low academic performance, truancy, low motivation, mental health/emotional issues, socio-economic disadvantaged, and criminal offenses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of At-Risk Students (Alt. Ed.)</th>
<th>Job Skill Course: Participant Profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retained; failing grades.</td>
<td>One or more model grades behind peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work completion issues.</td>
<td>Low academic performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truant, inconsistent attendance.</td>
<td>Past record of excessive absences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other responsibilities (caring for child).</td>
<td>Has dependent children in the home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seemingly apathetic; lack of motivation.</td>
<td>Lacks motivation to pursue education or career...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health issues; mild learning disabilities.</td>
<td>Emotional disorder that impairs education or goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic stress; living in poverty.</td>
<td>Is economically disadvantaged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On probation/juvenile justice system.</td>
<td>Convicted of a criminal offense...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3: Alternative Education/Job Skills Course Comparison*

**Profile: School #2**

(Information obtained from www.maine.gov).

Alongside my work in School #1, I also had the opportunity to explore similar processes in School #2. The percentage of seniors who had graduated had declined from 68.3% in 2007 to 60.4% in 2008 and the average dropout rate is 8.37%. Their alternative program involved several different agencies working together: *Jobs for Maine’s Graduates*, a state-funded non-profit organization, provided students with employability skills; the technical center offered career paths, a computer cluster with individual learning
programs and full time instructor provided computer skills; School #2 provided basic courses in English, social studies, math and science; and a full time counselor was provided and funded by the school and the adjoining vocational school. Most programs were located in a central area of the building to allow students with abbreviated schedules to enter and exit the premises so as not to disturb mainstream courses in progress.

The following table (Table 4) offers information about the participants in the study in School #2. The first four columns identify the participant by initials, age, gender, and grade, whilst the remaining columns provide course information by level (100, 200, 300) and whether they are enrolled in alternative education courses and (or) School #2’s job skill training course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Alt. Ed.</th>
<th>Job Skill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BG</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100/200</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MM</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100/200</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100/200</td>
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<td>SS</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>BB</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100/200</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4: Participant Profiles School #2*

The participants were selected using the same method as School #1. Though it is a small sample size, there are many consistencies between School #1 and School #2 in age,
course level, and enrollment in alternative education/job skill training course. The average age of the participants is 17 years old and the average grade level is 12. Four participants were enrolled in 100 and 200 level classes, whilst one participant (SD) was enrolled in only 200-level courses and another participant (SS) was enrolled in only 100-level courses. All of the participants were registered in programs that required some form of difficulty to qualify for enrollment: all 6 participants were enrolled in the job skills course and two of these participants were also enrolled in alternative education. It should be noted that School #2 was unable to provide me with a list of at-risk characteristics, and since the study took place, the alternative education program has been disbanded.

Summary

In order that the reader would get a better sense of the schools under scrutiny, I have provided demographic information for each school, participant selection procedure, the characteristics of the at-risk population in the main school, participant profiles for both schools, and narrative profiles of the participants in the main study school. Both schools showed similar characteristics in many areas including, course tracking levels, course level enrollment (100/200), and average participant age (17). However, School #1 had a lower drop out rate (5.13%) compared to School #2 (8.37%), as well as a higher graduation rate (76.3%) compared to School #2 (60.4%).

To understand more clearly what each school considers are the characteristics of EBD students, I argued that it was important for both schools to select the participants.
Because of this feature, the students chosen for the study have common histories of displaying many of the external characteristics stereotypically associated with EBD, yet the narrative profiles (Appendix C, p. 357) show an uncommon range of personalities and experiences. Using the voices of these students as a guide, the next chapter demonstrates how the research design proposes to organize this information to discuss their school successes and the locations where these have occurred.
Chapter 4: Planning My Inquiry Part 2 - The Research Design

Introduction

This chapter outlines the formal research design in terms of the progress and adjustments made, and demonstrates how data was obtained and analysed. I utilize the chosen research model using action research, the qualitative paradigm, and my experiences related to the construction and implementation of this research. I discuss the possibility of giving students “the chance to try out different roles” (Fielding & Bragg, 2003, p. 15) by conducting research in their school. The results produced data that helped me to better understand the daily school experiences of students who had been labeled with an EBD and how this might lead to school improvement. The chapter uses the following rough diagram to guide the reader through the research design:
School Tours
Where Do Students Feel Valued?

The goal of the school tour was to share a common experience with the participants so that the next stage of the enquiry would have more weight. Without this stage, the participant might assume that I am someone “who is interested in answers to questions only in so far as they demonstrate what has been learned...the pupil will not assume that the teacher really wants to know something she does not yet know, for example, the pupil’s own personal perceptions” (Altrichter et al., 1993, p. 102). To avoid this scenario and to keep within the boundaries of those researchers who suggest that for the purposes of analyzing data the interviews share a common theme, the school tours acted as a script for the interviews. Since the participants were made aware that other students would be taking part in the study, the school tours also provided a common way of proceeding “as active participants in research methods under their control” (Prosser, 1998, p. 235), whilst the nature of each experience would be unique.

Because of this feature, my intention was that the participants would not be preoccupied with comparing their responses in the interview to the responses of their peers, but instead would recognize that their distinctive contribution could have a direct influence on how the data would be analysed. Whilst each participant may not feel any change in their school brought about by the analysis, their participation in this study, however, might serve as a catalyst for self-reflection so that they have the opportunity to “understand points-of-view and to learn pro-social skills” (Hyatt & Howell, 2004, p. 182), and/or perhaps see their school and evaluate their experiences through a new lens.
As I have explained, the school tour approach had previously been trialed in a school for students with behaviour difficulties in the United Kingdom. Though the school tours stage of the methodology was successful in the pilot study, some adjustments were made so that the tours would work under different conditions but function the same way. For instance, tours implemented in schools with 80-minute periods would less likely be interrupted than in schools with 35-minute periods. It would be especially difficult to adhere to time restrictions in larger schools that have several floors and separate buildings. For this reason the pilot study actually served as a practice for making the tour more efficient.

Ainscow (1991) notes that by keeping a journal during his research “I was continuing to records events and decisions I also found that I was using the journal to hold conversations with myself” (p. 38). Using my diary as a way of reflecting on each stage of the methodology, I discovered that when the participants were able to hold the maps of their school and assume the responsibility of marking the places that corresponded to their criticisms, stories, and observations, the tour moved at a faster pace whilst still providing valuable data.

The following is a summary of the changes made in the school tour approach based on my experiences during the pilot study:

1. Participants were given symbols to use instead of a random mark. Quite often in the pilot study the participants would not remember why they marked their maps to identify a certain place. This is due to American fire escape maps that do not provide the names of
teachers. Therefore, a check mark was used to represent a place they considered to be a positive experience whilst an “x” represented a bad experience.

2. Occasionally in the pilot study students would ask if there could be a symbol that represented both a positive and negative experience in the same location. In this case, students were told to use both a check mark and an “x” so that the participant would make that decision during the interview. I discovered that when I allowed participants to use a question mark, they would not move beyond that symbol in the interview giving them permission, in a sense, to leave that segment of the tour unresolved. When the participants during the interviews looked at the map as a visual representation of the experience, they seemed to instinctively want the two symbols resolved to one, perhaps to match the rest of the map.

3. The age of the participant would determine the length of the tour simply because older students have more to discuss as they have had more experiences. In the case of a student who has been in a particular school for more than two years, my notes suggest that they should not be allowed more time to complete the tour. (Because I would be teaching alternative education for ninth graders (age 13-15), my students would not be selected as participants.) The instructions at the start, however, should be adjusted so that the participant understands that because of time restraints they should be discerning, recalling people and events that have had an impact on their lives, as follows:

I want you take me on a tour of your school. Think about the years that you have been a student here and all of the experiences you’ve had. As we go along, think about the people, places, and events that have made an impact. It can be
teachers, staff members, friends or just places that made you feel a certain way, both in a positive and in a negative way.

4. Younger participants in the pilot study did not have much “experience” and, therefore, I presumed they would have less to discuss. For this reason, the one recommendation I made for the selection of participants was that they at least have two years of experience. This, however, does mean that vital discussions about the transition to a particular institution could be lost.

5. Students would use a common starting/ending point for the school tour and that location would be a classroom. During the pilot study, participants were informed by their teachers that I would meet them in their classes and from there the participants would take me on a tour of the school. This made for an awkward introduction and the participants seemed to spend more time concerned that their peers would consider this removal from class as part of a disciplinary procedure. Using a classroom as a starting and ending point would allow the participant to use familiar surroundings to describe a situation or demonstrate a point. During the pilot study I noticed a participant attempt to imitate a teacher at a dry-erase board by holding an imaginary marker in the air. I speculated that providing the participants several ways of expressing themselves and empowering them in an environment where they might feel a lack of confidence could lead to more valuable data.

6. To avoid attention being drawn to the participants from their peers, students would receive written permission from their teacher to meet me in the designated classroom.
Interviews

How are the student-identified places characterized?

Stage two was carried out after the participants had completed the school tours stage. The goal of this stage is to investigate further the experience of the school tours by analysing with the participant its progress and notable features. Where the school tour was an exercise in recalling past observations, stories, and anecdotes, the combined nature of these stages gave the researcher and the participant the opportunity to frame those experiences together. Since the reflexive nature of the study at the first two stages is designed to “consistently inform the methodology” (Steier, 1992, p. 167); and additionally, the participants will produce a wide range of data, it is important at this stage to “control both the content and the process of the interview” whilst at the same time “enter into a kind of interactive relationship in which communication becomes a two way street” (Anderson, 1990, p. 227).

Though the school tour does provide a script for the interview, the nature of the questioning is essentially semi-structured, “which allow(s) absolute freedom of response, can yield in-depth responses and provide otherwise unobtainable heights, but produce data that are very difficult to quantify” (Gay, 1981, p. 167). It is important then to maintain the relationship borne out of the school tours, whilst at the same time “deviating from the schedule in order to answer questions and correct misinterpretations” (Mouly, 1978, p. 203).

The school tours experience served as a script for the interview and the map the participants used to record their progress was used as a guide. Qualitative research texts describe various types of interviews and interview techniques, but the one that felt closer
to the goals of this study are laid out in Eric Drever’s book, *Using Semi-Structured Interviews in a Small Scale Research* (2003). Where the line of questioning in these interviews is based on a common experience using a map, Drever points out that since “the interviewer and the interviewee share a common frame of reference” (p. 15) one of the goals in this type of interview is to “create a structure mapping the topics to be covered” (Ibid, p. 14).

This is contrasted with an ethnographic interview, where “it is important to let the person being interviewed map out the topic” (Ibid, p. 15). Kvale (2007) suggests that in a semi-structured interview, “the guide will include an outline of topics to be covered” (p. 57). The researcher and the participant, then, construct the outline of topics in these interviews during the school tour. Each reference point could represent a simple question or a long discussion, “it is up to the interviewer’s judgment and tact how closely to stick to the guide and how much to follow up the interviewee’s answers and the new directions they may open up” (Ibid). An example of this is demonstrated in my interview with participant MG, a participant from *School #1*. Though I could have explored with MG the components of an independent study, I decided to use her map to discuss the common features of two teachers she identified during her tour:

*MG*: Um, I’ve had her since freshman year, I’ve had her every year and she’s helped me through a lot. I used to tell her what’s been going on and she used to help me. She knows my entire story. She helped to try and get credits. She actually gave me an independent study class and I got to do whatever I wanted and still got a credit for it. Her subjects were different that I had. I had one English class with her and I failed it. But my independent study I passed and stuff.
I: So, what was a typical class like with her?

MG: The class that I was in was very small, maybe eight students in her class, maybe. They all worked on the computers and did their own little thing.

I: So mostly kids were working on their own?

MG: Yeah.

I: Now that’s really different from Mr. F’s class right? His class was more of a typical English class?

MG: Yeah.

I: So you like both of these teachers but what would you say they both have in common?

This aspect of the study was designed to explore the possibility of the participants finding locations in their school where they feel valued, observing those places to better understand their selection, and identifying the common characteristics of those places through observation. The interview stage, then, was at the heart of the methodology, as it not only served to validate the locations identified by the participants, but also was instrumental in guiding the rest of the study. This within-method triangulation (Fielding & Fielding, 1986) technique was employed in this study to “check on the data quality and attempts to confirm validity” (Ibid, p. 25). For these reasons, and because of the semi-structured nature of the questioning, the varying lengths of the individual tours and the rather unpredictable nature of schools (fire drills, intercom announcements, schedule changes), the school tour leading to interviews deserves to be rehearsed so that the immediacy of the moment is not lost and the accuracy of situation is maintained. An example of this during a practice was with participant AM:

AM: And he wrote...he writes...when he writes...
I:  Oops, just hold on a sec.

Interview interrupted with another adult informing interviewer about a meeting later in the day.

I:  Um...So...I forget what we were saying.

AM:  I forgot too.

Though we still had a map of the tour to guide us, the interview at this point lost its momentum and there is the possibility that valuable data was lost. To prevent this, and other disturbances from occurring, my notes from the pilot study and from the practice sessions in School #1 led to a number of adjustments. First, the study would be explained to the participants and permission to record the interview would be sought before the tour whilst other students are changing classes. It would occur again as an introduction to the interview. For example:

Interviewer:  We went on a tour and I had you check off places where you had a positive experience. Not necessarily in classrooms, it could have been anywhere. It looks like we started right here on the third floor, and I'm going to take you back on this tour and I want you to tell me about places that you either checked or put an “x” on. I'm going to actually start at this end, right here. Now, I see that you put an “x” on the art room?

Second, to avoid interruptions, if possible the intercom volume in the assigned classroom would be lowered or shut off completely. Third, the interview would be positioned away from the classroom door so that other students will not distract the participants. Lastly, the participant would be escorted back to class or to their next designated place in the school.
Map Analysis
Where are the common student-identified areas?

The maps of 20 school tours in School #1 were gathered for the purpose of comparing the identified common places. The criteria from the pilot study were adjusted slightly. The adjustments are in italics:

- Did the participant physically stop at this location?
- Did the participant speak about his experiences in this location?
- Did the participant introduce a teacher or staff member in this location?
- *Did the participant forget to identify a place and later mention it in the interview?*
- *Did the participant speak about teachers or places he hopes to become familiar with in the future?*
- *Did the participant mention teachers or staff members known to have positive or negative qualities but with whom he has no association?*

The common teachers/places identified in School #1 were Mr. F, Mr. L, Mr. Mc, Mr. Lb, and Mr. R. These led to observations in the following classrooms: Mr. F, Mr. L, Mr. Lb, and Mr. R. The following table (Table 5) provides the reader with additional information about the student-identified teachers in School #1.

**Table 5: Teacher Profiles: School #1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher:</th>
<th>Mr. F</th>
<th>Mr. R</th>
<th>Mr. Lb</th>
<th>Mr. Mc</th>
<th>Mr. L</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject:</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Soc. Studies</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Soc. Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed:</td>
<td>6 yrs.</td>
<td>24 yrs.</td>
<td>21 yrs.</td>
<td>38 yrs.</td>
<td>8 yrs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I expected to find a common trend in the profiles of the participant-selected teachers in School #1. Teacher ages ranged from 34 to 68 years old and their teaching experience
ranged from 6 to 38 years, which is too wide a range to draw conclusions. The same could be said for the subjects they teach: only Mr. R and Mr. Lb share a common subject matter (social studies). The one common feature among the participant-selected teachers in School #1 is gender (male).

**Observations**

*Can examples of identified themes be observed in student-identified areas?*

Formal 80-minute observations were conducted in the classrooms of Mr. L, Mr. F, Mr. Lb, Mr. Mc, and Mr. R. In his book *Doing Naturalistic Inquiry*, David Erlandson (1993) points out that “it is impossible to observe and record everything in a setting, and therefore one must begin with some type of plan” (p. 97). He suggests using a “checklist of elements likely to be present in an observation” (Ibid). With this in mind, Merriam’s (1998) list was used as a foundation for observation in this study:

1. **The setting:** What is the physical environment like? What is the context? What kinds of behaviour does the setting promote or prevent?

2. **The participants:** Describe who is in the scene, how many people and their roles. What brings these people together? Who is allowed there?

3. **Activities and interactions:** What is going on? Is there a definable sequence of activities? How do the people interact with the activity and with one another? How are people and activities connected or interrelated?

4. **Frequency and duration:** When did the situation begin? How long does it last? Is it a recurring type of situation or is it unique? If it recurs, how frequently? How typical of such situations is the one being observed?

5. **Subtle factors:** Less obvious but perhaps as important to the observation are:
• Informal and unplanned activities,
• Symbolic and connotative meanings of words,
• Nonverbal communication such as dress and physical space,
• Unobtrusive measures such as physical clues,
• What does not happen—especially if it ought to have happened.

**Thematic Coding**

*Are there common themes used to describe these places?*

Interviews produce a wide range of data. Therefore coding is necessary, but the codes at the thematic coding stage must be *in vivo* (Strauss, 1987, p. 120), taken directly from the participants at the interview stage. For the purposes of analysis, “by grouping sets of phenomena, we can save ourselves from the overwhelming task of trying to identify, interpret and understand every available stimulus as if it were something completely new” (Mongon & Hart, 1989, p. 26). During the first round of coding, the interview transcripts were read through and several descriptors were noted based on the frequency they occurred. Words used by the participants to illustrate a place (e.g. cluttered, organized, dirty), a teacher (e.g. funny, strict, mean, smart), feelings influenced by their daily experiences (e.g. frustrated, bored, tired, interested), and actions the participants have taken to influence their daily experiences (e.g. skip, swear, laugh, hide) were noted and written at the side of the transcript. Similar to the way that the teachers/places were derived during the map analysis stage for the observation stage, the descriptors to be coded in this stage were determined by how frequently they occurred across all of the interviews in each school. The descriptors were then placed into subcategories based on common themes. So, for example, funny, laugh, joke, and kid around were placed in the subcategory humour. Subcategories such as confidence, variety, and predictability were
then reduced to three major categories: *teacher behaviour*, *teaching style* and *environment:*

![Diagram: Descriptor ➔ Subcategory ➔ Category]

Table 6 shows the categories and subcategories drawn from the interviews. Some of the subcategories are researcher-generated whilst others, such as, *laid back* and *hands on,* are participant-generated because of the frequency with which they were used. An example of a coded transcript can be found in the next chapter, *Design Implementation.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Behaviour</th>
<th>Teaching Style</th>
<th>Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Connection</td>
<td>Encouragement</td>
<td>Comfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>Knowledgeable</td>
<td>Predictable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humour</td>
<td>Pace</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Variety</td>
<td>Cooperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laid Back</td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Rules/Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Hands on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individual profiles were used as a guide compiled from coded interviews at the *thematic coding* stage. These profiles were sections of the student interviews where the corresponding teacher was mentioned. From those profiles the frequency at which subcategories were identified during the interviews indicated to me their level of importance based on the participants’ recommendations. If 10 of 20 participants said that
Mr. L is unorganized, then I would determine in the observations how the students in his class react to that, or perhaps how it affected his teaching. A detailed example of this can be found in the next chapter, Design Implementation.

As with all of the prior stages, the purpose of the thematic coding and the map analysis stages was to guide the observation stage. Where the map analysis stage answered the first step of the research design (Where do students feel valued?) the results of the thematic coding stage propose to give direction to the observations by providing me a participant-directed guide. In other words, if several students identified Mr. Lb as laid back, organized, friendly, and funny and comment on the seating arrangement, then I could validate them if the observations could be coded in the same way and demonstrate how they affect the lesson, the learners, the classroom environment, etc.

During the pilot study, however, I considered the categories created in the thematic coding stage to be a possible limitation that might influence the rest of the study. I also believed that once they were developed, removing them during the observation stage, so that perspective is not prejudiced, could be problematic. As a result, it was difficult during the pilot study to not look for choice, humour, fairness, and independence during my observation in the art room. The thematic coding stage, however, was established so that if the descriptors were not observed then I could re-evaluate the semantics of the chosen words. For example, if Mr. Lb shows no signs of being funny, yet several students claim that he makes them laugh, perhaps the meaning of funny was lost between me and participant, or simply put, Mr. Lb was intimidated by the observation or was not in a good mood that day. This scenario might require a second observation. In this way,
the thematic coding stage influencing the observation stage would be less of a limitation than it is a validation, as they are in constant check of each other.

**Thematic Analysis/Group Interview**

*Would participants validate these themes in a group discussion?*

The goal of the final stage of the research process was to check all the previous stages before analysis. Without asking the participants directly, this stage invited them to look at the data and decide whether my analysis was credible. This was originally intended as a “lesson plan,” to see whether a sample of the participants would implement a lesson that would match the descriptors they used to describe the teachers they consider to be effective and a positive influence. However, this proved to be a logistical and operational impossibility since the planning of this lesson would have to rely on the availability of a willing class and the commitment of students who might have second thoughts when faced with an audience.

I felt that the nature of this stage would not only serve to further validate the data collected, but it would also be an opportunity for the participants to see the results of their input. With this in mind, it was important to formulate a scenario that would provide the same features as the lesson plan stage and allow all of the participants to take part.

Having had success with using the school tour as script for the interviews and having a limited amount of time to gather all of the participants, I decided that a group interview using the results of the first three stages as a script would be the best way to accomplish the goals of this stage.
Using an empty classroom, the participants were gathered for an 80-minute period. Because I had allowed several months to pass since the students experienced the school tours and interviews, arranging for students to arrive at this group interview by gaining permission from their teachers (and the parents of participants under 18) would be relatively easy. My experience teaching students allowed me to plan this interview as if I was planning a typical lesson: It would take at least 10 minutes to get them settled and an extra five to get their attention at the start, since this was a deviation from their normal routines and students would be arriving from several different locations in the building. Ten minutes were also reserved at the end for informal/formal discussion.

Using the data collected at the map analysis stage, the first part of the group interview was to explain the goals of the study, the purpose of the stage in which they participated and reveal the people they selected as their “top five”. Though we would be discussing their teachers in a positive light, the participants might discuss the group interview with good intentions to the “top five,” other teachers, and their peers and fail to identify the purpose, thereby damaging the trust the schools gave at the beginning of the study. Therefore, I gained permission from the teachers whose names might be mentioned in the group interview.

The benefits of doing this type of interview have been explained in the context of this study. More generally, Flick (2002) suggests that group interviews are “are low in cost and rich in data, that they stimulate the answers and support them in remembering events, and that they can lead beyond the answers of the single interviewee” (p. 113). Though the group interview would be stimulated and guided by the results of some stages of the methodology (and I would be controlling the questions), I hoped that the interview would
lead to a group discussion so that the participants would validate the data collected during
the previous stages by “illuminating the differences in perspective between groups of
individuals” (Rabiee, 2004, p. 655). An example of this is demonstrated in the following
excerpt. Whilst discussing and validating a shared experience in Mr. Mc’s class, SB and
MD generated a new topic for discussion:

SB: Basically, he (Mr. Mc) wouldn’t give a crap if you worked or not ’cause it’s
your own choice. But he just wanted you to try.

I: What if you just walked into that class and put your head down?

MD: He wouldn’t care. Because he says that it’s your future you’re ruining. He
has no effect on it.

I: What would we call that, if he’s giving you that choice?

SB: Freedom.

The preceding excerpt is an example of data collected from the last stage of the study.
This helped to validate the other stages in the research design and provided additional
information (freedom as a possible subcategory) for analysis. Because of my experiences
teaching students labeled with a behaviour difficulty, I was not surprised to find the
participants attentive and articulate during our discussion of the top five teachers they
identified. However, at the end of our time together, I was surprised to experience a role
reversal of sorts: The participants wanted to continue talking about the positive attributes
of their favorite teachers and I was quite nervous about giving them this control.

Though I collected sufficient amounts of data at this stage, allowing them to proceed in
this way accomplished two things: First, it gave them opportunity to revisit the study,
understand its components, and experience some of the results of their input. Second, if I
was nervous about students driving the discussion during the group interview, I
considered the possibility that my own bias as a teacher and my experiences as a student might affect the way I collected data. In the next section, *Limitations of the Research Design*, I address these and other concerns.

**Limitations of the Research Design**

As in the *pilot study*, the influence of the categories created in the *interview stage* could constitute a limitation to the rest of the study. Once the categories were developed, removing one during the *observation stage*, so perspective is not prejudiced, could have been problematic. Though this was not insurmountable, it may have been possible to invite another researcher to complete this stage (had it occurred to me at the time). The study also suffers from time constraints, especially when it concerns the *school tours* stage. If students began to acknowledge and inquire about my presence in their school, discussion about the tours could have compromised the balance of the study.

Having read excerpts of my journey from teacher to researcher, it is also important to address the possibility of data collecting being vulnerable to bias and emotion. Since the methodology was tested in a school where I did not initially consider myself successful as an educator, but later found success, this must be addressed so that the reader will find confidence in the methods and accept the data collected as sound. Having read many books and articles that relate to this research, I found that the work most related to this concern is *Emotions and Fieldwork* by Kleinman and Copp (1993).

They state:
Qualitative researchers hear mixed messages. On one hand, they are told that their emotions can hinder good research. On the other, they are told that they will not understand participants unless they form attachments to them. Consequently, most of us act like quasi-positivists: We allow ourselves to have particular feelings, such as closeness with participants, and try to deny or get rid of emotions we deem inappropriate (p. 3).

Just as triangulation of data is an important feature of this methodology, another important feature was my determination to triangulate my experiences where they concerned the participants in the study. The young teacher might gravitate to the idea that students labeled with a behaviour difficulty can overcome adversity when a teacher recognizes their hidden talents, whilst the experienced teacher has seen that this is rarely the case.

This triangulation, then, offers perspectives within the same setting— for the student, the teacher, and the researcher. For example, if a participant stated during an interview that he disliked a particular teacher’s class because he considered it boring, the researcher as a student, having possibly had the same experiences with a similar teacher, might agree. The researcher as a teacher, however, might recognize that the student could have just come from a session with the teacher and his social or intellectual needs were not immediately met and therefore the teacher in question had not been fairly judged. The researcher (as a researcher) then might make inquiries and decide by creating a knowledge base (McNiff, 1993) that the definition of boring cannot yet be aligned by both the participant and the researcher unless there is a deeper understanding of the participant’s daily experiences.
This triangulation, whilst offering multiple perspectives, encouraged me to better understand the participant’s definition of boring by not choosing a side, but by seeking to understand the term by questioning the perspectives. In this case, it is better to find out what the participant does not consider to be a boring lesson or a boring teacher, since our definitions of descriptors like boring, nice, funny, relaxed, and laid-back can never be exactly aligned.

With this in mind, in the sections that follow, I list the different data sources detailed in the research design (school tour notes, interviews, observations, and literature) and provide examples of how these fed into the analyses of the areas of curriculum delivery, specifically pace, routine, variety, sequence, and time management.

In the school tours, 20 students were selected to participate in a study that asked them to identify places in their school where they felt valued or where they had positive experiences. I noticed during several of these tours some of the participants felt more comfortable when I gave them more control (the researcher standing behind the participant and participant holding the clipboard and maps) and allowed the tour to develop and proceed at the participants’ pace.

The interviews produced several common themes. For instance, several students mentioned in the interviews that pace, timing, breaks, keeping up, and a daily syllabus are appealing elements that comprise a successful lesson. These themes are represented in bold in the following excerpts:

- “Go at your own pace. He doesn’t race along trying to get the course done.”
- “There has to be a time when kids can relax.”
• “He writes everything on the board so we know what’s going on that day.”

• (In other classes) “I just fall behind. I can’t keep up with the work.”

• “He likes to stick to a subject so you actually get it. He doesn’t teach it one day and move on.”

• “She has a lot of things written down on the board and she’ll go over everything.”

• “You can just look up at the board and say, ‘We’re doing that today’.”

The observations also produced several similar themes: predictability, transition, variety, momentum, etc. These are also represented in bold in the following excerpts:

• Part of the success of Mr. L’s lessons would seem to be attributed to a predictable sequence of activities. Usually occurring at 20-minute intervals, each activity provides students with time to ask questions as well as time for Mr. L to talk to students individually.

• Mr. Lb’s lessons activity transitions seemed to be more student-directed based on their success and momentum. Mr. Lb would begin his government classes by talking about current events and use these conversations to transition into politics.

• There are a variety of things to see that might serve as a predictor of things to come through the year.

• “He keeps referring to the page numbers written on the board behind him. A student tries to guide him: ‘I think we’re past that. I think we’re on the next chapter’.”
During the beginning stages of analysis, I noted that some themes I extracted from the school tours (participant/researcher), the interviews (the participants) and the observations (the researcher) intersected, such as: pace, time, predict, sequence, transition, momentum, and variety.

I used search engines in the United States (EBSCOhost) and educational databases (ERIC, Academic Search Premier) to develop these intersecting themes into researchable key terms. I combined the themes I extracted from the school tours, interviews, and observations with more general terms that encompass the themes in the study. For instance, when I combined pace with lesson planning and behaviour, I discovered research related to these areas that offered additional insight about my observations and interviews, new research areas, and additional key terms, such as routine and time management.

For instance, when I employed time management, lesson planning, and behaviour as key terms in ERIC, I discovered several articles that were relevant to my research. A notable example was Supporting Positive Behaviour in Alberta Schools: A Classroom Approach (2008) by Dana Antaya-Moore. This article describes ten key elements of effective classroom management that support positive behaviour, such as, “classroom organization, including the physical environment and structures and routines that foster learning and encourage positive behaviour throughout the school day” (p. 1).

By targeting the right combination of key terms I was able to generate several lists of articles related to pace, time management, daily syllabi, sequence, variety, predictability, routine, classroom behaviour and classroom management. Organizing the literature in this
way not only allowed me to condense the notes from my past readings, it also gave me
the opportunity to explore a variety of relevant research in this area and examine the
wider debates and issues addressed within the literature. In later chapters, I will
demonstrate how I used this information to suggest strategies for improving the academic
and social lives of students labeled with an EBD in School #1.

To obtain this information, it was first necessary to consider the rights of the students
under scrutiny. Without disclosing all aspects of the study (who will have access to the
data and how it might be used) I would be in danger of persuading students to participate
with the opportunity to be excused from their study period. Though some students might
have been less candid about their teachers when I revealed that others would be reading
the data, not explaining this at the start of the study would have been ethically
questionable. However, I argue that when the participants were made aware of the goals
of the study and how their input could affect the results, they made an effort to provide
more detailed information. In the following section I consider other ethical issues in the
study, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and privacy.

**Ethics**

During the pilot study, I used David Gray’s *A Checklist of Ethical Issues* (2004), to
consider the following issues that might arise during interviews and observations.

*Adjustments and other considerations for the main study are written in italics and can be
found at the end of each section.*
Privacy: Students were informed that the interview would be tape-recorded and that they could choose not to participate. This, however, was communicated after the tour, which is ethically questionable. *The appropriate information was communicated to the participants before the school tours. Permission to tape-record was gained prior to the study by the parents of the participants who were under 18 years old.*

Risk Assessment: The school tours and subsequent interviews occurred during school hours, the latter in the office of the school psychologist where students are frequently held for questioning. Since some students were not aware of my presence in the school, negative assumptions could have been drawn from other students. The participants’ peers might regard this observation and interview as a disciplinary procedure. *I moved all of the interviews to a classroom for the main study and conducted them away from the main door.*

Confidentiality: Participants were assured that the interviewer and the headmaster would have access to observation notes and that the participants would be referred to in the interview transcription by initials. Since the participants were aware that the headmaster selected them, it was made clear that their identity would be easily known despite the use of initials as an identifier. *The participants were also informed that tutors at the University of Manchester would be reading observation notes and interview transcripts for the purpose of the interviewer’s assessment.*

Informed Consent: Due to the nature of the observation/interview and our agreement to keep the data within the school and the university, the headmaster assured me that it was not necessary to notify parents. *However, it was necessary to contact the parents of*
students who were under 18 in the main study. This was accomplished two weeks prior to the start of the main study by phone in both schools.

Data Access and Ownership: Participants were made aware that their school and the interviewer would have access to the data. Ownership of the data was not discussed. I explained to the participants prior to the start of the study that their school and the University of Manchester would also have access and ownership of the data.

After the University of Manchester accepted my research proposal, I contacted the administration at School #1 and School #2 to arrange a meeting to present the findings of my pilot study. In School #1, I presented these findings to the principal, as well as the superintendent and assistant superintendent of the school system. In School #2, I conducted a similar meeting with the principal and assistant principal at a different time. At both meetings, I introduced the study using a power-point presentation that provided visual examples of the methods trialed and the data collected at Westside (pilot school). I reflected on these in terms of progress made and areas that would be improved and adjusted to accommodate the physical elements and larger student population of each school. I also made the principal and assistant principal at School #2 aware of their own role in this study.

Though both parties gave verbal approval for me to proceed, important questions emerged, such as: Who will have ownership of the data? How will this study impact the participants? How will I gain parental consent? How will I maintain my roles as teacher and as researcher? Are there any conflicts of interest for the researcher? Though I presented to these panels my ethical considerations before and after the pilot study, new
concerns prompted me to examine additional concerns raised in these meetings. In addition to David Gray’s checklist, I found guidance through BERA (British Educational Research Association) regarding issues concerning privacy, confidentiality and anonymity, risk or harm, trust, ownership of the data and results, the right to feedback, and the integrity of the findings. I also found that both schools seemed to be concerned about the balance of power between the researcher and participants (students or other faculty/administration).

Having examined BERA’s Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, I drew from these several guidelines that helped me to address possible ethical dilemmas. In the sections that follow, I extract the guideline that corresponds to each concern and discuss them in the context of the schools under scrutiny. A detailed list of these guidelines can be found in Appendix E (p. 364).

Guideline #10 (Voluntary Informed Consent)
As I stated in Chapter 2, because I was employed by one of the schools in the main study and could perhaps be considered to be in a position of power by the participants, “objectivity could be a concern in both the way the data are collected and analysed” (p. 69) and the way the participants interpret their role in the study. Therefore, it was important to explain in detail the nature of action research and the impact its research elements would have on the participants and the results of the study. I addressed these concerns by leading a discussion about action research at the end of my presentation. Because the assistant superintendent in School #1 was familiar with this type of research, he believed the participants would not immediately associate me (the researcher) as a member of staff, and therefore, would likely provide more detailed and honest responses
A member of administration at School #1 also had concerns about students identifying teachers and members of staff in a “top five”. These concerns were sympathetic to teachers who work with difficult students in School #1 who might not be identified by the participants in the study. Whilst one member of administration recognized that teachers receive awards and accolades quite often in school meetings, local newspapers, district-wide meetings, and yearbooks, another noted that while this may be true, it is never done comparatively within the context of their daily charge.

I used this opportunity to remind the administration at School #1 that because this study aims to identify the positive aspects of teaching in the classrooms of certain teachers, it is inevitable that the participants will identify places they have had negative experiences for comparative purposes. However, I assured this panel that though this did occur in the pilot study, the maps and unfavorable comments about teachers were not presented as part of the final presentation to staff. The assistant superintendent suggested that it was important to give the participants the freedom to speak about their experiences without interruption and fear of repercussion. However, he also proposed that because the maps would clearly identify teachers, they should be eliminated from the final report and negative comments about teachers should be anonymised (and removed in cases where an identity is made obvious my their position in the school). We decided as a group that this would be easier to discuss once the report was complete and members of this panel had a chance to examine it.

*Guideline #13 (Right to Withdraw)*
I was also able to alleviate concerns from both panels about students who might decide to withdraw from the study. We decided that if this should occur, then there would be no adverse consequences or repercussions. We also agreed that if the participant was able to provide information about his decision to withdraw, it could provide important data to be considered during analysis. I gained permission from both schools in the study to return to the guidance office for more participant recommendations if this situation arose.

Guideline #24 (Privacy)

Though I identified those parties who would have access to the data (the administration at each school and The University of Manchester), storage of the data was a concern for the administration at both schools. The principal at School #1 suggested that because I would be teaching in the same room I would be conducting interviews and also moving around the school (school tours) with sensitive information, that third parties might have access to the data. Students and teachers could glance at maps as we proceed down the hallways, or students might find maps and transcripts in folders on my desk. He suggested:

- There should no hard copies of transcripts located on campus;
- Electronic copies should not be stored on school computers;
- Maps should be stored and locked in a facility outside of the researcher’s classroom;
- Devices used to record interviews with students and faculty members should be locked in a facility outside of the researcher’s classroom;
• A log of participants’ movement around school should be made available to the administration: (this should include the duration of the school tour and interview represented my time signatures);

• If copies of transcripts or audio files of participant interviews were requested by administration officials, they should not be sent by e-mail.

**Summary**

As an educator of students who have been labeled with a behaviour difficulty, I found that the successful lessons are those that give direction to the students’ interests and impulses. Though I did not consider my own experiences as a teacher to be of value to this study at first, there was a direction for research developing through self-exploration. I explored using action research as well as heuristics as a foundation for inquiry, and my perspectives and the participants’ perceptions of an experience drove the research and formed part of the data. Successful lesson planning evoked my curiosity regarding the benefits of including student voice in the context of lesson planning, and my research design was formulated in a series of steps drawing on the cyclical foundations of action research. Of course it was important that the action research process was conducted with rigor and that I remained self-critical of my own role in the process.

What sets action research apart from other models of inquiry is a set of systematic reflective cycles that guides the research. Winter (1989) offers an overview of action research “principles” drawn on during this cycle, which he terms: *reflective critique, dialectical critique, collaborative resource, risk, plural structure, and theory, practice*
and transformation. Here I will seek to demonstrate briefly how these principles, that were incorporated into my research, would safeguard rigor:

1) Reflexive critique - The principle of reflective critique ensures people reflect on issues and processes and make explicit the interpretations, biases, assumptions and concerns upon which judgments are made. In this way, practical accounts can give rise to theoretical considerations (Winter, 1989).

I evaluated the first cycles of the process (Figure 1, p. 56). I began the cycle of action research with a set of thoughts and observations (Cycle One: Informal Observations to Curiosity, p. 58) and used them to formulate ideas and questions (Cycle Two: Curiosity to Questions, p. 59). These lead to a third cycle that I used as a guide for a new strategy:

**Cycle Three: Questions to Strategy:**

Diagnosing: School Tours

*Where Do Students Feel Valued?*

Diagnosing: Interviews

*How are the student-identified places characterized?*

Action Planning: Map Analysis

*Where are the common student-identified areas?*

Action Planning: Observation

*Can examples of identified themes be observed in student-identified areas?*

Evaluating: Thematic Coding

*Are there common themes used to describe these places?*

Specifying Learning: Thematic Analysis

*Would participants validate these themes in a group discussion?*
2) *Dialectical critique*- The key elements to focus attention on are those constituent elements that are unstable, or in opposition to one another. These are the ones that are most likely to create changes (Winter, ibid).

During interviews and observations, several common key terms were extracted. Because there were many terms that were specific to the culture of the participants in the pilot study (British, specifically Greater Manchester and Liverpool), I had already realized that I needed to resolve the meanings of certain colloquialisms with help from the Westside staff. However, I also found that apparently common terms required the same attention. After observing the teachers to whom these descriptors were applied, I found that certain terms such as *funny* and *humour* were ambiguous. A colleague pointed out that, perhaps, their casual use of the word *humourous* was closer to *humours me or listens to me*. From this experience I determined that a deeper understanding of participant dialogue was necessary.

3) *Collaborative Resource*- Participants in an action research project are co-researchers. *The principle of collaborative resource presupposes that each person’s ideas are equally significant as potential resources for creating interpretive categories of analysis, negotiated among the participants* (Winter, ibid).

*A. Discussing the findings with co-researchers and /or colleagues for the interpretation*- As I noted earlier, I used the school tour maps as a template for interviewing the participants. Using the participants as researchers, I was able to investigate why it was that participants chose to identify particular places on the maps (and chose not to identify others) and used the interview to discuss the significance of their selections.

*B. Analysing the evidence and collating the findings*- Following the pilot study, I compared the maps of six participants to determine common areas where students “experience” success and then used the corresponding interviews to identify common
characteristics of these areas, based on the frequency of occurrence. I then translated these into categories, based on the frequency of occurrence. I used these into categories, to give direction to new areas of enquiry and to determine whether the participants’ observations about a commonly identified location matched my own.

C. Writing the report / Sharing findings with stakeholders and peers- Of course the major use of findings from the pilot study was to construct my research proposal. However, I also presented these findings to the staff at Westside where discussions were both lively and helpful.

4) Risk- The change process potentially threatens all previously established ways of doing things, thus creating psychic fears among the practitioners. Initiators of action research will use this principle to allay others’ fears and invite participation (Winter, ibid).

Though the participants acted as co-researchers, what was perhaps lacking from the pilot study was the insight and expertise of staff members of Westside. This became evident to me during analysis, for example, when trying to resolve the definitions of words and understand colloquialisms. This was also apparent during the presentation of my findings to the staff at Westside when I found there were some staff members who seemed to feel they had been left out of the study. This could cause feelings of resentment and the loss of valuable insight.

5) Plural Structure- The nature of the research embodies a multiplicity of views, commentaries and critiques, leading to multiple possible actions and interpretations. This plural structure of inquiry requires a plural text for reporting (Winter, ibid).

During analysis of the pilot study, I consulted colleagues from the university and staff members from Westside to clarify areas of ambiguity. Subsequently, I realized that it would have been more effective if I had combined members of these groups to help
analyse the findings. However, at the time I was deterred by the professional and logistical constraints of doing so. I had never previously conducted systematic empirical enquiry and would have required the assistance of university members to oversee and give advice to the analysis team. This may have given the results more weight and also created confidence among the staff and leaders at Westside. Had this occurred to me at the start of the study, then aligning the schedules of a university consultant and the teaching staff at Westside could well have been possible and would have produced more integrated viewpoints. As it was I had to rely on my own integration of comments and suggestions from these two sources.

6) Theory, Practice, Transformation- For action researchers, theory informs practice, practice refines theory, in a continuous transformation.

The first two cycles demonstrate how my professional experiences led me to question the placement of misbehaved students in alternative programs, to examine how these alternative programs were run, and to question whether there were opportunities in the school outside alternative education where these students learn best. The pilot study represents the third cycle in the research design. From both informal and professional observations obtained in the first two cycles, I constructed a methodology to investigate where students who had been labeled with and EBD might acquire positive experiences in their school. I also explored whether such insights might be transferred to other places in the school where these students mostly experience social and academic failure in order to increase engagement. The fourth cycle in the research design represents a refined version of the pilot study, and information about its adjustments are explained in the next chapter.
Because the goal of action research is to better understand social situations and actions in their own contexts, some researchers have argued that bias is inevitable and objectivity is a limited. However, I argue that action research was indeed and appropriate method for this study because “the key elements to focus attention on are those constituent elements that are unstable, or in opposition to one another. These are the ones that are most likely to create changes” (Winter, 1989, p. 43). The next chapter demonstrates the research design as it unfolded through the study, drawing on two participant case studies, a teacher observation, and a participant group interview.
Chapter 5: Design Implementation

Introduction

In this chapter I explain how the research design was put into practice in School #1. Using extracts from my research diary and examples of the data I collected, I address the following questions: How were the methods used? To what extent did the researcher’s personal and professional experiences impact on the implementation of the methods? How can I make sense of the outcomes?

In what follows I use case studies of two students and one member of staff from School #1 (participants PD and BB, and teacher Mr. L) to explain the progress of data collection. The first two accounts will show the progress of both participants as they used the research model presented in the previous chapter. The third case shows how the data collected through the research design (including PD and BB) led to a teacher observation (Mr. L).

Three Cases

The purpose of choosing participants at the beginning and later stages of the study is to give the reader a better sense of how the study progressed and strengthened over time. In navigating these accounts readers will be presented with five sets of material, as follows:

1. The School Tour- This step is designed to put into context how two participants in the study are perceived by members of school authority and the researcher. It is also designed to give the reader a sense of the participants’ personality. This section contains tour notes, a summary of what teachers, guidance counselors or members of
administration mentioned to the researcher about PD and BB, and a tour commentary that describes each location and teacher as they unfolded during the tour.

2. The Interview- Following the school tour step, the interview step provides the reader my impressions not only of the interview itself, but also my general thoughts on how they might be improved. It involves:

- **Coded Interview**- includes excerpts from interviews from two participants in this study (PD and BB). They include the categories and subcategories as discussed in the methodology chapter, and commentary written immediately after each interview to discuss progress, problems and issues of clarity,

- **Coded Interview Summary**- uses the participant created categories and subcategories to show how often each subcategory was used against an average count in School #1. This section demonstrates how these subcategories could lead to areas of research.

3. Observation- The reader will see an excerpt of a transcribed observation of a teacher (Mr. L) identified as having positive qualities by a majority of the participants.

- **Teacher Profile**- shows a compilation of comments made by the participants to describe Mr. L. (This will follow BB’s case study),

- **Observation Transcript Excerpt**- that is coded using the categories used in the interviews and described in the methodology chapter, with commentary made by the researcher during the observation and during transcription,

- **Coded Observation Summary**- uses the participant created categories and subcategories to code an observation of Mr. L.

4. Group Interview- These materials are followed by the partial transcript of a group interview, conducted with participants present, including the two case study students. This is followed by a commentary written immediately after the group interview. This material contains a coded interview excerpt that includes an annotated version of the group interview and is coded using the categories and subcategories as discussed in the
research design chapter. It also includes commentary made by the researcher during the observation and during transcription.

The following guide will help the reader navigate through this chapter:

**PD**
Step 1: The School Tour
Step 2: The Interview

**BB**
Step 1: The School Tour
Step 2: The Interview

**Mr. L**
Step 3: Observation
Step 4: Group Interview
Case Study 1: PD

Step 1: The School Tour

This first case study found me off to a successful start. PD (who I will now refer to as Peter) is a pleasant young man who seems to be naturally enthusiastic. Participating in the study as well as being removed from a study hall (where he admits he often finds trouble or reason to wander the halls) seemed to be the impetus for his positive behaviour at first. Because Peter seems to be friendly with adults, I can imagine that he must be able of talk his way out of infractions and gain permission to submit homework late. However, the remnants of a black eye indicate that this disposition might change under different conditions. The following section contains notes about the school tour I conducted with Peter. The left column displays my notes and within them the lessons I learned from this tour, whilst right side contains commentary and ideas for school tour adjustments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peter’s Tour Notes:</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 Sept 2007</td>
<td>October 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:12 am</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Peter is a senior (final year) in high school. According to his guidance counselor, he will not graduate on time due to a lack of credits. She claims that he is a very “different” student this year compared to his first few years at School #1 as he had a tendency to skip school and would often appear to be under the influence of drugs. Several students must also receive all of their credits this year in order to graduate on time. Guidance counselors suggest that many of the participants in the study might not graduate on time.
The guidance counselor also suggests that teachers and staff seem to enjoy his company, as Peter seems to communicate and “get along” well with adults. Nevertheless, he did not earn many credits his first few years due to sleeping in class, incomplete homework assignments, poor test grades, and truancy. Students, according to the counselor, have said that Peter can at times be aggressive and “blow-up” at them, resulting in many out of school fights. At the start of the school tour, I do notice a bruise by his upper left eye.

Peter is very enthusiastic about participating in this tour. In fact, when I explained to him my motives and rational for the study, he responded with “Thank you, thank you, aw, cool!” When I asked him if he was willing to be interviewed, he responded in a similar fashion: “Sure, ab-so-lutely, no problem!” I was surprised by this reaction as I had originally expected him to be somewhat apprehensive. But by the look on his face, my instincts told me that this was going to be somewhat cathartic for Peter. He can’t stop smiling. His attitude was so unexpected and positive, I instinctively matched his demeanor.

At the start of the tour, I explained to Peter the purpose of the study, his role as a participant, and how the school tour and interview would be conducted. After the first few seconds of the tour, however, I realized that the instructions might not have been clear. As we proceeded down the hall, Peter scratched his head and said, “Now, what are we doing again?” I explained to him again what was required and noted this problem. Once I was

This seems to be true for other participants. BB, DB, MG, MD, MD2, TL and MA seem to get along well with adults according to their guidance counselors.

Incomplete homework assignments seem to be a common reason for failure among the participants.

Only one other participant, JB, was mentioned as “explosive.”

MG, BB, TL, DB and MA were also enthusiastic and cooperative. JB, HW and SB seemed reluctant and somewhat suspicious.

Reluctant students seemed to be concerned about who would have access to the transcripts.

TL has a similar reaction.

After the first few tours had similar issues, I reserved five minutes and sat with each participant to discuss the tour and interview in the classroom reserved for the interview. I did this in hopes of showing them a starting point and a finish line of sorts. This also seemed to help the participants to better plan where they would take me on the tour. Instead of taking me to remote parts of the building double back, the participants seemed to
assured that he understood, he took me to several rooms quickly without the narrative that I had hoped would accompany each stop. I attempted to slow him down by pausing to reflect on my map and it seemed to create a cadence that was consistent through the rest of the tour. In a polite attempt to wait for me, he filled in the uncomfortable silences with facts about each room: “This is where I took art when I was a sophomore…two years ago….the teacher was pretty cool.”

There was a sense of urgency on my part at the start of the interview because I didn’t want to lose the momentum of the school tour. I was worried that the change of pace might change his demeanor. We did this tour during classes so as not be disturbed by other students. Luckily, this school has removable cardboard coverings on the classroom windows in case of an interruption and it also prevented the possibility of other participants seeing what was going on. This was a variable that concerned me greatly, since other participants could be influenced by their own anticipation and assumptions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>plan the tour in a logical sequence that found us in discussion from start to finish.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Since the students were aware that the interview would take place directly after the tour, I had the recorder ready before we entered the room. I did this with the rest of the tours as well.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Peter’s Tour Commentary**

To give the reader a better sense of Peter’s progress on his tour of the school, this section will show each location in the order at which they were visited and provide commentary.

**Location 1: Mrs. P (rm. 224)**
Though a few other participants identified Mrs. P as a positive influence during the school tour stage of the methodology, I was surprised to find Peter exchanging greetings and smiles at her classroom door. Mrs. P’s English class looked like a typical classroom: posters, dry-erase board, desks in rows, book shelves, etc. Mrs. P (who looked to be late 40’s) was appropriately dressed and in the middle of a vocabulary lesson when we stopped at her room. There was nothing that was immediately exceptional about Mrs. P other than Peter’s attitude toward her.

**Location 2: Mr. Br (r. 211)**

However, his demeanor changed at our second stop. As we passed through a set of large double doors on the same floor, Peter’s face changed to a light shade of red and his gait became heavy and lumbering. I was very surprised to find the climate and arrangement of Mr. Br’s room comparable to the environments that many teachers associate with alternative learning scenarios: low enrollment (there were only six student present), couches, a massive television, etc. Yet, Peter claimed that Mrs. P makes him “feel comfortable” in a typical classroom, whilst Mr. Br “eyeballs” him in an alternative setting.

**Location 3: Mrs. Pw (rm. 212)**

Similar to the pilot study participants who identified the art room as a positive learning environment, Peter had high praise of his art teacher, Mrs. Pw. Peter waved at Mrs. Pw and their exchange was pleasant and paralleled our quick meeting with Mrs. P. These teachers did share similar physical features (both seemed to be in their late 40’s, around 5’6” and dressed professionally) and treated Peter as if he was a student to whom they both paid special attention or kept under their wings. The art room was decorated with student projects (mostly papier-mâché masks) and students were working independently on various projects whilst listening to the radio.

**Location 4: Mr. B (rm. 120)**

At our next stop on the tour, I found that Mr. B also seemed to make Peter feel at ease. Here, I discovered my ideas of a “comfortable and casual” and my predictions of how
Peter might react to this type of learning environment aligning. Like Mr. Br’s room there were couches and low student enrollment, but this room also included a stereo playing Pink Floyd, bookshelves (doubling as seats for some students), and students eating breakfast whilst working on independent assignments (resume and application writing). Peter felt comfortable walking through this class to sit on Mr. B’s desk to ask him how his day was going whilst some students inquired about his rationale for being there. Though we had only visited four rooms, I began to see a trend in what Peter sees as a positive learning environment: access to the teacher, being comfortable, and working independently.

**Location 5: Mr. A (rm. 100)**

Not far from Mr. B was the ISS room (in school suspension) and I was very puzzled as to why we would be heading in that direction. Located away from classrooms near the central administrative offices, the ISS room is designed to hold students for the remainder of the day as a punishment for violating school rules. At first, I thought Peter was directing us there to introduce me to his peers and I inquired about how he would have knowledge of the ISS room’s daily roster. Again, my assumptions about Peter’s motives proved to be wrong. I found students quietly at work on various assignments (provided to them by their corresponding teachers) under the management of Mr. A. After a quick and pleasant exchange with Mr. A (who I later discovered was almost 80-years-old), Peter acknowledged that this was a place where he could concentrate and “get some work done.” More information about ISS can be found in Appendix B (p. 351).

**Location 6: Mr. L (rm. 113)**

Peter then guided us to a combination of the elements that comprised the personalities and learning environments noted thus far. Mr. L, an algebra teacher, was dressed casually (jeans, cowboy boots) and spoke to us outside of his room that was decorated in Star Wars and fantasy murals. His chat with us was also quick and I attributed this to us disturbing his lesson plan and his want of returning to it. Whilst there were students in rows attentively doing assignments, there were others who sat informally around his desk. As we left Mr. L, Peter acknowledged his “laid back” persona and his willingness
to help students who struggle in his class. Peter commented that Mr. L is “such a cool guy.”

Location 7: Mr. Mc (rm. 12)

Peter decided to end our tour in the basement of the building where science classes were located. I was introduced to an older gentleman who looked at us over his glasses with fake disdain. This was obviously a marine biology class as the walls and various tables in this large classroom were adorned with pictures and models of marine life. There were also two large aquariums behind Mr. Mc’s desk where he stood and greeted us during what seemed to be his preparatory period. He was cynical and had a dry sense of humor, but it seemed to be an exchange familiar to Peter. They joked about whether Peter was in trouble and if I was working undercover for the FBI delivering Peter to various teachers for his final goodbyes.

Peter’s Tour Summary

Peter’s tour was the beginning of many unexpected and surprising exchanges and scenarios during this stage of inquiry. Before I conducted my interview with Peter, I sensed that personal connections, comfort, pace, and quiet workspaces were important to him. Because there were no obvious connections among the teachers and places we visited, I also remember feeling overwhelmed and fearful that I would not find trends during analysis. However, two of the teachers Peter visited on the school tour (Mr. L and Mr. Mc) were also identified by several other participants.

Though Peter was an enthusiastic participant and provided direction for future school tours, I found that my fear of losing control of the tour (and perhaps a participant) was driving this part of the research. After revisiting my notes I must keep in mind the possibility that this was perhaps due to information I received about him before the study.
I considered to what personal extent my personal and professional experiences had on the implementation of the methods. Though most teachers in School #1 had pleasant comments to share with me about Peter, others warned me of possible problems that could arise during the school tours and interviews, such as Peter abandoning the tour and leaving the school, disrupting classes, vandalism, and harassing other students.

Though Peter remained eager and focused throughout the tour, my assumptions about him found me trying to manage his behaviour. Thinking about Peter and my need to control him based on perhaps an inaccurate profile, inspired me to consider his classroom behaviour. Do these students paint a more accurate picture of themselves when they are given more control and the lessons are meaningful? Perhaps the participants’ behaviour and the information they have provided in the study would be an excellent way to show my colleagues that these students can provide a critical analysis of their past performances and communicate how they might improve them.

During the tour I was surprised to witness Peter stopping at positive and negative places. The positive places were not those that are stereotypically valued by “at risk” students: casual environment, couches, lack of structure and rules. I expected to find similar features in most of the places to which Peter directed us, but instead these were places and teachers with no common characteristics.

**Step 2: The Interviews**

The next stage of inquiry was designed to follow the *school tour* so that the map Peter used to identify positive or negative school experiences could serve as a script for an
This interview lasted for approximately 80 minutes and it concluded when Peter began to repeat the same information. In the following chart, the right column is an abridged version of the interview that is separated by teachers Peter identified on the tour and color-coded to match the subcategories they represent in the right column. An abridges transcript of Peter’s interview can be located in Appendix F (p. 365)

**Peter’s Coded Interview Excerpt**
School #1, September ‘07

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories:</th>
<th>Teacher Behaviour</th>
<th>Teaching Style</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subcategories</strong></td>
<td>Personal Connection</td>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Peter:** Well, I think it’s because she (Mrs. P) makes me feel comfortable. When I go into the classroom, I feel like I can sit down and take out my work and if I don't have a lot of it done, or if I don't have it done at all, it’s okay. She understands. She'll give me another day to make it up or, you know what I mean?

----------

**I:** Now, do you think that it’s the teachers that you didn't like, do you think that they were doing that to you personally or do you think they do it to all the kids in class?

**Peter:** Well, I'm sure they have a select few, you know, I mean it’s not like they're gonna like everybody in the course. There's a select few that they're gonna dislike and...I mean it’s all about pickin' and choosin' I guess...

----------

**I:** Now, back to Mrs. P's class. Um, talk about, um, something you did in that class that would make you think it’s positive. Like, what's an assignment, what's an activity?

**Peter:** Oh, well we learned about Stephen King. That's what I really liked. I, like....I don't know. I never liked reading, and like for some reason, I like reading in her class.
The momentum did not slow down during the interview and Peter’s enthusiasm helped
me be at ease. He leaned back in his chair for the most of the interview with his hands
behind his head. I found myself doing the same. Whenever Peter said something that
seemed to mean a lot to him, he fell forward in his chair as if to get closer to the tape
recorder and looked at the ceiling tiles like someone recalling a good movie whilst
promoting it to a friend. His voice was conversational.

There were many times, however, when Peter could not seem to find the right words and
I finished his sentences and perhaps influenced his responses. (This was noted for further
interviews). Peter did provide some valuable information, especially when he described
the personality of his teachers and how it affected whether he would buy into their lesson
plans. His mannerisms when describing positive experiences with teachers seem to
suggest that he believes that it is easier to act “like a friend” than to be negative. I found
this positive attitude to be unexpected and unlike his rough exterior. When I arranged his
criticisms in the same order that they occurred in the tour, they not only encapsulate the
elements that Peter believes comprise a positive learning environment, but they can also
be compared against other participants in the study and point to areas of research:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Peter’s Interview Excerpt</strong></th>
<th><strong>Research Area</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>She makes me feel</em> <strong>comfortable</strong>.*</td>
<td>Personal Connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>She would always be</em> <strong>helping me</strong>.*</td>
<td>Encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>She helped me out.</em></td>
<td>Encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I like reading in her class.</em></td>
<td>Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>It’s so quiet in there.</em></td>
<td>Rules/Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>He goes at your</em> <strong>pace</strong>.*</td>
<td>Pace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>He’ll give you a way to catch up.</em></td>
<td>Variety</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There's no way he's gonna let you fail.

The following table (Table 7) demonstrates that the excerpts and corresponding categories also remained consistent with other participants in the study. The second column shows the subcategory frequency in Peter’s interview and the third column compares this against the participant average. Though most of Peter’s scores remain consistent with the school’s average, a few categories are not. For instance, whilst a personal connection seems to be important to Peter, unlike the other participants, humour is not. By identifying the common subcategories and corresponding areas across all of the participants, I was able to recognize literature that lead to clear paths for improvement and reform for students labeled with an EBD.

Table 7: Peter's Coded Interview Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Peter</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Connection</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humour</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Laid Back”</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pace</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Hands On”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictable</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules/Expectations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case Study 2: BB

Step 1: The School Tours

Having spent time adjusting the school tours for pace, time, control, and location, BB’s tour (who I will now refer to as Ben) found me better prepared. This is not to say, however, that there was no room for more direction leading to adjustments. Ben was also enthusiastic about participating in the study. Unlike Peter, I believe that this is less about his demeanor and more about his knowledge about the study and specifically the school tour before we began. I presented Ben the rationale for the study, its components, and how he would contribute to the overall project. Though I had originally thought this might spoil the process and corrupt the data, it seemed to enhance the process. Like Peter, the school tour form below representing Ben is set up in a similar way. The left side displays my notes, whilst the right side analyses these notes and considers adjustments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ben’s Tour Notes:</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 Oct 2007</td>
<td>October 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:12 am</td>
<td>Ben made me smile throughout this interview. He seemed to be trying hard to convince me that he was a behaviour problem and he could become agitated easily. This all seemed like an act to me and I played along.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ben is a senior (final year) in School #1. Like Peter, he seemed eager to participate in the school tour and interview. When the researcher described the process he informed me several times that he did not mind “speaking his mind” about teachers that he did not “get along with” over the course of his high school experience.
wanted to make sure that he understood that this would also be an opportunity to talk about positive experiences, to which he just smiled a bit and giggled to himself. At first I was very apprehensive about Ben. I believed he wanted to use this as an opportunity to vent his frustrations.

Ben didn’t look like a stereotypical “bad” student. In School #1 that would be hip-hop or street clothes with a bit of jewelry in the form of chains around the neck or attached to his wallet. Ben wore “clean-cut” shirt and jeans. I’m noting this because it didn’t seem to fit his persona. Ben also wears a hearing aid that he adjusted a few times during the tour. I also made note that Peter and Ben both seemed distracted by my note taking. Ben’s concerns that I was marking things down correctly slowed down the pace.

Because momentum is important to this part, I decided to give the clipboard to Ben and allow him to make notes. At first I thought this tour might not be as successful as the first with Peter, but allowing Ben to have more control gave the proceedings a bit of life that might have been missing.

Watching Ben proceed through the hallway, he seemed to be very much in control of his environment. I am not sure if this is typical of Ben, but this seems to be where the strength lies in this methodology: giving control in an environment where he may have a lack of control. (I will experiment with this on the next tour to see if it achieves the same effect.) I also noted the way Ben peers into classrooms before talking about his experiences in them, positive or negative.

His appearance gave weight to my original thoughts about him: He’s a nice guy trying to convince the world around him that he’s “bad” but can’t seem to make up his mind.

I actually felt a bit sorry for Ben, not for his handicap, but that his hearing aid negates his attempts to seem abrasive.

Ben seemed to want to be in control of the school tour/interview and I did not fight it. I think this made the experience more rewarding for both of us. I think that giving this control will work depending on the student. For instance, this would not work with HW.

Once a common group of teachers is known, perhaps in a future study they should be more aware of what is
Whether he was doing this out of fear or curiosity, it was consistent through most of the tour. Maybe he was checking to see if the teacher was there so that he could speak freely, or maybe this is a pattern of behaviour for a student who is truant.

Ben’s Tour Commentary

To give the reader a better sense of Ben’s progress on his tour of the school, this next section shows each location in the order at which they were visited and provides a commentary.

Location 1: Mr. B (rm. 120)

Ben’s tour began with his job skills teacher, Mr. B. I found Mr. B managing his class consistently throughout the tours: most of the students were working independently, listening to music, eating, and talking with Mr. B informally. Ben also used this visit as an opportunity to visit with Mr. B and they chatted casually about sports and a soccer team that was playing on a television with the volume off.

Location 2: Mrs. T (rm. 102)

I was surprised to find Ben directing us across the hall to Mrs. T’s room, a place often avoided by other participants. Ben seemed to have mixed feelings about Mrs. T. He referred to her social studies class as “boring” and “difficult,” yet acknowledged that he did take with him important lessons from her teachings. The first two places on Ben’s tour had a wide range of differences in environment, teaching styles, rules, etc. Ben made his rationale for showing me these places more clearly during the interview. When he said “she keeps kids on track... but there has to be a time where kids need to relax” it suggested to me that Mr. B’s classroom climate and independent approach to teaching combined with Mrs. T’s teaching style would comprise his ideal learning environment.
**Location 3: Mr. Lb (rm. 103)**

The third teacher we met on the tour, Mr. Lb, seemed to personify this compromise. Dressed formally with his sleeves rolled up, Mr. Lb was sitting among his students (on top of an empty student’s desk) and engaging them in a conversation that I could not hear. I noticed his chalkboard was covered with posters and students did not have any books open, which suggests to me that his informal teaching style was customary in his class.

**Location 4: Mr. Mac (Industrial Arts)**

Ben proceeded to the industrial arts department located away from the other classes and in the basement of the school. Though Mr. Mac was not present, it was clear through Ben’s behaviour that this location had a profound influence on his high school experience. From the window of two locked metal doors, I could see this classroom/workshop was arranged by individual stations. Ben smiled and looked wide-eyed as if he had not been down this way in a long time and was recalling past experiences. He seemed frustrated that we were not able to enter this workshop so that he could show me a past project that was still on display.

**Location 5: Mr. Mc (rm. 12)**

I believe these memories influenced his decision to guide us to Mr. Mc who also located in the basement. Though Mr. Mc is primarily known for his marine biology class, Ben spoke about his Science & Survival course in which he was previously enrolled. Though Mr. Mc was busy teaching at the time, when we arrived at his class Ben identified some of the equipment he used in Mr. Mc’s class from outside his classroom door. These resembled a pile of backpacks and various items for camping. As we left Ben mentioned that, “Mr. Mc is so funny.”

**Location 6: Mr. G (rm. 209)**
From the basement, we climbed three floors to Mr. G’s art room. Like Mr. Mc’s room this classroom was adorned with posters, papier-mâché models, pottery, and other examples of student work. Mr. G seemed to be in his early 50’s and shared similar physical features with Mr. Mc (mustache, glasses, dressed casually). Though Mr. G was busy dealing with a small group of students, he allowed us to look around his room. Ben directed me to a section of the art room reserved for pottery where he immediately sat down at a pottery wheel and began to spin it with his feet. This art room was also adorned with various student projects (papier-mâché masks, paintings, pottery, posters) and Mr. G also allowed students to listen to music as they worked independently.

**Location 7: Mrs. Tr (rm. 201)**

After talking to me about various art projects in which he participated, he directed us to our last stop on the same floor, Mrs. Tr. As we proceeded down the hallway to her room, Ben talked exclusively about how “nice” and “cool” she was and mentioned that students in the past who have tried to take advantage of her were often warned by Ben to behave. Because of the way her classroom was arranged, I could not get a glimpse of Mrs. Tr during the school tour though I could see her students were working in groups whilst having casual conversations. Ben mentioned that he did not “get a lot of work done in there” because informal nature of her class. Later, during the interviews, he seemed to negate this comment.

**Ben’s Tour Summary**

Like most of the participants in the study, Ben seemed to be influenced by a variety of personalities, environments, and teaching styles. With only a few students left to participate in the school tour and interview, I speculated that these would also provide a wide range of data and that the analysis stage of inquiry would be a challenge. However, this supports my original idea that students labeled with a behaviour difficulty, like all students, are positively influenced by a variety of teaching and own the ability to think critically about under which learning environments they learn best. This suggests that
these students, who are often excluded from mainstream classes, are managed by product of their perceived behaviour issues and less by their individual learning needs.

Working with Ben also reminded me of my time in England. Ben was a perfect example of a successful interview because of an established common ground. Looking back on my notes, I can see more clearly why I have been successful with my students in the past. Though I know School #1 well, it is a very different place when looking at it through a different set of eyes. When I arrived in Manchester, I needed many things like batteries, toiletries, and an ATM machine, but the first thing on my mind was a place to eat:

Data Diary: September 2006

My instincts told me that it would have been a mistake to approach a native and ask how to get to the nearest restaurant. It would be an innocent question, but there are too many things unknown by both parties to make it an effective exchange of information. The person I am asking must assume that I know how to use the buses, that I know at least the name of a few major roads and what I might consider a restaurant to be. Instead, I simply told a custodian in my residence hall that I planned to go to the Chinese takeout around the corner and I asked him if it was worth the trip. The exchange went something like this:

“Oh no, go around the corner from that and there’s a better place and cheaper.”

“Do you eat there a lot?”

“Now and then.”

“I wonder if I have time to make it.”

“Yeah, plenty. This is a student-y area so things are opened later.”

“Oh cool.”

“Where in the states are you from?”

“Maine.”
“Maine? Where’s that?”

Being in a new country and thinking about my experiences helped significantly with the construction and implementation of the methodology in this study. I was willing to adapt my behaviour in order to make connections. This led to an awareness about school environment and teachers who are willing to accommodate their behaviour. When the headmaster in the pilot study called me a “softer” American during our first meeting it was a good sign that I might be allowed to collect data there since I had proposed to him a research model that would allow me to observe his school at will. I realized early on that any success in the pilot study would depend on my attitude and my willingness to adapt.

I had no idea how important these moments would be in shaping this study and I am finding that as this study progresses I am not adapting my behaviour: I am generally curious about the participants and how they came to be marginalized. Ben also seemed to be curious about why I think his opinions are so important. The same is true about the headmaster in the pilot study school. His curiosity about my life led to many discussions about his life in Liverpool during the 60’s. We exchanged a few books and these curiosities about each other led to a short friendship. I am noticing that as the study progresses, I am thinking more about student/teacher relationships, friendships and communication.
Step 2: The Interviews

In the following chart, the left column is an abridged version of the interview that is separated by specific teachers and places discussed and color-coded to match the subcategories they represent in the right column. An abridged transcripts of Ben’s interview can be located in Appendix G (p. 370).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School #1, October 2007</th>
<th>Categories: Teacher Behaviour Teaching Style Environment Subject</th>
<th>Subcategories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ben</strong>: Um, because he's (Mr. B) like a younger teacher. So like, he like gets, like, the kids...like...like the environment like....you know what I mean like?</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ben</strong>: Like, I don't know, you could talk about like what you did on the weekend and he wouldn't really like to share it with like the other teachers...</td>
<td>Personal Connection</td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ben</strong>: It’s probably the best class ever.</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ben</strong>: Um...well, she's like old school...like...like, back in the day kind of teaching, like...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I</strong>: Yep.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ben</strong>: She's (Mrs. T) really strict about everything. No sleeping, no talking...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I</strong>: Mm hm. Now, is that necessarily a bad thing, though?</td>
<td>Pace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ben</strong>: No. It’s...keeps kids on track and like...what school should really be about, but like...she doesn't like, understand like...some kids, like...um...I don't know how to put this, but um...like there has to be a time where like kids need to like relax in class, like...</td>
<td>Pace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

144
Finding a rhythm during this interview was the key to success. Where some of the early interviews found me completing the participants’ sentences and not allowing enough time for them to complete their thoughts, this interview is a good example of practice leading to better results. Part of this success, however, can be attributed to more control given to the participant when they seem to require it to proceed. I discovered through experience that this control is hard to predetermine and must present itself during the course of the interview. Though early interviews did provide valuable information, allowing them to take a more conversational shape seemed to be a more rewarding experience for the participant. When I arranged Ben’s criticisms in the same order that they occurred in the tour, they not only encapsulate the elements that he believes comprise a positive learning environment, but they can also be compared against other participants in the study and point to areas of research:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ben’s Interview Excerpt</th>
<th>Research Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You <em>could talk about</em> (your) weekend.</td>
<td>Personal Connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>He wouldn't share it.</em></td>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids need to like <em>relax in class.</em></td>
<td>Comfortable/Pace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>He throws in other stuff.</em></td>
<td>Variety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>They're both laid back.</em></td>
<td>Laid Back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>They stay on schedule.</em></td>
<td>Organized/Pace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I also) like <em>hands on</em> classes.</td>
<td>Hands on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>They take you as like an adult.</em></td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He’s <em>strict</em> about his work.</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>He's really funny.</em></td>
<td>Humour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I've asked him stuff.</em></td>
<td>Personal Connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>He helped me.</em></td>
<td>Encouragement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Everything (is) written down. Organized
She’d start off with a lecture, Organized
and then you have worksheets. Organized/Predictable
She's just open about everything. Personal Connection

The following chart demonstrates that the excerpts and corresponding categories also remained consistent with other participants in the study. The reader will notice the similarities and differences between Peter and Ben after the interview analysis. Whilst organization on the part of his teacher seems to be important to Ben, the rest of the participants do not. I should also be noted that during the school tour, Ben claimed he “never did anything” in Mrs. Tr’s class. During the follow up interview he spoke highly of her organizational skills and claimed that “she's just so like...open about everything.”

The opportunity to discuss these inconsistencies gives further weight to the research design and its validation features.

As demonstrated in the first case study (Peter), identifying the common subcategories and corresponding research areas across all of the participants allowed me to consider more concise paths to school reform in School #1 for the students under scrutiny. The second column in the following chart (Table 8) shows the subcategory frequency in Ben’s interview and the third column compares this against the participant average. Though most of Ben’s scores remain consistent with the school’s average, a few categories are not.
Table 8: Ben’s Coded Interview Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ben</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Connection</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humour</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Laid Back”</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pace</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Hands On”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictable</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules/Expectations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using experience to adjust this beginning stage of inquiry, Ben’s tour found me more confident with this procedure. These adjustments gave more control to the participant and by doing so, provided me with a clear and concise script for the interviews. Though it might be difficult to see these changes when comparing Ben to Peter, the reader should note that Peter was not bashful or withdrawn during the school tour and interview whilst Ben was more reserved. I believe that allowing Ben to hold my clipboard and manage the maps during the tours yielded richer and more detailed data and I argue that this information would not have been available to me had he not.

Summary

Using two participant case studies (Peter and Ben) to show how the research design unfolded has allowed the reader to understand better the first three stages of inquiry.
(school tours, interviews and map analysis) and how data was collected at these stages as well as slight adjustments that were implemented along the way. Peter and Ben provided a rich amount of data that identified common directions for research and differences that demonstrated their individual thoughts and needs. The next sections of this chapter show the last two stages of the research design (observation, group interview). At the map analysis stage, I found that 12 of the 20 participants identified Mr. L as a positive influence. I observed his class to validate and better define the comments and criticisms of the participants made at prior stages. The next section uses a teacher identified in the study (Mr. L) to demonstrate how the first two stages informed the next stage of the research design, observations.

Case Study 3: Mr. L

Introduction

A significant feature of the commentary developed by the two students was their focus on one teacher, Mr. L (who I will now refer to as Mr. Libby). In what follows I look more closely at their comments on this particular teacher. The following extracts and compiles all of these comments made about Mr. Libby and divides them by participant. Each participant section concludes by restating the same categories used during interview coding. The purpose for displaying these comments and categories in this way is so the reader will get a better sense of one of the teachers under scrutiny. The reader will also note that before interviewing the top five teachers selected in the study, their individual profiles were arranged in this way and made available to them.
Teacher Profile

The following section is a compilation of the participants’ descriptions of Mr. Libby’s personality, appearance, demeanor, and teaching style extracted from the interviews. Following each description are subcategories (in bold italics) that I applied to them during analysis.

**PD:** He's got that personality. He asks you how your day was. He...he actually cares. You can tell him anything you want. And he'll just find a way to make you happy somehow...joke...somethin'. He goes at your pace. Not, like...he doesn't race along trying to get, like the course done. If you're behind, you can...he'll give you a way to catch up. There's no way he's gonna let you fail. Even if he knows you're a bad guy, he'll give you another chance. (laid back, personal connection, pace, encouragement)

**AF:** But he's, like, different kind of funny. I mean you can joke and he, but he can kind of scare you too. Like bash it, like...he like...if someone's not paying attention, he has like a cane. Yeah, he can be loud. (confidence, personal connection)

**JB:** He’s more laid-back. Instead of going in and just constantly doing something, you take a little break here and there if they’re not all worked out. He goes into detail instead of just telling you what to do and leaving it at that. He comes over to try to make sure that you understand it. (laid back, pace, variety, encouragement)

**AG:** He was somebody who was a lot of fun. He really knows what he is talking about, but he has fun with it and he makes it that much easier. Mr. Libby talked about it for a few seconds and I got it right away. Other than getting personal, they really know what they are talking about and they know so much about what they are doing that they have that leeway to have fun with it. They know exactly how they want to come across with the subject matter. And, if they see that something is not working for even just one of their students, they'll find a way to make it work. (knowledgeable, confident, variety, personal connection)
BW: He's another person who makes you feel really comfortable. He's always, like, laughing and joking, but he knows that if you wanted to talk to him or tell him something, he would be there. He's really nice about stuff like that. He always gets done what he had to do in class, then you get to do what you want towards the end. But, if your homework's not done and you're falling behind, he'll let you know and he'll get on your butt about it. I despise math and I liked it, though, because he kind of did things that were, like, fun and like, projects that were hands-on so you weren't working on the book all the time. (comfortable, humour, personal connection, independence, encouragement, variety)

HW: He (Mr. Libby) made math rather fun and interesting. He explained everything and if we even, like, needed a little help he’d explain it to us. And, it was a rather enjoyable class. Whenever we’d go to class, he’d always have something new, and it was rather enjoyable when he’d, like, make some funny comments or jokes. He was pretty good, like that. (encouragement, variety, humour)

MA: He has a nice room too, like he’d turn around and he has Star Wars ‘cause he likes Star Wars, skateboards…he’s like a kid pretty much. (personal connection, humour)

RD: He’s very funny. And he would also, like, talk to me and stuff. I dunno, it gives me a better vibe when there’s not negativity in the room or anything. He’ll probably sing and stuff like that, whistle, I dunno, just say funny stuff. (comfortable, humour)

Compiling the data in this way allowed me to analyse it using subcategories as a guide.

As result of this filtering technique, I was able to determine that the participants who identified Mr. Libby as a positive influence find that his “laid back” behavior and exaggerated personality make them feel at ease when accessing him in times of academic frustration or when attempting to make personal connections. His students also believe that because of these connections, “if you wanted to talk to him or tell him something, he
would be there.” These participants acknowledged that his teaching style contributes to
their positive feelings in his class, especially when this concerns self-confidence. They
identified variety, pace, and independence as elements that enhance his lessons and so
that difficult areas of algebra become more manageable. One participant noted, “he goes
into detail instead of just telling you what to do” whilst another suggests, “he really
knows what he’s talking about.”

**Step 4: Observations**

In the next section I attempt to validate the participants’ criticisms about Mr. Libby by
observing his class to see where and in what form they exist. This will help to better
understand some of the participants’ terminology. For example my definition of laid-
back means easy-going and mellow and this contradicts the participants’ loud and scary
descriptions of Mr. Libby’s behaviour. Laid-back also has other professional
connotations that imply laziness and rule breaking. Observations in Mr. Libby’s
classroom helped me to determine the participants’ definition of laid-back, as well as
other as terms such as funny, and I argue that by doing so, I will have a more complete
picture of Mr. Libby’s personality and teaching style that will result in a richer and more
accurate analysis of the data.

The following chart provides the reader with my observation of Mr. Libby’s class. The
left column shows my notes as the lesson unfolded, whilst the right column provides
commentary and is color-coded to match the subcategories I assigned to my notes during
analysis. A full copy of this observation can be located in Appendix H (p. 376)
Classroom Observation Excerpt
School #1, 12 January 2008, 12:25 pm

Categories: Personality Teaching Style Environment Subject

9th Grade Pre-Algebra
80 minutes

I am doing this observation from the teacher’s desk which is situated adjacent to the entrance of the room. The seats are in rows to my right and I am at the front of the room. I have begun this observation about five minutes before the start of class.

The room is full of art painted directly on the wall, I assume, by students. I can see Darth Vader and Yoda, dragons, Pegasus, spiders, etc. The room has a very organic feel to it, even though the desks seem to be positioned perfectly. There is one round table in the back with four mismatched padded chairs around it. The desks are a seat/table combination that show evidence of welding and colour fading. There are a few plants by the window. Near me is a clock that is built into the wall that does not work and a cheap clock is taped to the wall on top of it. I assume this was a clock/intercom/phone combination that is outdated and broken. Mr. Libby is dressed casually and looks like he hasn’t shaved in a few days. Mr. Libby is dressed in jeans, a white shirt and cowboy boots.

Organized - The desk is organized and I sat in a big leather chair.

Comfortable - Compared to other classrooms in the building, this room has an appealing atmosphere. Even though the desks seem uncomfortable, students seem at ease here.

It’s unfortunate that the desks are in such bad shape. I couldn’t imagine sitting on them for 80 minutes. A lot of the classroom accessories are out of date or broken. It seems as though some of the artwork is covering other broken items.

Laid back - Mr. Libby is dressed casually and looks like he hasn’t shaved in a few days. It seems to fit his personality. He uses words like “cool” and “nice” quite often whilst teaching. He is loud and is always smiling.
My observation in Mr. Libby’s class validates the participants’ observations that he is *humorous, laid back, organized*, plans *cooperative* lessons, *encourages* them to succeed, and students seem to feel *comfortable* in his class. However, to understand better the students definition of terms like *funny, laid back, and comfortable* required further analysis. For instance, I expected to find Mr. Libby making jokes and teasing his students to match my definition of *funny*, yet I did not witness this. Therefore, the observation stage helped to shed new light on the participants’ definitions of certain terms.

The methodology in this study has several stages that are designed check and validate each other as the study proceeds. The first stage, *school tours*, helped the participants identify locations in their school where they have had positive and negative experiences. During the second stage of the study, I conducted *interviews* to discuss these locations with the each participant using their school tour map as a script. I then identified five teachers and staff members mentioned most frequently from the data I collected in the first two stages and observed these teachers’ classes. One of the teachers often mentioned during the *school tours* and *interviews* was Mr. Libby who was described as *loud, laid-back, funny, confident*, and *encouraging*. The participants described his lessons as *well paced*, with a *variety* of teaching scenarios, and opportunities for *independent learning*.

I used categories and subcategories in the *interview* stage to narrow a wide range of data and later applied them to my observations. My observation in Mr. Libby’s class confirmed the participants’ beliefs about his personality, teaching style, and teaching
environment. This observation allowed me to gain a better definition of student terminology. By looking at the data, and more specifically observations in this way, I can determine what terms like laid-back and funny mean in the context of other observations. Achieving this level of understanding also helps to determine what literature is most relevant when examining the possibilities of school reform in this area. For example, laid-back to some might mean comfortable or casual. I have seen through observation that this term is more associated with students feeling at ease due to predictable learning environment that incorporates a variety of teaching strategies.

To give further weight to the research design, the last stage brought the participants together to discuss the results of the study. This stage was intended to accomplish two things: First, it allowed the participants to examine the results of their efforts and perhaps feel a sense of accomplishment. Second, it would validate the research design if the participants agreed with the process and the data it produced or would provide me with direction for adjustments. Table 9 is designed to show how the subcategories observed in Mr. Libby’s class against the average of the subcategories mentioned by the participants in the interviews. Though most of Mr. Libby’s scores remain consistent with the school’s average, further observation outside his classroom might show that Mr. Libby makes more personal connections in these areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mr. L</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Connection</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humour</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 9: Teacher Coded Observation Chart*
The following section is designed to show the reader the final stage of the research design, *group interview*. This component of the research design aimed to validate the previous stages by allowing the participants to confirm or refute my analysis of the data. Having gained permission from the participant-selected teachers in the study to discuss their practice and positive attributes, the *group interview* section of this chapter is presented as an abridged dialogue between the participants and the researcher.

At first, the participants seemed to be very curious about why they had been invited to what seemed to be an impromptu meeting. Though I had made it known to them after their *school tours* and *interviews* that this meeting would occur, some time had passed, especially for the participants who took part near the start of the study (September). The students naturally gravitated to the desks that were arranged in rows. I also found that conducting this meeting like a lesson suited me best. From the dry erase board at the front of the room I explained the purpose and format of the meeting. This last stage of
inquiry is reported as the meeting occurred. In Appendix I (p. 384), it is arranged by order of frequency in the top five teachers the participants identified in the study, from least (Mr. R) to the most participant selected (Mr. F). The left column is an abridged transcript of the meeting and the right side displays my commentary. What follows is an excerpt from this stage of enquiry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Interview Excerpt</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>December 2007</strong></td>
<td>Students remained still and quiet at the beginning of this meeting. When I wrote the name of the fifth teacher on the dry erase board it felt as if I was doing a magic trick: the participants breathed in and exhaled when Mr. R was revealed in their top five teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abridged</strong></td>
<td>Students seemed to emphasize the independent nature of his class perhaps more than they did in the interviews.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I’m going to start with #5. Now if you’ve had this teacher, I want you to raise your hand and feel free to talk about that teacher’s class.

Mr. R

So here we go, #5

(Writes “Mr. R” on the chalkboard)

Can anybody talk about this class?

* I love Mr. R, he’s probably one of my favorite teachers. He doesn’t let you do what you want, but he doesn’t shelter you. He doesn’t like, tell you what to do, he just lets you work on your own. It’s your choice if you want to get work done or not and he’s not on your back the whole time.  

I enjoyed pushing the boundaries of their comments and the participants seemed to enjoy this discussion.
He’s helpful.
He’s friendly.

But why is that important? How does being friendly help you? If I taught math, all I have to say is “here’s how it’s done.” Why do I have to be like, “Hey, how was your weekend? That’s good. How is your family? That’s great. X=2.” (laughter)

*It makes you comfortable.*
*It shows they care. It makes you feel safe.*

Here is an example of students engaging in their own discussion, trying to make sense of the term “comfortable.”

Drever (2006) states that in a group interview, “you are building into the interview the normal patterns of interaction within the group, and probably getting better evidence as a result” (p. 16). Where the individual interviews used the tour map as a prompt, the group interview used the results of their work to guide the dialogue. This helped to validate the findings during this stage of the methodology and also helped to give closure to their contributions. Having worked with marginalized students in the past, I was aware that if the group considered my findings to be flawed, they would not allow me to proceed easily.

The *group interview* showed that the following subcategories were used to validate the findings of the interviews and teacher observations. The subcategories identified during teacher observations were: *personal connection, humour, empathy, and independence.* Comments from the participants during the *group interview* helped to validate my use of subcategories whilst others provided additional insight (“It’s kind of like being in your own home”). Through their feedback, the group ensured me that the teachers selected to represent various positive aspects of their school experiences were correct. I concluded
the interview having validated the last stage in the study and also giving the participants a sense of accomplishment.

Summary

The material presented in this chapter was designed to demonstrate the methodology in action through the use of two participant case studies, a teacher observation, and a group interview. The participant case studies included a tour commentary that described each location and teachers as they unfolded during the tour; interview summaries to give the reader a sense of the participants’ voice and demonstrate the subcategories in action. These led to an abridged teacher observation that showed how the subcategories derived from the interviews cross over to the observations; and, an abridged group interview that re-examined and verified the methods whilst adding new subcategories.

With practice, I became more comfortable implementing the research design. This is also attributed to a willingness to allow the participants to have more control in the interview process. Over the course of the study, the interviews became more conversational, and as a result, provided more useful data. This way, the interviews were less restrictive and kept within the themes of self-expression and student voice. This relaxed /conversational mode of interaction was not limited to the interviews. As the study progressed, I found that recording all participant interactions during the school tours provided more data about their daily experiences:

Student: This is a quilting class. I’ve had classes in here. Yes, it’s where you can make a quilt or a…
Teacher: Yes, what are you doing?

Student: I’m giving a tour.

Teacher: YOU’RE the tour guide???

Student: I have your class next year. I’m excited. I won’t be with xxxxx this time so…

Teacher: Please don’t… it won’t be good.

Student: (laughs) I’ve changed since freshman year.

Teacher: Well, it can only go up. So we’re not going to have any of those...

Student: No problems.

Teacher: All right, I’m counting on it.

Allowing dialogue like this with other teachers/students to unfold gave me a glimpse into this student’s academic history at School #1 and more information to secure during her interview. Knowing that she was a student who often found herself in trouble (but is now concerned with self-improvement) could change the line of questioning during her interview. In addition to asking her about places in School #1 where she found success, I could ask about teachers and staff members outside the map who might have influenced her new behaviour.

The following subcategories occurred most often in the participant interviews: personal connection, humour, respect, variety, encouragement, comfortable (classroom), and organization. The teachers who were identified most often by the participants during the school tour/interview were observed using the participant/researcher subcategories as a guide. The following interview excerpts show each category and subcategory as they were extracted from the participant interviews:
**Category:** Teacher Behaviour

**Personal Connection:** “He doesn't really get personal with his students, which for me, as a student, that means a lot to me. That makes the learning experience that much easier.”

**Confident:** “He was just easy to listen to, like some people just have that voice, I don’t know what it is. It’s just like, you just don’t want to hear, someone who’ll listen anymore and he’s like, his enthusiasm, he’s like, he likes what he’s doing and you can tell pretty much.”

**Humour:** “Not that much...and what he does in class is so fun, and we like...he talks to us. He jokes with us.”

**Empathy:** “Oh, yeah. He’s like, he’s older than us obviously, but he sets his mind and tries to act like what a teenager would.”

**Laid Back:** “I never seen him yell. I've never seen him, like...get mad or anything at anyone ever.”

**Respect:** “Like, I don't know, you could talk about like what you did on the weekend and he wouldn't really like go share it with like the other teachers...”

**Category:** Teaching Style

**Encouragement:** “…if we mess up, he says, ‘It's okay guys, don't worry. It's not a big deal.’ Or he tries to help us out when we say, ‘We can’t’.”

**Knowledgeable:** “My favourite class. I like marine biology. I like all sorts of sea creatures and animals and he's (Mr. M) a very intelligent guy. He's got a doctorate in...”

**Pace:** “He goes at your pace. Not, like...he doesn't race along trying to get, like the course done. If you're behind, you can...he'll give you a way to catch up.”

**Variety:** “She showed us all sorts of neat techniques and like different ways of doing things...”

**Organization:** “He was organized with class work, but his classroom in general is not very organized.”

**Hands on:** “Cause, I dunno, maybe ‘cause I’m drawing it, I’m the one who’s making it so I’ll probably remember it better instead of just skimming through it and reading it real quick.”

**Category:** Environment

**Comfortable:** “I dunno, it gives me a better vibe when there’s not negativity in the room or anything.”
**Predictable:** “We sit down and open our books, take out our notes about the chapter and we’d start discussing the book – what we read- then she’d give us the next assignment and we’d start reading ahead, and do the rest of the work (until) the end of the class.”

**Independent:** “She let me do it my way. Like, she taught me what she knew, but when she told it, I dunno, *I have to look at it differently and she let me do that.*”

**Cooperative:** “Like when we're reading books, and we don't have to read, like, a whole book by ourselves. *We read it as a class.*”

**Rules/Expectations:** “I honestly think it is. I know what her *boundaries* are and it’s not all against her, it is some of the school board.”

Using this feature of the methodology in this way gives me the opportunity to extract information that represents the voices of the participants in the study. Instead of examining the current themes in *School #1* that point to problems outside of school (home environments, mental illness), these subcategories will be used to explore themes and links to relevant literature that allow teachers to take ownership of these issues to discuss the current climate of the school, re-examine the profiles of their marginalized population, and consider possible paths to improvement.

The next chapter demonstrates how I used this method to extract information from a broad range of literature that surrounds EBD students: failure, truancy, school culture, and school climate. It also includes comments from teachers identified in the study who validate the subcategories created in the participant interviews and give weight to this method. As suggested by researchers such as Cullinan (2004), approaching a literature review in this way will provide “a consistent set of terms for communication among practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and others working in a field, increasing the chance of sharing reliable information across disciplines and points of view” (p. 32). Because there is, as Gardner (1978) suggests, “a wide range of differences among
children with learning and behaviour difficulties” (p. 5), it was also beneficial to bring a good classification (Cullinan 2004) to the literature so topics could easily be accessed during analysis.
Chapter 6: Analysing the Findings

Introduction

This chapter demonstrates how using the research design to filter of an overabundance of literature related to students labeled with an EBD can be implemented in one of the schools in the study. I extracted participant-generated themes from the relevant data, compiled and sorted this data into categories, and applied them to research areas. Giving this type of organization to the literature allowed me to select and narrow the notes from my past readings so that I could develop and expand them whilst simultaneously suiting them to School #1. Arranging the research areas in this way allowed me to explore relevant research (through the eyes of the participants and teachers in School #1) and examine the wider debates and issues addressed within the literature.

Organizing the Literature

Participant-Generated Data

Some of the themes were researcher-generated whilst others like laid back and hands on were considered significant because of how often participants used them. Arranging these categories by frequency showed the most common positive features of School #1 according to students who have been labeled with a behaviour difficulty. The following subcategories occurred most often: personal connection, humour, respect, variety, encouragement, comfortable (classroom), and organization. The following table (Table
10) demonstrates how these subcategories influenced the direction of research for *School #1*. The first column identifies the party or individual from which the subcategories were extracted. The second column lists these categories in the order by which they were extracted and the third column demonstrates the research area to which each subcategory corresponds.

*Table 10: Participant-Generated Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Research Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humour</td>
<td>Humour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Connection</td>
<td>Student/Teacher Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Student/Teacher Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable/”Laid-Back”</td>
<td>Student/Teacher Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>Student/Teacher Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Student/Teacher Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Data</td>
<td>Rules/Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Rules/Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Confidence</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands-On</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pace</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The teachers who were identified most often by the participants during the school tours/interviews were observed using the participant/researcher subcategories as a guide. The following table (Table 10) demonstrates how individual profiles were used as a guide, compiled from interviews at the thematic coding stage. These profiles are composed of the sections of student interviews where the corresponding teacher was mentioned. From those profiles, the frequency at which a subcategory was identified during the interviews indicated to me their level of importance based on the participants’ observations/interviews. The subcategories identified during teacher observations were: humour, personal connection, respect, organization, variety, confidence, and encouragement. The following table shows how the subcategories extracted from teacher observations influenced the direction of research for School #1. The first column identifies the party or individual from which the subcategories were extracted. The second column lists these categories in the order by which they were extracted and the third column demonstrates the research area to which each subcategory corresponds.

Table 11: Teacher-Generated Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Research Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Student/Teacher Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Student/Teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To give further weight to this type of organization strategy, I found that using literature that features student voice could also serve as a useful guide. Where the pilot study was formulated through the eyes of a British teenager, this literature review is guided by similar voices. Edward Blishen’s *The School That I’d Like* (1971) is a compilation of entries submitted to the *The Observer* in response to a competition that simply asked adolescents to describe the school that they would like. The author describes the project as “an enormous, remarkably good-humoured, earnest, frequently passionate and, at best, highly intelligent plea for a new order in our schools” (Blishen, 1971, p. 9). Though Blishen’s book deals little with students with an EBD label, his intention it seems is to explore school improvement through student voice as opposed to reports on school environment that tend only to be concerned with managing behaviour. He does this by categorizing student quotes and arranging them thematically in a way that is not only more accessible to the reader, but also seems to tell a story through their voices.
In hopes of achieving the same effect, each category and subcategory in this review will begin with an entry from Blishen’s book to set the stage of each section. The reader will have to the opportunity to see the literature within the context of the schools under scrutiny in the study. Though this was not included in the original research design, after reading a compilation of the participant interviews that deal directly with the corresponding teacher, each had the opportunity to react and respond through an interview with the researcher. When the participant interview, the literature and the teacher interview show a common thread, an excerpt is included in the section. These will lead to my recommendations for further research, and suggestions for instructional considerations, goals and principles, and (or) faculty development in the next chapter.

Each section will resemble the following diagram:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic:</th>
<th>Humour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blishen Excerpt:</td>
<td>Humour can “liven up a lesson.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature:</td>
<td>Humour can have both positive and negative effects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant:</td>
<td>“My teacher occasionally makes inappropriate jokes.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>“I use humour, but sometimes not all of my students get it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I was unaware that my students found me funny.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“methodological story” (Hart, 2006, p. 43) within the existing literature of behaviour difficulties in education, “rooted in the tradition of phenomenology and methodological indifference- the practice of placing to one side the existing approaches and views about a phenomenon... (to) place brackets around the assumptions” (Ibid). With this in mind I arranged the subcategories (failure, literacy, curriculum, independent learning, cooperative learning, tracking, student-teacher relationships, empathy, humour, rules
and expectations, and physical environment) and the corresponding literature in this order:

1. Failure (literacy)
2. Curriculum Delivery
3. Student-Centered Learning (independent/cooperative learning, tracking)
4. Student-Teacher Relationships (empathy, humour)
5. Rules and Expectations
6. Physical Environment
Failure

Candidates must be judged according to their application to their work throughout the whole course, and not to one three-hour cram effort after feverish revision under hysterical conditions. - Judith 18

A wide range of researchers would support the idea that behaviour problems result from educational failure and that “it is a strong correlate of later psychological disturbance and delinquency” (Cernkovich & Giordano, 1992). Though some schools might investigate issues within their own system, there is a tendency to rely on socio-cultural factors and “cultural deprivation or deficits” (Widlake, 1986, p. 15), instead of ineffective instruction (Carnine, 1995) as an explanation for most educational failures. Students who experience failure in school tend to respond by using withdrawal strategies that might exhibit many types of behaviour, from daydreaming, to aggressive and provoking behaviour.

As a result, “school disciplinary practices, especially those that remove students from the instructional setting (i.e., in or out-of-school suspension and expulsion) may alienate students and contribute to their academic failure” (Charlton & David, 1994, p. 86), often resulting in limited academic opportunities (Bierman et al., 1996). Some teachers and researchers see these students who have gained “dysfunctional coping strategies that interfere with the acquisition of more sophisticated composing processes” (Palinscar & Klenk, 1991, p. 156) as a result of long histories of school failure. They argue that it is likely that fewer disruptive incidents borne out of academic failure will occur if students experience the type of academic success “that helps narrow the performance gap between them and their peers” (Furlong et al., 2004, p. 195). Some researchers argue that
behaviour management problems usually only exist in classrooms where students do not experience academic success: “There are no discipline problems in any class where the students believe that if they make an effort to learn, they will gain some immediate satisfaction” (Glasser, 1988, p. 13).

A lack of success can lead students to become “unsure of their value to others, and insecure in their ability to gain importance in socially acceptable ways, they may resort to negative behaviour to make themselves feel important” (Hunter-Carsch et al., 2006, p. 154). For example, TL explained that she failed her first year of algebra because “I absolutely did not like the teacher. Because she treated us all like we were little kids and, I don't like it when I am treated that way.” However, when she was enrolled in the same class again the following year with a new teacher (Mrs. D), she passed the course because, according to TL, Mrs. D “tries to teach you like you’re an adult”. This is perhaps why some students succeed with Mr. Mc because, according to PD, “it’s your choice if you want to fail.”

Some researchers also suggest that as students get older and have had more school experiences, it is likely that they will find more difficulty in separating their self-perception and their performance evaluations. “If the student fails to maintain a favorable self-attitude in the face of induced failure or devaluation, he may lower his self-report” (Ferrari & Sternberg, 1998, p. 252). This appeared to be true of participant AG who seemed to believe that failure is akin to addiction: “You can be somebody who is a straight A student, or somebody who fails classes or does drugs, and stuff like that. He (Mr. L) will see no difference between those two students.” A student who has consistently experienced failure might also become suspicious about successes if they are
inconsistent with the way he sees himself: “Some researchers suggest that in this light the student may augment his self-report in the face of failure either on a scale that is in direct relation to the failed task or even lower a very global estimate of self-esteem” (Wylie, 1961, p. 185).

Wylie (1961) states:

*The student may try to reserve self-esteem by defensive behaviour. He may devalue the source of the unfavorable or failure information. He may claim that the task is unimportant, or the group is unappealing to him. He may blame others rather than himself for his failure. He may increase other behaviours which have yielded him self-esteem in the past....Those who have generally poor self-regard may react to failure stressful tasks with greater anxiety that do those who have generally high self-regard... especially when confronted with a task that induces failure or the threat of failure* (p.186).

There are researchers who argue that failure leading to drop-out are largely based on individual relationships within the school and how and individual values learning. The *general strain theory* (Agnew, 1992) suggests that students experience failure when they are constantly presented with negative stimuli that, as a result, obscure positive goal setting. This is especially true when students are excluded from class based on failing grades and put into environments where there is negative behaviour or where the value of their goals are not equally shared. This would validate Hirschi (1969) whose *social control theory* argues that a student’s attitude toward school is directly related to the bonds he forms with peers and teachers who value education.

Students, especially those who have been excluded to controlled learning environments, who do not have access to a variety of teachers, who do not feel welcomed at school-
related activities, and who have not experienced a variety of positive learning and social behaviours are more likely to fail and drop out. Several participants in the study talk about success and failure in terms of effort and responsibility. For example:

PD: I don't know...and another thing about Mr. Mc...I like the fact that...you come into his classroom, the first thing he'll tell you. ‘I am a good teacher. If you don't do the work, that's your problem. That's your failure. You can fail if you want. Go ahead, slack off. I don't care,’ but he...he pretty much says you can slack off, but you’re gonna fail.

Mr. Mc seemed to confirm this when he commented:

Mr. Mc: I graduated from this school, I went to UNE (college in the same town as School #1)... Then I total it up... I’ve been taking tests; I’ve been writing notes and studying almost twice as long as you’ve been alive. So I don’t want any crap from you about how hard or ‘I can’t’. I says, ‘I’ve heard it all; I don’t wanna hear it!’... I tell them that I teach all my classes the same way I teach my college class. If you do what I tell you to do, you’ll pass this class. There are no dummies in this class. It’s whether or not you choose to do the work.

**Literacy**

I myself would like more English and less arithmetic. English is so much more imaginative. The only imagination I use in arithmetic is when I guess the answers. - Melissa, 11

There are researchers who suggest that economic factors (Rumberger, 1987), parental educational attainment (Carr et al., 2000), grade retention (Jimmerson et al., 2002), are predictive of school success, whilst other researchers suggest that a change in curriculum that focuses on learning deficits, especially in literacy (O’Donnell & Wood, 2004) and self-monitoring (Morgan & Jenson, 1998), can improve self-esteem through the
improvement of basic skills: “This is especially true if the activity is freely chosen, if it presents opportunities for complex interactions and allows the formulation of increasingly unpredictable intentions. As a result of such an activity – and assuming it was moderately successful - the self emerges strengthened from the evidence of its accomplishments” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1982, p. 31). Participant HW would seem to agree:

Yeah. I like to read books that interest me, like, True Life Tales, which is what she was teaching and then, like, Sci-Fi which is another class that I had that was, like, right next door. We sit down and open our books, take out our notes about the chapter and we’d start discussing the book – what we read- then she’d give us the next assignment and we’d start reading ahead, and do the rest of the work (until) the end of the class.

I: Was it kind of the same order everyday?

HW: Yeah.

The language skills of children who have been labeled with an emotional and behaviour difficulty are a suitable place to continue to discuss school failure. Researchers estimate that the language deficits in children who act inappropriately in school are 10 times that of the general population (Donahue & Cole, 1994). In addition to behaviour issues, these students also present academic skill deficits, especially in areas of language and communication and are associated with persistent depressed academic achievement, increased grade retention, and self-esteem issues (Griffith, Rogers-Adkinson, & Cusick, 1997).
It has been argued that this relationship can be narrowed to their inability to decode the meaning of text. Researchers such as Scott and Shearer-Lingo (2002) suggest that “because of the strong relationship between reading failure and general school failure, reading instruction should be studied as an intervention for students with a history of academic and social failure” (p. 168). When this relates to long-term outcomes such as drop-out rates, employment and social issues, low reading achievement is a primary risk factor (Caspi, Elder, & Bem, 1987).

There is also a wide range of research on the relationship between language deficits and inappropriate classroom behaviour and that “attention problems and thought problems showed a clear relationship with language problems” (Van Daal, Verhoeven, & VanBalcom, 2007, p. 1144). Cohen, Riccio, and Gonzalez (1994) found that students who have difficulty staying on a topic, give unsuitable responses, and have fluency and comprehension difficulties were rated as the most delinquent by teachers, and they demonstrated more severe challenging behaviour. This poses the possibility that teachers might “perceive certain language deficits as delinquent behaviours” (Harrison & Gunter, 1996, p. 184). Consequently, these issues in language often go undetected, putting some EBD students at a higher risk for reading difficulties.

The correlation between language difficulty and behavioural difficulties could strengthen over time. Studies report that behaviour difficulties tend to increase as children age (Baker & Cantwell, 1987) and “indicate continued barriers in the language bases of social interactions as they become more complex with development in the school context” (Lindsay et al., 2007, p. 823). According to Harrison and Gunter (1996), this occurs in the third grade, “when experiential-based learning is gradually replaced with presentation
of new information through formal language modalities… and places greater demands on children's abilities to understand more complex verbal instruction in both written and spoken form” (p. 185). Negative behaviour and emotions can result from the embarrassment and loneliness (Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2009) students gain after years of academic failure, especially as they get older and begin to compare their status to other classmates (Sutherland et al., 2008). We see evidence of this in the following extract:

MA: Yeah, cause at the beginning of the year it was just awkward cause being a senior in sophomore English, it was kind of weird.

I: So that’s what made you put an x on there, just you felt awkward?

MA: Yeah.

I: Did the teacher make you feel like you were a part of the class? I’m guessing the awkwardness didn’t last very long.

MA: No, he singled me out most of the time. He was like, uh, “I suggest the class pays attention especially if you’re a senior and you need this class to graduate.”

I: Does that bug you a little?

MA: I almost went to the office sometimes but that’s fine.

Gallagher (1999) suggests that inexperience with language finds marginalized students using less verbal communication, thereby reducing their ability to understand advice, warnings, and verbal cues (Fujiki, Brinton, Morgan, & Hart, 1999). As a result, there is a tendency to become frustrated, use physical actions to solve problems, and over time, develop antisocial behaviour (Prizant et al., 1990; Ruhl, Hughes, & Camarata, 1992). This can lead to the growth of psychiatric disorders:
Beitchman, Brownlie, and Wilson (1996) have shown that of those children with language deficits and no psychiatric disorder at school entry, but who later demonstrated psychiatric signs, 57% also had reading problems, whereas of those speech-language impaired children who did not present later psychiatric signs had only 14% reading problems (cited in Tomblin et al., 2000, p. 479).

In Paulo Freire’s book, *Reading the Word and the World* (1921), the central approach to literacy is his belief that human beings are the starting point for analyzing how the construction of experiences provides them with the opportunity to give expression and meaning to their own needs and a voice for empowerment. To this end, teachers can help students find their own identities selecting assignments that “go beyond the most elementary reading levels and evaluate what they read, to incorporate what they learn in forming new ideas, in other words, to read critically” (Zimmet, 1987, p. 187). This not only helps students to recognize the importance of their work, but also allows them to reflect on their own positive learning behaviours and provides opportunities to practice constructive behaviours. Dewey (1933) calls this reflective thinking and defined it as: “Active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion to which it tends” (p. 118). Participant SD recalled a similar learning experience during her interview:

*SD: Um, well last year I had her and we did this senior memory book thing, and it was about this thick, like mine was huge. There was (twelve chapters and each chapter had to be due like one chapter a week. So I handed in everything last}*
minute and she was a little upset that it was all last minute, but that's just the way I work, it's like, it was really fun.

I: And what was it about that assignment that was so much fun?

SD: Um, it brought back some memories because there was like one chapter and it was about beginning high school and I was like “oh great, I have to go back to this” and I had to write about how I wasn't in school a lot and how I didn't really care and how, like, I've changed. I'm, like, a whole different person.

Researchers such as Holdaway (1980) maintain that reading is a reciprocal process where students become risk-takers. Though it has been argued that in an effective secondary literacy program, there needs to be a high level of routine and predictability, planning can “too often become distorted by the anxious demands of instruction. Independence, relevance, diversity, and joy are often displaced by the urgent drive to teach skills and test performance” (Holdaway, 1980, p. 8). When students take risks and are given the opportunity to practice problem-solving behaviour, they develop a better sense of conscious control, a metacognitive awareness, and an overall set of strategies that they can adapt to any text they read (Pressley, Symons, & Kurita, 1989). More importantly, teachers also create an environment that allows the student freedom and power to ask questions, especially when they come to a situation or problem they do not understand. Participant MG seems to thrive in this type of learning environment:

MG: He’s (Mr. R) a cool teacher.

I- Why do you say that?
MG: I don’t know, he brings it into a discussion. We’re not sitting in a circle, but we’re all discussing one thing. We actually have this little debate kind of conversation. It was very interesting. He brings up one thing on the board and we go into this whole discussion about it, you know? We talked about impeachment and he started talking about Bill Clinton and we just got on a whole, like, conversation about it and learned a lot. It was interesting.

I: Is it easier for you to understand the topic when you’re able to approach it in a more conversational way?

MG: Yep. When he, like, writes it on the board and we have a whole discussion about it...I mean, I remembered the word “impeachment”!

Some researchers agree that teachers must understand that literacy development accepts the child at whatever level he is functioning and should develop a program based on individual needs (O’Donnell & Wood, 2004). Research conducted by Dunn and Dunn (1978) on learning styles shows that reading achievement and attitudes toward reading improve when students are taught to read through their individual style. Methods that help to achieve this interpretation of experience to critical thinking include the implementation of narratives, literacy histories, and dialogical teaching. One benefit of this narrative element is the insight teachers and students gain as a result of "self-inquiry" (Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991) in social settings where students are provided opportunities for the social construction of knowledge and the chance to discuss their work (Nystrand, 2006). This method was “even more pronounced for struggling readers, negating the potentially negative effects of tracking, socioeconomic status (SES), race, and ethnicity” (Johannessen & McCann, 2009, p. 67). In the following extract, for example, BG notes the benefits of working in this cooperative manner:
I: And does he assign chapters? How does he approach Lord of the Flies with you?

BG: Yeah we like got the book last week so we had to read one chapter for homework and then this will be our third class today of this week so we've had to read three chapters for homework this week. I don't know I just fall asleep in class and go on www.sparknotes.com when I get home.

I: What could a teacher do? Let’s say their project was to get you to want to read, what could they do?

BG: I think like, I don't know maybe, like, in my junior year I can remember in English class that she sat at her desk. But the way that the chairs were set up is we were all around her so if she would have like interacted more instead of just... ‘cause we would have to read a book and we'd go around the room, one person reading a page or something, and it’s just if she was reading and then asking us questions about it. I think it would be a lot easier because as we were moving through the book together then we would know what’s going on. It would make it a lot easier to follow I think.

Other researchers such as Graves and Graves (1994) suggest that “good readers need to rely appropriately on the texts that they are reading and their background knowledge to arrive at meaning, and teachers need to provide students with the sort of texts and tasks that promote their doing so” (p. 25). As it is often the case with most students who have experienced failure, however, prior knowledge (especially in language acquisition) can be incorrect and misleading, which is “more debilitating to learning than having no prior knowledge at all” (Anders & Guzzetti, 2005, p. 84). To remedy this circumstance teachers must re-evaluate their curriculum, yet it is often the practice of some teachers and school officials to remove failing students from class and place them in separate alternative programs that deal with improving self-esteem rather than addressing deficits.
in basic skills. Though there are many instructional strategies that would help students to “unlearn” alternative concepts (Ibid), pull-out programs tend to rely on traditional methods that exacerbate the original cause of the failure: “The low-level curriculum was behaviouristic and reductive— it only helped students recover the credits needed for graduation” (Kim & Taylor, 2008, p. 216). As a result of programs like this, students labeled with an EBD and other students who have excluded from mainstream classes tend to believe that their personal lives and their education have no direct connection (Bos & Anders, 1992).

Sternberg and Grigorenko (1999) state:

In many schools, however, poor readers are likely to get a watered-down program for improving their reading skills. In an attempt to give poor readers ‘appropriate’ reading materials for their skills levels, schools give them material that actually may lead them to fall behind... Soon, children who are getting the watered-down reading program do start to fall further and further behind in reading. Teachers label them as slow or incompetent and then start to expect incompetent work, which is exactly what they get...As the years go by, these children are placed in lower tracks or else receive diminished opportunities in standard tracks (p. 69).

Scaffolding, a teaching strategy that provides individualized support based on Vygotski’s (1978) zone of proximal development, supports learners by bridging the gap between what they can do and what they need assistance to do (O’Donnell & Wood, 2004). It not only aims to build on a student’s prior knowledge in order to understand new information, but also encourages the learner to think independently and to monitor his or
her own learning behaviour. For students who have been labeled with an EBD, who have a learning disability, or who are beginning to self-monitor the way they learn, scaffolding creates many learning scenarios that allow teachers to give positive feedback. Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) in their book, *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience and School*, spotlight the features of scaffolding:

- Motivate or enlist the child’s interest related to the task,
- Simplify the task to make it more manageable and achievable for a child,
- Provide some direction in order to help the child focus on achieving the goal,
- Clearly indicate differences between the child’s work and the standard or desired solution.

The reader will notice in this section and in the *student/teacher relationships* section of this literature review that the teachers identified in the study scaffold their lessons, though all of them seem to be unaware that they are doing so. For example:

*Mr. R:* People who don’t understand the lower-level student often misconstrue different educational approaches as not doing anything where, in fact, you’re accomplishing a lot. Whether it’s to exercise different techniques where you have a very relaxed atmosphere, not as structured as traditional school where there’s give and take dialogue from teacher to student...

*I:* Does this go back to you and storytelling?

*Mr. R:* Yeah, that might be dismissed by certain elitists or administrators or people who haven’t been in a classroom (and many of those are in administration for many years), they might not see that as a valid technique. They still want very structured classes and note-taking which is all good too and those kids can do that to a degree but... Yeah, that’s what I believe it is, there are people who are judgmental, they believe they know what a class should be, they believe one size
fits all… They see it as ‘Oh that guy isn’t doing anything,’ where in fact, that guy is doing more.

Like Mr. R, other teachers identified in the study also rely on their instincts to “build up” a lesson. However, it seems difficult for some to document and communicate the importance of doing so to those who make official observations. For example, in School #1, Mr. F explained:

They’re not going to appreciate the little details as much as administrators are going to, because that’s not what they’re looking for. They don’t care what I’m doing at a minute-sixty. They just don’t care. My administrators want to know what I’m doing at a minute-sixty at a minute-one because that, for some reason, is valued.

Curriculum Delivery

Ideally the school would have a wide curriculum, students would not be walled-in by subject discipline, confined by maths, physics, and chemistry, but would study more subjects, seeing these in the light of the plethora of knowledge surrounding them, thus learning a toleration and appreciation of studies with which they are not immediately concerned. - Ann, 18

Many researchers would suggest that students labeled with behaviour difficulties are interpersonal (Venter, Poggenpoel, & Myburgh, 2005), kinesthetic (Ernsbarger, 2002), and musical (Darrow, 2006) learners (Gardner, 1978). However, “It is rare for teachers of these pupils to recognize that this is the case, let alone choose pedagogical approaches to teaching that will enable such pupils to learn” (Hunter-Carsch et al., 2006, p. 28). Due to the pressure to adhere to a specific curriculum, teachers in segregated learning
environments are rarely able to provide “an equitable access to an empowering and successful educational experience” (Palinscar & Klenk, 2004, p. 142). This also leaves no room to teach these students alternative responses in the hope of “maximizing their emotional, social, and behavioural development and freedom” (Polsgrove & Smith, 2004, p. 401).

Gardner (1978) points out that students labeled with behaviour difficulties are often provided the same kinds of academic programs because teachers and policy makers believe that “low-level text production skills are a necessary prerequisite to the acquisition of composing skills” (Palinscar & Klenk, 2004, p. 142). Yet a wide range of literature would point out that these students are “already behind their peers academically and require effective instructional activities to enhance their learning. If they are to catch up with their peers academically, then they must learn more during a single school year; otherwise, they will remain in a skill deficit position” (Hyatt & Howell, 2004, p. 192). The motivation to learn so much in a small amount of time occurs when students are taught strategies to control and monitor learning activities that help them to interpret social cues (Gagne, 1982). If students are provided this instruction that is “more flexible in terms of widening access diversity and choice” (O’Hanlon, 2003, p. 13), “it is likely that fewer disruptive incidents stemming from failure or frustration will occur” (Hyatt & Howell, 2004, p. 195).

Providing students with a variety of materials and methods promotes critical thinking, independence and cooperative leaning scenarios. When variety was used as a subcategory in this study, it also included differentiated activities and the time and order at which they occurred. The participants generally used variety to describe sequenced
learning tasks that occur within the same learning session. Several students, including participant BG, claimed in their interviews that a predictable and varied sequence of tasks help them to access prior knowledge before a lesson. For example:

I: Is it helpful when she puts things up on the board when you walk in you know what’s going on that day?

BG: Yeah.

I: Why do you think that is? What’s so big about that? Why do you have to know what’s going on? I don't want to put words in your mouth but is it (to) kind of get you ready for the day, your brain?

BG: Yeah it’s like a structure. Like I know what I should be thinking about and I guess it kind of gets my mind ready for, yeah, like it brings up all the knowledge she's already told us.

Often these are predictable, but occasionally the participants appreciate it when these tasks are “mixed up” based on the mood of the class or teacher or as a reward for completing complicated learning activities. Some teachers in School #1 use a variety of materials and methods within the same class, whilst others rearrange weekly activities.

Curriculum/Variety: Mr. L

HW: Whenever we’d go to class, he’d always have something new, and it was rather enjoyable when he’d, like, make some funny comments or jokes. He was pretty good, like that.

Mr. L’s classes usually planned his classes as follows:
Part of the success of *Mr. L’s* lessons would seem to be attributed to a predictable sequence of activities. Usually occurring at 20-minute intervals, each activity provides students with time to ask questions as well as time for *Mr. L* to talk to students individually. Since *Mr. L* reminds his students that if they finish early they may “take a break” until the next activity begins, this allows for students who might need extra help to access *Mr. L* whilst allowing other students to rest. During my observation, I noticed that most students seemed to be respectful of this rule.

**Curriculum/Variety: Mr. Lb**

Like *Mr. L*, *Mr. Lb’s* lessons also shared a predictable sequence. However, *Mr. Lb’s* lessons activity transitions seemed to be more student-directed based on their success and momentum. After greeting and conversing with his students about school-related happenings, *Mr. Lb* would begin his government classes by talking about current events and use these conversations to transition into politics, as noted by BB:

*Like he'll teach what he has to teach, but then like...let's say there's something in the newspaper that's interesting, but really not about history. He'll let us talk about it and whatnot.*
Mr. Lb mentioned that on occasion he might allow the current events activity to spill over or even take over the main part of his lesson. This is based, he said, on whether students were discussing the current event appropriately. In lower-tracked classes the current events portion of his lesson was usually spent explaining a current event, whilst in the upper-tracked classes it was used for debate. During the interviews, participants often mentioned that this activity (and its transition to the topic at hand) seemed to help them understand the subject matter better. For example:

MD: ‘Cause, he (Mr. Lb) likes to teach, and like, he likes to stick to a subject so that you actually get it and he doesn’t teach it one day and then move on the next day.

Curriculum/Variety: Mr. F

Mr. F’s enthusiasm for his subject matter would seem to be part of what student find appealing about his classes. Like Mr. Mc, students often claim that he “knows a lot” about his subject, but unlike the other teachers identified by the participants in this study as being a positive place in School #1, Mr. F only seems to have a loose idea in regards to his daily planning. This is not necessarily a negative aspect of his charge. More than achieving daily goals and standards, Mr. F seems to be more concerned that his students develop an appreciation for reading and writing, as noted by BW:

Yeah. I always liked English class, but with Mr. F it was kind of fun. We didn't really always do book work and we didn't always really do certain things like that. We did hands-on projects and stuff like that.
So that students might achieve this appreciation, Mr. F employs several different mediums. These include movies that correspond with readings, video clips from the internet, cooperative activities, and independent time to grasp the day’s lesson. MG commented on this during the following discussion:

*You learn a lot, we watched a movie and read a book on the movie and we did that in class and...I don’t know, we just learned more together, more ‘do it on the side.’*

I: Explain that. ‘Do it on the side.’

*MG: On homework (instead of) do it outside the class, we would do it in the class which made everybody keep with each other more.*

**Curriculum/Variety: Mr. Mc**

*Mr. Mc’s* classroom is aesthetically impressive and it commands the immediate interest and respect of his students. As a teacher and professor of marine biology, his classroom resembles the learning center of a small marine wildlife center, complete with aquariums, papier-mâché sharks, bones, posters, and student artwork. There are a variety of things to see that might serve as a predictor of things to come through the year. Using several mediums to explain his lessons seems built-in to his classroom; and at any moment there are props available to him. Participant TL observed this and had mixed reactions:

*Sometimes. He showed us a lot of videos, but he did stuff on the overhead, as well. But, he sometimes got off-track, and it'd last for 20 minutes, sometimes, or maybe longer.*
Mr. Mc also teaches another class, *Science and Survival*. This course is designed to show students how to survive in the wilderness and uses scientific methods to do so. Of all the classes described as *hands on* in the participant interviews, this one seems to be most accurate. The class incorporates camping, hiking, orienteering, wildlife studies, fishing, and emergency medical care. Several participants point to the value of that class through its cooperative qualities and perhaps the chance to get to know Mr. Mc better:

> BB: *I remember like three girls. They were always in the corner and they were always just like, ‘Oh this class sucks. This class sucks.’ But then we had to start fires and dehydrate food and stuff... And eventually, he made it so they liked it and then they finally got into it...like, towards the end of the semester. And they really started liking it.*

When asked about using a variety of methods in his teaching, Mr. Mc (like Mr. L, Mr. R, and Mr. F) did mention that in his planning he gauges the ability of his classes on instinct. This seems to clash with those in administration:

> Mr. Mc: *I guess I have a pattern in the way I do things. I can change it on a moment’s notice, if something else comes up sort of thing. That’s why I hate this idea of ‘Oh you have to have a plan book three weeks ahead’. I can make a plan book three weeks ahead, but by the time I’ve been through one period, I’m off already.*

Planning and curriculum led to a discussion about tracking, special education, and authority. Like Mr. L, there seemed to be a discrepancy between what he knows works well and what the school considers to be good teaching. Also like Mr. L, Mr. Mc (without being specific) claims that he has suffered the consequences of challenging authority and what he considers to be a disservice to his students.
Curriculum/Variety: Mr. R

The participants did not often identify Mr. R as a teacher who was a positive influence because he uses a variety of methods and materials in his lessons. However, during my observations in his class, he did incorporate several techniques, most notably his ability to tie in personal stories and anecdotes and use the internet as a resource. Like the other teachers identified in this study, Mr. R also plans his lessons on a series of activities loosely planned (similar to Mr. Lb). As a result, students arrive to his class with a good sense of what will happen. However, though Mr. R does receive positive feedback about his teaching from his superiors, he has often been told that this is an area need of improvement:

Professional Staff Observation

Grade 10, World Geography (200 level)

This was a well-planned lesson with specific learning outcome goals in which a variety of instructional approached were used. Directions were provided in a clear and concise manner. An area of improvement would be for Mr. R to self-monitor to keep lecture time focused on a limited number of essential concepts (rather than basic facts which can be provided on a handout), limit lecture time to about 20 minutes, and self-monitor to avoid tangential stories or points which not only lengthen the lecture/discussion time but also risk confusing students about what the essential/required information is.
A lesson is not much good if, for instance in science, all one ever does is listen to the teacher instead of finding out things for ourselves. After all, why have fifteen Bunsen burners if the only person who ever uses one is the master? - R. (boy), 11

A wide range of behaviour often makes the delivery of instruction in a traditional classroom very challenging. Variables such as instruction time, pacing, lesson sequence, and opportunities for independent and cooperative learning activities are shown to be more effective for enhancing student learning in these environments and reduce the “overidentification of children for special education” (Witt et. al, 2004, p. 428).

Several researchers agree that an educational approach that is best suited for this environment and incorporates a majority of these variables is one that is adapted to the student’s individual needs: “It is generally more effective to teach, to learn, to reward, to penalize, to succeed, and to gain a sense of achievement in small, immediate ways than in large, deferred ways, and the classroom structure should be predicated upon this fact” (Wiener, 1972, p. 38). This approach “allows for high-level achievement at a rate of learning and a level of interaction that are compatible with the student’s ability and behaviour” (Johnson & Ruskin, 1977, p. 9), where levels of learning are “defined in terms of the degree of competence to be achieved” (Glaser, 1977, p. 88): “The moment children act they individualize themselves; they cease to be a mass and become the intensely distinctive beings” (Dewey, 1990, p. 33).
The ability to learn how to learn at one’s own pace is central to individualistic learning (Carroll, 1963). For those students with learning and behavioural difficulties who might lack learning strategies, individualized or differentiated instruction provides training in this area (Allsopp, Minskoff, & Bolt, 2005, p. 103). Individualistic learning tells the student “what he is going to learn and also why it is necessary for him to learn this particular material” (Lewis, 1971, pp. 62-63). It trains learners who lack these strategies to “enter a classroom and, regardless of the teacher’s teaching style or the subject matter being taught, know how to select and use appropriate strategies to understand the course content sufficiently to discuss, read, and write about it” (Boiarsky, 2003, p. 25). Keller (1968) (as well as participant SC) finds that these attributes have led students to prefer individualized learning to standard lecture-based classroom instruction:

SC: We have the LCD’s so basically whatever we do, we see on our computer. We also see on top of like the board. She’ll write on the board some things and we’ll go through some transactions deals. She basically let’s us be independent unless we have questions or help then she’ll come and help. But I like working at my own pace sometimes.

Having students establish these learning strategies also increases their locus of control (Brophy, 1987) whilst at the same time helping to establish “resilience factors that could counterbalance some deficits including constitutional dispositions (sociability, problem-solving ability, planning ability, and internal locus of control)” (Furlong et al., 2004, p. 251). Charlton and David (1994) also state that, “locus of control beliefs are influential in determining pupils’ levels of motivation and efforts...Under-achievers are often externally oriented and successful pupils internally oriented” (p. 87). PD noted in his
interview that when he was given the opportunity to work independently with no
distractions, he was able to focus and complete his assignments:

Well...when you go into that room...ah...Mr. A, he usually...he doesn't say
anything to you. He just sits down. He does his job. You can just sit in there and
you can get a lot of work done if you think about it because it’s so quiet in there.
You can't talk to anybody. You sit in a booth.

In addition to learning strategies, individualized learning puts an accommodating mix of
individual activities into practice that concentrates on each content area using a
continuing modification of content, procedure, and material designed to meet the
students’ prior knowledge and interests (Tieso, 2003). In a classroom that incorporates
individualized learning strategies, “a wide variety of materials in many media would be
available…The significant element in organizing and using resources would be the co-
operative planning of pupils and teacher” (Talbert & Frase, 1972, p. 74). Participant RH
seems to argue that a combination of teacher instruction and independent learning
contributes to a positive learning environment:

She let me do it my way. She taught me what she knew, but I have to look at it
differently and she let me do that. But other teachers give you steps and stuff to
write down. We have to do their step... the way they do it and if not then they take
points off on your paper.

Therefore, for teachers to be able to implement these strategies, they “should have a wide
repertoire of teaching methods so that they can match the appropriate strategy and
technique to the particular learning style of each student” (Musgrave, 1975, p. 2). Along
these lines, Gardner (1978) argues that, “children and adolescents frequently engage in
inappropriate behaviour when they become bored. They become satiated with the same old routine, especially if it is rigid and inflexible” (p. 99). Though there needs to be a sense of structure and predictability, courses should offer a range of activities, “by a variety of means, to arouse in the child an interest in school studies” (Dewey, 1990, p. 75).

There are, however, a number of misconceptions regarding individualized and differentiated instruction. They include: (a) the inability to be successful with standardized testing (Wormeli, 2005); (b) “low productivity due to socializing” (Johnson & Johnson, 1999, p. 161); (c) the separation of content into segments for students who might not be able to relate them (Hyman, 1973); (d) little opportunity for students to make choices in what they are going to learn (Lewis, 1971, p. 39); (e) the perception that individualized learning does not prepare students for college or to compete for employment opportunities (Wormeli, 2005); and (f) the feeling that independent learning fills “only part of the learning picture” (Adams & Hamm, 1999, p. 11) and misses “the power of collaboration” (Ibid).

Individualistic efforts have been known by some researchers to “promote isolation and self-centeredness” (Johnson & Johnson, 1999, p. 64) and to contribute to diminishing social support within the school. In this light, another strategy that has been shown to be successful with low-achieving students is cooperative learning. It “promotes student achievement by coupling individual accountability with group incentives and recognition” (Nath & Ross, 1996, p. 117). Adams and Hamm (1996) find that a wide range of learners prefer cooperative to individual learning activities, especially those students “who present challenges in the traditional classroom environment” (Furlong et
al., 2004, pp. 244-245) and who might have “something valuable to offer the group” (Wavering, 1995, p. 85).

**Cooperative Learning**

*The school I would like would be perfect, glorious in every way, where you wouldn’t worry yourself to death over things, wouldn’t get bored, and yet wouldn’t get lethargic. It would be a friendly school, everyone familiar with everyone, everyone co-operative, with ambitions, big ideas for the future.* – Gillian, 13

As a majority of teenage students spend most of their time making efforts to integrate socially, schools must encourage teachers to plan activities (Wavering, 1995; Campbell, 1991) “to facilitate academic achievement and socialization” (Siegel, 2004, p. 220). Slavin (1983) states that cooperative learning methods “have been found to increase student academic performance and to increase positive interpersonal relations among peers” (p. 21). Participant SD would seem to agree that the employment of cooperative learning strategies would not only incorporate the strengths of individualized learning, but also “help to improve student self-esteem, as students are likely (correctly) to perceive that they are doing better in school and getting along better with their peers” (Ibid):

*We all like came together. Like at first no one really cared for each other. But once we got to know each other it made everything so much better. We all had a piece and if your piece wasn’t done, then the project wasn’t gonna go together.*

In a cooperative learning classroom, students are encouraged to “try out strategies, discuss, experiment, explore and evaluate” (Adams & Hamm, 1996, p. 9) whilst knowing that they cannot succeed under these conditions unless there is full participation from the
members of their group. Positive interdependence (Johnson & Johnson, 1999) encourages these collaborative learners to “complement and build on each others’ views to construct shared knowledge” (Hargreaves, 2007, pp. 188-189). At the heart of cooperative learning theory is the assumption that people learn best from direct experience rather than direct instruction (Walker, 2006). “Whatever the subject matter being studied, collaborative learning develops in learners’ higher-level thinking skills, including the ability to reflect and think critically” (Hargreaves, 2007, p. 190). We see evidence of this in the following:

AG: Everybody’s talkative, everybody participates. Everyone just has fun with it. It's one of those classes where, even though in school you'll have the different clicks, it's almost like, in that class, the clicks don't matter. Everyone does something and everyone participates in that class.

SM: He made us help with stuff. You know how some teachers just do it all by themselves? When kids are involved it’s a lot more interesting.

Johnson et al. (1986) investigated the effect of computer-assisted cooperative, competitive, and individualistic on achievement. Students in cooperative conditions performed significantly higher than students in competitive and individualistic conditions. Similarly, Slavin and Karweit (1985) conducted research for the purpose of comparing three teaching strategies and their effects on students’ mathematic achievement. Yager (1986) dealt with the impact of group processing on achievement in cooperative learning groups. The purpose of his study was to compare the achievement of students in cooperative learning groups with the achievement of students learning on their own and the part that group processing played on this achievement. Yager’s study
showed that the students in the cooperative learning groups performed 7% - 12% higher on the achievement posttest than the students working in individualistic conditions.

Sharon et al. (1979) investigated the effect of small groups against the traditional classroom. Analysis of the data revealed that pupils from the small-group classroom achieved higher scores. Though the results of these studies were in favor of cooperative learning, researchers in this field find that most are using versions that are in need of individual accountability: “This ‘group work’ creates the danger that one child can do the work for the whole group, that some children will take the ‘thinking roles’ in group activities whilst others take clerical or passive roles, or that some children may be ignored or shut out of the group activity, especially if they are perceived to be low-achievers” (Slavin, 1999, p. 74).

Both individualized and cooperative teaching strategies encourage the student to self-regulate by teaching how to learn. Another method close to this approach is person centered counseling, a type of counseling strategy rooted in the idea that the answers to the client’s problems are found within the client. The counselor is not concerned with finding out the causes of the problem, but in helping the client to identify the best solution possible through self-regulation strategies (Gatongi, 2007): “Self regulation refers to the capacity to change one’s cognitions, emotions, and/or behaviour to better meet social standards and personal goals” (Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2009, p. 233).

Like the other teachers in the study, Mr. F would rather run his class in a cooperative way, but feels burdened by traditional methods:
I would love to do it where you have 20 kids in a room and you say ‘Here’s what we’re gonna do for the next 36 weeks, let’s just do it.’ This is gonna be a really good crowd. This is gonna be fun, let’s not yuck it up with grades. It’s just more complicated because you have to do things, you have to know specific things and it gets messy because then you have other things riding on it than, ‘Hey, let’s just do some cool stuff.’ It’s much more... mathematically complicated: GPA, class rank, ‘Why did I get an A and she got a B?’

**Tracking**

*There would be no prefects, or superior ranks of boys. Schoolboy persecution is a strong source of misery, and the frustration felt by boys at having to submit to the jurisdiction of others, superior to them only in age, provokes resistance.* - Nicholas, 14

Literature shows a wide range of writers who hold the belief that labeling issues precede learning difficulties in the lives of students who have been labeled with a behaviour difficulty. However, it remains the case that “this is hard to define, and sociologically speaking, deviancy (rather like beauty) is in the eyes of the beholder” (Berridge et al., 2008, p. 25). Consequently, teachers can unknowingly contribute to the social construction of behaviour problems, the effects of which can go unnoticed. This “suggests the need for more careful consideration to be given to the process of how pupils come to be labeled as difficult than is usually the case” (Charlton & David, 1994, p. 113). For example, JB commented:

*He was my chemistry teacher this year and I had to get out of his class. ‘Cause I was in a smart, higher-levelled class than I should have been and they wouldn’t take me out ‘cause they thought I was smart enough for it. And all the kids around me, they knew what they were doing and everything and I had a hard time with it.*
So he kind of pushed me back in the corner and helped the rest of them ‘cause they knew what was going on. And he got off track a lot.

As teachers become more vocal about their biases about certain behaviours and if “they determine that students can’t or won’t achieve” (Smith & Mack, 2007, p. 2), students can be defined as deviant. If this label has an effect on the student’s self-concept he is taught to “behave as expected, thus ‘verifying’ the initial false diagnosis” (Walker, 2006, p. 367). These biases are not limited to a student’s behaviour in class. Race (Lareau, 2007), sex (Moore, 2004), grooming (Clifford & Walster, 1973), class records, parent visits, and other immediate characteristics (Rist, 2007) can also comprise a type of label that is based on assumptions teachers make about students and “less from knowledge of individual pupils” (Charlton & David, 1994, p. 112). Participant AG discussed similar experiences in her interview:

_The teacher was rude ‘cause she always treated me like different, because like my Mom said I have a learning disability._

Researchers argue that these labels can affect the teacher’s perception of the student because good behaviour will lead to favorable treatment towards a student who is well behaved. Researchers such as Herman (2009) found that new teachers tended to label students based on placement and that “alternative placements to be the most needed modification” (Lago-Delello, 1998, p. 480). One result of school-recognized labels is an emphasis on intervention in the form of academic tracking that “assigns students to a
stratified sequence of courses with a particular post-high school focus” (Glatthorn, 1992, p. 110).

Many researchers argue that tracking leads to inequalities within our society for the reason that it intends to place students in appropriate classes by ability, but actually tends to place students in the lowest tracks based upon race and class (Oakes, Gamoran, & Page, 1992). In these classrooms, researchers find that teaching strategies, social interactions, motivation, teacher attitudes and dropout rates are all influenced by tracking. “In all industrialized nations, students encounter curricular differentiation and are sorted into groups, classes, and schools as they progress through the public education system. The sorting, commonly referred to as ‘tracking,’ often has a negative effect on a student’s ultimate educational trajectory” (LeTendre et al., 2003, p. 216).

Tracking further emphasizes and gives strength to the deviancy label especially for students who are placed in segregated environments with other students who might also exhibit inappropriate behaviour patterns. As “it is highly likely that the child will imitate some of these behaviours” (Gardner, 1978, p. 180), researchers agree that intervention strategies should be used to guide “rather than remove responsibility from the teacher” (O’Hanlon, 2003, p. 16). It is argued that these students will then “go through a process of deviancy training, in which their peers teach them deviant norms and values” (Nelson, Leone, & Rutherford, 2004, p. 286). The result of assigning students to classes based on ability is the creation of a social stigma that students ascribe certain meanings to their status within the school” (Berends, 1995, p. 329). Participant AG seemed to have a sense of this when he commented:
Just about any job out there you have to give a little bit more that you really have to. He (the teacher) does all he needs to get by. It’s almost like he doesn’t but in the extra effort. Teachers will even say that about students. Like when I was in middle school, my grades weren’t the best. I did all I could to get by. I wasn’t doing the extra things. But he (the teacher) seems like he has his favorite classes and it seems like he puts more effort to those classes.

According to Gardner (1978), labeling allows the focus of the deviant behaviour to be placed on the student, and not the teacher or the educational environment: “This takes place even though the most critical factors that could be used to influence behaviour change frequently reside in the child’s environment and not within the child’s diagnosed pathology or deviation” (p. 10). Consequently, the justification for segregating students by ability is strengthened when teachers claim that not doing so would “improve the opportunities for success of the one group, whilst avoiding charges of ‘watering down’ the curriculum and reducing academic standards for the high-achieving group” (Mongan & Hart, 1989, p. 83). According to these teachers, an inclusive learning environment finds higher-leveled students hindered by the progress of “slower” students.

Though the results of empirical research show that leveling benefits higher-tracked students, it also shows that “low-ability students tend to learn less” (Hallinan, 1994, p. 80). This suggests that “low-achieving students benefit from opportunities both to model and to practice and appropriate expert-like thinking skills” (Palinscar & Klenk, 2004, p. 158) and that deviant behaviour could be a result of “settings that emphasize rote memorization over problem solving” (Wheelock, 1992, p. 11). As schools lose sight of the individual characteristics of their students, labeled and segregated students are unable to gain any sense of worth in the eyes of their peers and teachers, thus reducing
motivation and future aspirations. Cooper (2000) points out that, “from the perspective of the child, self-worth is closely linked to what he or she believes important others think” (p. 123). Therefore, “the school must provide greater opportunities for members of different streams to interact, preferably in a cooperative enterprise” (Hargreaves, 1967, p. 187).

Those who support tracking argue that students in the higher strata (300-level and honors in both schools in this study) will have more of an opportunity to be challenged, whilst those in the lower strata (100-level and remedial in both schools in this study) will have more opportunities for remediation. In a heterogeneous classroom, according to proponents of leveling, teachers are forced to teach to an average level, resulting in higher-functioning students who are uninterested and low-functioning students who are overwhelmed (Slavin, 1987). Though within-class ability grouping, designed to group students with similar abilities within a class, intends to be a compromise of sorts, the debate between proponents and opponents of leveling by ability in schools remains as a topic of much debate. This was made more evident during a monthly teacher meeting at School #1. In response to a discussion concerning the merging of 100 level classes with 200 level classes, a teacher said, “I don’t need the lower leveled student poisoning my upper leveled classes.”

There is evidence to show that most students will continue to experience tracking at various times during their educational careers (Hallinan, 1994; Oakes & Saunders, 2008). Though efforts to “de-track” in schools have become common, it has been found that schools that continue to practice tracking do not demand much from their lower-leveled pupils (Schwartz, 1981) whilst the quality of instruction increases with track level
(Oakes & Saunders, 2008) as does the motivation for teachers to improve their practice. Track level has also been associated with social status, self-esteem academic status, and motivation to learn (Oakes, 1985).

The perception of one’s own abilities in the context of self-perception, self-esteem and motivation is not limited to lower-tracked students. Students in the upper-tracks might regard their placement, in certain social situations, as undesirable (Manor-Bullock et al., 1995) simply because they are treated differently. Research studies suggest that in order to avoid the “perceived negative social effects of recognized high ability” (Swiatek, 2002, p. 66), gifted adolescents may employ social coping strategies, forcing themselves to take part in pop culture-based activities whilst rejecting the activities in which they truly find enjoyment. This could lead to a sabotage of their academic efforts.

As part of a project on educational inequality, Hargreaves (1972) believed that higher tracks provide status. As a result, school for these students tends to be a positive experience. On the other hand, lower-tracked students, who have had status taken from them because of ability, “react against this system and the values it is based on, namely ability and hard work” (Van Houtte, 2006, p. 274). Researchers such as Furman and Shields (2003) suggest that tracking is strongly associated with social inequality and continues to exist due to a lack of educational leadership. Teacher mentors, who might associate lower tracks with a certain type of ability and motivation level, are responsible for how they communicate their beliefs about tracked students to beginning teachers. Studies conducted by Achinstein and Barrett (2004) suggest that the role mentors play in influencing new teachers’ beliefs about low-tracked students and about student diversity
in general is crucial, especially when this concerns their perception of low-tracked students.

For those teachers who might find themselves in a heterogeneous setting as a result of de-tracking, new methods have been developed to help acclimate teachers to this new environment. Intellectual Role Taking (IRT) is one such method that has gained acceptance in de-tracked classrooms. In this method the class is allocated various procedural assignments for daily completion, with each student assigned a different role to accomplish a given task. Examples of these activities include, collecting and distributing materials, cleaning up after a group assignment, or taking part in a group note-taking session where the day’s events are discussed and logged (Herrenkohl, 2006). “These roles are important for young students as they help ensure equity, minimize disputes and disagreements, and help students see their own and others’ budding competencies” (Ibid, p. 49).

Teachers identified in the study recognize tracking as an issue in School #1 and that upper-tracked students have an unfair advantage in terms of equal access to a variety of teachers and teaching styles. For example:

*Mr. R: Students in upper-leveled classes tend to exaggerate their own abilities. If you challenge them to work harder, they resist. And they’re not as pleasant to be around. In a lot of cases, quite frankly, their parents are quite intrusive in a negative way... Kids at the lower-levels, once you identify that mutual respect in expectations, both behaviourally and academically, they’re really good, solid students that give you good effort every day. Obviously they have some different issues, you know, but I’ve found that if you’re good with those students you get a disproportionate amount of them compared to other teachers who consider*
themselves to be elitists. There are some teachers, quite frankly, who just won’t teach those students.

I: Let me play devil’s advocate. If you don’t mind teaching those students wouldn’t you want to only have those students?

Mr. R: Class size. Today with these budget problems or what have you we used to have one 200-level class, which differentiated between various skills, and now they’re combined (with 100 level). So now if you have a class with 25-30 low-leveled students, now all of the things that you could do to make it a successful class, more differentiated instruction, more one-on-one attention, more, you know, personal connections and contact, those things become lost as the class sizes become large... When I can have classes between 18-22 at that level, they’re some of the most enjoyable classes I’ve ever had.

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**Student-Teacher Relationships**

Ask any child what his favorite subject is, and the chances are it will be one in which he has, or has had, a teacher whom he liked. In other words, teachers should be trained to communicate personally with their pupils, so that education follows on naturally and easily. – Ian, 16

It can be difficult for teachers to relate to students who continuously interrupt their lessons, especially in an environment where they must teach the planned lesson whilst also imparting more acceptable “replacement” alternatives to negative behaviour (Cheney & Barringer, 1995). Consequently, “obedience predominates over responsibility, punishment over logical consequences, [and] systematic, coherent attempts to help them
gain control over their problems is the exception, not the rule” (Knitzer, Steinberg, & Fleisch, 1990, p. 64). Instead of investigating the potential of their students’ abilities, they will rely on the “subject-matter at command, and little knowledge of how this is related to the minds of those to whom it is to be taught. In this division between what to teach and how to teach, each side suffers from the separation” (Dewey 1990, p. 70).

A teacher who has few strategies for managing students with various developmental issues might unknowingly use their students’ lack of knowledge against them and provoke negative behaviour. This is evident when teachers continue to teach lessons, unaware of whether their students have the capacity to process the information at hand: “If children cannot perform expected work... then there is no behaviour management program in existence that can produce enduring behaviour change in such a classroom” (Witt et al., 2004, p. 428). However, when teachers employ “management strategies, effective instructional techniques (e.g., class wide peer tutoring), early intervention for students with learning problems, and positive teacher-student relationships” (Furlong et al., 2004, p. 253) they “will decrease antisocial behaviour” (Reinke & Herman, 2002, p. 553) and it is less likely that exclusion will occur. During her interview participant AF compared two English teachers who employ dissimilar strategies when setting the stage for their lessons:

> You go into class and she’s at the door and she instantly greets you with a huge smile. Her voice is loud enough so everyone can hear it. The whole class: everyone is talkative and everyone participates. Everyone just has fun with it. It’s one of those class where, even though in school you’ll have different clicks, it’s almost like in that class the clicks don’t matter. Everyone does something. But Mr. F... You walk in he and he’ll be sitting at his desk or writing something...
on the board. He won’t even acknowledge the people that are walking into class unless he’s spoken to. He doesn’t really get personal with his students and that means a lot to me. That makes thing a lot more easier.

Skiba and Peterson (2003) point out that instruction should attempt to provide opportunities for the development of appropriate social skills and positive student-teacher relationships. “The teacher who is assured and confident and who provides warm personal direction and encouragement is likely to facilitate such behaviours in her students” (Gardner, 1978, p. 78). In this light, teachers who bring to their charge a knowledge of subject matter and are “prepared personally and professionally to help the student with numerous concrete and abstract situations” (Woody, 1969, p. 5), and have the skills and training to manage difficult behaviour (Sawka, McCurdy, & Mannella, 2002), can better understand students who arrive at their classrooms labeled with a behaviour difficulty. Perhaps, as Gregg (1999) points out, unsuccessful teachers are simply confused about their roles when they are assigned to teach lower-leveled classes and find themselves choosing between whether they are “supposed to improve outcomes for students with different educational needs or (to) separate disruptive students from mainstream classrooms” (p. 109).

There is a significant amount of literature that supports the idea that all students, including those labeled with an EBD, can benefit from positive interactions with their teachers. All the teachers identified by the participants in this study connect with their students, albeit in very different ways. Follow up interviews with these teachers showed that four of the top five teachers identified by the participants in the study have been
reprimanded by School #1 for the same qualities the participants most admire in them. (It is also interesting to note that since 2007, one teacher left his post due to “unsatisfactory working conditions” and “disagreements with administration,” two were put on probation, and one claims to have been harassed and treated unfairly by the administration.)

**Student/Teacher Relationships: Mr. L**

Several students identified Mr. L’s room as visually stimulating, interesting and colourful. I noted that part of the appeal of Mr. L’s room was that it was student-directed, yet based on his personal interests. It was as if the students were painting murals that display Mr. L’s personality: colourful, erratic, inviting, and loud. Participant MA commented that “He has a nice room, he has Star Wars and skateboards... he’s like a kid pretty much.” Though some participants such as SB point out that Mr. L’s room makes them feel “safe” and “It’s kind of like being in your own home,” in 2007, he was asked to paint over these murals with the appropriate classroom colours: light blue, beige, and white. According to Mr. L, he was also asked on occasion to change his attire (cowboy boots, jeans, and earring) to something more appropriate.

According to Mr. L, his attempts to reach other marginalized students in School #1 also seemed to have been thwarted by administration. In 2007, after a few years of unofficially reaching out to gay and lesbian students, Mr. L was denied permission to meet with them before school because of a rule that forbids students to be in classroom areas before 7:30 am. Though Mr. L was given permission to meet with students after
school, he believed that it would be impossible to meet students under less anonymous conditions. This failed attempt to reach out to marginalized students, however, was not limited to activities outside his classroom. For example:

They often refer to my personality instead of my teaching because in many circumstances my personality is my teaching style. Through jokes, fairness, and the willingness to listen to these kids and not throw them out the door for an occasional ‘oh xxxx’ in the classroom, I was able to reach kids that a lot of teachers had given up on. It really is all about caring and less about the rules... Keep in mind that the then head of the math department considered my class fun and games and did everything in her power to take it away from me. My methods of teaching and larger than life personality were not always looked upon as an asset by the administration, yet none of them ever stopped to see if my methods were effective. A lot of teachers don't show their personality because they think that it undermines their authority. But as I like to say, 'If you have to tell people you're the boss, you probably aren't.'

Student/Teacher Relationships: Mr. F

SD: In Mr. F's class, his personality doesn't really match his room. But he has all of his kids' pictures on his desk, and stuff...and that matches him. Like, he talks about his kids all the time, so that matches what his personality is: His desk, it's all messy, and that's how his head is, it's all messy. It has his kids on it and that's all he ever thinks about, really.

When referring to Mr. F, students often bring up his children. Since most of the students in the study were seniors (age 16-18), most of them seem to remember watching Mr. F experience being a father for the first time. In many ways he resembled a contrived college professor in a television comedy: unorganized, knowledgeable, dishevelled, and preoccupied. This, combined with the nervousness of unexpectedly having twins,
seemed to make Mr. F’s classroom experience funny whilst at the same time very human. Though the participants rarely mention Mr. F in the context of personal connection, there seemed to be a degree of reverse empathy in his classroom: the teacher’s life was out of control with his students providing a sense of normalcy:

Mr. F: I think one of the reasons the students you’re dealing with would be kids whose abilities are outside the mainstream. If they have a gift, if they have a skill, it’s probably not grammar or literary analysis; it’s probably something else that’s getting marginalized. I think one of the reasons they can relate to the teachers on your list there, and I’ll go with me I guess, what I bring to the class isn’t marginalized. It isn’t that textbook, classic ‘Here’s what shows up in observation or in a graduate class, or in a workshop discussion’…What I bring isn’t what would be stereotypically valued.

Over the years, I have observed many programs that intend to help marginalized students succeed in school. The program providing most of the students in this study is the most notable. It is a program that focuses on improving social deficits through esteem-building activities designed to improve study skills, develop employability skills, and provide an advocate who will aid these students in academic decisions. Though these programs have been successful in leading students to graduation, they seem unnecessary when teachers assume their students come to them with talent. The personal connection Mr. F has with his students is not the type of empathy promoted by the aforementioned programs, but rather, it is in his ability recognize his students as valuable assets to his class, if they are willing to take part.

Student/Teacher Relationships: Mr. Lb
All the teachers identified by the participants in this study were recognized as *friendly*, *nice*, and *funny*. However, unlike the other top five teachers recognized by the participants in this study, *Mr. Lb* seems to demonstrate these qualities in obvious, recognizable, and measurable ways. For example:

*AG*: I walk in. Just like I said with Mrs. T, he'd (Mr. Lb) say hello. If it was Monday he'd ask how my weekend was, and stuff like that, and he'd answer right back and we'd have a good discussion before class started. As soon as it started, we'd go right into class and talk about current events and talk about the subject matter that we are on that day.

Born in the town where he teaches, *Mr. Lb* seems to connect to his students by way of heritage (French Canadian) and personal knowledge of the city. I witnessed this during his observations in *Mr. Lb’s* classroom and by watching him in the hallway between classes. *Mr. Lb* seems to have a working knowledge of his past and current students’ lives which he accesses in the hallway to former students and in the classroom as he greets his current ones. Instead of a simple hello, *Mr. Lb’s* typical greeting is more detailed:

*Mr. Lb*: Hey xxxxx, comma ca va? Did you finally get your tires fixed? Did you go to who I told you to go? How was it?

Further observations showed that *Mr. Lb* spends at least 15 minutes of an 80-minute period greeting his students and talking about the weather, school events, and town happenings. This was used as a stepping-stone to the “current events” portion of his lesson and whether it was related to the subject matter. This, according to *Mr. Lb*, would purposely be student-selected, so that it could lead to another current event more related
to the subject. During my observation, this was Amy Winehouse leading to Barack Obama. Though the subjects were not related, encouraging students to read the newspaper was the goal; it allowed for about 40 minutes of subject-related instructional time. Though I believed the lesson went well, Mr. Lb claims that he is often instructed in professional observations to limit the amount of time talking students so that there is more time for actual instruction.

**Student/Teacher Relationships: Mr. R**

By his appearance, Mr. R gives every indication that his class might be rigid and strict with little room for inappropriate behaviour. Though his classroom rules are very clear and are strictly enforced, Mr. R’s delivery of instruction blends humour and storytelling with history. Like Mr. Lb, this comes across as effortless and unplanned, yet the pace and flow of his delivery would indicate that there is a method that seems to be driven by instinct. During his first time in his class, I observed Mr. R begin his lesson by talking in great detail about his lawn care business:

**Diary Excerpt, November 2007**

*Mr. R had me laughing inside because of his delivery and also because I had no idea where he was going with it. What made his stories so interesting were not just the stories themselves, but that whilst some students were laughing, others smiled and rolled their eyes as if this happens every day. Also, there is something very slapstick and physical about his delivery. I’m surprised he’s letting me see this. I’m equally as surprised that his introduction went from lawn care, to political signs on the lawns of his customers, to politics.*
Like Mr. Lb, however, it was recommended to Mr. R in an official observation that he limit his time telling stories and devote more time to instruction. When he revealed this to me during a conversation, I queried whether he could include his introductions in a lesson plan and somehow justify it. Mr. R said that his introductions were improvised based on a number of variables including the types of learners present and the time of day. There seemed to be in his teaching a delicate balance of instruction, nurturing, and a want by the teacher to be taken seriously.

In the group interview, Mr. R was identified as another teacher who “makes me feel safe.” Mr. R, however, does not feel the same security in School #1. Though students might feel a personal connection with him as their teacher, there does exist with Mr. R a certain amount of suspicion and a loss of connection with his colleagues. As a result of the scrutiny into his lesson planning, Mr. R rarely invites other teachers to his room.

**Student/Teacher Relationships: Mr. Mc**

*Mr. Mc* is most often referred to as the teacher who will allow them to fail if they choose to do so. Though he was not widely known by students in the context of having a direct personal connection, the participants in this study often talked about his personality and appearance. In the group discussion, it was agreed that *Mr. Mc* “looks like the guy from *Jurassic Park,*” referring to Richard Attenborough. He greets his students as they enter the room, a bit more mild-mannered perhaps than *Mr. Lb* and the opposite of *Mr. L.*
Apart from this, it was difficult to at first to understand the personal connection between Mr. Mc and his students. After reviewing the interview with BB, this became clearer:

*Yeah, he gets along with everyone. I've never seen the guy mad ever in my life. I've never seen him yell. I've never seen him, like...get mad or anything at anyone ever.*

PD explains that this, combined with a sense of freedom is why he enjoys Mr. Mc’s class:

*You felt challenged, but you didn't have that feeling, like...oh, I got to get this done, like right now. You can put it off to the side for a few days and not have to worry about it. It wasn't like (whilst snapping his fingers) ‘Get it done now, get it done,’ you know?*

The combination of Mr. Mc’s personality (mild-mannered), his philosophy (fail if you choose to) and his appearance (‘grandfather”) all seem to point to SB’s addition to the subcategory list during the group discussion: *safety* and *freedom*. There is the nurturing side of Mr. Mc, but also it is important to consider that some students might feel that being in his class a privilege. Students often spoke about his credentials. For example:

*PD: My favorite class. I like marine biology. I like all sorts of sea creatures and animals and he's a very intelligent guy. He's got a doctorate in marine biology!*

His perceived intelligence alone however does not constitute a positive personal connection. Yet, in the context of school credentials his might be considered by other students as a guarantee that they are receiving the same quality education as those in upper-tracked classes. Furthermore, this sense of belonging does perhaps provide a safe environment to learn. Where most of the participants seem to find themselves existing on
the periphery of the school population, Mr. Mc’s class, which has no levels attributed to it, seems to bring them to the center.

**Empathy**

**Person-Centered Approach**

*The ideal school for the present day would be entirely comprehensive – infant, junior, and secondary education being completed under one roof – but making change for provision for change if desired. It would be advantageous in many ways.*

-Jennifer, 18

Students reported as having an EBD often have difficulty in classrooms understanding social cues. As a result, teachers and peers have been known to avoid dealing with these students, as they can be perceived as aggravating, emotionally draining, and unpredictable (Kauffman, 2005). Over time these students begin to lose their ability to monitor their own behaviour. According to researchers such as Bosson and Swann (2009), “there are strong links between people’s relatively specific academic self-concepts and outcomes such as academic achievement” (p. 540). Therefore, when considering the *person-centered approach* when applied to teaching, there are researchers who find that students who improved their ability to self-regulate also showed improvement in classroom behaviour. Students with low confidence in these abilities, however, continued to display behaviours that are consistent with those that are used to describe a student labeled with an EBD (Roeser, Strobel, & Quihuis, 2002).

*The person-centered approach* has been found useful in academic and social interventions involving students labeled with an EBD as “this population is prone to
automatically respond to ‘provocative’ stimuli impulsively and inappropriately, often with little awareness or concern for the long-term consequences of their behaviour” (Polsgrove & Smith, 2004, p. 402). A feature of this approach is the “way the therapist works within the therapeutic encounter” (Clarke, 1991, p. 31) with special attention to the way a client perceives his problem. According to Rogers (1965) it is “to sense the client’s private world as if it were your own, but without losing the ‘as if’ quality” (p. 99).

According to Woody (1969), “constructive personality change will occur if the therapist can communicate three attitudes to the client: unconditional positive regard, empathetic understanding, and congruence” (p. 147). In a client-therapist scenario the person-centered approach creates the opportunity for the client to be accepted by recognizing that they have the ability to put their lives back on the right track. Thorne (1984) describes this as an attempt by the teacher to see his students’ academic world through their eyes. In the classroom, this effect is achieved when teachers communicate that they value their students as they are without regard to their personal backgrounds, especially their academic histories. Students can then express themselves without fear of losing their teacher’s recognition and without fear of being omitted from the social aspects of the class. According to Rogers this scenario is summarized accordingly: “To the extent that the therapist finds himself experiencing a warm acceptance of each aspect of a client’s experience as being a part of that client, he is experiencing unconditional positive regard” (Rogers, 1965, p. 98).
Unconditional Positive Regard

Teachers would be there to help and not to organize, and they might hint at something to do but not make us do it. They would make sure we had discovered all the important aspects of life and give us gardens to cultivate. We would go on visits to places like Kenwood House, Harworth and Blenheim Place and organize ghost hunts in the weekends! The murals on the classrooms walls would be of the latest aspect in the life we had discovered. - Lalage, 11

*Unconditional positive regard* in the context of therapy is using “non-expert language” (Wickman, 2003, p. 179) to help a client by “honoring (her) expertise in at arriving at (her) own meaningful outcome” (Ibid). The goal of *unconditional positive regard* then is to elicit personal growth through self-awareness and responsibility so that “setbacks in daily life will be more likely to cope with stress effectively” (Doucette, 2004, p. 376). When considering students who have been labeled with an EBD, teachers who employ self-monitoring through individualized and cooperative strategies might unknowingly use *unconditional positive regard* in their classroom. As a result, unsuccessful students can take some real control over their educational experience “to acquire skill in self-direction” (Clark & Starr, 1991, p. 346). With this in mind, participant JB noted in his interview the valuable lesson he learned from his teacher. For example:

*She basically taught me how to smile, like how to deal with things and be happy.*
*Even if you’re mad at something she’ll make you look at a good thing about it.*
*Like. “JB think about this, don’t think about that, don’t think about the negative.”*  
*It’s just easier to be happy in her classroom.*

Congruence

*I believe there is a definition of a teacher that goes something like this: ‘A person who tries to impart knowledge to his pupils, even when they are listening to pop records, and, when he finds that he is not succeeding, sits and listens to them with his pupils.’* It takes
Lietaer (1984) argues that total impartiality is almost impossible to achieve. Teachers who strive to seek impartiality in their classes run the risk of becoming transparent in the eyes of their students. Dryden (1990) argues that “the helpers should be ready to be as ready as is therapeutically desirable to their clients to a level of displaying their personal and private experiences to their clients, if the situation demands” (p. 17). This honesty, or genuineness, is often described in counseling terms as a way of being “real” so that the helper can encourage the client to listen to himself and to be aware of how he processes his thoughts and emotions. “Counseling will be inhibited if the helper feels one way about the client but acts in a different way” (Clarke, 1994, p. 3), therefore, the counselor or the teacher “must not role-play at understanding... he must actually feel with the client” (Woody, 1969, p. 148). Mr. Lb seems to exemplify this:

I get to know every kid that’s in my room and know what they’re into. So sometimes kids don’t know that you hear their conversations. I love sports, but I don’t want to be that guy who only talks to the athletes. I might just ask a general question like... you know... some kids are into video games that involve war. So for me that’s easy. If we’re talking about WW2, I can say, ‘In that video game you’re talking about, ‘Medal of Honor,’ or whatever, what weapons do they use?

As a way to enhance student-teacher relationships, genuineness or congruence might be considered risky by some teachers; they might “feel uncomfortable behaving in such an open and honest way” (Roeser et al., 2002, p. 356). In the spirit of Blishen’s *The School That I’d Like* (1971), several passages in Kathleen Cushman’s book *Fires in the
Bathroom (2003) spotlight the importance of student-teacher relationships and empathy through the eyes of new teachers and students:

Pg. 15: Finally, though adolescents often hide it, they are interested in their teacher's lives, too. This doesn't mean that teachers need to reveal personal information, but students welcome anything teachers are willing to share about their academic training, work background, or outside interests.

Pg. 21: It matters to students that teachers like being in their company.

Pg. 22: If teachers don’t like the students, the students can also tell, and it affects their learning. Even the suspicion that a teacher holds a bias sometimes grows into students feeling that they can’t do anything right.

Pg. 89: Getting all kinds of students to open up in class creates an atmosphere where they can learn together even though they may have very different academic backgrounds. In fact, such differences become advantages, if the teacher treats everyone’s perspective as valuable. If the opposite happens, students are quick to realize it.

In these passages, Cushman uses dialogue to frame both student and teacher experiences as a way of developing empathy and better communication so they can lead to school improvement by challenging “the student's current perspective, issues related to changing thinking patterns, and approaches that involve reflection” (Butcher, 2006, p. 195). One of the benefits of teaching is that it offers many occasions to experience this type of reflection. It is this genuineness that can lead to self-awareness (Ibid).

**Self-Awareness**

Some teachers say insulting things to their pupils with a leer in their voices. Some teachers, however, say such things but do not mean them. The former, I think, should not
be teachers, but the latter are tolerable. - Louis, 14

Some researchers suggest that teachers who have been trained to bring about self-awareness in their students understand how it “forms an important part of cognitive work to improve social skills” (Cooper, 2000, p. 131) and “how the involvement of emotions in their teaching role can impinge on and affect the learner” (Hunter-Carsch et al., 2006, p. 38). When self-awareness concerns behaviour problems, researchers “draw attention to the importance of teacher self-awareness but also point to the value of teachers” (Charlton & David, 1994, p. 113) who can “achieve any degree of objectivity in dealing with behavioural problem children” (Woody, 1969, p. 6). Action research has allowed teachers to “examine their own contributions to pupils’ behaviour” (Miller, 2003, p. 36) and consider the idea that behaviour could be linked to the inability to reflect on the accuracy of their performance and adapt their problem-solving strategies (Hartman, 2001). However, participant JB discussed in his interview teaching environments where teachers fail to recognize that their inability to “act adaptively on the basis of that knowledge” (Armstrong, 2000, p. 3) is the goal:

**JB**: He always has an attitude. He would treat me different. Just the way he would talk to me compared to everybody else. Like he didn’t care.

**I**: Why do you get along with some teachers and not with others?

**JB**: Like with Mrs. Sch, she treats me good. It depends. Most think I’m a punk, and treat me like an idiot. They’ll see you walking down the hall or something. They’ll see you cut the corner and come chase you. think you’re doing something.
Teachers often talk about “good” students and “bad” students. Researchers such as Hargreaves et al. (1975) point out that there tends to be more discussion about the “bad” students, probably because it is more exciting or interesting. However, “when teachers hear these discussions and remember them even when they do not teach or know a pupil an important source of pre-information is provided” (p. 163). In his interview, Participant PD considered the possibility that a particular teacher may have behaved toward him with preconceived notions about his behaviour:

*There are certain students that he’d pick and choose and stay there with them. But us? He’s just be like ‘Yeah, go there and just do this and that.’ But Mrs. P was there for everyone.*

This further emphasizes the need to for teachers to look into the process of how pupils come to be labeled with a behaviour difficulty. This will, however, “probably sound like exactly the reverse of what they see as their own interests” (Mongon & Hart, 1989, p. 37), even though, as Kounin (1970) points out that in “both high and low motivation to learn classes, liked teachers are described more frequently as being friendly or more understanding than are disliked teachers; disliked teachers are described more frequently as being harsh, grouchy, and as having many enforced rules” (p. 44).

Perhaps some of the variables that contribute to this attitude could be found in the nature of the profession itself. Kirst (1984) believes that “at the age of 35, most teachers must look ahead to a lifetime in the classroom with little change in duties and little change in income. Furthermore, during this lifetime they will be on public view” (p. 145). Whilst there are a few opportunities to enhance their roles as educators outside the classroom
(department heads, curriculum committees, class advisors), most teachers will look to self-improvement within their teaching to compensate for the lack of advancement. However, “strident emphasis on more testing of teachers and students, more required courses, fewer electives” and “a reduced federal role in guaranteeing equity” (Shor, 1987, p. 11) can all contribute to bad feelings and resentment among staff members and between staff members and administration. According to Kelley (2004), “teachers in different tracks experience the professional climate of their school differently” (p. 199).

The teacher then “would need to develop a highly self-conscious skeptical attitude to staffroom discussion and pre-labeling of certain pupils as deviant, and to the use he makes of the… typing of individual students” (Hargreaves et al., 1975, p. 259). The deviance-insulative (Gardner, 1978) teacher believes that all students really want to learn. However, literature indicates that teachers are more concerned with how to make students follow rules “through the application of a negative consequence” (Witt et al., 2004, p. 427) than investigating the types of lessons that would make interest in disciplinary measures unnecessary. “This is one of the central challenges presented by EBD’s: to overcome what seems to some to be the commonplace approach to negative or deviant behaviour, that is, the desire to make the perpetrator suffer” (Cooper, 2000, p. 11). Mr. F would seem to agree:

*Just like some of those kids (in the study) because we talk about them all the time: kids who won’t sit through a formal lecture class, but can go do really cool stuff on the side, you know, whether it’s art or music. We all think of those kids who don’t fit into that normal, stereotypical ‘Here’s what we want to show on the news’ or ‘Here’s what we want to show at the workshop’ kind of classroom.*
The following teachers identified in the study did comment that the results of the study offered them the opportunity to see their teaching from a different perspective and thus I believe that they were more willing to cooperate and speak more openly about their charge:

Mr. R: You know, this interview helped me to really see things differently, especially hearing it from the kids.

Mr. L: Very cool. It's funny sometimes as a teacher you don't know the effect your teaching style is having on the kids. It's really interesting to see it in writing.

Mr. F: I really didn’t know what students thought of the way I teach.

Mr. Mc: (kidding) Will you write me a recommendation?

OTR-Praise

I think teachers should encourage us instead of giving us a most boring lecture on what we have done wrong. The teacher only wastes his breath. Nobody listens. These lectures are, in my opinion, inclined to make you believe that you cannot go through with what you have set your mind on, i.e. exams. I have myself experienced this. When a teacher praises you for good work you want to carry on with it and do better.
- Rachel, 15

Gunter et al. (1993) suggests that providing students with regular opportunities to respond (OTR) to academic requests and giving students a variety of ways to answer correctly will lead to more correct responses. This in turn allows more chances to praise students for their efforts and hard work. This is especially helpful in classrooms with students labeled with an EBD and who have received modest amounts of positive reinforcement. Though researchers find that, “consistent and appropriate use of teacher praise and increased OTR may serve as an important first step to establish predictable and
positive classroom contexts that promote successful primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention and intervention” (Moore-Partin, 2010, p. 172), teachers of marginalized students rarely praised their students (Sutherland, 2000). Van Acker et al. (1999) point out that teacher praise was more likely to occur randomly and in reference to students' behaviour than to academic accomplishments.

However, though “the combination of rules, praise proved highly effective in reducing inappropriate behaviour” (Miller, 2003, p. 22), research suggests that praise might also affect motivation and confidence which in turn increases the rate of OTR (Sutherland & Wehby, 2001). Researchers also suggest that when praise is employed, “students identified with emotional or behavioural disorders (EBD) on average had more correct responses per minute, an increase in percentage of correct responses and on-task intervals and a decrease in the mean rate of disruptive behaviours” (Hayden et al., 2009, p. 268). As a result, there was “increased academic outcomes, increased task engagement and decreased inappropriate and disruptive behaviour of students with EBD” (Sutherland & Wehby, 2001, p. 117).

**Humour**

*Lessons must be a mixture or a combined effort by the teacher, machine and pupil. Often a teacher will come out with something amusing, and this livens up a dull lesson a lot. Also the unexpected throwing away of a routine in a school helps to make it less of the prison it appears to be for some.* – Nina, 14

Students who have emotional and behaviour difficulties seem to be better behaved and communicate better in the classes of humourous teachers. This gives weight to the idea
that these students seek real relationships (Fovet, 2009) with self-actualized teachers
(Rogers, 1965); relationships that researchers believe foster mutual respect (Donahue,
1994). This bond has often been linked to important outcomes in the educational setting.
They include improved motivation (Minchew & Hopper, 2008), the promotion of
divergent thinking (Dodge & Rossett, 1982), enhanced quality of student-teacher
relationships (Spencer & Boon, 2006), retention improvement (Hill, 1988), attention
gaining strategies (Gorham & Christophel, 1990), and improvement of the classroom
environment (Warnock, 1989). Participant AG recalled positive experiences in her
interview with teachers who she recognized had a sense of humour:

*He makes the subject fun. He makes sure he finds a way to work with the
students. He makes it understanding and he adds humour which is a huge aspect
of the class. Humour is a huge sign of a teacher being down-to-earth.*

Though many researchers believe that the use of humour in the classroom has many
positive effects, most would argue that it enhances learning (Wanzer et. al., 2010) and is
an essential part in good teaching (Check, 1986). Through humour, “it may be possible
to positively affect the social and academic interactions between teachers and students
with EBD” (Sutherland et al., 2002, p. 11).

Glenn (2002) suggests that before the enhancement of any teaching strategies can take
place, a positive environment “in which defenses are lowered and students are better able
to focus and attend to the information being presented” (Garner, 2006, p. 177) must be
provided. A more-relaxed atmosphere achieved through humour can not only reduce
anxiety (Bryant et al., 1980), it can also provide a "cognitive break" (Korobkin, 1988, p.
so that the student will have additional time to process new information (Torok et al., 2004) resulting in a willingness by the student to take on additional information. For example, participant MA noted in her interview that Mr. F is “pretty funny and picks on kids all the time. He was easy to listen to. Some people just have that voice you want to listen to. He likes what he’s doing and you can tell.” Applying this theory to the instructional context would mean “that when students perceive the topic or message as relevant, they should be more motivated to process the information, resulting in greater retention and understanding of the content” (Wanzer et al., 2009, p. 5).

If the humourous message has elements that elevate students’ ability to process information related to the course content or makes the content relevant, then students will be more likely to better process the instructional message and learning will be enhanced. This occurs perhaps because a “humourous outlook” requires students to be flexible and “see every side to every issue” (Mindness, 1971, p. 10), to be spontaneous, and exercise the “ability to leap from one mode of thought to another, to see an instant connection” (Ibid).

Humourous messages, however, can also serve as a distraction. Researchers such as Kuhrik et al. (1997) believe that “there are limits to determining what is funny and what isn't, and the mere inclusion of classroom humour does not automatically guarantee learning will take place, it must not exceed appropriate boundaries” (p. 332). Findings by Frymier, Wanzer, and Wojtaszczyk (2008) suggest that some students find certain types of teacher humour both appropriate and inappropriate, as is hinted in the following interaction:
I: I hear a lot about Mr. F’s sense of humour and how he picks on students.

TL: Yeah, but some kids take offensively.

Researchers such as Wanzer et al. (2010) believe that the source of the humour is a factor in determining whether self-disparaging humour is identified by students as both appropriate and inappropriate. Self-disparaging humour may result in more attention paid to the teacher and “reduce status differentials and increase perceptions of closeness” (p. 8) because it is unexpected. However, if the teacher fails to resolve an incongruity, makes disparaging comments to a particular social circle within the school, is overly cynical, or is overly self-deprecating they can be found to be inappropriate by some students and might distract them from the lesson by reducing the credibility of the teacher.

The literature on humour and teaching is also quite diverse. To pinpoint the origins and effects of humour beyond its entertainment value (putting students at ease) seemed like it would be too subjective to report. However, observation allowed me to see this phenomenon as a participant and in research helped to validate my experiences. As a result, the top five teachers identified in this study did make me laugh, albeit in very different ways.

Humour: Mr. L

When describing Mr. L, the students often referred to his voice: loud, confident, and “gets your attention.” During my observations of Mr. L this was certainly true and he was
quite funny. As Mr. L is not a large-framed man, his voice seemed to be an exaggeration of himself, as if his lessons were being delivered though a megaphone. It would come in bursts and unexpectedly. Watching some of the participants react to it and smile reminded me of how these students react to each other’s own quirks. During my years of teaching alternative students, (students labeled with an EBD who had been excluded from mainstream classes) I noticed that the erratic behaviour of some students was accepted by other students without question. They would smile and say things like “Here he goes again” and “She just does that.” There was something similar to this in Mr. L’s class, almost as if his erratic behaviour was inside information privy only to those who know him well. In that sense, it should be considered that this class perhaps sees itself as a group and in that group there is safety.

Mr. L’s auctioneer-style delivery also had in it a constant reminder of his classroom rules. As he delivered instruction he also reprimanded students with little opportunity for them to talk back. The reader should picture this being delivered in one monotone yell:

Mr. L: X=23, next Sharon please give the answer to Number 6, Shawn pay attention, yes Sharon that is correct!

Students seemed to find this very funny. This could be for several reasons. Shawn (fictional name) was caught sleeping and was reprimanded; because of Mr. L’s delivery, Shawn could not respond; Mr. L was mocking the idea of reprimanding students; or perhaps his reprimand seemed to have no emotion in it, no hard feelings and everyone in class is susceptible to it. The latter also seems to add to the idea that the participants consider Mr. L’s class to be a safe environment:
SD: *I like teachers that have rules, but they don't really care about the other rules. Like, wearing hats in class, or chewing gum or eating in class, or, like, swearing or whatever. I have a teacher, like, if you say ‘crap’ she'll yell at you.*

I: *And the type of teacher you don't prefer, or you don't like is?*

SD: *Umm, strict. Uptight.*

I: *Uh huh. Give me one more word.*

SD: *Un-relatable.*

**Humour: Mr. F**

Mr. F’s type of humour is one that most teachers would consider to be quite risky. When he is using humour to transition into a lesson, his knowledge and love of literature allows him to align it to pop culture in a way that is interesting and immediately relatable. During my observation, Mr. F referred to Hemingway as “over-doing it in the masculinity department, (pause) you know, like me.” I observed him looking like a writer who fell asleep at his desk and woke up late for class; this type of self-deprecating seemed to be the foundation of his humour. In the context of a lesson, Mr. F used this to his advantage, especially when describing characters in stories or authors of literature. Those students who seemed unprepared for class at the very least seemed to be interested in seeing Mr. F teach in hopes perhaps of seeing him poke fun at a required reading or at himself.

*But I don’t make fun of anybody. It’s not useful to make fun of you. I’m not about that at all, and I think everybody gets that. I mean I made a joke about XXXXX out in the hallway. It’s funny because she knows it’s a joke. I can laugh, she can*
laugh or nobody can laugh and it’s not a big deal. I’m not one of those perfect-
people teachers.

Some participants did point out, however, that he would on occasion make inappropriate
comments to students, whilst other teachers identified in the study pointed out that during
parent-teacher conferences Mr. F would often have a long lines of parents (at parent-
teacher conferences) waiting to question his motives. The participants in this study also
noted that though Mr. F did say some inappropriate things (a participant told me that he
often referred to female students who misbehaved in the context of prostitution), students
always had the right to give it back to him without fear of receiving a disciplinary
infraction. According to some participants, this would lead to some students constantly
challenging Mr. F out of context. For example:

I: I hear a lot about his humour and the way he picks on kids. Does he do this in
a way so you know that he's kidding?

TL: Yeah. But some kids did take it offensively.

(Mr. F validates TL’s observation):

I: Have you ever run into a time where a student didn’t understand your humour
and took it the wrong way?

Mr. F: There’s a couple of kids you just know you can’t. The kids have to play it
back. If the kid isn’t in on the joke, then it’s not a joke. I usually get a pretty
good read on it, but not always. Usually you can tell just from the reaction of the
class. You can tell if they’re rolling their eyes of just have their head on the
desks. You can sometimes tell in the moment. It is really nice when I get stories
later. Kids recognize stuff and they’re usually pretty good at coming back and
telling you.
Humour: Mr. Lb

Mr. Lb: There’s funny, joking around. Like I have certain nicknames for kids, and I’ll make fun of them for doing things in school or out of school. Then I know I’m being funny. It has nothing to do with the curriculum. I guess sometimes I don’t like the atmosphere if it’s too serious. So I’ll lighten up the mood by making a joke like that. Sometimes when I’m teaching I’m being funny and I’m actually trying to be funny and it flops or it’s successful. I find myself using jokes like the teacher’s I’ve had.

As mentioned earlier, Mr. Lb would reserve the first part of his class to talk to his students, first to greet them, then to talk about current events. During this time there was no sign of Mr. Lb ever consciously attempting to be funny per se, but he did laugh quite often. In a sort of reverse-storytelling scenario, he began a topic and allowed students to slowly add to it until it became a class discussion. During an observation, Mr. Lb began by talking about the “Winter Carnival” decorations being displayed by a student committee in the hallway outside his room. When Mr. Lb asked, “Did anyone here buy their tickets yet?” students began to raise their hands to explain why they were going or not going to this event. The comments made Mr. Lb laugh:

Student: Mr. Lb, our yearbook costs 80 bucks. Field trip: 30 bucks. Winter Carnival: 20 bucks. Where’s is all this money going? Not to fixing the front steps, that’s for sure.

This led to a discussion about spending and not seeing the results on a school level. Mr. Lb acted as ringleader and audience. It should be noted that during this time he seemed to be watching me observe him as if I might not be taking this part of his class very seriously. This was unnecessary. When he turned the topic of “spending without seeing
results” to current events involving the American war in Afghanistan, I found it to be quite impressive.

Humour: Mr. R

During the summer of my third year at the University of Manchester, I took a friend back with me to the states for a visit. By chance we decided to have lunch at a sandwich shop where Mr. R was eating. By his attire we could see that he was on break from mowing lawns, his summer business. He invited us to join him for lunch. After explaining to him who my friend was and what we were doing, Mr. R immediately broke into a story about the “deadbeats” whose properties he maintains in the summer months. As he told his story, I noticed the expression on my friend’s face and he seemed mesmerized. I noted that my friend described Mr. R like a character that walked out of a Scorsese movie about New York. He also said that it’s been a long time since he’s ever met anyone so naturally funny. I believe that this was Mr. R’s way of making my friend, who had never been to America, feel welcomed. He commented:

I think it makes it real, rather than just be the figurehead or the teacher sitting up front, the guy with the tie. They now realize you’re a real person. You have some real life-experiences outside of education. I think kids can identify with that a little bit. It makes them feel at ease a bit. I don’t know. It makes them more accepting of you as a person rather than just a person they’re disseminating information from.
Humour: Mr. Mc

Of the five teachers interviewed, Mr. Mc was the only one who suggested we conduct the interview in a pub. This suggested to me that this more relaxed atmosphere would provide more freedom to speak candidly. Mr. Mc’s laid-back personality combined with a real sense of confidence, suggested that this interview was no different for him than his role of teacher. Being in this position allowed me to get a better sense of what students like participant AG meant when she said, “I'd walk in and even before class started he (Mr. Mc) might say something that would be funny.” Mr. Mc states:

*Sarcasm and puns, a lot of puns. And they just come along as I talk. And that’s how I gauge my class. I’m really into the English language and if they don’t understand my humour or my puns or my use of the English language, I got a bad class. If they’re laughing, I’ve got a good class.*

Rules and Expectations

*To become interested in a subject the pupil has to enjoy it, and half the enjoyment of lessons is taken away if they are held in an enforced silence. – Ian, 14*

The literature that concerns classroom management in relation to discipline seems to be divided into three categories: school disciplinary policies, instructional strategies, and social maturity. “In the social developmental literature, social competence has been described from a variety of perspectives ranging from the development of individual skills to more general adaptation within a particular setting” (Pianta, 2006, p. 695). Though many researchers agree that teachers have the ability to influence their students’
classroom behaviour through effective lesson planning, most teachers seem to believe that their school’s discipline policy holds more weight than their own classroom rules and instruction:

Glasser (1990) states:

*Kicking disruptive students out of class, keeping them after school for detention, or suspending them may control the immediate situation, but it does not deal with the basic problem: how to get them involved in quality learning. In the quality school, lead-teachers must learn how to handle a disruptive student in a way that is not punitive yet gets the situation under control and, as the same time, opens the student’s mind to the option of beginning to work in class* (p. 135).

Instead of addressing students’ instructional and social needs, researchers such as Eccles, Wigfield, and Schiefele (1998) argue that most schools tend to emphasize teacher control. As a result, there is a conflict between adolescents’ efforts to gain independence and the schools’ efforts to control. However, “factory model schools are being replaced in some districts by new concepts of schooling that make students active participants in their own learning” (Howe, 1993, p. 7). In his interview, PD discussed a positive learning environment that offered opportunities for student involvement in decision-making and self-management:

*PD: Well...when you go into that room...ah...Mr. A, he usually...he doesn't say anything to you. He just sit’s down. He does his job. He does what he's told...and you can just sit in there and you can get a lot done if you think about it because it’s so quiet in there. You can’t talk to anybody. You sit in a booth. It’s almost like prison so you feel as if you have to work.*
I: Do you think if people, students were assigned once a week to go into a place like that, like ISS where no one was going to bother them that their grades would go up?

PD: As long as the rules stay the same.

I: That's some valuable advice. ISS is supposed to be a negative place, but a lot of kids go down there and they like it because they get their own sort of breathing space.

PD: You don’t have teachers around you telling you what to do and I don’t know, it’s just a lot better.

Lipsitz (1990) concurs that a good instructional program that allows students to become part of its planning reduces discipline problems. If students’ interests and needs are considered when instruction is planned, engagement in learning activities is more likely and misbehaviour is less likely to occur. This type of planning has been shown to be related to classroom improvement and there is “a convincing body of evidence demonstrating that modifying curriculum can result in improved behaviour” (Robinson & Griesemer, 2006, p. 798). A study conducted by McPartland and McDill (1977) that analysed the responses of over 3,000 secondary school students in the United States to determine the relationship between delinquency and student involvement in rule-making showed that students involved in this process displayed fewer delinquent acts.

Students who take part in the construction of classroom rules, the physical aspects of the classroom, and lesson planning tend to have high expectations for academic learning and pursue goals to learn for internalized reasons (Wentzel, 2006). Students who “model a sense of importance or enjoyment with regard to task engagement are likely to influence
their peers to do the same” (Elliot & Dweck, 2005, p. 288). If classroom tasks are structured so that the content is related to their interests, learners will more than likely be motivated to achieve classroom objectives whilst at the same time, working to achieve their own personal goals.

Wiener (1972) states:

> Furthermore, only the establishment of long-term goals can give significance to what would otherwise be trivial short-term rewards and penalties. That is, it is one matter to give an award for a superior essay or require extra study time to master an arithmetic problem with no further aims in sight. It is another matter altogether to place such limited aims in the perspective of the longer term purposes of becoming an English teacher, draftsman, effective citizen, or father—and this kind of larger, more distant goal may be necessary for the more thoughtful or serious-minded students and teachers (p. 37).

In this manner, effective lesson planning has a social context and the plans are believed to play an integral role in providing opportunities for the development of social competencies. Bronfenbrenner (1989) argues “that competence can only be understood in terms of context-specific effectiveness, being a product of personal attributes such as goals, values, self-regulatory skills, and cognitive abilities, and of ways in which these attributes contribute to meeting situational requirements and demands” (p. 187). Perhaps this is why participant BB recognized that Mr. Mc’s “class is noisy and people are talking, but you can look up at the board and think, ‘Aw, that’s what we’re doing today.’”
When adolescents are not given opportunities to belong through positive and constructive ways however, they may develop what Dreikurs (1968) calls “mistaken goals” – attention getting, power, revenge, and withdrawal. Students who are pursuing these goals tend to establish a pattern of behaviour that prefers impulsive action over moral values (Nucci, 2006) and cause many of the serious problems that teachers encounter. This perhaps implies that students who are not given the opportunity to experience classrooms with a variety of students, who model positive behaviour through the pursuit of personal goals, have a better chance of being consistently exposed to students with negative feelings about school. In this light, schools that practice tracking probably would seem to have a higher population of students who have been labeled having a behaviour difficulty. I noted in my interview with MG that familiar classmates brought about old feelings and defense mechanisms:

Mrs. R? Oh my God, I did not like her at all. I had her last year and we fought and, I dunno, we didn’t have a good relationship at all. She was very strict and we had a class that was kind of out of hand anyway. We had a few people, JB and DK again, so it wasn’t a good class. She was always yelling at us. I flipped out on her once because nobody yells at me while I’m in school. And when she yelled at me ‘cause I asked a question, I was like, “Well, I didn’t do anything. Just because you’re in a bad mood doesn’t mean you flip out. You’re a teacher, be professional.” And she got even more mad. I was like...(laughs) don’t go there.

There is research that points to links between the student-teacher relationships, classroom structure, and student misbehaviour. Brophy (2004) summarized the research on qualities of teaching showing that adolescent’s developmental outcomes are improved when they are exposed to teacher-student interactions that are characterized by emotional support and sensitivity in combination with structure, modeling, and direct instruction
According to Shockley and Sevier (1991), the student-teacher relationship is the most significant variable in behavioural issues for adolescents. By considering the needs of the students when planning lessons and creating classroom rules, teachers can reduce inappropriate behaviour (Pianta, 2006). In her interview, participant AF noted that Mr. R “can joke around when he talks, but one time he said there’s a distance between me and you.”

Purkey and Novak (1984) state:

_Students who are consistently treated with dignity and respect are less likely to cause problems in the classroom. Conversely, students who think teachers are out to embarrass them and that the system is geared to convince them that they are worthless, unable, and irresponsible will find ways to rebel, disrupt, and seek revenge - as humans have always done in their discontent and resentment_ (p. 51).

Though many teachers do enforce rules consistently, some researchers question whether too many rules are, in a sense, disrespectful: “More to the point is the implication that deviance will be reduced if the number or rules is reduced, and it may be well that is some schools some of the rules could be abolished without any serious consequences” (Hargreaves, Hestor, & Mellor, 1975, p. 256). _Mr. R and Mr. L would seem to agree:_

_Mr. R: I just tell them basically that my rules are mutual respect whether it’s in school, out of school whatever the case. It’s how I treat people and how I expect to be treated. And that seems to disarm any kids that come in with a preconceived attitude. ‘Cause they’ve run into teachers who have preconceived notions about them, their behaviour, their actions and I don’t think that’s fair in either case._
Mr. L: They care about survival academically speaking, and for most of the lower-level or problem students their academic survival is pretty much determined by whether or not they can get along with the teacher. Personality to them is a key and often motivating factor in their learning process. If the teacher is too strict with the rules or prejudges them unfairly they are more likely to be rebellious and non-motivated. If the teacher gives them a fair chance and an occasional break (something these kids very seldom get) then they tend to be more responsive to what the teacher has to teach, and if (like me in many cases) the teacher actually makes it fun to come to class, then these kids actually attend class and start to learn.

Physical Environment

Our schools have become unfriendly, boring slums; our ‘teachers’ uninterested adults fighting a losing battle... This cannot be the fault of the pupils... It is the conditions in schools today that help greatly to create the impression that we are ‘untidy, rude and lazy.’ Nobody can be greatly inspired (and this is speaking from personal experience) by ... the boring, antique, blackboard-and-book methods. – Richard, 17

Research shows that the colour (Bishop, 1971), cleanliness (Bettenhausen, 1998), classroom layout (Shores, Gunter, & Jack, 1993), availability to resources (Stewart & Evans, 1997), lighting (Jones, 1987), acoustics and noise reduction (Cohen et al., 1986) and room for freedom of movement (MacAulay, 1990) can improve student academic and behavioural outcomes. Unfortunately, the “institutional blandness” (Warner & Myers, 2010, p. 30) of most schools is not conducive to creativity and concentration: “The cell-like self-contained classroom works to the detriment of both the teacher and the student in that it does not provide an atmosphere conducive to self-expression and authentic interaction” (Bishop, 1971, p. 175).
Guardino and Fullerton (2010) suggest that the physical aspects of the classroom can affect behaviour as well as generate additional motivation. Windows that allow adequate daylight and an inspiring structural design “that invokes a sense of pride” (Eley, 2006, p. 61) help to command respect and authority in the classroom whilst at the same time provide comfort: “A small success is more likely than a prolonged hope to produce the desired movement in the classroom. It is more likely to nudge the recalcitrant student into effective action” (Wiener, 1972, p. 38). The design of the classroom also makes best use of the teacher’s ability to move about to keep students on task and reduce inappropriate behaviour (Anguiano, 2001). Jones (1987) suggests that room arrangement and seating arrangement are “the two most important topics when considering the physical aspects of the classroom and behaviour” (p. 56). Participant MG would seem to agree:

*Well, the class is set up…the desks are in a circle. Everybody’s in one big discussion. I find that I like working in groups instead of working on my own at a single desk in rows. We’re all facing each other; we’re all talking about one thing. It’s fun ‘cause everybody’s talking with everybody, nobody has, like, their little groups they’re sitting with and stuff.*

Other researchers agree that seating arrangement has also been shown to influence the educational dealings (Wannarka & Ruhl, 2008) in behaviour and achievement (Pace & Price, 2005). For example, Moore and Glynn (1984) found the number of questions received from the teacher is directly associated with where the students sit, whilst Granstrom (1996) found that students’ social interaction is impacted by where they are located in the classroom: “The physical arrangement of the room, placing students in a small circle or in small groups, reinforces students’ self-image as co-learners and co-
teachers” (Wallerstein, 1987, p. 41). Musgrave (1975) suggests that teachers “use a variety of instructional formations so that each student may experience, at least part of the time, a learning situation that best suits his particular learning style” (p. 47).

I acknowledge that “organization” can mean two things to the participants: order and cleanliness of the classroom and teacher preparation. The latter has been previously discussed in terms of variety and the lessons that provide opportunities for personal connection. Examining the physical aspects of classrooms of the teachers identified in this study reveals very different settings. Mr. L and Mr. Mc have classrooms that are well-decorated, vibrant, and inviting. However, Mr. Mc’s room is designed to enhance his lessons with marine-based models and educational posters, whilst Mr. L’s room displays student artwork that is not related to his subject.

Mr. R and Mr. Lb, both social studies teachers, keep their rooms clean, but the general decay of the building itself has prevented them from decorating their rooms appropriately. As a result, there are rotten ceiling tiles and water stains on the walls due to water leakage. Both Mr. Lb and Mr. R cite this as the primary reason why the walls in their rooms are beige and barren. Mr. F, on the other hand, keeps his room bookishly unorganized with stacks of books and papers teetering and growing over shelves and bookcases.

What is interesting about these classrooms is that on the surface, it would seem that three of the five teachers in this study either refuse to decorate their rooms or simply do not believe it to be important. When Mr. R was asked about his room in this context, he shared a common story:
Mr. R: They’re being told they’re not valued. People responsible for their education allow there to be mold stains and water entering the building whilst kids are in session and puddles on the floor. They (the students) know it’s a commentary on their environment that they’re always expected to always do with less. The kids know that. And I think it affects them and helps breed some negativity... But I’d be very careful about what I put up (in my classroom) and have to really take a look at it to make sure it was very neutral, not make any political statements. Unfortunately, there’s an environment now that, um... you have to play everything very safe as an educator. There’s an element of unpredictability with our administration. So people don’t take chances to do things, it’s kind of just status quo. The safest thing to do is to not do anything.

Mr. F seems to have similar reservations:

Mr. F: I had a split-level ‘Farside’ picture of a man walking into heaven and it said ‘Here’s your harp,’ and at the bottom there was a man walking into hell and it said ‘Here’s your accordion.’ I was asked to remove it by the principal because he said it might be too offensive.

Though students do seem to appreciate the rooms of Mr. L and Mr. Mc for the way they are presented, they were not mentioned by the participants as being an addition to the variables that comprise the positive aspects of their profiles. The same could also be said for the classrooms of the remaining teachers identified in this study. This could be because of the overall décor and ambiance of School #1. With most classrooms in disrepair (rotted ceiling tiles, mismatched and re-welded desks and chairs, water stains and broken chalkboards), the classrooms of Mr. Lb, Mr. R and Mr. F do not really stand out as being unorganized. Yet all of the teachers have been told by the administration, either verbally or in writing, that their classrooms must be better organized and cleaned.
Summary

Using a triangulation of school tours, interviews, and observations to give shape to the voices of students labeled with an EBD, the purpose of this chapter was to give strength to the proposed methodology through literature that questions and supports teacher behaviour, teaching style, and school and classroom environments. In doing so, a wide range of literature was condensed (Appendix J, p. 391) so the school under scrutiny would have a better sense of the daily school experiences of their challenging students and a clear path to lead to school improvement for the students. Using members of the teaching staff who were identified as positive influences, also helped to spotlight and shape recommendations that would work under conditions that might be unknown to me and might not be accepted by the teaching staff and administration in School #1. A compilation of short-term instructional goals and long-term faculty development extracted from this chapter can be found in in the next chapter. The following table (Table 12) shows the results for School # 2 and how differences in the subcategory count will affect the direction of the literature specific to that school.
Table 12: Subcategory Comparison Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Behaviour</th>
<th>Pers. Connection</th>
<th>Confident</th>
<th>Humour</th>
<th>Empathy</th>
<th>Laid Back</th>
<th>Respect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School #2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School #1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Style</th>
<th>Encouragement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledgeable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pace</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hands On</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Comfortable</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>2</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Predictable</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperative</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rules/Expectation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average score of the subcategories identified during participant interviews in School #2 were: personal connection, variety, cooperative, organization, hands on. Though there are some similarities between both schools, the results of the methodology indicated that further research should take different paths, especially in areas of teaching style, as opposed to teacher behaviour. The sample size however did not show enough common places across six interviews; therefore, I believe that a bigger sample size is needed, especially in larger schools.

Table 12 represents how the literature would be utilized based on the findings in School #2. Where the literature in School #1 focuses primarily on categories in teaching behaviour and teaching style and subcategories in personal connection, humor, curriculum, and rules/expectations, School #2 shows some differences. When reviewing literature for School #2, I would focus more on the positive aspects of curriculum, content knowledge, and respect (though not necessarily in that order) than I would on...
rules/expectations and labeling/tracking. This demonstrates that the methodology produces results that identify areas of success as well as direction for improvement that are unique to each school.

This is also true of the pilot study school. The literature review would likely emphasize choice and variety than it would personal connection and humor. Further research into the positive aspects of School #2 and the pilot study school might show that negative behaviour is reduced and personal connections are made through effective lesson planning. Observations in participant-identified teaching areas could reveal sage advice and direction for improvement in other areas of the school. However, many variables including researcher experience, culture differences (United Kingdom and United States), age (11-14 in the pilot study and 14-18 in the main study), and sample size could have affected the category and subcategory count. With this in mind, I found that these variables as well as the cultural aspects of the school should also be considered at the start of the study.

In this chapter I used the subcategories generated from participant interviews and teacher observations to narrow a wide range of literature about EBD students. In the next chapter I used this literature and research to recommend improvements.
Chapter 7: Discussion

Introduction

In this chapter I summarize each category of literature that was reported in the previous chapter. I then use this condensed information to suggest strategies for improving the academic and social lives of students labeled with an EBD in School #1. These are reported in two sets: The first set of data produced practical advice for teachers at School #1, such as: year-long and daily syllabi, seating arrangement, independent and collaborative lesson planning, student-generated classroom rules, teacher praise, and improving classroom aesthetics. The second set of data is aimed more at teacher and administrative behaviour in School #1, such as: the use of humor in the classroom, empathy, student and teacher relationships, and student respect.

In the following section, Paths to Reform, I report my recommendations using the literature identified by the participants and teachers in School #1. To remind the reader of how the participants helped to identify and organize the literature, each category will begin with an excerpt from a participant interview. The excerpt will then be followed by a summary of the literature reported in the previous chapter (and in the same order) and end with one or more of the following: instructional considerations (first set of data), goals and principles and faculty development (second set of data). In the section that follows Improving the Study, I re-examine the way I arrived at these recommendations and consider further improvements to the research design by thinking about School #1’s culture of management, culture of teachers, and culture of students.
Paths to Reform

Failure

TL: I hated math when I went into her classroom, and I had her for two years. I failed my freshman year, because I absolutely did not like the teacher. Because she treated us all like we were little kids. And, I don't like it when I am treated that way.

Many researchers argue that behaviour problems result from educational failure. These problems are exacerbated when exclusionary measures that intend to address social and academic shortcomings isolate students and contribute to their feelings of frustration. As these students mature in this type of environment and submit to disparaging labels, they will find it difficult to remove themselves from feelings of low self-perception and ability. As a result, behaviour problems arise when the student attempts to maintain self-image by displaying self-protective behaviour. These behaviours are escalated when there is a discrepancy between their goals and their education and when their peers, who have not been placed in exclusionary environments, begin to prepare for college or move into careers after high school. Several participants in the study talked about success and failure in terms of effort and responsibility and improvement of self-esteem through the recovery of basic skills.

I began with failure as a foundation for this type of research, as is seems to be the foundation for negative behaviour and low self-esteem in School #1. The following sections will demonstrate how my experiences as a teacher of marginalized students, the subcategories generated through analyzing participant interviews, and teacher observations and interviews relate to research. Each section will conclude with suggested paths for reform and improvement for School #1. These sections are literacy, curriculum
Literacy

MA: Uh, it all depends on the class if we’re being loud he makes us read by ourselves. But we have weekly tests at the end of the week, vocabulary.

I: So, do you get to choose the things that you’re reading sometimes, or does he just say read this or...

MA: We get to choose, like we had to. We had a book report that’s due today.

Several researchers agree that there is a strong correlation between school failure and language acquisition. There is also a wide range of research on the relationship between language deficits and inappropriate classroom behaviour. Because of these associations, reading instruction should be examined as an intervention for some students who tend to fail and drop out of school. However, there is a tendency to enroll students in programs designed to address these issues but only acknowledge the improvement of negative behaviour and credit recovery. However, as students get older and the correlation between language difficulty and behavioural difficulties strengthens, negative behaviour and emotions can result from embarrassment and loneliness. Though these students would have to work harder than their peers, these programs should aim to build on a student’s prior knowledge in order to understand new information and encourage them to monitor their own learning behaviour.
Goals and Principles

• Short term: A year-long intervention program for students in ENG 100 who are reading below the 4th grade level,
• Long term: Redress all facets of the problem through partnerships, interrelated analyses, prioritizing, adaptive curricula, trained staff, and more literacy specialists,
• Capitalize on faculty concerns and their strengths,
• Collect baseline data,
• Document instructional strategies that work,
• Provide each learner with instructional goals,
• Explore having more collaboration with local universities.

Instructional Considerations

• Better use of technology, desktop publishing, assessment, blogs for online publishing, and student portfolios,
• Switch from textbook instruction to independent projects, oral-life histories, magazine production, and access to newspapers and magazines,
• Improve learning environments with tables and better lighting.

Faculty Development

• Focus on content skills, school culture, teacher perceptions of low-level students, alternative assessments that document student work, modeling, off campus visits, guest speakers, short institutes, graduate credit courses, and retreats with middle school/elementary teachers who have expertise in literacy and curriculum delivery.

Curriculum Delivery

BW: Yeah. I always liked English class, but with Mr. F it was kind of fun. We didn't really always do book work and we didn't always really do certain things like that. We did hands-on projects and stuff like that.

Due to the lack of structure in most segregated learning environments, teachers are seldom able to provide instruction that address gaps in basic knowledge, that encourage collaborative behaviour, and advance the skills needed to self-regulate their academic and
social behaviours. When students are taught these self-regulating and self-monitoring strategies, researchers agree that the motivation to accelerate learning occurs. However, because school leaders tend to believe that students labeled as low-leveled learners should use low-leveled texts, students in segregated programs tend to learn less and at a slower rate than their peers. As a result, they rarely develop the skills to think critically. Researchers argue that providing students with a variety of materials in independent and cooperative learning scenarios promotes critical thinking, increases self-esteem and positive behaviour.

The teachers identified in the study do not consider themselves to be experts in curriculum development. However, the participants consider their classes interesting, entertaining, well paced, and meaningful. Though there seems to be a lack of planning in many of the classes, most of these teachers succeed when they rely upon their instinct and perhaps basic professional skills/training. This instinct, rooted in cooperative learning, empathy, and making personal connections, resembles what most researchers consider to be good teaching, especially for those students who find the academic and social aspects of school a challenge. However, because of a lack of confidence outside the classroom, Mr. L, Mr. R, Mr. Mc, Mr. Lb, and Mr. F might find themselves at a loss for words if they were asked to communicate their best practices to their colleagues. However, there are some obvious and strong features about their teaching that can easily be transferred:

**Instructional Considerations**

- Predictable weekly schedules,
- Lessons that are appropriately sequenced,
- Lessons that include time for discussion/review,
- Daily syllabus displayed and followed,
• Alternative seating arrangements, preferably in a circle,
• A variety of assessment tools.

Though they were not identified by the participants in the study (due perhaps to tracked students only seeing a certain group of teachers), there are other teachers in School #1 who are experts in curriculum development and who are also passionate about school equity. These teachers who are involved in curriculum development are also part of organizations concerned with the social and academic progress of students. Through various experiences, these teachers believe that immediate positive intervention based on classroom observations and records will affect the academic and social progress of students at School #1. The rationale for identifying students is not to solely influence academic placement nor to promote behavioural intervention, but to express concern to parents informally, and to access school resources for recommendations. These resources include (but are not limited to) special education, literacy specialists, substance abuse counselors, etc.

Goals and Principles

• Higher expectations for lower-tracked students especially in areas of problem-solving and high ordered thinking that could lead to a reduction in course leveling,
• Collaboration between those teachers identified as positive influence in the school experiences of disengaged students, curriculum coordinators, and policy makers,
• More opportunities for professional observation and feedback apart from those obtained from administrative observations,
• More opportunities for disengaged students to take part in a common curriculum that varies across content areas and that is aligned with the school’s mission statement,
• More teacher-training days devoted to the exploration of current research best practices for teachers, especially in cooperative and independent learning.
Independent Learning

PD: Well...when you go into that room...ah...Mr. A, he usually...he doesn't say anything to you. He just sits down. He does his job. You can just sit in there and you can get a lot of work done if you think about it because it's so quiet in there. You can't talk to anybody. You sit in a booth.

Having students establish independent learning strategies increases their locus of control and helps to establish resilience strategies that could offset defensive coping skills. An important feature of this type of strategy is that it explains to the student not only what he will learn, but also why it is important to do so. In addition, these strategies utilize a combination of activities that concentrates on subject areas using an ongoing adjustments and modifications. Therefore, for teachers to be successful using independent learning strategies, they should have a wide repertoire of teaching methods.

Instructional Considerations

- Give students regular opportunities to make choices (Jolivette, Sitchter, & McCormick, 2002),
- Set learning goals that encourage students to self-evaluate (Pape, 2010),
- Encourage students to select appropriate authentic texts (O’Donnell & Wood, 2004),
- Involve learners in lesson planning (Schwartz & Cramer, 1989),
- Encourage students plan and implement appropriate working environments (Stairs & Burgos, 2010),
- Encourage learners to keep learner diaries (Hirano, 2009),
- Build reflection into activities (Easley, 2006).
Cooperative Learning

MG: Well, the class is set up...the desks are in a circle. Everybody’s in one big discussion. I find that I like working in groups besides working on my own at a single desk in rows. We’re all facing each other, we’re all talking about the book that we’re working on, we’re all talking about one thing. It’s fun ’cause everybody’s talking with everybody, nobody has, like, their little groups they’re sitting with and stuff.

Like independent learning, cooperative learning strategies improve self-esteem through self-regulation by teaching how to learn. Through peer interaction and feedback, students are given the opportunity to construct and implement shared knowledge whilst knowing that the group cannot succeed unless each member fully contributes. Working under these conditions allows students to model different types of behaviours whilst at the same time acknowledging their own strengths as well as areas that need improvement. Though some researchers agree that cooperative strategies can encourage some students to take passive roles within the group, studies in this area show improvements in basic skills when teachers incorporate them into daily lesson planning.

Though it is clear that several students appreciate and value the idea of whole classes working as a team, there was little evidence of any collaborative lessons plans in the classrooms of the teachers I observed. This is not to say that these teachers oppose formal collaborative efforts. On the contrary, I argue that these teachers would be more inclined to use them if they were given opportunities to examine the findings of experts in this field. Researchers such as Slavin (1991), Johnson & Johnson (2001), Sego (1991), and Kagan (2001) offer practical advice for teachers who are interested in exploring these types of lessons, but are somewhat skeptical of their value.
Instructional Considerations

- Experiment with class activities that enhance student satisfaction with their learning experience: *three-step interview, team pair solo, circle the sage*, etc. (Kagan, 2001),
- Promote positive interdependence: each group member has a unique contribution to make to the joint effort because of his or her resources and/or role and task responsibilities (Brewer & Klein, 2006),
- Promote student self-esteem: group members discuss how well they are achieving their goals and maintaining effective working relationships (Patrick, 1994),
- Develop students' social skills: leadership, decision-making, trust-building, communication, conflict-management skills (Abbott & McKnight, 2010),
- Group accountability: observe each group and recording the frequency with which each member-contributes to the group's work (Wang, 2009).

Faculty Development

- Determine who in *School #1* is currently employing collaborative or independent lesson plans;
- Allow these teachers to present these lessons during teacher-training days with time for staff members to ask questions;
- Demonstrate how a typical lesson in *School #1* could be transformed into a collaborative or independent lesson, using in house experts and research as a guide;
- Examine state standards to determine collaborative or independent learning objectives;
- Find teacher volunteers who are willing to incorporate these types of planning in their classrooms and collect baseline data on their progress and problems;
- Analyse this data and note whether changes in participation, motivation, and behaviour have occurred. Present this data to the staff at a later date.

Tracking

*JB(2):* He was my chemistry teacher this year and I had to get out of his class. ‘Cause I was in a smart, higher-levelled class than I should have been and they wouldn’t take me out ‘cause they thought I was smart enough for it. And all the kids around me, they knew what they were doing and everything and I had a hard time with it. So he kind of
pushed me back in the corner and helped the rest of them 'cause they knew what was going on. And he got off track a lot.

Though tracking aims to place students in appropriate classes by ability, many researchers argue that tracking leads to disparity in schools. Tracking, they argue, tends to place students in the lowest tracks based on race, class, and inappropriate behaviour where they will have fewer opportunities to engage in critical thinking and model different types of appropriate behaviour. Under these conditions, researchers argue that these students will learn more from the negative aspects of their environment than they will from the low-ability lessons provided to them. Consequently, they will either gain deviant behaviours or exacerbate existing ones. As teachers and management begin to focus more on these behaviours through a perceived and often misdiagnosed pathology, they will focus less on these learning conditions as the cause of negative behaviour. Quite often, this trend will follow these students through most of their academic careers.

Whilst the teachers identified in the study are not opposed to tracking, they are also not opposed to teaching a variety of students of differing abilities within the same class. Most teachers at School #1 agree that a strong dependence of tracking can result in a lack of post-secondary opportunities for lower-tracked students. Though there are some teachers who would support de-tracking simply because they consider it to be unjust, little attention has been given to the practical advantages of a heterogeneous school. When this concerns students labeled with an EBD, de-tracking will:
Goals and Principles

- Expose students to a variety of teachers who are experts in their content areas and teaching styles,
- Expose students to a variety of learning and diverse perspectives,
- Reduce class size,
- Provide opportunities for more personalized learning,
- Develop and implement consistent school-wide social and academic expectations.

Faculty Development

- Explore the testimonials and processes by which successful schools have de-tracked and invite guest speakers,
- Spotlight and observe teachers who already teach a variety of abilities within the same class successfully, especially those identified by the participants in this study,
- Invite experts from local universities to guide teachers and administration through the de-tracking process.

Student and Teacher Relationships

MG: Um, I’ve had her since freshman year, I’ve had her every year and she’s helped me through a lot. I used to tell her what’s been going on and she used to help me. She went down to guidance a few times with me. She knows my entire story.

It is common for the teachers of marginalized students to attempt to make personal relationships with their students as motivation for learning and appropriate behaviour. Experienced teachers and researchers argue that the foundation for student/teacher relationships will be more effective if they are rooted in instruction. Effective lesson planning that incorporates a variety of strategies will provide opportunities for the improvement of social and academic skills. Trust and mutual respect are more likely to be borne out of the teacher’s want of the student to succeed academically than they are
from teacher who is confused about their charge or who simply bends the rules to gain acceptance. Students in the study seemed to be aware of this difference.

Though it is apparent that the participants in the study do feel strong connections with certain teachers, most of them do not feel socially or academically accepted by other teachers and the overall school population. This has much to do with course leveling and a lack of exposure to students and teachers with a variety of interests. As a result, most of the participants in the study have been classmates since a very early age and have become accustomed to specific types of learning scenarios, personalities, and behaviours. These students, some who spend most of their day excluded to certain parts of the building, are often unaware of extra-curricular activities such as homecoming events, dances, sporting events, and clubs. Though classes like *Jobs for Maine’s Graduates* (a course designed to introduce employability skills) do offer opportunities to job shadow and participate in group-building field trips, they are still only planned and implemented within the boundaries of their exclusion.

Whilst some teachers like *Mr. L* and participant *RD* have suggested ideas to the administration for school-recognized clubs (guitar club, break dancing club), *School #1* has declined to recognize them officially due to safety reasons, and therefore denied funding opportunities. I did notice that some school-wide extra-curricular activities were made known to all students through the use of daily announcements, but most of the participants claim that whilst these events are open to all students, they have not been made to feel welcomed.
In an attempt to remedy this problem, the principal initiated a once-a-week class called *Advisory*. Arranged by grade-level and in alphabetical order, it is a year-long course designed to allow students to meet new teachers to discuss important topics such as course selection, college entrance processes, financial aid for college, etc. Unfortunately, because of large families in the community who share a common surname, students seemed to be back in classes with students already familiar to them. Some staff members also complained that this was only an additional course to plan without compensation. They also noted that they would enjoy planning extra-curricular activities for all students; however, most of their time after school is reserved for meetings planned by administration.

**Goals and Principles**

- Could the time allotted for *Advisory* instead be used to plan extra-curricular activities? Could all teachers plan or co-plan an activity of their own interest and allow students the freedom to attend the activity of their choice?
- Alleviate after school meeting time so that staff will have time to meet with students,
- Allow students to create clubs and activities through a formal process designed by school administration,
- Offer incentives to staff members who design, implement, and advise clubs or activities,
- Institute a program board composed of a variety of students who plan guest speakers and concerts and who are in charge of fund-raising for such events,
- Offer incentives for teachers who attend events, especially those teachers who teach marginalized students who can encourage their students to attend through their own incentives,
- Offer credits for students clubs that have instructional goals,
- Involve parents and community members in the planning of extra-curricular activities.
Empathy

*AG:* It almost seemed like he tried too hard to have a positive attitude. His smile seemed fake in the class, and some of the subject matter – he was really serious about it – he didn't really try to have fun with the class. And, another thing that bugged me, personally, he could never be wrong. It was hard to learn in that class, too.

Marginalized students, especially those who have been segregated from their peers will gradually lose the monitoring abilities that are linked to academic and behavioural self-concepts. To give students opportunities to construct or rebuild these abilities, several techniques that tend to be associated with psychotherapy can also be augmented and incorporated by teachers in the classroom. Using the *person-centered approach,* teachers communicate to their students that they are valued despite their personal backgrounds and academic histories. Another strategy *unconditional positive regard* that is used by therapists (but can also be used by teachers) aims to use students’ existing knowledge and experiences to solve current stress and setback issues. So that the teacher can encourage students to listen to themselves in times of distress, communicating to them in a real, non-expert, or congruent way, helps students to become more aware of how they process thoughts and emotions. Researchers also find that appropriate use of teacher *praise* that leads to increased opportunities to respond affects confidence and motivation that helps to establish a foundation for academic self-awareness: discovering what they know well and what is left to learn.

Four of the top five teachers identified in the study were born and raised in the town where they teach. This was made known to me by *Mr. R* after his interview when I mentioned I was looking for common traits across the top five teachers. Whilst all of
these teachers do practice various forms of empathy in their classes (unconditional positive regard, praise, congruence), it should be considered that knowledge about the town (the difference in socio-economic locations, local entertainment, and employment opportunities) and knowledge about the students’ heritage (French Canadian/Irish) also help students to feel “safe” and “comfortable”. When I examined this further, it was also made known to me that most of the decisions about curriculum, rules/expectations, assessment and the physical aspects of School #1, were made by faculty members (guidance counselors, department heads, administration) who have limited knowledge about the school’s community. Though this is not necessarily a negative phenomenon, it is worth further investigation.

**Faculty Development**

- The teachers identified in the study (as well as members of their classes) should keep a journal about their experiences to present mid-semester during faculty development days,
- Encourage staff to talk about (and utilize) their own interests and goals in their classes,
- Allow other staff members to make informal observations in the classes of teachers identified in the study or other teachers who are considered positive role models,
- Consult staff members identified in the study who have strong community ties regarding curriculum and school-wide reform decisions.

**Humour**

*AF: That makes me feel welcome into his class and don't make me...and...everyone's like...like laughing, cause he's so...he's funny too and he can joke around.*
Students who seek relationships with adults often find success socially and academically with teachers who incorporate humour in their teaching. Apart from the entertainment value of humour, researchers agree that its use in the classroom creates a positive and relaxed environment that challenges some students to think critically on several different levels, that helps some to better process information, and encourages others with positive reinforcement. Though it can serve as a distraction for some students, for most it establishes a personal connection that reduces anxiety and gives opportunity to see their teachers more as a part of the learning process and less of an authoritarian. As a result, some researchers agree this reduces inappropriate behaviour.

At first, I found humour to be difficult category to recommend instructional remedies, professional developmental paths, and considerations for research. Obviously, it would be difficult to suggest ways teachers could become more humourous if it were not already part of their personality. Similar to this is trying to use students’ advice and suggest ways teachers could be friendlier in their classrooms. By looking closer at the word humour however and by taking into account the different ways teachers identified in the study were labeled as funny, I was able to detach myself from the literal definition of the term and examine the participants’ varied usage. Certainly, these teachers did have elements of classic types of humour in their lessons: Mr. F’s hyperbole, Mr. R’s storytelling, Mr. L’s exaggerated personality, Mr. Mc’s puns and creative use of language, and Mr. Lb’s observational commentaries.

**Instructional Considerations**

It is clear however that despite these funny additions to their lessons, at the heart of their planning is dialogue. The term humour, then, could be better understood as humour me, or listen to me. This became more evident to me through observation. Though it would
seem like these teachers were entertaining students in hopes of keeping them behaved, I observed these as conversational exchanges where students were a part of the act. In this way, students began to speak comfortably about the topic at hand, whether it was a cynical observation of the decaying conditions of the school, teasing the pompous qualities of a famous poet, or exaggerating the school’s rules. These teachers would skillfully steer the dialogue to the lesson and the students seem to feel at ease transitioning this way using this conversational consistently. I observed students in Mr. Lb’s class who were confused about a subject feel at ease when asking for clarification.

Faculty Development
I argue that students apply the term *humour* to this type of dialogue simply because it is close to the same positive feelings they experience when they are learning something new outside of school like learning to parallel park, operating a cash register, cooking a meal, hitting a homerun, etc. Therefore, the classes of Mr. Lb and Mr. R would be an appropriate place to examine dialogue as an important element of lesson planning simply because they consistently build dialogue into their lessons. This would help School #1 redefine *humour* and *funny* and perhaps inspire teachers, especially those who are reluctant to use conversation during class time, to examine how student participation can accelerate the grasping of a concept, strengthen student/teacher relationships, and improve behaviour through appropriate rules and expectations.

Rules and Expectations

**BW:** He's just really nice, like, and really polite and he just makes you feel comfortable. Like, he's not always strict, but when he has to be he is, and he tells you what you have to do. If you don't do it, then he'll get on you about it.

In order for students to gain independence, researchers agree that they should be part of the rule-making process. Research shows that this type of student involvement with classroom rules, as well as curriculum modification, is related to improved classroom
behaviour and students reaching academic objectives. These objectives help students to establish personal goals, maintain or establish self-regulatory skills, and also help to maintain the mutual trust and respect needed in effective student/teacher relationships.

Several participants in the study identified a clear and consistent set of rules and expectations as a strength in the classes of teachers they consider to be a positive influence. It seems that most of their student infractions occur outside the classroom, in hallways, in the parking lot, and especially in the cafeteria. Although there are consistent rules across the classrooms of the five teachers identified in the study (no hats, cell phones, or talking during lessons, etc.), other teachers in School #1 manage classes that have a more strict set of rules and consequences for breaking them (for example, a detention for backpacks not being put under desks during a lesson). This is often confusing for students who must remember conflicting sets of rules under different conditions. As a result, the teachers who enforce these rules were considered by some of the students in the study as unreasonable and unfair.

Teachers and students are provided a handbook (Appendix B, p. 351) that clearly states the rules and regulations of the school. However, the teachers in the study claim that whilst teachers are encouraged to follow a strict set of rules, administration is never usually prepared to help enforce them. Quite often, the consequences of an infraction (skipping school, swearing, and fighting) are clearly stated, yet the punishment is inconsistent. Mr. R and Mr. F spoke candidly about students in upper-tracked classes receiving an after-school detention for what a lower-tracked student might receive a suspension. They believe that this occurs for two reasons:
• Students in lower-leveled classes do not have the coping skills to manage their anger and therefore act irrationally when confronted by administration, elevating the consequence,
• A lack of staffing in administration often results in inconsistent research and dealings with repeat offenders.

The rules in School #1 are not just limited to classroom and school expectations. The participants and the teachers identified in the study also believe that there are rules in place that are also inconsistent with the goals and mission statement of the school. The four rules most often considered unfair in this context during interviews and observations were:

• No students allowed in the building after 2:35 unless they are working with another teacher,
• The media center is closed at 2:00,
• Any printing made from school computers must be checked by a librarian,
• Older students are not allowed to leave for lunch.

Goals and Principles

• Form a committee of administration, teachers and students to revise the student handbook to decide which rules are unnecessary or cannot be properly enforced,
• Observe the classes of teachers who have a consistent set of rules that are considered to be reasonable by most students, especially the teachers identified in the study,
• Nominate teachers to become a Dean of Students (as recommended by Mr. R) at each grade level to assist in rule-making and the assignment of consequences,
• Under a strict set of guidelines, allow the Dean of Students in the upper grades to nominate and allow students to leave during lunch hours. This would provide incentive to those students as well as prevent over-crowding in the cafeteria,
• Allow the media center to stay open after school for students, teachers, and parents,
• Create a study center in school for students who find their home distracting or who do not have a place to study.
Physical Environment

SD: Like, in Mr. F's class, like, his personality doesn't really match his room. But, like, he has his kids' pictures on his desk, and stuff...and that matches him. Like, he talks about his kids all the time, so that matches what his personality is. Like his desk, it's all messy, and that's how his head is, it's all messy.

The physical aspects of the school and classroom can affect behaviour. Classrooms that are aesthetically pleasing, that have appropriate lighting, that are organized and clean, and that are arranged so that students have the opportunity to see each other tend to have students who are well behaved. On the other hand, classrooms that are in a general state of disrepair, that do not display student work, and exist in a bland, factory-like atmosphere communicate to students that they are not welcomed or worth the effort to improve. The students at School #1 only mentioned the state of their school occasionally during interviews, whilst the teachers identified in the study believed that the poor conditions of the school had a direct influence on their teaching.

Due to overcrowding, an aging infrastructure, water leakage, inadequate lighting and storage, inconsistent heating and poor air quality, School #1 has begun the construction of a new building with completion scheduled for 2010-2011 (Mendros, 2011). However, steps should be taken to encourage teachers and students to display their work and personal art projects without fear of censorship from administration in the current building and the new one.
Measures should also be taken to involve students in the planning and design of the new building to accommodate their “physical and learning needs” (Newman & Thomas, 2008, p. 241). Several researchers agree that the design of a school can stimulate or hinder emotional or behavioural responses (Lewis, 1977; Bowers & Burkett, 1987; Christopher, 1988; Phillips, 1997; Kumar, O’Malley, & Johnston, 2008). Researchers such as Flutter and Ruddock (2004) argue that “consultation has been cited as key to the continuing improvement of teaching and learning, with a focus on the transformative potential of pupil voice” (p. 138). An example of this is Park Wood School, located in a socio-economically depraved part of Coventry, United Kingdom, that adopted several strategies to engage students in the design process:

- consultation throughout the visioning process;
- a ‘Design your school day’ which entailed gifted and talented students leading groups of other students to design and make a model of a chosen part of the new school;
- promote discussion about student aspirations for the new build;
- school council to act as a conduit for student voice; and
- questionnaires sent home to encourage family discussion about the school in an attempt to involve the wider community (Newman & Thomas, 2008, p. 241).

During my observations at the pilot study school, I was invited to attend weekly student council meetings. Comprise of elected students, two teachers, and the headmaster, these meetings usually dealt directly with school conditions and suggestions for improvement. During my last observation in this school, students had suggested that the garden located in the back of the school be expanded so students could move with more freedom without disrupting others. The student council members patiently remained quiet as school leaders questioned the cost and value of their plan. Though these students were known to have behaviour difficulties, they seemed to understand why it was important to respect
meeting protocol to achieve a positive result. Plans to expand the garden began that summer.

Students in School #1 also understand the power of organized collaboration. Recent issues in air quality and decaying school conditions there have provoked many emotional responses among teachers and students (Mendros, 2011). According to Mr. R, several students and teachers (including Mr. R) reported being sick due to poor air quality and one student was hospitalized. Whilst leaders at the school maintain that the professional testing conducted at the school showed no signs of mold or particulates, students, who were skeptical of these findings, organized themselves and raised money to hire their own air quality tests through a different testing agency (WMTWTV, 2011). Those studies did show that the traces of mold already in the school and dust from current school construction, might be the cause of student and teacher allergic reactions (Ibid). Similar to the reactions of leaders at School #1 are studies from the University of Georgia at ten elementary schools that showed “little was known about indoor air pollution by the ten principals. The same was true about their understanding of the operation and maintenance of their buildings and the support systems” (Liska, 1997, para. 4).

Yet the community as well as some school leaders seemed to be divided by whether the school needed attention. A local news report concerning the conditions of School #1 claims “public forums for a bond (for the construction of a new school) were not well attended” (WMTWTV, 2011, 1:33) and it took a group of students “who put together a 40-minute video on the school’s need for renovation and posted it on the school’s
Facebook page” (WMTWTV, 2011, 1:46) to put renovation plans in motion. As a result of their efforts, “voters approved the bond to renovate the high school by a 2:1 margin” (Ibid). It is clear that student voice in School #1 can be quite powerful and effective when provoked by the right circumstances, unfortunately these were under desperate conditions. I now speculate how conditions at School #1 would be improved for marginalized students if the utilization of student voice were part of their daily routine and culture.

**Improving the Study**

During the group interview I found that the participants approved the findings from the initial stages of the study (identifying teachers they considered a positive influence) and were enthusiastic about adding to and enhancing the data I collected about the teachers they most admire. Though the top five teachers identified in the study also shared the same feelings about this data, after years of feeling that their concerns and recommendations about their charge had gone unheard, they seemed pessimistic about whether administration and other members of the teaching staff would accept the results. I believe that further research might reveal that teachers who are successful with marginalized students also feel marginalized in their profession.

The pilot study exposed minor limitations that were corrected before the start of the formal study. However, I later discovered that another possible limitation was the willingness of one of the schools under scrutiny to consider my findings. Whilst
administrators at the *pilot study* school allowed formal and informal presentations, administrators at *School #1* seemed less inclined to follow suit. Resistance to my findings found me examining the school’s culture and contemplating adjustments for future implementation of the methodology instead.

It occurred to me in the later stages of this research that perhaps my work was affected by a lack of consideration for the voices of students and teachers who were *not* included in the study. Though the voices of the students selected for the study do provide many avenues for practical and cultural improvements, they are limited to a *subculture* of *School #1*. Further research into the culture of *School #1* may spotlight important data meriting examination of any direct connection between the daily school experiences of marginalized students, (especially those labeled with having a behaviour difficulty), and the many elements that define the term school culture: norms and values (Saphier & King, 1985); communication patterns (Reinke & Herman, 2002); shared focus (Edmonds, 1982); expectations (Conway, 1985); assumptions (Schein, 1990); rituals and traditions (Raywid, 2001); and a shared sense of purpose (Staessens, 1991).

**Looking at School Culture**

Just as exclusion can lead to the development of isolated subcultures (like marginalized students in alternative education programs), teacher isolation can lead to subcultures of teachers who mistrust leadership and who are reluctant to participate in school reform. However, Glickman (1985) argues that teachers who are given opportunities to work
collaboratively to analyse their charge and investigate new teaching prospects that interrupt stagnant routines are more likely to modify their own actions.

The collegial relationships I developed through the teacher interviews conducted in this study also produced provocative and critical data that leaders could use as a foundation for reform efforts; therefore, I would include teacher interviews as part of the research design. With this in mind, it is important to also consider the possibility that creating a network of teacher and student researchers working collaboratively in this study might have led to management more willing to accept the results. I agree with Lieberman and Miller (1984) who state, “it is perhaps the greatest irony, and the greatest tragedy of teaching, that so much is carried on in self-imposed and professionally sanctioned isolation” (p. 160). I argue that teachers at School #1 who are given opportunities to collaborate with their colleagues will feel the positive effects of daily feedback from their peers. As a result of this collaboration they might gain a new confidence that will give them courage to present their best practices and try new techniques. Students in these teachers’ classes, who will have the opportunity to model this same behaviour, might also gain the same type of confidence and thus be willing to learn collaboratively and try new learning scenarios.

I argue that the ways that management in School #1 determines who has a behaviour difficulty is similar to ways it communicates its plans for reform to teachers. The profiles for marginalized students seem to have no common themes apart from isolated incidents of negative behaviour and symptoms of academic detachment (the latter used as a rationale for excluding students to alternative education is justified by the students’ supposed need for alternative ways of processing information). In the same way,
teachers at School #1 are often divided into various reform committees and are not fully made aware of the suggested outcomes of their collaborative efforts or the individual roles they will play within them. One teacher in the study suggested that this is perhaps a strategy that prevents teachers from thinking critically and questioning the reform that could affect the way they teach:

*Mr. R:* Oh no question. It’s after school, everyone is exhausted and suddenly we find ourselves in random groups. Half of us don’t even know each other...and the rest who do... we just kind of look at each other and roll our eyes. It’s like, ‘What’s this all about?’ Then someone with an agenda, usually a department head who also seems clueless, gets up and starts explaining our group’s task. It’s like ‘Ok, according to this we have to write two pages as a group about classroom egress safety.’ Everyone in the group is shrugging their shoulders. ‘Who is this for? What is this for? What are other groups doing?’ No one knows.

This frustration is sometimes transferred to the classroom:

*MG-* Mr. O? I don’t like his teaching method. He kind of just goes up to the board, does a couple of problems, kind of explains it on the way, and then sits at his desk and tells us to do a whole paper on it and, I don’t know...When you ask him for extra help, like, say you have a question on something he’ll literally set out this whole entire scenario. And I’m just like, that confuses me. That’s not what the problem says and I’m trying to figure out what these letters mean and, I don’t know, I don’t like the way he teaches, I don’t like that class.

I agree with Blumberg (1980) who argues that once teachers have been employed in the same system for several years, it is common for them to develop a “strong ego-stake” (p. 23) in the way they teach. Because school reform efforts generally involve the
improvement of teaching skills, resistance occurs when teachers are sent mixed
messages: They are convinced by many years of positive formal evaluations and
informal student-feedback that they have been successful educators whilst most reform
efforts imply that there are aspects of their practice that could be improved (Ibid, 1980). I
argue that it is the role of the school’s leaders to address these issues and create a climate
that validates change.

However, at School #1 this would not be an easy task. I have seen teachers with various
professional responsibilities respond differently to reform, especially when the reforms
seem to only concern or benefit a particular group of teachers. For example, I attended a
monthly teacher meeting at School #1, and “hats” was an item on the agenda. Some
teachers argued that students wearing hats in the hallways was highly disrespectful and
expressed their concerns vociferously. Others, who did not share the same urgency for
this matter (and who did not seem to notice that students were wearing hats at all), were
more concerned about how this group of teachers was allowed to have their concerns
included on the agenda. Though there is research that gives advice to school leaders to
encourage collaborative behaviour, I argue that these avenues only seem manageable in
schools with higher morale and with less division amongst its staff.

Similar to the way teachers of marginalized students find academic success with their
students, the best way for leaders in this environment to find the same success would be
to encourage teachers to accept and develop what they already know. In doing so,
teachers will not only discover more about each other and perhaps see this as an
opportunity to refine their own skills. It will also satisfy some emotional needs such as
self-efficacy (Charlton & David, 1994) that have been developed by years of professional
polarization. After examining teacher interviews from School #1, it is clear the staff recognize a need for leadership to remove the notion of individual blame and to create opportunities to discuss what they consider to be barriers to progress and reform. Using a research design like the one presented in this study can unite teachers with a common research focus.

It is also clear that the participants in the study have shared experiences with the same type of segregation and have developed similar attitudes toward authority and change in their school. These feelings were perhaps validated and reinforced when their teachers’ negative reactions to their own lack of voice was modeled to them in the classroom. Yet both teachers and students communicate different feelings about their school when removed from this environment and empowered to create change. Researchers such as Blumberg (1980) have had similar observations:

Like many of my colleagues, I have held untold numbers of conversations and work sessions with individual administrators and teachers outside the immediate context of the school as an organization. By and large, these situations have been pleasant and productive. It’s as though people involved wanted to relate, work, learn, or change. On the other hand, there have been many occasions where I have attempted to deal with the school as an organization, but my experiences were much different. I was confronted with lethargy, defensiveness, and an attitude that might be best expressed as ho hum. The startling thing was that in a number of these cases, individual and organizational, some of these same people were involved (p. 18).

Through my research I have demonstrated that “misbehaved” high school students were insightful and articulate about the attributes of their teachers when put in leadership roles (school tours); perhaps more so than I had originally expected:
PD: Maybe, sometimes...that's actually kind of weird, cause I think about that sometimes too, but um...I think that maybe sometimes that they...I don't want to say this like, for sure, but they maybe jealous in a way.

I: Oh yeah? Tell me about that.

PD: Jealous that, when they were younger, they had to work hard, really hard and that I come into the class, do it all with ease, come out of the class, and just pass the course.

Aspects of the research design allowed the participants to detach themselves from their school experience and through dialogue thought about ways to improve them. This promoted a more reciprocal paradigm of leadership “within which knowledge and understanding are coproduced by teachers and students” (Cook-Sather, 2006, p. 345-346). The same could also be said for the participant-selected teachers in the study. Perhaps providing feedback from students others deem most challenging also gave them an opportunity to experience education as a collaborative and personal relationship that challenges traditional educational practices, such as failure.

Summary

In my experiences as an educator, I noticed a lack of critical thinking in areas of student and teacher voice and programs designed to deal with negative behaviour and under-achievement. Over the years, I began to find through dialogue with “under-achievers,” assigned to lower-leveled classes, that they tended have low self-esteem and a lack of motivation that was perhaps due to an environment that did not provide these students with opportunities to think critically. Yet many of the means that schools have chosen to
remedy this situation “ignore the role teachers play in preparing learners to be active
critical citizens” (Giroux, 1988, p. 121). Though my colleagues and I began to question
the quality of education for certain students, especially those labeled with a behaviour
difficulty, there also seemed to be a lack of opportunity to think and speak critically about
educational reform at the professional level.

Over the past few decades, research aimed at school improvement has incorporated
student voice as a method of investigation. Though the results of these inquiries have
provided some researchers with useful data, there are others who find them inconclusive
due to methodological limitations. Some researchers have also found that at the heart of
this issue is a reluctance of researchers to include the voices of students who exist in
learning environments that are in most need of change. These students, who are often
excluded from mainstream classes due to behaviour difficulties, are also excluded from
participating in research that employs student voice.

Knowing that these students often lack the ability to think critically due to academic
frustrations and hostile learning environments, I used successful lesson plans from my
“alternative” classes as a rough template for constructing a methodology. I took my
experiences, ideas, and curiosities to the University of Manchester where I prepared a
formal study. Though I approached a pilot study informally at first, beginnings of a
methodology began to emerge over a few weeks of observation. A school tour from a
student had a profound impact on me when I noticed my guide’s tendency to only deliver
me to places in the school that inspired both positive and negative dialogue. Over the
course of several weeks, common themes emerged when I used school tours as the
foundation for a small-scale study and incorporated a triangulation of qualitative methods.

The refined research model incorporated school tours, interviews, and teacher observations in student-identified classrooms and led to a formal study in the United States in two schools. The main study produced a variety of categories and subcategories and I used them as a guide for identifying literature that would inform school improvement efforts for students labeled with an EBD.

As in the pilot study, I employed Winter’s (1989) set of standards for carrying out action research to guide the research I conducted in the main study: *reflective critique, dialectical critique, collaborative resource, risk, plural structure, and theory, practice and transformation*. In what follows, I demonstrate how the main study meets these standards:

1) *Reflexive critique* - I reviewed and refined the first cycles of the process in the following ways (as summarized in *Figure 1, p. 56*). I began the with a set of thoughts and observations based on my teaching experiences (*Cycle One: Informal Observations to Curiosity, p. 58*) and used these to formulate ideas and questions (*Cycle Two: Curiosity to Questions, p. 59*). These led to a third cycle that I used as a guide for a new strategy that I implemented in a pilot study (*Cycle Three: The Pilot Study, p. 64*). The fourth cycle (*Cycle Four: The Main Study*) represented a refined version of the pilot study.

*Cycle Four: The Main Study:*
Diagnosing: School Tours

Where Do Students Feel Valued?

Diagnosing: Interviews

How are the student-identified places characterized?

Action Planning: Map Analysis

Where are the common student-identified areas?

Action Planning: Observation

Can examples of identified themes be observed in student-identified areas?

Evaluating: Thematic Coding

Are there common themes used to describe these places?

Specifying Learning: Thematic Analysis

Would participants validate these themes in a group discussion?

2) Dialectical critique- In the pilot study, I had discovered that certain terms the participants used to describe teachers (such as boring and organized) were imprecise. From this experience, I decided that a multifaceted understanding of participant dialogue was needed and that this was better accomplished through enquiry activities that provided multiple perspectives (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Comparisons of these perspectives led to insights that helped me to better understand areas of ambiguity. For instance, some students would often claim that their favorite teachers were laid back. However, there were several teachers I observed who did not seem to me to exemplify the usual definition of this term. During the pilot study, I consulted my colleagues on this matter and they suggested this term was perhaps more related to flexibility than casual behaviour or inattention to classroom rules. With this information, I was more open to new areas of research such as routines, pace, and predictability.
3) **Collaborative Resource**- The focus of my study was on designing a research model that used action research to help identify literature to address the educational and social needs, and interests, of marginalized students. It used school tours to help participants identify areas of success, as a basis for interviews, and as a direction for teacher observations. The participants produced common categories and I used these to determine whether the participants’ observations about a commonly identified location matched mine, to give direction to new areas of research, and to identify possible paths to reform. They were able to identify several successful components of lesson planning and general concerns that challenged the school’s culture.

4) **Risk**- As mentioned in Chapter 4, it became evident to me during the analysis phase, and during the presentation of my findings, that the pilot study lacked the insight and expertise of staff members of Westside. In the main study, I presented my proposal to senior staff in the school and reserved time at the end to discuss areas that this group considered problematic, such as the participant’s right to withdraw, access to data, and students identifying a “top five” group of teachers. These ethical and logistical considerations are discussed in more depth in Chapter 4.

5) **Plural Structure**- As I noted earlier during the pilot study, I consulted colleagues from the university and staff members from Westside to clarify areas of ambiguity during analysis. When I reflected on this experience, I determined that it would have been more effective if I had combined members of these groups during analysis to avoid confusion by “a lack of language specificity” and being “sidetracked by an inappropriate metaphor(s)” (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 115). With this in mind, I intended to align the
schedules of a university consultant, members of the teaching staff and administration at School #1 to give more weight to the findings. However, because of time constraints and conflicting schedules, I was unable to form a formal research panel. However, I did achieve an “analysis group” in a less orthodox way, and found it was extremely helpful. Though it was not a pre-planned element of the methodology, I found that consulting the “top five” teachers to clarify areas of ambiguity and consulting with the participants as a group to validate the findings served two purposes: First, it gave me the opportunity to clear up vague areas (slang, colloquialism, generalized terms) directly from their source, e.g., “I’ve gone over my notes from the interviews. What did you mean when you said Mr. L was laid-back?” Second, it gave the participants and teachers the opportunity to reflect and comment on their positive contributions to the study.

6) Theory, Practice, Transformation - Following the first two action research cycles, I commented how my teaching experiences led me to question the placement of students who misbehave. In the third cycle, I conducted a pilot study to test a methodology that would help me find out where these students, who had been labeled as EBD, had positive experiences in their school. The fourth cycle in the research design represents a refined version of the pilot study, in which I employ a triangulation of qualitative of methods to focus on the questions that drove the research:

- Can we access the voices of students marginalized with an EBD more effectively?
- Can data generated by research into the perceptions of these marginalized students lead to improvements in the academic and social experiences of students labeled with an EBD?

In the sections that follow, I provide summative answers to these research questions and link them to the main findings of the research.
Can we access the voices of students marginalized with an EBD more effectively?

My study has shown how processes of action research of the sort I used can generate knowledge by bringing theory and practice together, thus combining the roles of “producer” and “user” of educational theory. In this way action research distinguishes itself from other research paradigms that seek to minimize the influence of the researcher on outcomes. However, researchers such as Bostock (1993), Anrot & Reay (2007), and Winter (1989) argue there is a need to develop more subtle research methodologies in action research which will enable the researcher to “elicit the tacit rules or transmission and the tacit voice of a particular social category” (Anrot & Reay, 2007, p. 323) with confidence.

The specific focus of this study was the design and implementation of a methodology that used action research techniques to more accurately identify the specific concerns of the students under scrutiny. Though there were areas in the research design that could be improved, useful data was produced nevertheless. When this data generated from different methods were viewed collectively, I believe new insights were created. Like the cycles of action research, each stage of this methodology was designed to build on and validate prior stages, whilst also providing data that could direct the stages that followed. This method afforded me the opportunity to examine the data at various interim stages, and I found that when qualitative research methods are designed to complement each other, they can generate richer and more focused data that might have been missed by a single qualitative method. Of course, it is difficult to construct an accurately structured enquiry to gain feedback on students’ academic experiences, if the important issues and variables surrounding those experiences are unknown. In this study, it would have been
easy find out, for example, where students feel valued by administering a simple survey or by asking them directly in an interview, but uncovering the reasons why they feel valued in those places challenged me to generate understandings from the perspective of participants.

By addressing this problem, I was able access the voices of marginalized students through multiple methods that investigated how the participants made sense of their academic environment. These methods, that incorporated different perspectives and expressions, allowed me to share a discovering experience with the participants. By doing so, I was able to establish their trust and this relationship led to more detailed and what seemed to be more authentic data. I argue that was this due in part to the research design that allowed the participants to recognize themselves as unique individuals rooted in a distinct context, one of the same features a majority the participants identified as a positive attribute of a successful learning environment in their school.

Can data generated by research into the perceptions of these marginalized students lead to improvements in the academic and social experiences of students labeled with an EBD?

The study identified themes generated from participant data. Giving this pattern of organization to my enquiry also allowed me to select from and narrow down the notes from my past readings, so that I could develop and expand my literature review whilst simultaneously matching this with the emerging issues. Conceptualizing the research in this way allowed me to explore the experiences of the students through the eyes of the participants and teachers in School #1 whilst examining the wider debates and issues associated with these key themes within the research literature.
I then drew on both my own experience and the work of others to suggest strategies for improving the academic and social lives of the students labeled with an EBD in the school which was the main focus of my research. These recommendations were in two parts. The first set offered practical advice for teachers, whilst the second set was aimed more at system and administrative practice.

In addition, the findings in this study suggest that students labeled with an EBD are capable of getting along with a range of teachers who are quite different from one another. Consequently, the notion that there is a “way” of teaching these students is perhaps misguided. There is not one particular style or approach that seems to be effective and searching for one would seem to be misguided too. What matters to these students is that they feel they have authentic relationships with their teachers. The authenticity of these relationships can be demonstrated in a variety of ways that reflect the different personalities of the teachers. The teachers who have found ways of achieving this intuitively, are quite different from one another, as are the positive attributes of their teaching: One teacher might be identified as “helpful” and “encouraging”, whilst another is identified as “funny” and “cheerful”. Schools, as well as the teachers themselves, find these qualities difficult to quantify and as a result, rarely examine these aspects of teachers’ practice.

In addition, what the participants in this study have provided are potential directions for future research and reform. However, it is clear they also believe progress cannot be achieved until positive relationships with their teachers have been established. The five most successful teachers seem to use their instincts to achieve a balance of effective teaching and positive relationships with all of their students. However, in an attempt to
find a particular formula for teaching these students and managing their behaviour, management at School #1 have imposed strategies that often seem to clash with these teachers’ instincts. Teachers feel they have been instructed to teach their students, especially students labeled with an EBD, in ways they know will not work. As a result, these teachers themselves sometimes feel isolated and unsure of their own effectiveness.

Yet, what these teachers seem to be saying is that it does not matter how you teach these students, because there is no one formula. If you want to be successful with these students, you have to have a relationship with them, and the students must feel confident that they have a relationship with their teacher. Similarly, the data produced through the method of enquiry in this study can improve the academic and social experiences of students labeled with an EBD when we also consider that there is not one formula for leading research efforts. The type of enquiry in this study gave me the opportunity to consider the effects of my intervention, and researchers such as Lau, Myers, and Nielsen (1999) argue that this “yields more observable effects on practice” (p. 95). This is perhaps because in the type of enquiry I employed, “the emphasis is more on what practitioners do than on what they say they do” (Ibid).

However, because schools bring together members of administration, teachers, and students who have different (and often times conflicting) goals, perceptions, and approaches, researchers must address the essential human dimension of this type of organization in order to conduct meaningful research. I argue that failure to do so may explain the lack of confidence teachers and students sometimes have when methods of enquiry are used in isolation. In the end, research into human behaviour and feelings need to be done with people, and not to them.
Chapter 8: Reflections

Introduction

In the beginning of this thesis I discussed my concerns about the exclusion of students labeled with an EBD through the context of my successful lessons with them. In the following section, *New Perspectives*, I will bring the reader back to my classroom to discuss this research experience in terms of personal and professional growth and my journey from educator to researcher. In the first chapter, I also introduced participant MD (who I will now refer to as Mandy) to demonstrate how students can display dissimilar behaviour under different conditions. I discovered that Mandy was known for hostile and irrational behaviour in School #1, but conducted herself professionally in her afterschool job. At the end of my study, I was fortunate when Mandy contacted me to discuss her progress after high school. I use her (as well as her mother’s) e-mails to validate my fears about exclusion and exemplify the fate of some of the students I have come to know.

New Perspectives

English department storage rooms in the United States are often found overflowing with bargain copies of classic paperbacks. Their availability and price make it difficult for teachers to defend the purchase of more personalized materials for their classes. As a result, they are often faced with the pressures of translating classic literature to effective lessons. This is especially frustrating for teachers of “at-risk” students: the motivational
needs and prior knowledge of their students never seems to coincide with the school’s available materials. As a new teacher in 1994, I could have chosen *The Call of the Wild*, by Jack London, but I chose *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* simply because there were more copies.

I remember carrying 30 copies of this book to my new classroom room and along the way, I noticed the condition of the books in my arms: most of the front covers had either been ripped off or adorned with inappropriate drawings and words. Nevertheless, I created comprehensive questions for each chapter and thought of collaborative projects, such as a paper-mache version of the river we could create to help guide us as we read. However, I soon received a notice in my school mailbox that thwarted all of these plans. The guidance office informed me that most of the students enrolled in this class were re-enrolled (repeating a course due to failure). I assumed that they were the students responsible for desecrating *Huck Finn* and were probably not going to be very happy with a new teacher who was going to make them read it again. Consequently, I abandoned the plans I made that summer and decided to read it to them, an enormous risk for a new teacher. When the school year began a month later and I was certain that most of the students assigned to my class had officially dropped out, I was given permission to discard the more severely abused versions of the 30 paperbacks.

Since there was no more planning or papers to correct for that course, I soon discovered the benefits of re-experiencing *Huck Finn* with my students. The one consistent topic of discussion was the inconsistencies in Huck’s character and how he seemed to change his feelings about friendship, religion, and trust as he journeyed down the Mississippi River. We watched Huck grow intellectually and spiritually by gaining new perspectives on life,
yet students seemed to get frustrated with Huck when he resorts to his unconfident and childlike ways when reunited with his old friend Tom.

It’s easy and perhaps somewhat contrived to draw a parallel between Huck and the profiles of marginalized students: they’re uneducated, but street wise; they’re unconfident, but raucous; possibly from abusive homes; but rarely ever there. I argue that these types of obvious comparisons are what lead us to false conclusions about these students. Huck Finns exist in all of our schools. Yet, those readers who know him well would be less inclined to perseverate on the symptoms of his urgency to run away, and more inclined to wave goodbye whilst reminding him to write it all down. Although modern laws would require us to report abuse, our knowledge of Huck’s life would not find us meeting with his cruel and neglectful father to implement a graduation plan; rather, it would compel us to match his life experiences to his pursuit for knowledge. This is not to say that schools never attempt to do this, but I argue that academic programs and school structures that are based on traditional paradigms rarely allow students to gain new perspectives. As a result, some students do not mature and grow intellectually. This is the same for some teachers who work in restrictive and oppressive environments.

Though intellectual and physical maturity occur in adolescents at various times, some have the benefit of obtaining new life experiences and challenges at school at more accelerated rates, whilst others do not. My own research revealed that the same could be said for teachers. My journey began with a question and a curiosity: Why do we segregate and label students who are capable learners? Like Huck and perhaps the participants in this study, I had to discover the answers to my questions from a new
perspective and through a different role. This critical distance allowed me to see issues in traditional school structures that censor the voices of marginalized students. The participants in the study were given, if only for a brief time, the opportunity to gain a new perspective and perhaps a new feeling of confidence to hear their voices that, like Huck, will help them question what they been taught to believe about themselves.

Yet what I consider most interesting about *Huck Finn* is that despite its narrative value and wider implications, teachers in the United States are often discouraged from using it in their classes. The main reason perhaps is because of the racial slurs, the casual use of disparaging stereotypes, and the “inappropriate” relationship between Huck and his older friend Jim. I can remember a college professor in a teacher-training course of mine encouraging all of his student teachers to stay away from books of this nature (*Huckleberry Finn, The Catcher in the Rye, The Color Purple*, etc.) until we were tenured. Over the years, I have read and used this book in my classes dozens of times and I still find myself moved by its direct emotional experiences. After the book has ended and I evaluate this experience, I often find myself moved by the direct implications of Huck’s journey.

When I reflect on my own journey to England and my experiences with the participants in this study, it is difficult for me to conclude my research having left the reader with a clever comparison between Huck’s journey down the Mississippi and students who struggle to find their voice. I am more interested in the idea that *Huck Finn* is considered offensive to some Americans and that it is banned in certain school districts in the United States. I believe it is a reflection of how we tend to address difficult issues in schools: When we must deal with students who challenge us, we find clever ways of ignoring
them. Huck Finn is a challenging book to a lot of Americans because it not only reminds us of how we can behave as a society, it also shows us what still needs to be done. It is a book some of us celebrate, and some of us want to prevent others from reading.

When this idea concerns students who have been labeled with an EBD, I have seen through my own experiences (and now through my research) that in an effort to improve these students’ self-esteem, removing them from mainstream classes takes away their ability to protest their situation: if they have never been successful learning, they might be unaware of when they are learning and why it is important. As a result, it is easy for schools to redefine it for an isolated group of students. Like Huck at the start of the novel, they are convinced that learning is not knowledge of skill acquired by instruction; they are convinced it is behaving. Or in Huck’s case, becoming civilized.

We must not forget that Huck Finn does not have a happy ending. Quite often when reading this novel, my students feel frustrated when Huck reverts back to his old behaviour when he is reunited with Tom in the last few chapters. Huck was slowly becoming “educated” and beginning to find his voice by challenging inequality and what was known about the effects of labeling and dividing people by their involuntary qualities. When Tom arrives, Huck does not lose this insight but gone is the strength of his voice and my students would often protest Twain’s closing narrative decisions. Perhaps this was his way of teaching us that at the end of the day, we all have to journey back home and face our shortcomings and inadequacies.

If we convince students they are educated by awarding them credit in classes that accomplish very little academically, the shortcomings and inadequacies they will have to
eventually confront might result in a sense of hopelessness, regret, anger, and resentment. In the following set of e-mails from participant Mandy and her mother (who both tracked me down after the study), I demonstrate Mandy’s discovery that though she graduated despite insurmountable odds, she perhaps did not feel competent to pursue a college education.

She wrote:

_I heard from Ms. B and she gave me your email address so I can talk to you. I finally graduated!!! Aren't you proud? I became a customer service manager at Wal-mart in June. It's too much work, save me! Just kidding. I like the challenge. Shocking, I am going to college and my major is Liberal Arts. I want to be a social worker, so my main major is PSY! How's the weather in England?_ M. Dawson (personal communication, August 23, 2009).

In the next e-mail, I was surprised to find Mandy so confident and excited about her new prospects and that she decided to major in psychology.

_I'm going to YCCC (York County Community College). I'm very excited but a little nervous at the same time seeing how it's a new environment and I never do well in those. What are you teaching over at SMCC (Southern Maine Community College)? Yeah, people think I'm crazy for majoring in PSY, but I know I can pull it off so I have no worries about getting that degree._ M. Dawson (personal communication, September 7, 2009).

About six weeks into her first semester in college, Mandy seemed to feel overwhelmed. Her concerns, however, only seemed to be about finance.

_I have a problem and need your advice. I feel that I am wasting my money and time going to YCCC. I feel that I should go to a university but I can't afford it. Most of the credits that I will get from YCCC will not transfer to a university per discussions with my teachers. This makes me want to stop going there. I want to_
take spring semester off as well because I jumped into college too quick and need space. What the hell should I do? Please respond soon. M. Dawson (personal communication, October 28, 2009).

At this point Mandy stopped responding to my e-mails and I lost contact with her. A few days later, her mother continued the conversation and informed me that there was not only financial trouble, but also problems with Mandy’s progress.

My concern is that she missed out on a lot of "learning" experience at high school. She dropped out for two years and she made up her credits to graduate in just two years. She had a lot of help for which I am forever grateful. I helped her with the college assignments, leading her in the right way. She missed out on a lot when she dropped out and I think that hurts her in a way. Going to a university, she’s just a number. Monica D. (personal communication, October 31, 2009).

There have been other former students who have had to face these realities. I now teach at a community college not far from where I conducted this study. This college specializes in training students for vocations that coincide with the needs of the local economy: criminal justice, firefighting, nursing, culinary arts, etc. This and other similar colleges in the area often enroll students like Mandy who are willing to work hard and commit four years to a specific vocation. Some students thrive in this type of school; however, some do not. During the first few weeks of the introductory English courses I now teach, I am often witness to students like Mandy who entered college convinced they were prepared and soon discovered they were lacking in basic knowledge. So I ask them questions. How did this happen? I already know the answers.

Mandy still works at Wal-Mart. It is difficult for me to shop there now that I am home from England because I still envision her majoring in psychology and working with
teenagers who have lost their way. When management at School #1 denied my plans to share the results of my study with its staff members, I felt camaraderie with Mandy and the other participants in my study: our alma mater found a way to ignore us. Perhaps we said too much or we did not say enough. Regardless, saying goodbye to School #1 was bittersweet. Though I started promising career there, I had no reservations or regrets when I made the choice to leave permanently. Perhaps this decision inspired the kinship I now feel with Mark Twain. In a sense, I am now the author of a banned book. But what is the sense of writing something no one will read? So I suppose my journey is not over “and if I could think up anything worse, I would do that, too; because as long as I was in, and in for good, I might as well go the whole hog.” – Huck Finn
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Appendix A: Climate Survey

School #1 Student and Staff School Climate Survey Summary

I am happy at this school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Student Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I help decide things like class activities or rules.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Student Response</th>
<th>Staff Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This school is a safe place for students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Student Response</th>
<th>Staff Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
<td>62.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perception of staff showing they care about students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreed</td>
<td>84.9%</td>
<td>85.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreed</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perception that staff listens to what students have to say.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreed</td>
<td>66.1%</td>
<td>90.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreed</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perception that staff believes every student can be a success.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreed</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td>88.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreed</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perception that this school is a supportive and inviting place for students to learn.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreed</td>
<td>77.9%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreed</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perception that teachers want all students to do their best.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreed</td>
<td>73.9%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreed</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perception that this school promotes academic success for all students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreed</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreed</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This school is a supportive and inviting place for staff to work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreed</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreed</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent of staff who feels a responsibility to improve this school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreed</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreed</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you feel connected to any adult at BHS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Students who failed at least one class.</th>
<th>Students who have not failed a class.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreed</td>
<td>67.2%</td>
<td>68.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreed</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Top three identified reasons students believe they fail a course:

- Homework
- Bored/Uninterested
- Lack of understanding

Top three things students identified that could have helped them to pass a class.

Student responses from those who have never failed a course:

- Teacher support
- Do homework
- Complete work in school

Student responses from students who have failed at least one class:

- Good teaching
- Do homework
- Put in more effort (student effort)

Top two reasons why students believe homework is not completed.

Student responses from those who have never failed a course:

- Did not want to do it
- No time (job or family commitment)

Student responses from students who have failed at least one class:

- Did not want to do it
- Lack of understanding
Appendix B: Student Handbook

School #1 Mission Statement

Information obtained from http://www.bxxxxxxschools.org/handbook.pdf

At Bxxxxxx High School, our shared vision is that all students will graduate with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in post-secondary education, compete in the global economy, and participate as informed citizens.

In order to achieve this vision, it is our mission to ensure that:

• All students receive an education that is challenging, engaging, equitable, and relevant;
• We are providing a learning environment in which all members of the school community feel safe, valued, and respected;
• We are working in partnership with families and the community to support and promote the healthy development of each individual.

Academic Expectations: Bxxxxxx High School should strive to provide a core of common learning to ensure all students an adequate foundation of education.

Students will write effectively for a variety of purposes and forms, and to a variety of audiences. The students will demonstrate:

• Correct spelling, correct punctuation, understanding of parts of speech, correct use of paragraphs, and citation.
• The written expression of thought with clear beginning and topic sentence.

Students will speak with clarity to specific purposes and to a variety of audiences. The students will demonstrate:

• The ability to articulate and organize ideas and information.
• Flexibility in listening to and acknowledging new ideas and concepts.

Students will read a variety of materials for comprehension and for enjoyment, and to meet specific demands of curriculum. The students will demonstrate:
• An understanding of an author’s tone and point of view.
• The ability to synthesize and summarize works.

Students will use a variety of technological resources to gather information, solve problems, and communicate ideas. The students will demonstrate:

• An awareness of both current and developing technologies.
• The ability to access, understand, and evaluate current information by using technology.
• The ability to choose appropriate and effective strategies for gathering and presenting information.

Students will use computation to solve problems across the curriculum, and to reflect on, communicate, and apply academic content to everyday life. The students will demonstrate:

• An organized and practical approach to problem solving.
• An ability to solve and/or resolve problems.
• An ability to interpret data and effectively use resources to solve and/or resolve problems, verbally and in writing.

**Social Expectations:** Bxxxxxxx High School will encourage students to be responsible, to have confidence in their abilities, and to have respect both for themselves and others. Through class discussions, personal interactions, school initiatives, curricular and co-curricular activities, community events, and the school discipline code, students will demonstrate:

• Familiarity with conflict resolution.
• Acceptance of responsibility for one’s own actions and of consequences for inappropriate choices.
• Respect for family, school, and community values.
• Willingness to contribute to the well being of others within the school community.

**Civic Expectations:** Bxxxxxxx High School will prepare students to be contributors to our democratic society and an interdependent world. Through class discussions, personal interactions, school initiatives, curricular and co-curricular activities, community events, and the school discipline code, students will demonstrate:
• Recognition of the need for teamwork, communication, and leadership skills needed to function in diverse and rapidly changing settings.

• Awareness of global issues and recognition of the variety of beliefs, opinions, and needs of others in our own and different cultures and societies.

• Knowledge of the rights, responsibilities, and privileges of citizens in democratic society.

School #1 Student Behavior and Discipline

The policies and procedures governing student behavior at Bxxxxxxx High School are intended to protect the rights of all members of the school community, to promote students’ accountability and acceptance of responsibility for their own actions, and to ensure a safe, orderly and respectful learning environment for all.

Detentions

Students may be assigned teacher detentions or administrative (office) detentions. Athletics, transportation, or after school employment are not considered valid excuses for missing a detention. Students who skip a teacher detention will be assigned an office detention. Students who skip an office detention will be assigned an in-school suspension (ISS). Students who feel they have a valid reason for missing a detention must discuss the issue with the teacher (teacher detention) or administrator (office detention) BEFORE the detention is to be served in order to make arrangements for another date. Reasons/explanations given after the fact will not be accepted.

Office Detention

• Monday through Thursday, 2:05–3:00

• Failure to complete an office detention will result in an ISS the following day

• No student will be admitted after 2:05

• Students are expected to work on assignments whilst in office detention. If a student has completed their work for the day, they may read a book. Sleeping, listening to headphones, or talking with others is not permitted.
• Food is not permitted in office detention.

• Students who create a disturbance or who fail to follow the above rules will be sent home and assigned to ISS the following day.

• Students who have demonstrated a pattern of cutting office detention (3 or more) will be automatically assigned to ISS for cutting teacher detention or other offenses that would otherwise result in office detention.

In-School Suspension (ISS)

• Students assigned to ISS must report to Room 100 by the 7:50 bell or face additional consequence.

• Students assigned to ISS must turn in all electronic devices at the beginning of the day. This includes cell phones, iPhones, iPods, iTouches, CD Players, etc. These will be secured and returned at the end of the day. Students who are found with electronic devices in ISS will receive a 2 day OSS.

• Students are expected to bring academic work to do and to work or read quietly.

• Students in ISS may not leave to get work from their classes or run other errands.

• Students cannot leave to participate in any classes without administrative permission in advance.

• Students who leave ISS without a pass or who are asked to leave ISS due to disrespect or disruption will be assigned a 2 day OSS (or more as the situation warrants, in keeping with Behavior/Discipline Rubric)

• Students will eat lunch in the ISS room.

• Any ISS Aide who receives ISS will be removed from the Aide position.

• Only students who have an ISS may be in the ISS room, with the exception of approved ISS Aides.

• An In-School Suspension does not count as an absence from school (see Attendance Procedure).
Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)

Because OSS involves depriving a student of instructional contact time, this consequence is reserved for severe infractions of school rules that pose a threat to the safety and orderliness of the school, or in instances where misbehavior has continued despite all other efforts to curb it. When the school imposes OSS, it is because the student is not under our control and we are turning him/her over to the parent/guardian for a period of time with the hope that he/she will come back ready to pursue his/her education in accordance with school rules and regulations.

OSS does not count as an absence from school in terms of the Attendance Policy. Every effort will be made to contact parents by phone before the suspension begins. Except in extreme cases, the suspension will start the next day. The main office will issue a Work Request to the student’s teachers. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to pick up work to be completed whilst the student is under suspension. Students who are suspended are not permitted on school property whilst suspended, and likewise may not participate in any extracurricular activity or attend any school function.

Student Dress

The School Committee recognizes that responsibility for the dress and appearance of students rests with individual students and their parent(s)/guardian(s). The School Committee will not interfere with this right unless the personal choices of students create a disruptive influence on the school program or affect the health or safety of others. Students are encouraged to use sound judgment and reflect respect for themselves and others in dress and grooming. In keeping with the goals of the Bxxxxxxx School Department to provide a safe, healthy and nondiscriminatory environment for educating students for maximum academic and social development, the following restrictions on dress shall be enforced.

Academic Integrity Code

Academic honesty and integrity are essential to the school’s ability to function as a learning institution and also to the educational value of courses to students. Academic dishonesty is a serious violation and will not be tolerated either by teachers or by school administration. To be specific:
• **Cheating** is to act dishonestly and to deliberately violate rules. In a school environment, students are expected to produce original work without using mechanical devices or unauthorized and/or unacknowledged help of others.

• **Plagiarism** is deliberately using text, images, sound bytes, video clips, or any other type of information created by someone else without giving credit.

• **Fabrication** is the conscious act of creating false or misleading information as a substitute for legitimate research or creative submission.

• **Facilitation** is any action that contributes to another person’s effort to be academically dishonest.

When a teacher discovers evidence of academic dishonesty, s/he will meet with the student privately. The teacher will present evidence to the student (without accusation) and ask for an explanation. If the teacher believes the student’s action is not a violation of the Academic Integrity Code, i.e. that the student acted unintentionally or as a result of a lack of understanding, the matter will be treated as a grading issue. The teacher may ask the student to rewrite and resubmit the assignment. If the teacher believes that the student violated the Academic Integrity Code, the work will be graded as a zero. The teacher will notify the student’s parents of the violation and inform the assistant principal. Both the student and the student’s parent/guardian will be required to meet with the assistant principal, teacher, and the student’s guidance counselor. In addition, if the assistant principal agrees that academic dishonesty has occurred he will notify the principal. Per teacher/administration discretion, a student may redo the assignment and receive no more than a grade of 69.

NOTE: Students need to be aware that the ramifications of academic dishonesty can be far reaching. Grade point average and class standing can be affected; college acceptance opportunities can be reduced, as can the student’s chances of receiving scholarships and awards.

Adopted: July 14, 1993

Revised: November 25, 1994; April 27, 1999
Appendix C: Participant Narratives

**DB**- DB is a highly imaginative student who has a hard time expressing his passions. Though most discussions will be redirected to his current readings in fantasy, demonology, horror and comics, they seem confuse his peers since they are usually out of context. He has the vocabulary of a high functioning student, due perhaps to his constant reading of graphic novels, but refuses to write or participate in group-work claiming that he can’t think of anything to write about. DB will often tell his teachers that their assignments are “stupid” and will ask to do his own version. If allowed to do so, he will usually start something highly creative and quit half way through or lose pieces of the project. DB does not like to be confronted with these issues.

Other students often use DB’s appearance as a foundation for ridicule. He can consistently be found wearing a black trench coat and his hair in a ponytail. DB is occasionally found sleeping in various places in the school when he should be in class. He can be found sleeping there as well. DB has a close group of friends that encourage him to do well and he will listen to their advice concerning absenteeism and respect for authority. DB is excited about this year’s schedule because he seems to trust his teachers and has a close friend that is also thinking about enrolling in these classes with him.

**JB**- JB’s demeanor at this interview was defensive and suspicious. Without knowing anything about him I got the sense that he was accustomed to being unsuccessful. When asked why he was not going to any of his classes, he told the story of a confrontation with his industrial arts teacher. He was accused of stealing and did not want his anger to escalate into a physical altercation. He left instead.

JB kept his arms folded through much of the interview and I was impressed by the way he probed the rationale for this study. He wanted to know who else was on my roster for interviews and what would happen with the results. All of these inquiries seemed to lead to one unsaid question whether or not he would be put on the spot in front of his peers. When I assured him that this would not be the case, his demeanor changed slightly and he was more willing to talk about future plans concerning his probation and possible full-
time enrollment back in day school or adult education. At this point he seemed like a pleasant young man with a strong lack of confidence.

**RD-** RD has been excused from his first and fourth block classes due to confrontation with other students. As an 11th grader, this would put him severely behind his projected graduation date. According to his guidance counselors, RD’s lack of attendance in school over the years has put him behind in basic skills. He is easily distracted in classes that are content-based, especially those that deal with reading, writing, and chronology. This distraction leads to mischief by antagonizing other, short-fused students. RD does not seem to understand why these students retaliate.

As a student, RD’s comprehension level seems to be normal, but as stated before, his lack of prior knowledge concerning writing mechanics often finds his assignments undecipherable and with a lack of structure. RD also has a slight speech impediment that makes him hard to understand at times. Before this interview, RD struggled with my explanation of the study and the interviews I was conducting. All of this had to be diagrammed on a dry erase board at which point he decided he would rather be home playing video games.

**MA-** According to some of his teachers, MA usually sits in the back row of their classes exhausted and unmotivated. Never a discipline problem, he always seemed to squeak by doing minimal amounts of work and participating only when asked. His responses were apathetic and cynical. MA’s admitted that his issues in school were drug-related and watching his peers who were getting ready to graduate influenced his behavior.

During MA’s interview he seemed optimistic and friendly. He said that he reached a point in his life where he wanted to turn things around, gain more credits, and graduate with his classmates. MA’s attitude matched this endeavor, as he seemed more interested in hearing other’s advice concerning his future instead of pretending to have things under
control. He was disappointed when I revealed to him that this interview would not have an effect on his current status as a student.

MA’s passions and interests are a mystery to his teachers since he has rarely participated in any class discussions. Lately, however, his interests have turned to sports as he has tried out for baseball this year and is planning on seeing the season through.

**MG-** MG’s background, attitude and demeanor intrigued me. According to her guidance counselors, she had all of the prior knowledge and basic content area mastery of a student at her reading level, yet she always seems to quit when she is nearing the completion of a course. One teacher commented that MG also has an uncanny memory and is able to recite very specific details about what she has read. She also has very high organizational skills and would often help other teachers file their papers during class when she finished her work. Because of MG’s history of absenteeism and not completing courses, she had little to no credits after spending a year in high school. She is currently living with a boyfriend and supporting her child.

At her interview MG seemed to be anxious to get back on track. Her focus was on daycare and who else had signed up for her classes. She would not enroll if there were students in class that would distract her or tease her because she is a mother.

**DD-** DD is somewhat intimidating and he would be a physical threat to any peer that might cross him. According to his teachers, he is threat to their planning. He remains in lower-leveled classes because though he can finish his work in class and pass all of his tests, downtime after these activities will lead to inappropriate behaviour. He will blame his teachers for wasting his time and tell them they should choose another profession if they plan to bore him.

I was allowed to observe DD at an IEP with his mother, guidance counselor, and teachers. DD did not seem interested in hearing about his behaviour issues and he sighed and rolled his eyes through most of the meeting. Though he was aware that he was in dire need of credits, DD’s concern was not about work, class structure, homework or
tests. He wanted to see the class rosters of his spring-semester classes before he would commit to anything. To my surprise the guidance counselor allowed this to happen. He went through the list and decided who was “cool” and who might give him a hard time. Once he found that the “cool” kids outweighed the others, he was able to be more specific about his hatred for high school. It came down to two things: he hates to read and he hates his teachers. DD’s complaint about reading was that he had no choice, though he seemed incapable of making any kind of decision if afforded the opportunity. He simply would not reveal his interests.

**MD**- MD seems to a classic case of creativity stifled by boredom. According to a former teacher of hers, though she was given choice and opportunities to express her creative nature in class, she would often be found skipping class. Always very polite and never usually a disruption, MD’s wallflower façade often keeps her teachers at bay. However, on occasion, MD has also been known to burst out yelling in class usually unprovoked. This change in attitude and personality often confuses those who wish to help her.

MD’s interests are in fashion and design. Though she skips “Fashion Basics” she is aware that she is hurting herself. The need to be with friends seems to trump her concern for future endeavors. She is also aware that she has been placed in lower-leveled classes because of apathy and a waning work ethic. She simply would rather complete assignments with just enough effort to pass instead of challenging herself.

During the interview, she seemed cautiously optimistic, but willing to listen to the guidelines and rationale for the study. Once again, her concern was not for the outcome of the study, but the roster of students who would also be participating. She seemed to know most of the students and agreed to give this opportunity a chance.

**HW**- I recognized HW from my observations in the ISS (In-School Suspension) room. At this interview HW was very respectful and recognized this as an opportunity to voice his opinions. In our brief conversation before the interview began, he seemed concerned that he may not graduate with his peers. He questioned how many days me might be
allowed to miss, and the consequences for doing so. It seemed as though he didn’t trust himself and that his temptations to skip class might get the best of him. I was impressed with HW’s respect and demeanor. Though he is on probation and considered a behaviour problem by most teachers, I did not see any occasion for concern. In fact, his innocence and “salt of the earth” attitude was endearing.

SL- A teacher I spoke to about SL had him in class twice in English 100. Both times he flunked due to absences and behaviour issues, yet he still remained one of this teacher’s favorite students. According to this teacher, SL is “one of the best liars I have ever met.” SL believes that at the end of this year, he and his friend are going to buy a van and head north to enroll in Job Corps. There he hopes to become a chef or a video game designer. When told that Job Corps didn’t offer cooking or computer technology, he simply said “Seriously? Damn.” Watching SL tell tall tales, I’m afraid to say, is like watching videos involving skateboarding accidents: You know the skateboarder is going to get hurt but are unaware of the long-term consequences. (You also know that despite the injury, they will get up and do it again.)

His teacher told me that though he is a capable student, SL has missed so much school he does not have a working knowledge of basic writing that is comparable to his age. The same is true for his ability to comprehend basic 11th grade reading material. When he has been given the opportunity to expound on a topic of interest, he can make logical connections to the task at hand.

DL- I was also intrigued by DL, a thoughtful young man more interested in forming a close group of allies than exploring his interests. His guidance counselor informed me that he is also a teacher’s nightmare, since his motives for failure are not easy to identify. He simply will not do any work, yet manages to pass all of his tests based on information overheard in between cartoon doodling. This same teacher described him as “pleasant but sneaky,” whilst another commented that “he will always let you down if you cut him any slack and show no regret or concern.”
At this interview DL seemed more interested in why so much attention was being afforded to him, since, it seems, he rarely paid attention to anything. He looked interested and grateful, but also unconfident of his own ability to see this opportunity through.

**MD2** - MD2 and her teachers have always had a great working relationship. One teacher, who had MD2 in English100, admired her ability to be a participant, lead others in projects and still have the respect of her peers. Though she had the opportunity to follow some of her classmates to failure through skipping, she “understood overindulgence.” She is an intelligent young woman who seems to have no direction and many addictions, but respect for authority that show her the same.

Other teachers noted that MD2’s passions in class were in organizing projects motivated by a want of seeing these projects come to their fruition. Because of this, she became a natural leader during group work. Though she had no want of bossing others around, it would irritate her to not see the result of a game plan. These teachers claim however, that these projects must be meaningful and make sense to MD2. A project or a “fun” presentation based on a teacher’s whim would be cause for her to skip class or “rudely” question the teacher’s motives, but an assignment that allows her to make logical connections would be considered very interesting.
## Appendix D: Job Skills Interview Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Barrier Form</th>
<th>Name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.1 One or more model grades behind peers. Number of grades:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.2 Has repeated a grade in high school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.3 Low academic performance (a grade point of C or below or basic skills in the bottom quartile.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.4 Limited English proficiency.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.5 Did not pass the state proficiency exam.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portions which still need to be passed:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.6 Has a past record of excessive absences as verified by school officials.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.7 Has been suspended, expelled, or put on probation during high school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.8 Has dropped out previously.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Attended:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Grade Level Completed:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.1 Family environment is not conducive to education or career goals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.2/3 Mother/Father did not graduate from high school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.4/5 Mother/Father does not work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.6 Is pregnant.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.7 Has dependdnt child(ren) in the home.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.8 Is parenting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.9 Has documented alcohol or substance abuse.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.10 Convicted of a criminal offense other than a traffic violation:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offense:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.11 Has a record of violent behavior.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>E.12/13 Homeless/Runaway.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.14 Requires childcare during work or school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.1 Special education certified.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.2 Lacks motivation or maturity to pursue education or career goals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.3 Emotional disorder which impairs education or career goals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.4 Health problems which impair education or career goals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.5 Has a disability. Disability:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: BERA Guidelines

Guideline #10 (Voluntary Informed Consent)

Researchers engaged in action research must consider the extent to which their own reflective research impinges on others, for example in the case of the dual role of teacher and researcher and the impact on students and colleagues.

Guideline #13 (Right to Withdraw)

Researchers must recognize the right of any participant to withdraw from the research for any or no reason, and at anytime they must inform them of this right.

Guideline #24 (Privacy)

Researchers must comply with the legal requirements in relation to the storage and use of personal data as set down by the Data Protection Act (1998) and any subsequent similar acts. In essence people are entitled to know how and why their personal data is being stored, to what uses it is being put and to whom it may be made available. Researchers must have participants’ permission to disclose personal information to third parties and are required to ensure that such parties are permitted to have such access to the information.
## Appendix F: Peter’s Coded Interview

### Categories:
- Teacher Behaviour
- Teaching Style
- Environment
- Subject

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School #1, September ‘07</th>
<th>Subcategories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peter:</strong> Well, I think it’s because she (Mrs. P) makes me feel comfortable. When I go into the classroom, I feel like I can sit down and take out my work and if I don't have a lot of it done, or if I don't have it done at all, it’s okay. She understands. She'll give me another day to make it up or, you know what I mean?</td>
<td>Personal Connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I:  Now, do you think that it’s the teachers that you didn't like, do you think that they were doing that to you personally or do you think they do it to all the kids in class?</td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peter:</strong> Well, I'm sure they have a select few, you know, I mean it’s not like they're gonna like everybody in the course. There's a select few that they're gonna dislike and...I mean it’s all about pickin’ and choosin’ I guess...</td>
<td>Variety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I:</strong> Now, back to Mrs. P's class. Um, talk about, um, something you did in that class that would make you think it’s positive. Like, what's an assignment, what's an activity?</td>
<td>Encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peter:</strong> Oh, well we learned about Stephen King. That's what I really liked. I, like...I don't know. I never liked reading, and like for some reason, I like reading in her class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I:</strong> Now, tell me the difference between Ms. P's class and that teacher’s class, English...reading.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peter:</strong> Well...I think that that teacher was just...he'd just give you the work and say, “do it.” He wouldn't help you with it or anything…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I:</strong> Really?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peter:</strong> ...or explain it. He'd just be like, “Here's a paper, you do it, you take care of it.” I mean, he would explain it somewhat, but he was very vague, you know what I mean?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Peter: And he'd, he'd, he'd be always all around the classroom helping everybody else. He wouldn't, like, take time for you and stay with you until completely understand what you're doing. He'd just (snaps) "quick explanation and then I'm gone."

I: Do you feel like you do okay, when, when that was happening, you were taking it personally? Like...

Peter: Yeah, I mean, there's certain students that he'd pick and choose and stay there and be like, “yeah, you gotta do this and this and, you know.” And then with us, he'd just be like, “yeah, do this, that and (inaudible)...”

I: So, the opposite with Ms. P's class. You felt like she was ready to help everybody?

Peter: Yeah, she's (Mrs. P) there for everybody.

Peter: Yeah, I like to draw and other stuff and I, I don't know, I just like...like pictures. Like pictures are cool.

Peter: And like...she didn't explain it to me. She didn't really like me at first when I first joined the class. And then she got to liking me so I was like, “Oh that's really cool, cause...”

I: Tell me a little about that just a little bit. What do you think was the turn around? When do you think she started to, to get along with you?

Peter: 'Bout like a quarter of the way through the course. She (Mrs. Pw) held a grudge for a little while, cause I gave her an attitude when I got in there. And then she got over it and then we were just talkin' and she would always be helping me with assignments and stuff. So it was really cool. I mean, I thought she was goin' to fail me for sure. But she helped me out. So, that means a lot.

I: Were you finding that you were more of an artist than you thought?

Peter: Definitely. Definitely. She showed us all sorts of neat
techniques and like different ways of doing things...

--------------------

**Peter:** I mean, there's a couch in the back of the room. There's like another little couch on the side so you can just relax and, you know what I mean? It's just...I don't know.

--------------------

**Peter:** Oh yeah. Mr. B was really cool. I mean, on the side, I don't want to say, like this to be like, like hurt his career or whatever...

**I:** No, it won't (chuckles)

**Peter:** Yeah, like...he would give me answers if I really needed them. Like if I was having trouble with a problem, he'd just say, “Here's the answer,” you know?

--------------------

**I:** Tell me about the teachers who don't...why would a teacher not want you to succeed? Why do you think?

**Peter:** Maybe, sometimes...that's actually kind of weird, ‘cause I think about that sometimes too, but um...I think that maybe sometimes that they...I don't want to say this like, for sure, but **they may be jealous in a way**.

**I:** Oh yeah? Tell me about that.

**Peter:** Jealousy, maybe.

**I:** Jealous of what?

**Peter:** Jealous that, when they were younger, they had to work, work hard and hard, really hard and that I come into the class, do it all with ease, come out of the class, and just pass the course.

--------------------

**I:** So you think maybe teachers that don't want you to succeed are jealous because you seem happy here.

**Peter:** Yeah, exactly.

**I:** You think that's it?

**Peter:** Seem happier because they were in school and they **probably were miserable in high school or made fun of or picked**
I: Well, it’s funny, you checked off the in-school suspension room as a positive place.

Peter: Yeah (chuckle)

I: (chuckle) Tell me about that.

Peter: Well...when you go into that room...ah...Mr. A, he usually...he doesn't say anything to you. He just sits down. He does his job. He does what he's told...and you can just sit in there and you can get a lot of work done if you think about it because it’s so quiet in there. You can't talk to anybody. You sit in a booth. It’s almost like prison so you feel as if you have to work...

I: Do you think if people, students were assigned once a week to go into a place like that, like ISS (in school suspension) where no one was going to bother them that their grades would go up?

Peter: If, as long as the rules stay the same: no talking, like....

I: Alright, that's ah...that's some valuable advice because, you know, ISS is supposed to be a negative place, but a lot of kids go down there and they like it because they get their own sort of breathing space...

Peter: Right, exactly.

I: ...and concentration.

Peter: You don't have teachers around you, telling you what to do and...I don't know it’s just a lot better.

Peter: He's...He's (Mr. L) a laid back kind of guy. He's got that laid back personality. You know what I mean?

Peter: ...just that, “Hey, how's it going today?” (chuckles) You know what I mean? He asks you how your day was. He...he actually cares. It’s not like he doesn't care, like...

I: Right.
Peter: "...you're havin' a bad day. You can tell him anything you want. And he'll just find a way to make you happy somehow...joke...somethin'."

I: ...about his teaching, though. Tell me about the way the class is set up and the structure of the class. Is there something appealing about that?

Peter: He goes at your pace. He doesn't race along trying to get, like the course done. If you're behind, you can...he'll give you a way to catch up. There's no way he's gonna let you fail.

Peter: Even if he knows you're a bad guy, he'll give you another chance. He's not a...grudge kind of guy, I guess.

Peter: My favourite class. I like marine biology. I like all sorts of sea creatures and animals and he's (Mr. M) a very intelligent guy. He's got a doctorate in...

Peter: You felt challenged, but you didn't have that feeling, like...oh, I got to get this done, like right now. You can put it off to the side for a few days and not have to worry about it. It wasn't like (while snapping) "get it done now, get it done," you know?

I: So you could predict what was...you knew what was gonna happen when you walked in?

Peter: Right, right.

I: And is that important to you?

Peter: Yeah, definitely.

Peter: I don't know...and another thing about Mr. M...I like the fact that...you come into his classroom, the first thing he'll tell you. "I am a good teacher. If you don't do the work, that's your problem. That's your failure. You can fail if you want. Go ahead, slack off. I don't care," but he...he pretty much says you can slack off, but you're gonna fail.
## Appendix G: Ben’s Coded Interview

**Categories:** Teacher Behaviour, Teaching Style, Environment, Subject

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School #1, October 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ben:</strong> Um, because he's (Mr. B) like a younger teacher. So like, he like gets, like, the kids...like...like the environment like...you know what I mean like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ben:</strong> Like, I don't know, you could talk about like what you did on the weekend and he wouldn't really like to share it with like the other teachers...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ben:</strong> It’s probably the best class ever.</td>
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</tbody>
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| Ben: Um...well, she's like old school...like...like, back in the day kind of teaching, like... |
| **I:** Yep. |
| **Ben:** She's (Mrs. T) really strict about everything. No sleeping, no talking... |
| **I:** Mm hm. Now, is that necessarily a bad thing, though? |
| **Ben:** No. It’s...keeps kids on track and like...what school should really be about, but like...she doesn't like, understand like...some kids, like...um...I don't know how to put this, but um...like there has to be a time where like kids need to like relax in class, like... |

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| **I:** That's Mr. Lb right next door... |
| **Ben:** ...like, he's more like...enthusiastic about it, like... |
| **Ben:** Like Lb...he'll teach like...what he needs to teach, but then after that he'll like...he'll like, talk about like stuff like that's not really history, but it's history. |
| **Ben:** ...like he'll teach what he has to teach, but then like...let’s say there’s somethin' in the newspaper that's interesting, but really not about history. |
Ben: He'll let us talk about it and what not, like...

I: What is Mr. Lb's class look like?

Ben: (laughs) Kind of like a mess, but he's still like teaching. Kids are still, like... ‘cause like in Ms. T's, like...the way she teaches...most kids are just like, they're just like, “Aw, I don't want to learn,” ‘cause the way she teaches...

Ben: But like Mr. Lb makes it more interesting and like, throws in other stuff, so like...

Ben: So he makes like, learning fun so kids make...I don't know, take it more...

I: Seriously?

Ben: Yeah.

-------------

I: Alright. We're gonna ask the same questions. Now, both Mr. O’s...would you say that they're kind of like Mr. Lb?

Ben: Yeah, they're...nah...

I: Tell me what the difference is?

Ben: Yeah, well they're...they're both laid back, like...like, they're like Ms. T...like they stay on schedule, but they're laid back about it, like...

-------------

Ben: He...taught me so much about everything...like...just, not even about, like the classes...about everything, like...

I: What was the class like though? When you'd go to class, what was it like? Why did you like the class and the teacher? Give me a better picture.

Ben: Well, it's like all hands on classes, like small engine...

I: Mm hm.
Ben: ...and um...manufacturing tech, but...I don't know, he's just the kind of guy that’s...like...he rides snowmobiles, four wheelers, so...

I: You can kind of relate to him...

Ben: Yeah.

---------------

I: They teach the same subjects. What are the differences?

Ben: Um, Mr...

I: You like 'em both.

Ben: Yeah, Mr. Mac, he's strict about his work, but...that's understandable, ‘cause it’s, like, all machinery and stuff.

I: Mm hm.

Ben: So like he's really got to be, like...on task about that. But like, he really knows how to teach...like, what he's doin', like...and I really like that, ‘cause like...some teachers...like the new teacher that’s down there now, Ms. L?

I: Mm hmm.

Ben: She...she knows what she’s doing, but she's just kind of like...

I: She’s kind of new.

Ben: Like, Mr. Mac, he's old school so like he really knows what he's doing about like...like woodwork and what not...so...

Ben: ...and like they respect you more, like, ‘cause you’re working with like big machinery so...

Ben: ...like, like...I don't know, they take you as like an adult kind of down there.
I: What was he...I mean he (Mr. Mc) seems like, um...I mean I know him and I think he's really funny.

Ben: Yeah, he's...and he like, he gets along with everyone like...like...he never...I've never seen the guy mad ever in my life.

I: Really.

Ben: I never seen him yell. I've never seen him, like...get mad or anything at anyone ever.

I: But because of the teacher, you kind of got into it?

Ben: Yeah, like...there was like...there was...I remember like three girls. They were always in the corner and they were always just like, “Oh this class sucks. This class sucks.” But then, like, we had to start fires and like dehydrate food and stuff...

I: Mm Hm.

Ben: And like eventually, he made it like so they...they liked it and then they finally got into it...like, towards like the end of the semester?

I: Yep.

Ben: And they really started liking it like. Like he made it more interesting for ‘em.

Ben: Like, I've gone down there before and asked him, like, stuff about like, the woods and, like, about a plant and stuff like that.

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Ben: Mr. Gb.? He would stay there with you until, like, you figured out how to do what you had to do.

I: So, see if you remember the actual moment, or the day, where you weren't big on art, and then you realized it wasn't so bad. Is there a...was there a one thing that happened?
Ben: Yeah. Well, not really in my drawing class. But, in my ceramics class, where like, we were all making pots, and I started a pot, and it just blew out, and I was like, “Screw this!” I just got up and he came back and he helped me, and then finally when I got it, like, figured out how to actually do it.

I:  Mm Hm.

Ben: I was just like, “Yeah, this is cool. I want to make some more pots.”

I:  Cool.

Ben: Then that's like when I really got into the class.

------------------

I:  Well, what is it? I mean does she just sit and… When you go to class, does she start off with a lecture, and then you have worksheets, or ...

Ben: Well like, she has everything written down on the board, and she'll go over everything, like...and she'll like let you ask questions and...She's just so, like...I don't really know how to explain it, but she's just so like...open about everything like...

I:  And when you...so, when you come into class, you can look up at the board and you already know what's going to happen?

Ben: Yeah.

I:  ...during that class. Is that helpful?

Ben: Yeah, a lot.

I:  Why?

Ben: Because like, the class is noisy and people are talking and you can just look at the board and be like, “Aw, we’re going to do that today. Alright, let's get started on that.”

I:  So, it’s kind of good to have consistency, like... “Here's,
Here's Lb's class, I'm pretty sure I know what's going to happen..."

**Ben:** People would walk over there and sit down, talk for a little bit, and people would be over there talking and she'd just be like doing her thing...  

**I:** Mm hm.

**Ben:** Like, before class started.

**I:** Yep.

**Ben:** And it would be nice to look at the board and see what you're going to start in class.
Appendix H: Classroom Observation

Categories: Personality Teaching Style Environment Subject

9th Grade Pre-Algebra

School #1, 12 January 2008, 12:25 pm
80 minutes

I am doing this observation from the teacher’s desk which is situated adjacent to the entrance of the room. The seats are in rows to my right and I am at the front of the room. I have begun this observation about five minutes before the start of class.

The room is full of art painted directly on the wall, I assume, by students. I can see Darth Vader and Yoda, dragons, Pegasus, spiders, etc. The room has a very organic feel to it, even though the desks seem to be positioned perfectly. There is one round table in the back with four mismatched padded chairs around it. The desks are a seat/table combination that show evidence of welding and colour fading. There are a few plants by the window. Near me is a clock that is built into the wall that does not work and a cheap clock is taped to the wall on top of it. I assume this was a clock/intercom/phone combination that is outdated and broken. Mr. Libby is dressed in jeans, a white shirt and cowboy boots.

12:30

Mr. Libby is standing at a podium talking

Organized - The desk is organized and I sat in a big leather chair.

Comfortable - Compared to other classrooms in the building, this room has an appealing atmosphere. Even though the desks seem uncomfortable, students seem at ease here.

It's unfortunate that the desks are in such bad shape. I couldn't imagine sitting on them for 80 minutes. A lot of the classroom accessories are out of date or broken. It seems as though some of the artwork is covering other broken items.

Laid back - Mr. Libby is dressed casually and looks like he hasn’t shaved in a few days. It seems to fit his personality. He uses words like “cool” and “nice” quite often whilst teaching. He is loud and is always smiling.

Personal Connection - The student with whom Mr. Libby is speaking seems to be
to a student from a previous class about computer graphics. A male student who looks to be about 16 says, “So we might be converting to Mac’s soon? That sucks ‘cause I’ll be graduated by then.” Mr. Libby is holding a cane as he speaks with both hands behind his back. Students are beginning to enter the class and they seem to hover around the front of the room where Mr. Libby is standing. A female student has some forms for him to sign and he simultaneously finishes his computer conversation and takes the form from the female student. She looks concerned that he might not sign it. He yells out, “A field trip? I’m not sure about this.” She doesn’t know whether to take his seriously and replies nervously that she is all caught up. She is not smiling even though Mr. Libby is clearly being sarcastic. “Yeah, why not,” he says and signs the form on the podium. The female student exhales and smiles: “I thought you were serious for a minute.”

More students file in and a few male students (who look older than the rest) run to the back table and argue over the seats at the round table. Even though there are four students and four seats, the argument seems to be over who will get the seat by the window. Mr. Libby says, “JB you had it yesterday, let’s all share.” JB doesn’t really seem to care but plays along as if he’s really offended. Other students have made their way in and seem to be gravitating to specific seats. The older looking students must be able to sit where they like, whilst younger students have assigned seats. If there are older students in this class, they are probably repeating it.

Empathy- This student seems like she is not used to Mr. Libby’s personality and is uncomfortable talking to him casually. Mr. Libby immediately makes an attempt to make her feel at ease.

I’m wondering if Mr. Libby purposely ignores them.

The students in class actually seem to be annoyed by the older students.
Some students are retrieving textbooks from under their seats whilst others are taking them out of their backpacks. Immediately, Mr. Libby notices that a student has taken a book out of his backpack and it is not covered. “R, what did I say would happen if you showed up to class without your book covered?” R shrugs his shoulders. “See you after school.” Mr. Libby sounds like a loudspeaker when he talks. It almost sounds robotic and monotone, but on purpose as if he is impersonating a cartoon character. R mumbles something under his breath.

The bell rings and most of the students are in their seats. A few students are still taking things out of their bags. Mr. Libby is standing at the podium leafing through the teacher’s edition of a textbook. He keeps referring to the page numbers written on the board behind him. A student tries to guide him: “I think we’re past that. I think we’re on the next chapter.” Mr. Libby does not acknowledge the student and continues to search for his place. Most of the students are sitting quietly looking for homework assignments. The students at the back round table are not taking their books out. Two of them are leaning back in the chairs and securing themselves against the wall, whilst the other two are talking about their plan to skip an assembly scheduled for tomorrow during this period. Mr. Libby seems to catch on to what they are saying: “Can you guys

**Rules/Expectations** - Book covering seems to be very important in this class. Mr. Libby seems to be very frustrated. I almost feel like R is doing this on purpose to get attention.

**Confident** - Mr. Libby’s voice is very commanding yet somehow unthreatening. I think, however, that some students can’t tell when he’s angry. If this is a tactic to keep the students guessing, it works.

**Organized** - Most students looked at the board when they walked in, I assume, to see the day’s assignments. It seems like this is a regular occurrence.

**Personal Connection** - Even though these students seem to be a disruption, they definitely feel comfortable talking to Mr. Libby as if he is their equal. They seem
afford to get caught?” JB replies, “L, it’s going to be so freakin’ boring!” Other students in the class also begin to talk about how they would rather stay in this class than go to the assembly. One student says, “C’mon L, we can watch a movie or something.”

Mr. Libby ends the conversation by starting the lesson. His voice is very loud and he sounds like an auctioneer. “Okay! Turn to page 112!” Students begin to turn pages. There are 24 students in the class. A few of them in the back row put their heads down. “Take out last night’s homework!” Some students already have their homework out whilst others are still searching. Mr. Libby tells the students they will begin on the left side of the room. A student tells Mr. Libby that they started on this side last time. Mr. Libby affirms this and he begins on the right. Mr. Libby writes a problem on the board from page 112 and students give the answers using their homework assignments as a guide. He starts with the row closest to me and proceeds down each row. It proceeds like this: Mr. Libby puts the problem up on the board, reads it, and yells a student’s name and the student attempts to answer it. On the few occasions where a student is incorrect, he refers back to the board and works on it with the student. R does not have his homework completed; yet, Mr. Libby still makes him do the problem. When the student finally gets it right, Mr. Libby says, “Good, but I need to see you after school.” This process continues for approximately 20 minutes. Students are generally paying attention except the students at the back round table who seem to be doing their own thing and not really disrupting the class. One student in

like they could cross the line but never do.

I wonder why L doesn’t acknowledge them.

**Predictable**- All students seem to know the routine when they enter class. This almost seems necessary as half the students look worn out and this is the last block of the day. Students seem to enjoy helping Mr. Libby, even though he doesn’t seem to need it.

**Organized**- I thought that some students would be bothered by this routine, since it seems to put them on the spot. It all flowed well and students generally seem to want to succeed. I was hoping this would happen.

**Respect**- I’m not sure how positive this is, but there definitely seems to be a mutual respect between these students and Mr. Libby. I think he is either choosing his battles or protecting the rest of the student from distraction.
the back row is still sleeping.

1:00

The student at the back table doesn’t seem to be participating and Mr. Libby doesn’t seem to be bothered by this. One of these students says he is going to the toilet and Mr. Libby points to a clipboard near the door. The student signs his name, looks at the clock and writes down the time. A student from the table says, “He ain’t comin’ back.” Mr. Libby says, “That’s okay with me.” The students at the back table laugh.

“Okay, everybody let’s go from where we left off yesterday, don’t forget tomorrow’s Friday and we have a quiz.” A student informs him that there is an assembly during this block tomorrow. Mr. Libby says that the assembly isn’t until 1:00, which, he says, is “plenty of time for a quiz.”

Mr. Libby erases the dry-erase board and writes “F. O. I. L.” He tells the class that these initials will “save their lives” as they begin to tackle more complex equations. He shows the class an example of what they will soon be studying. The class almost has a collective sigh. The students at the back table seem to indicate that this is where they began to fail the last time they took the course. They are mumbling and leaning back in their chairs. Mr. Libby says, “Did you think I was going to skip this part for you?” JB is getting frustrated and he has closed his textbook. The other students seem to be interested.

**Rules/Expectations** I assume that Mr. Libby really enforced this process at the beginning of the year.

**Humour** On paper this looks like it was insulting, but it was actually funny and the student knew he was kidding.

Mr. Libby has everything planned out so I wonder why students continuously want to help him sort things out.

I remember this from my own school experiences.

**Encouragement** JB’s mood has changed dramatically and he really seems to be upset. The relationship between Mr. Libby and these students is becoming clearer. Obviously, they’ve been in this class before and have failed. My guess is that Mr. Libby is only making them responsible for certain parts of the course and these students are entering the section where they began to get lost last.
in this exchange and some of them are now looking back at the round table and smiling. Mr. Libby seems to want to stop the exchange and says, “C’mon JB, we’ll get through this!”

1:10

The problem on the board is:

(4+8x)(7+3b)

He asks: “Can anyone guess what F.O.I.L. might stand for?”

Another student seems to remember this from last semester. He guesses that the “F” stands for “first” but he doesn’t seem to remember the rest. Mr. Libby asks the class what the other letters might stand for: “If ‘F’ stands for ‘first’ what might some of the other letters stand for?” He puts his hand near the “L” and a few students blurt out “last.” The student who left for the bathroom has now returned. He signs the clipboard again and passes in the front of the class. As he passes, he notices what’s being written on the board and he yells out “first, outer, inner, last.” Mr. Libby replies, “Now you remember!” The student laughs. Mr. Libby explains the acronym using the example on the board:

“Using this equation, ‘first’ would be 4 and 7, what would ‘last’ be?” Students answer each part of the acronym correctly. Mr. Libby then demonstrates how to complete the equation step by step.

Encouragement - The mood at the back table is back to its original status due, I think, to this exchange. It’s a fine line with these students, and Mr. Libby seems to know how to balance humour and encouragement whilst maintaining a steady pace.

Humour - This was actually very funny. It almost seemed like it was planned.

I’m not sure if Mr. Libby requires them to do this or if he just encourages them to.
step. Students seem to be writing down the steps he is demonstrating in their notebooks. The same student who did not have his book covered (R) is not writing anything down and the same student, who was sleeping in the back row, is still asleep. Mr. Libby acknowledges R and tells him that he should probably write this down. R shrugs his shoulders and mumbles that he doesn’t have paper or a pen. Mr. Libby asks him where his notebook is and “R” shrugs his shoulders. Mr. Libby asks the student in front of R if she can give him a piece of paper and let him borrow a pencil. The student complies and R seems annoyed by this. He exhales loudly.

1:25

Mr. Libby instructs the students to open their textbooks to the next page where students find a new unit. He continues the lesson by using examples from the book and demonstrating them on the dry-erase board. Students seem to be following and this continues for about 10 minutes. The students at the back table are also doing the same and the class is relatively quiet. There are students outside the class doing something with long strips of poster paper. Occasionally you can hear a bit of laughing. Now and then some students are distracted by this.

1:35

“Okay, here tonight’s assignment.” When Mr. Libby finished the last assignment in the text, he handed out a worksheet with

Laid back- Mr. Libby never loses his cool with R. There is something almost robotic about the way he handles this. He leaves no room for R to take the situation over, doesn’t show any sign of anger and keeps teaching as if nothing happened.

Comfortable- Students seem too calm about the amount of work they are putting in. No one is complaining. I wonder if they like the routine or if they simply want to impress Mr. Libby. Students seem to want to be on his good side or at least have the opportunity to talk to him socially.
10 problems that ask students to demonstrate the F.O.I.L method. “Okay, start this now and if you have any questions raise your hand and I will come around.” Immediately, the students at the round table start helping each other whilst the rest of the class works quietly. Occasionally a student will raise their hand and usually the question is, “Is this right?” Mr. Libby has to remind the students that they need to show each step. He praises each student he speaks to. He comes to the round table and asks the students how they’re doing. He looks at their worksheets and says, “I’m okay with you doing your work like this, but I’m worried about how you will do on your tests.” JB says, “It’s all good L, it’s all good.”

1:50

Mr. Libby announces that there will be a quiz tomorrow even though there is a scheduled assembly. He reminds students on what they will be quizzed and informs them that what they learned today will appear as a bonus question. Then he says, “I need to see R and M (sleeping student) before you leave today.” Mr. Libby looks at me and indicates that he will need his desk area. As those students come to his desk and I collect my things, the afternoon announcements come on and students begin to pack their books.

Cooperative- I’m not sure if these students have special permission, but Mr. Libby doesn’t seem to be bothered. It seems to work. I am also wondering why other students don’t interpret this is as playing favorites.

Organized- Students were writing this down. It seems to help when they know what to expect.

I’m glad this is happening.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Interview</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 2007</td>
<td>Students remained still and quiet at the beginning of this meeting. When I wrote the name of the fifth teacher on the dry erase board it felt as if I was doing a magic trick: the participants breathed in and exhaled when Mr. R was revealed in their top five teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abridged</td>
<td>Students seemed to emphasize the independent nature of his class perhaps more than they did in the interviews.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I’m going to start with #5. Now if you’ve had this teacher, I want you to raise your hand and feel free to talk about that teacher’s class.

Mr. R

So here we go, #5

(Writes “Mr. R” on the chalkboard)

Can anybody talk about this class?

I love Mr. R, he’s probably one of my favorite teachers. He doesn’t let you do what you want, but he doesn’t shelter you. He doesn’t like, tell you what to do, he just lets you work on your own. It’s your choice if you want to get work done or not and he’s not on your back the whole time.

He’s helpful.

He’s friendly.

But why is that important? How does being friendly help you? If I taught math, all I have to say is “here’s how it’s done.” Why do I have to be like, “Hey, how was your weekend? That’s good. How is your family? That’s great. X=2.” (laughter)

Here is an example of students engaging in their own discussion, trying to make sense of the term “comfortable.”
It makes you comfortable.
It shows they care. It makes you feel safe.

Mr. Mc

Are you ready to hear #4?
(Writes the name on the board)
I love him!

Can anybody speak about Mr. Mc’s class?

Basically he wouldn’t give a crap if you worked or not ‘cause it’s your own choice. But he just wanted you to try.

What if you just walked into that class and put your head down?

He wouldn’t care. Because he says that it’s your future you’re ruining. He has no effect on it.

What would we call that, if he were giving you that choice?

Freedom.
Did you see a lot of people doing that?
No.
Anybody else?

He talks a lot though. We take a lot of notes in his class. And when we’re not taking a lot of notes, we’re watching movies.

That’s what I didn’t like about it.

Too much work?
No, like, he talked too much.

The participants confirmed the “failure” speech that the participants consistently noted in their interviews. One participant pushed the boundaries of the meaning of this speech from independence to “freedom.”

I assume here that Mr. Mc’s “talk” was course-related lectures and not anecdotes or random stories.

Again, I enjoyed my freedom to expound on various topics and as well as the freedom to clarify certain comments.
Well if you liked Mr. R based on his personality, what was Mr. Mc’s personality like? If a lot of people did say they liked that class, I find it hard to believe that is was because he gave a lot of work and you had options. It must have been something else.

*He made jokes sometimes. He made, like, comments about his wife.*

He’s funny?

*Yeah, he’d make fun of his wife sometimes and say that, like... because, like, he teaches marine biology/marine science, he’d be like “My wife is as big as a whale,” but his wife is, like 50 pounds.*

*I think he looks like the doctor from Jurassic Park.*

Yes, he does!

*No, he IS the doctor from Jurassic Park.*

---

**Mr. Lb**

Ok, #3

(writes on the board)

*I love Mr. Lb!*

*He pays attention.*

*He pays attention to you?*

*Mm hmm.*

In the interviews students also said that they like the structure of his class.

*It always started out with current events.*

A lot of students said that they liked knowing what was going to happen before they walked in the room. Tell me if this is true. Students said that teachers who put on the...
board what they’re going to do for the entire week is very important to them.

So they won’t get lost.

What else can we say about Mr. Lb?

He’s down to earth.

He’s always trying to fight me. Like in the hallway. I’ll be walking by and he’ll put his fists up like he wants to fight.

Mr. L

Who do you think is #2?

Mr. L!

Let me prompt you again. A lot of students said that they feel like if they had a problem, they could talk to him.

You can. He’s very open.

He can relate to you.

How can he relate to you?

He’s like a kid.

Let’s go back to the word SB mentioned, “safe”.

It’s kind of like being in your own home.

Why is that important?

Because he treats everybody the same.

That came up a lot. How does that relate to being safe?

You don’t feel targeted. They don’t play favorites.

Why is that important to you?

investigate this further. I remember being happy with the way this meeting was moving and perhaps I felt overconfident.

These comments also confirm earlier descriptions of Mr. Lb in the hallway talking and playing with students.

I was surprised that students were able to guess that the second most identified teacher in the study was Mr. L. Either they each remembered speaking about him during the interview (which is unlikely) or Mr. L’s place in the study is an obvious choice to the participants.

I had a feeling students would immediately mention his personality. I believe the next few comments from the participants add additional information to the study.
So they don’t feel left out.

Can teachers do that without even knowing it? Give me an example.

*Letting someone get away with not doing homework when another student gets in trouble for not doing it.*

Have you ever been in a class where a teacher has favorites?

*Oh yeah.*

*Usually, it’s the sports kids like with Mr. (cuts herself off).*

*Usually, it’s the popular kids too.*

Talk to me about the teachers we’ve mentioned so far and rules. All of these teachers seem like rule-breakers.

*They know when to be strict and they know when to be lenient.*

When is it too much?

*When you keep giving them warning, after warning, after warning and they’re still not working and they keep getting away with it every time.*

Mr. F

Ok, are you ready for #1?

(writes name on the chalkboard)

*Oh, I love Mr. F!*

I’m going to pick on you because you haven’t said much. When did you have him?

*I had him last year.*

I actually sat in on one of his classes. He does some

This statement is very profound and could have several different meanings.

Fair treatment and not playing favorites certainly adds more weight to research in empathy, as does “not feeling left out.”

The participants seem to be very aware of to whom the teacher is paying more attention.

They also seem to believe that they are a certain “type” of student in a school that has many social groups.

Again, they “love” the teacher.

I wanted to speak to a participant who seemed
pretty deep stuff, and kids love this guy. Why?

*He makes everything into a joke.*

How does that help you to learn English?

*He’s not boring.*

Give me an example of something he might do… that might make you laugh.

*He would make fun of certain poets. Like if we were doing Walt Whitman, he might say that we might like him even though he’s a loser.*

I heard he makes fun of students a lot.

*Oh yes! (says student’s name)*

Now if he picks on a student would they know he’s kidding around?

*Yes.*

How does he (Mr. F) get away with that?

*Kids just know he’s joking around.*

Yes, but how do you know that?

*Because he does it every day. Like, we’ll pick on him and he’ll pick on us.*

Let me give you a quote from one of the interviews. “I like Mr. F because he’s like one of us.”

*He is. He’s like a kid.*

Can we think of one more word for Mr. F?

*Smart.*

Is it important that your teacher knows about their subject area? How can you tell if a teacher doesn’t?

*Because they keep looking at the book.*

Do you have a book for that class?

*No. I don’t think so. We look at a book once in awhile and then we look at poems or something.*

Mr. F seems to have a talent for easing students into literature most students might find difficult. His use of humour in this area seems to alleviate anxieties for students who find literature boring.

I was curious about this because I heard about his teasing quite often in the interviews.

The participants mentioned in the interviews that Mr. F allowed students to tease him back and that it’s a common occurrence.

These comments are similar to Mr. L and Mr. Lb.

Intelligence and confidence were mentioned as positive attributes for Mr. Mc and M. L.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is it a class you could say you look forward to?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yeah, even though I don’t like English, he made it interesting. We’d have class discussions and everyone would get involved.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Captures your attention.

This is another example of cooperative learning.
### Appendix J: Research Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Research Areas</th>
<th>Participant Influence</th>
<th>Teacher Influence</th>
<th>Researcher influence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abuse</td>
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<td>Academic Intervention</td>
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