"THEY MADE ME MEAN": STUDENTS IN THE MARGINS SPEAK OUT AGAINST UNFAIR SCHOOL PRACTICES

by

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The purpose of this investigation was to amplify the "voices" of students in the margins to better understand their perceptions toward school and the relationships they have with the significant adults in their lives. Children and adolescents from the underclass/working class, middle class, and the privileged/overclass were interviewed in order to gain insight into what they perceived their relationship with the significant adults in their lives to be like and how those relationships affected their lived experiences. The narratives of these students were analyzed to identify the discriminatory practices of educators based on what socio-economic class a student belongs.

Narrative research methodology was used to collect each student's narrative. Narrative research was used to give "voice" to these students that are excluded and marginalized by the adults in their schools. The students' stories were analyzed. Phenomenological themes emerged that reflected the experiences and "voices" of the students.

These students' stories revealed that their successes and failures were the result of positive and negative relationships with significant adults at

home and at school. Unfair school practices were magnified through the students' narratives. These students told that they were treated differently by the adults at school depending on which socio-economic class they were in.

This research verified that students who participate in "inclusive" classrooms sustain a higher level of personal satisfaction and perceive that the quality and effectiveness are much greater than in pull-out programs. There are implications for future research provided by this study: 1) pilot programs, 2) staff development, 3) test scores, and 4) case studies-- "voices" of parents, teachers and students. Utilizing the narratives of these students and initiating future research on inclusive practices will help more students experience school success and lower the dropout rate.

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CHAPTER I

DEFINING "WHO?," "WHAT?," AND "WHY?"

Introduction

Each year teachers work harder; students work harder; curriculum is aligned, tests are given; and scores are received. Disappointed again at not seeing more improvement, teachers become more frustrated. This research will hopefully provide a new approach to becoming more effective in efforts to help students experience success in school.

For many children, school is a humiliating and frustrating experience. Ultimately, the children who experience such feelings of inadequacy because of their inability to master the school's expectations for them, become school dropouts, discipline problems, and/or underachievers. In many cases these are children who have been misunderstood and mismanaged by the school system.

Tracking is still predominantly used in middle schools and high schools even though research has shown that it does not improve academic achievement nor does it increase positive school attitudes (Oakes, 1985).

Tracking is still used because of the belief that it promotes equality--different leveling practices are geared toward individual student needs. Equality is not promoted; tracking only advances the discriminatory practices in society. Students already alienated by the school experience because of race, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic class, are even more adversely affected by the use of tracking in the school system.

Students placed in Learning Disabled and Emotionally Handicapped classrooms are not becoming successful. One in four of these students drop out of school (Hines, 1994). Tracking helps to sort and classify students based on unfair and ineffective policies which advocate society's practice of stratifying people based on class, race, gender and ethnicity.

Statement of the Problem

Passage of compulsory education laws in the 1800s created legislation that stated that children between the ages of four and twenty years be provided a free education (Dunn, 1968; Melcher, 1976). Now in the 1990s legislation can mandate that equal access be enforced, but it cannot guarantee equal outcomes. Ryan (1981) states that "the structures of social arrangements, carved through capitalism, institutionalized racism, sexism, and

handicapism guarantee unequal outcomes-- despite and through public education." Various advocates have strongly indicated a need for school systems to change. There are divergent opinions being offered as to how this change should occur, but most are related to the issue of inclusion. These zealous reformers hope to inadvertently change society through school reform.

Much focus has been concerned with the ever increasing number of "at risk" students. The high student dropout rate is affecting the economic and social spheres of American society. Schools are faced with a much more diverse population of students. Many students have unusual needs that are causing schools and teachers to question their abilities to meet the demanding challenges presented to them.

Schools are slow to change when the cries of reform come predominantly from those who are most oppressed. Discriminatory practices and policies continue to plague schools because of the benefits enjoyed by the people in the dominant power structure. Schools do not create these racists practices, but they perpetuate them through silencing the "voices" of critique.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze the narratives of labeled students of all ages to gain their perspectives when interpreting the relationships that appeared to have affected their school experiences, curriculum knowledge and sense of "self". Much legislation and policies have often been aimed at eradicating inequities and inequalities in schools. This study was an opportunity to obtain critical information from the students most disempowered in an attempt to provide hope of remediation and change.

The Students

Who?

I chose to interview elementary and middle school children because I felt that students in this age range are still hopeful about the future. I was adamant about including female students and black students since these groups are usually ignored. I also interviewed four women who had dropped out of school to see if the reasons they gave matched the reasons the younger students offered as to why students drop out. When I had finished, I had interviewed nineteen people. The subjects ranged in age from eight to seventy-nine years old.

Why?

I had formulated some interesting questions during my teaching career and during my graduate school studies that I felt needed to be answered: How does the relationship between the student and adults affect the student's ideology about this relationship? at home? at school? How do students make meaning and sense of the world in order to survive? What effect does the parent(s)' work have on the student's attitude? How do they develop their own sense of self? Does school cultivate a student's personality based on socio-economic class? how? I knew that I would have to listen to what the students had to say in order to find the answers.

What do they care about?

These marginalized students are figuratively and literally separated from others. They tell of their sense of separation and retain hopes of being "normal". Self-consciousness and experience make them see themselves in relation to the managers of their lives. They know what they want for themselves. They want acceptance, a better education and a more nurturing, supportive environment.

Through caring and love, students will begin to hope, build dreams and reconstruct their worlds. They will learn to build relationships founded on duty, love, and respect. They will learn to interpret these relationships with a new openness that is focused on the responsibility each person has for the other. This kind of community cannot be established in a standardized classroom, but only in a class where material is continually open to all to interpret. Textbooks are not the focus in this type of classroom. The focus in this type of classroom is on the self and others.

Definitions

Race

I define race through a particular interpretive discourse. I listen to the language a person uses to get a sense of their values and conflicting areas. Defining race is more complex than the simple instruction I learned as a child. Race is an evolving product-- one that is never static. I believe that race is socially constructed. Race is changeable and multi-dimensional. The differences that do exist are primarily based on one's experiences within a particular ethnic group culture.

Socio-Economic Class

Jean Anyon (1980) states that a person's socio-economic class is not totally defined by one's income or by how much money one makes. Social class, according to Anyon (1980) is defined through "a series of relationships". Using Anyon (1980) as a guide, I then categorized the students in my study and their parent(s) into socio-economic classes based on economic variables and the values they espoused. I have placed the students in my study into three categories: 1) underclass/working class, 2) middle class, and 3) overclass/privileged.

Underclass / Working Class

The students that are in the "underclass / working class" category have no rigid future plans for their lives. They are more flexible and resilient. All of the students either do not know who their father is or their father is hardly ever around. They cite drugs, pregnancy, parents in jail, boredom and having to repeat a grade as reasons for dropping out of school. They believe that schools need more strict teachers and students should become more obedient. All of the students conclude that a good education will lead to success. A majority of the mothers work full-time in mills. Some work part-time as

waitresses or in motels. These parents have been on welfare at some point in their adult lives and some continue to receive welfare assistance. There seems to be a cycle of on and off welfare that cannot be broken.

Middle Class

The students I classify as "middle class" are acutely conscious of test scores and the impact they have on the school's image. Most of the students believe that the teacher is not always at fault. They offer excuses for the teacher when students misbehave and fail to learn. They are acquisitive-- and credential conscious. To these students, possession is synonymous with success. The majority of their parents are divorced and remarried, but the children still have contact with both natural parents. Both parents work outside of the home. Occupations include; construction, policeman and office jobs.

Overclass/Privileged

The third classification is "overclass/privileged". The students in this category have a neat and tidy sequence of plans for their future. They are extremely conscious of accumulating credentials and objects. They assume

that they are entitled to the best the school has to offer. They feel comfortable questioning authority. The parents' jobs are more influential. Jobs include; teacher, social worker, supervisor and executive.

At-riskness

Many definitions are used in an attempt to define or describe the characteristics of students who are destined to drop out or likely to fall short of the school's intended purposes. Those from economically disadvantaged families and students of color are most likely to be considered at risk, although between 25 and 32 % of all students in the United States are seriously at risk according to a comprehensive national study (Frymier and Gansneder, 1989). Even though race, ethnicity, socio-economic class and limited English ability may be risk factors for school success, most students that were identified as "at risk" in the national study were white and middle class.

There are a multiplicity of factors that have been attributed to the at-risk population. These factors may be used as early as third grade to predict which students will eventually drop out (Slavin, 1989). Also, according to Pallas, Natriello, and McDill (1989) specific factors such as a person's race,

his or her parents' educational background or only having a single parent in the home, is closely associated with being at risk. These variables are closely related and not easily isolated, therefore, making all the relationships causal.

A study by Trueba (1988), highlights an even greater problem. There are students who exhibit all of the previously mentioned conditions, yet are still very successful in their school careers. There is negative evidence that reveals that the dropout rate among white students in Chicago is 38 percent (Hahn, 1987). These findings have led to research that proposes a social constructivist model to explain at riskness (Richardson, Casanova, Placier, and Guilfoyle, 1989). Richardson and her colleagues report that their data demonstrates that the identifying factors of at riskness vary from classroom over time. The focus in this model is not solely on the student, but rather on the interaction between the student and his or her environment.

Whatever definition is used to determine at-riskness, the number of at risk students is growing increasingly larger each year. The statistics reported by the popular press are alarming:

- Each year 700,000 students drop out of high school, costing the nation more than $240 billion in lost

earnings and foregone taxes.

- Dropout rates for black and Hispanic youth are two times greater than the white student dropout rate.
- A third of high school graduates cannot order two items from a lunch menu and then calculate how much change they are owed after paying the cashier three dollars.
- By the year 2000, the bulk of the labor force will come from minority-group students; nearly 40 percent of those students are now considered functionally illiterate.
- In many urban areas 40 to 50 percent of black teenagers are unemployed; at times the amount has risen to 70 percent.
- Every year nearly half a million teenagers give birth; half of these teenagers never complete high school; many end up on welfare.

- Ninety percent of black teenage mothers are unmarried at the time of their child's birth; only 33 percent eventually marry.

These statistics come from the *Wall Street Journal* (February, 1990); *Newsweek* (June, 1990); *U.S. News & World Report* (June, 1989, pp. 4-53).

The majority of my last year in school was devoted to reducing the dropout rate. I helped develop two important programs in my former elementary school. The first program was designed to implement current technological advances within the school program. This would gradually occur over a five year period. The impetus was to introduce elementary students to the most up-to-date technology and methodologies in order to promote a higher rate of success. It was believed that the more successful experiences a student received the less likely he or she would be to drop out later in his or her school career.

The second project was aimed at early identification and early intervention of at-risk students. We (the group of teachers and counselors working on the committee) asked, "Who is at risk?" and we gave the following answers based on our experiences: Children whose parents did not

finish high school, children who do not do well academically, children who come from single parent homes, children from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and children who have been referred repeatedly to the principal's office for discipline problems.

But when the same question was asked of parents, they responded differently. They stated that students dropped out of school because: there are conflicts between student and the teacher, frustration due to being too far behind and not being able to catch-up with the others, and because the school failed to teach sufficient skills.

School personnel tend to blame the parents and students. Those outside of the school tend to blame the school. Instead of shifting blame, we need to search for better answers and a greater understanding of the problem. The search for understanding has led me to the students themselves. Perhaps the knowledge educators need will be supplied through listening to their stories. Knowledge comes through interactions with other people. Huebner (1984, p.121) sees knowledge as an "...invitation to join hands with someone else in their involvements..." It is "a relationship with something that was, at

one time, strange." By including the students' voices, I believe it can change their futures.

While the numbers of dropouts are increasing, the ongoing problem of determining causes continues. This particular dissertation hopes to show that the notion of drop outs should be understood less as a matter of individual failure and more as the consequence of a social process that is concerned with the production of inequality and hierarchy. Students that are at risk of educational failure come from all ethnic backgrounds, socio-economic classes, races, and include students of both gender. According to Sinclair and Ghory (1987) the term "marginalized" is a more accurate than the term, "at risk". Referring to these students as marginalized implies that the conditions leading to school failure are found within the learning environments rather than within the students themselves. Perhaps the notion of students at risk will disappear and schools will begin to focus on the school policies and practices that put students at risk.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

The purpose of this literature review is to explore relevant research on *inclusion*. There is a nationwide move toward inclusion and as it builds momentum, many questions begin to emerge. Thus, much controversy on whether "inclusion" is a good idea has provoked much debate with very few answers. The research is divided into the following sections: 1) Chronological history of inclusion, 2) Theoretical foundations for inclusion, 3) Practical problems with inclusion, 4) Implementation strategies, and 5) How it relates to my problem.

Chronological History of Inclusion

Publicly supported special school programs began with the passage of compulsory education laws in the 1800s (Dunn, 1968). The legislation stated that all children between the ages of four and twenty years be provided a free education (Melcher, 1976), but it was more than a century before legislation guaranteeing fulfillment of this promise was enacted. Much litigation and

federal legislation was needed in order to improve the educational opportunities for America's handicapped children.

The Cooperative Research Act was passed in 1954 and then implemented in 1957. Sixty-six per cent of the $1 million that was appropriated for the act was directed to be spent on research relating to the education of the mentally retarded. Also in 1957, the National Defense Education Act was enacted. This act recognized that monies should be provided for extra services for exceptional and gifted students.

By the 1960s, the federal government had increased its involvement in special education services. In 1961 the passage of Public Law 87-276 gave federal support for training teachers of the deaf, the visually impaired, the speech impaired, the emotionally disturbed, and the crippled. Federal aid to education was solidly established with the passage of Public Law 89-750, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In 1965, 1966, and 1967 amendments gave monetary assistance to states providing services to handicapped students and funded the expansion of special education programs. The Handicapped Children's Early Education Assistance Act of 1968, the Vocation Education Amendment of 1968, and the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act amendment of 1969 provided a certain percentage of vocational funds be spent for the handicapped and authorized technical assistance to programs for the gifted as well as fund research projects for the specific learning disabled.

The legislation in the 1970s reformed education and opened the door to new educational rights and opportunities for handicapped students. Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Amendments of 1974 was the first federal civil rights law enacted specifically to protect the rights of handicapped individuals. Education services for the handicapped became a civil right protected under Section 504. In 1975, Public Law 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) was enacted. It guaranteed a free, appropriate education to every handicapped individual. Public Law 94-142 mandated: (1) provision of educational services in the least restrictive environment, nondiscriminatory evaluations and placements, and (3) due process protection procedures (LaVor, 1977). This began the joint venture between both general education and special education. The concept of "least restrictive environment" was mandated and students that were identified could be placed in a special education classroom only when

the disability interfered with the successful attainment of his or her education with supportive services in a regular education classroom.

Twenty years after the passage of Public Law 94-142, many students are still denied services in general education classrooms. According to Justine Maloney (1995), in the 1990-91 school year, less than 30 percent of students with multiple disabilities and/or mental retardation received their education in either the general education classroom or a resource room. Approximately 76 percent of students with learning disabilities received their education in those settings. Since the passage of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act in 1975, most special education services have been provided through pull-out programs (e.g., resource rooms).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA) strongly encouraged schools to provide appropriate education for students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. With the passage of IDEA, the federal government requires that schools make a significant effort to place students with disabilities in general education classrooms or *inclusive* environments even if they cannot do the work if there is a potential social benefit.

Recently parents have begun to use the courts to force reluctant school systems to include their children in general education classrooms. There is increasing enforcement of Section 504 and IDEA. Several federal court cases have caused a push toward inclusion or more integration into general education classrooms. In one federal court case, Board of Education, Sacramento City Unified School District v. Holland, 786 F. Supp. 874 (ED Cal. 1992), the court ordered a school district to place a child with an IQ of 44 in a general education classroom. Another federal court case, Oberti v. Board of Education of the Borough of Clementon School District, 789 F. Supp. 1322 (D.N.J. 1992), the court rejected the school district's argument that a disruptive child would impair the learning of other children. Such developments in the federal court system cases tend to influence future precedents as evidenced by Connecticut's State Board of Education's decision to blend special education and general education into "a unified and coordinated system of education" (Zirkel and Gluckman, 1993, p. 96) for all students.

In response to these recent developments, various advocates have indicated a need for school systems to change. There are divergent opinions and solutions being offered and most are related to the issue of inclusion.

Theoretical Foundations for Inclusion

Inclusionists have resorted to using the Supreme Court case, Brown v. Board of Education, which declared racially segregated schools unconstitutional, to illustrate that special education placements are unconstitutional. They argue that separate placements brand students, cause low expectations-- from teachers and students, and add to poor school performance because it reinforces the student's feelings of inadequacy. Special education is seen as the moral equivalent of apartheid (Lipsky and Gartner, 1987) and slavery (Stainback and Stainback, 1988).

Historically, special education has served as the "dumping ground" for students that are labeled "undesirable" and "unteachable." Students with special needs are usually viewed to be the most undesirable and unteachable students, therefore, being educated separate from the mainstream student. Eliminating separate placements will force general education teachers to deal

with special-needs students. In the process, regular education classrooms can hopefully be transformed into a "more resourceful and humane system" (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995).

Inclusion embraces an educational philosophy based on the belief that all children regardless of ability, language background, culture, race, gender, or special need should participate in their school community (Friend and Cook, 1993). An unequal number of students receiving services are members of racial and ethnic minorities (Heller, Holtzman, and Messick, 1982). Schools must be reformed so that special and general education is appropriate and clearly the main resource for all students. The Librarian of Congress Emeritus Daniel J. Boorstin once said, "The menace to America today is in the emphasis on what separates us rather than on what brings us together." This emphasis on separateness is evident in public schools. Special education programs label children for the special places they go to and the kinds of disabilities they have.

Approximately two decades ago, Featherstone stated that "schools that carelessly mislabel poor children are very likely going to mislabel middle-class children as dyslexic or hyperkernetic" (1975, p.14). Today the terms

"learning disabled" and "attention-deficit disordered" are used. More than half of the students receiving special education today are labeled *learning disabled.* The number of students served each year under EHA has grown each year. Between the first child count done by the U.S. Department of Education in 1976-1977 and 1987-1988, there has been an increase of 785,367 children or 17.5 % (see U.S. Department of Education, 1989, table 1, p.3). Also between 1988 and 1990, the number of special education teachers employed in cross-categorical programs increased by 131 percent (Wang, Reynolds, and Walberg, 1993). Students are being referred for evaluation and possible special education placement more and more often (e.g., Fuchs and Fuchs, 1988; Gottlieb, Alter, and Gottlieb, in press; Research for Better Schools, 1986, 1988). Advocates, parents, and lay people are starting to wonder why so many students are placed in special education programs (e.g., Gerber and Semmel, 1984; Shepard and Smith, 1983; U.S. Department of Education, 1984).

Early research on inclusion was prompted by a report of the National Academy of Sciences (Heller et al., 1982). The panel stated that classifying and placing students in special education classrooms was "ineffective" and

"discriminatory." In the 1980s, several studies revealed that accurate classification of students is extremely difficult and that systems for placing students in special education programs are grossly imperfect (Reschly 1987, Wang et al. 1992, Ysseldyke 1987). Substantial evidence since the enactment of EHA has shown that segregation of special-needs students into separate programs weakens academic performance and social adjustment (Walberg, 1986). Madeline Wills of the U.S. Department of Education pointed out that "pull-out" programs were not effective and appealed for reform as early as 1986 (Hines, 1994). A five-month study of America's special education system was reported in the December 1993 issue of *U.S. News and World Report* magazine. The study exposed that special education programs are ineffectual, that one in four special education students drop out of school, and nearly one-third (primarily LD and EH students) are arrested at least once after leaving high school. Of those who graduate, 43% remain unemployed for 3-5 years after high school. Follow-up studies reveal that as many as 50% of students with mild disabilities drop out (Edgar, 1987; Zigmond and Thorton, 1985). These students often lack basic skills (e.g., academic, vocational, social, independent living, self-advocacy) needed to

live independently as young adults. Many remain in the home long after their age mates have moved out on their own (Haring, Lovett, and Smith, 1990; Mithoug, Horiuchi, and Fanning, 1985; Sitlington and Frank, 1990: U.S. Department of Education, 1991). Since the Oberti v. Clementon 1993 court decision, school districts that continue to remove students from general education classrooms are held accountable for proof that the special-needs student could not benefit from the general education classroom.

Special-needs students with mild to moderate disabilities are frequently not moved to less restrictive environments (e.g., Anderson-Inman, 1987; Biklen, Lehr, Searl, and Taylor, 1987; Gottlieb, 1985; Weatherly and Lipsky, 1977). Demands for schools to address the scientific and legal basis for not incorporating inclusive practices are intensifying. Parents and legal experts are using empirical analysis of the outcomes from established special education programs to show that they have not worked. Special education programs have not benefited special needs students in the development of academic, social or vocational skills (Roger, 1993). Students in pull-out programs do not develop critical skills and behaviors needed to be successful

in mainstreamed general education classes because of the very poor linkage between the two programs (Reynolds, Wang, and Walberg, 1987, Stainback and Stainback, 1989, 1990).

In 1992, the Independent Commission on Chapter 1 asked for reconstructing schools that serve underprivileged populations. Commission members proposed a new approach. Instead of focusing on skills training for staff members, they suggested that Chapter 1 attempt greater integration with general education (Commission of Chapter 1, 1992). Chapter 1 is a rather small categorical program at the school level, so why not make a more concerted effort with all categorical programs (Wang et al., 1993)?

Another problem facing schools today is the rapidly growing at risk population. Their learning difficulties stem from a combination of social, economic, environmental, and cultural challenges in their lives (Helge, 1988). Williams (1991) estimated that as many as 30-40% of the school population may be at risk for school failure. Many of the classroom problems faced by this population is similar to those experienced by students with mild to moderate learning disabilities (Orstein and Levine, 1989). The schools have very few resources to assist these students.

Many schools are exploring innovative approaches to meet the growing diversity among school-age children with the limited resources available to them. One method that is receiving considerable attention is inclusion or a co-teaching partnership between special education and general education. This approach helps schools meet the goals of IDEA through an ongoing process of defining and refining appropriate mainstream learning opportunities for at risk learners and students with disabilities (White and White, 1992).

Various terms have been used to describe the process of including students with disabilities in general education classes. None of these terms actually appear in federal law, but all are used to delineate disparate beliefs about what the law means.

Mainstreaming refers to the selective placement of special education students in one or more general education classes. Generally, the special education student can earn his or her way into the general education classroom once their academic skills and/or behavior approach the proper level. The student must be able to keep up with the regularly assigned work.

Inclusion usually refers to the process of allowing any physically, emotionally, or academically handicapped student, regardless of the severity into the general education classroom with support services. Support services are usually in the form of teaming or collaboration with the special education teacher. The student is not required to keep up with the regularly assigned work, but evidence must be shown that the child will benefit from being in the class.

Full inclusion is used to refer to the belief that general education classrooms have the resources and the skills available to accommodate all students in the classroom. Full Inclusionists argue that general education teachers only need technical assistance and training from special educators. There are two kinds of full Inclusionists. The first kind argue for a complete revamping of the special education delivery system. They believe that there should be no more special education teachers (Stainback and Stainback, 1992). The second kind say that special education teachers should only provide services within a general education classroom (Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edleman and Schattman, 1993). Both types of full inclusionists believe that students with disabilities should remain in general education

classrooms full time. According to Sapon-Shevin (1995), inclusion is serving all children in the "regular classroom" with children their own age. Schools would be restructured so they are supportive and nurturing both to students and teachers. Inclusive schools would try to "create a world in which all people are knowledgeable about and supportive of all other people, and that goal is not achieved by some false image of homogeneity in the name of inclusion (Stainback and Stainback, East, and Sapon-Shevin, 1994, p.487). Inclusive schools would ask, "How can we meet children's individual education needs within the regular classroom context-- the community of students-- without segregating them (Sapon-Shevin 1995, p. 8)? In summary, inclusion is an educational philosophy based on the belief that all children should participate in their school community regardless of ability, language background, culture, race, gender, or special need (Friend and Cook 1993). The intent of inclusion is to educate students with disabilities-- with whatever supports they require-- into classrooms with nondisabled peers. The aim is for disabled students to become full members of their classroom communities, valued for their own self-worth (Friend and Cook, 1993).

Practical Problems with the Inclusion Process

There are many crucial issues pertaining to the heterogeneous grouping of children. For example, can one set of educational outcomes address all students? Can academic rigor persevere when differences in skills and interests are accommodated? How do you account for the research that demonstrates that students learn best in small groups? Are social aspects of education more critical than the academic aspects (Smelter, Rasch, and Yudewitz, 1994; Heron and Jorgensen 1995)?

According to Smelter, Rasch, and Yudewitz (1995), there are three intellectually indefensible arguments against inclusion. The first is that education's primary goal is to educate. Inclusionists claim that social benefits should outweigh the educational ones. Those who oppose say that social agendas should take a back seat to educational agendas. The second argument is against pulling special education students out of small-group instruction and thrusting them into large heterogeneous groups. Much research has shown that children learn best in small groups. All children do not learn best in the same learning environment.

The third argument is against the belief that all students have the constitutional right to be served in general education classrooms. The differences between the "artificial" separation of children based on race and the "nonartificial" separation of children based on learning styles is blatantly obvious. Separating children because of their race has no educational basis. Separating a child based on his or her learning style has a strong educational rationale, which is to improve the child's learning.

Special education services provided under inclusion are not equal to the special education services given through pull-out programs. Parents need to look closely at the number of contact minutes and the qualifications of those who deliver the services and make sure they are the same as guaranteed in the individualized education plan.

Inclusionists seem to place an educational philosophy above the needs of the students. There is no investigation into the learning styles of individual students or of the learning environment in which they learn best. They appear to intentionally create an environment in which there is disruption and potential physical danger just in pretense of being "egalitarian" or to fulfill their philosophical beliefs.

Some children have a tendency to reject peers whom they find to be insulting and offensive. Handicapped students are even more isolated in the general education classroom which places even greater psychological pressure on them. A smaller group of children actually mimic deviant behaviors, therefore causing a spiral of disruption. This havoc would deny regular instruction to the many nonhandicapped students in the classroom. It would also deny students with disabilities the carefully prescribed sequencing of instruction by highly skilled certified specialists. Thus, all students emerge as losers in this scenario.

In the case study by Baines, Baines and Materson (1994), a public middle school in a southeastern suburb of a large city in Texas was observed for more than seven months. The middle school is mainstreaming almost all special education students. The investigation found a great many difficulties with the inclusion model. A distressing discovery was that very few general education teachers received any training, either through district inservice training or through university courses, that would help them deal with special education students, nor did they receive assistance from the school's administration. Other significant problems included: little or no consistency

with special education teachers in the classroom or during the planning time together, too much time was spent on making modifications to lesson plans expressly for special education students, discipline problems increased, teachers had to teach at a much slower rate to ensure moderate success, teacher stress increased, expectations as a whole were lowered, and it appeared that the rights of the special education students outweighed the rights of everyone else.

In a statement made by The American Federation of Teachers in December of 1993, it called for a moratorium on the concept of full inclusion. It is not just teachers who are paying the price. Inappropriate inclusion lowers expectations that any student in that classroom can get the education they deserve, and the student who needs the most help invariably suffers the most. As inclusion is increasingly practiced, it bears no resemblance to what most well-wishing people think of as mainstreaming children with disabilities into regular classrooms. It places children who cannot function into an environment which does not help them and often detracts from the education process for all students.

With the controversy surrounding inclusion added to the gross inefficiency of implementing it, many parents may give up on the public school system. They are upset that the public school system has been turned into a laboratory for social experimentation. Disgruntled parents may join the growing number of Americans who are opting for school vouchers.

Successful Implementation Strategies

Through inclusive practices, special education students avoid the stigma associated with the trips in and out of the general education classrooms. Their day is less fragmented because it is not spent out of the mainstream classes and also because the special education teacher is in the classroom and more able to relate remedial practices to regular instruction. Inclusion can only work if both teachers and students learn new strategies and develop new attitudes. True inclusion can only be determined by what occurs after special needs students have been placed in general education classrooms. True inclusion is characterized by; all students becoming integral members of the learning environment, special-needs students are not just given grades as gifts, but are achieving at commensurate levels of average or above average students, special-needs students are not negatively impacting

the learning environment of others and, parents, students, and teachers are satisfied with the outcomes (Deshler and Schumaker, 1988).

Jamner (1992) conducted a study on increasing the number of emotionally disabled students in general education classrooms in elementary and middle school. He used a teacher-student cooperative model. Both regular and special education teachers received training in the use of behavior management and social skills training. Students also received the social skills training in addition to peer-tutoring. Special education teachers consulted with regular education teachers to assist them with the mainstreaming process and maintenance. The objectives were to enable more successful mainstreaming of emotionally disabled youth, to improve the attitudes of the regular education teachers towards accepting the emotionally disabled youth, and to improve the social skills of the emotionally disabled youth for increased peer acceptance.

There are several factors contributing to the prevention of the emotionally disabled student from receiving and maintaining mainstreamed classes. First, special education teachers need more training in order to prepare their students to receive mainstreamed classes (Baker and Zigmond,

1990; Levine, 1988; Peterson and Whitmore, 1980). Second, emotionally disabled students lack the motivation or desire to be mainstreamed or care if mainstreamed classes are withdrawn. The third factor is the lack of motivation of the regular education teacher to accept successful placement of special education students in their classes (Aksamit, 1981; Munroe, 1982; Roberts, Pratt, and Leach, 1991) The fourth factor is the need for additional support for regular education teachers. Special education students are placed in their rooms with little or no prior knowledge of the student's problem or how to deal with the student successfully. There is a tremendous lack of communication between the regular education teachers and the special education teachers (Hauptman, 1983; Panko, 1984). The fifth factor is the need to give the emotionally disabled students support. Usually they are placed in mainstreamed classes with little or no technical support from the home or from their teachers (Langa, 1979; Braaten, 1980; Polirstok, 1987).

In a case study conducted by Fuchs, Fuchs, and Fernstrom (1992), a five-month process by which pupils were moved one at a time into regular education math classes was evaluated. The evaluation involved 13 special education teachers, 21 regular education teachers and 44 reintegration

candidates. Two significant barriers to successful mainstreaming were found. One reason why mainstreaming infrequently occurs is the misconception that clouds the process. Research has shown that some regular educators harbor negative attitudes toward special-needs students (e.g., Alexander and Strain, 1976; Efron and Efron, 1967; Garvar-Pinhas and Schmelkin, 1989; Gickling and Theobald, 1975; Hudson, Graham, and Warner, 1979; Shotel, Iano, and McGettigan, 1972). Most people interpret this research to mean that successful mainstreaming is impossible unless regular educators' attitudes are modified. The second factor found to impede successful mainstreaming is the failure of skills to transfer from a more restrictive setting to a less restrictive setting that is closer to the mainstream (e.g., Anderson-Inman, Walker, and Purcell, 1984; Hundert, 1982; Thorpe, Chiang, and Darch, 1981; Wehman, Abramson, and Norman, 1977). There are many reasons why skills fail to transfer. The most important reasons are that instruction and materials are usually quite different from those used in the regular classrooms.

The study revealed that although much research has been written about the regular teachers' attitudes on mainstreaming, it is even more crucial to consider the transfer of skills from the more restrictive setting to a less

restrictive setting. It suggests that special education teachers and special education students need more training before successful mainstreaming can be accomplished.

York, Vandercook, and MacDonald (1989) surveyed regular educators, special educators and classmates without disabilities the first year after middle school students with severe disabilities were integrated into regular education classrooms in two suburban midwestern communities. Results of the study showed many benefits for educators and students. Social competence on the part of the students with disabilities was achieved and acceptance by nonhandicapped classmates was increased. There are numerous reports that show benefits to children with severe disabilities that have been given the opportunity to grow up and learn together with nonhandicapped peers (Elias, 1986; Forest, 1986; Hanline & Halvorsen, 1989; Strully and Strully, 1985).

Analysis of the study reveals that several strategies need to be undertaken before success can be achieved. First, special educators must clearly communicate what the expectations for special education students are and also to point out to regular educators what the accomplishments are so

they can see positive growth. Second, findings indicate that special education students need training in social and interpersonal skills before making the transition to regular classes. Third, teamwork among regular and special education staff must be promoted. Selections should be based on the teacher's willingness to participate and should be supported by the administration. Clearly, the study shows that much more efforts must be made in changing the behavior and attitudes of both adults and students.

An interactive needs assessment was conducted in the L'Anse Public Schools by Chisholm and others (1991) in order to provide academic support to mildly impaired special education students within the regular education classroom. Special education students and their teachers were placed into regular education classrooms. A co-teaching approach was utilized that matched special education teachers with regular education teachers. The project was initially implemented in grades 6-8 in the content areas of science and social studies. Six regular education teachers were paired with three special education teachers.

Several strategies proved helpful in accommodating integration of students with disabilities into regular education classrooms. First, the

administration discussed the practices with all personnel and openly accepted their input. Regular education teachers were allowed to volunteer for the program. Second, the special education teachers and the administration discussed who should be mainstreamed, how many classrooms were needed, and how many co-teaching classrooms could be accommodated successfully without overload. Third, the administration supported the program by assisting in the scheduling process. Small percentages of students with disabilities were assigned to regular education classes with the various support personnel needed. Fourth, letters were sent to parents explaining the program. Fifth, emphasis was placed on joint planning sessions. It was shown to be critical that teachers need to plan together if they are to work together.

Lockledge and Wright (1991) designed a study to assess the roles played by middle school educators while participating in a collaborative teaching program. The program combined a regular educator, a special educator and their respective students for one period of content instruction per day. The project was to facilitate the inclusion of learning disabled, mentally handicapped, and behaviorally/emotionally handicapped students

who were receiving resource and consultative services into regular education classes with their peers.

The study revealed that communication is a key factor in implementing inclusion in schools. There must be clear communication between regular and special educators, between the school and the parents, between administration and personnel, and between students and teachers. A second key factor is adequate planning. Time must be allotted in the school day for the special and regular education teachers to plan daily lesson plans and to maintain sound classroom management. These key elements must be present in an inclusive program in order to ensure success.

Inclusion is possible. Schools can be on their way to becoming a place where all students belong, are valued, can do quality work, and can learn with others who are different from themselves. In order to make this become reality, schools need to do the following: 1) allow collaborative planning time, 2) accommodate students' learning differences right from the start, 3) provide support to all personnel, 4) all members of the team contribute to locating materials and needed resources, 5) all teachers must be willing to diversify, 6) special education teachers must be trained, 7) regular education teachers

must be trained, 8) students must receive training, 9) parents need to be informed and receive training, 10) teacher education systems should provide the common learning experiences and skills that all teachers need, and 12) schools must not ignore the student's right to literacy.

How the Literature Relates to My Problem

Educators and researchers should explore ways to make inclusion work. Areas of research might be to 1) identify teaching styles and formats that facilitate interaction in the general education classrooms, 2) distinguish supports that promote inclusion, 3) design strategies that assist special-needs students adapt to the regular classroom, 4) investigate methods of utilizing both special and regular educational resources more effectively, and 5) investigate perceptions of various key players in the inclusion process, such as, special educators, regular educators, administration, special education students, regular education students, and parents (Biklen et al., 1987; Haring & Breen, in press; Stainback and Stainback, 1989).

Renick (1985) found that learning disabled students in resource rooms had a better sense of self-worth than did those students in self-contained classrooms. Her results imply that the extent to which these students

perceived themselves was related to their perceived acceptance from their peers. There seems to be evidence of "handicapist" attitudes that impede the successful integration of students with disabilities into general education classrooms just as there are racists attitudes that inhibit true community spirit in some places. Students can be prepared in advance for mainstreaming and these attitudes can be addressed (Curtis, 1982). Shaver (1983) discussed how teachers can help nonhandicapped students become aware of their attitudes and help students with disabilities cope more effectively with handicapism.

Minimal attention has been paid to the various models for implementing the integration of students with disabilities into general education classrooms and even less attention has been given to collecting data about integration. The majority of data that exists has been collected from general education teachers, special education teachers, principals, and nonhandicapped students. Most studies have been conducted at the early childhood level. Insignificant amounts of studies have been done of elementary and secondary age children. Very few investigations have explored special-needs students' perceptions on the various inclusion models.

Hollowood and colleagues (in press) found that time lost to interruptions of instruction was not significantly different in inclusive and noninclusive classrooms. Their findings are supported by survey responses of teachers and parents who have direct experience with inclusive classrooms (Peck, Carlson, and Helmstetter, 1992). In a related study, Helmstetter and colleagues (1993) surveyed a sample of 166 high school students who had received instruction in inclusive classrooms in Washington State. These students did not believe that they had missed out on other valuable educational experiences. In a survey of parents and teachers, all indicated that nondisabled students did not mimic undesirable behaviors of students with disabilities (Peck et al., 1992). In a follow-up study of nonhandicapped students in inclusive classrooms, interviews with teachers and parents as well as direct observation indicated that nonhandicapped students did not acquire undesirable behaviors from classmates with disabilities (Staub et al. in press, 1994). Research has indicated that nondisabled students benefit from their relationships with students that have disabilities (Biklen et al., 1987; Murray-Seegert 1989, Peck, Hayden, Wandschneider, Peterson, and Picharz, 1989). Nondisabled students indicate an improvement in their self-esteem as

a result of having formed relationships with students that have disabilities (Amado 1993; Peck et al. 1992; Peck, Donaldson, and Pezzoli, 1990; Staub et al., in press; Strully and Strully 1985; Voeltz and Brennan ,1983). The majority of teachers and administrators interviewed have realized the benefits of inclusion for all students, but agree that active support and reallocation of resources is needed for success (Peck, Mabry, Curley, and Conn-Powers, 1993). Noddings (1984) states that the development of all children is enhanced by the sense of belonging, caring, and the community that is found in schools that learn to tolerate all kinds of diversity. More than 100 years ago, Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "I pay the schoolmaster but 'tis the schoolboys that educate my son." Today that saying is still true even though the "schoolboys" are a diverse mixture of special-needs students and nonhandicapped students in the same classroom. The research that exists shows that when administrators, teachers, students, and parents support one another, students are successful learners in inclusive classrooms.

Any new policy that affects what students learn and their social and interpersonal development should not be implemented hastily. All issues should be fully addressed and carefully scrutinized before adoption of an

inclusive model. Approximately 10-12% of the school age population have disabilities that require special services. There are also many students with special needs that do not qualify for special education services. School systems are searching for innovative ways to help the increasingly diverse student population. Inclusion is not just a fad or a new buzz word for the 1990s. It will not just go away. Schools need to be prepared to implement inclusive programs with solidly strong strategies to ensure successful implementation. They need to investigate the culture of their school. School culture is the expression of the ways people operate within a school. It is their beliefs, assumptions, and norms that guide their behaviors and create standards. Culture is important because it is an extremely powerful force that exists in a school building. Culture either works for you or against you. Because culture consists of beliefs (the way people think things are), values (what people think ought to happen), and norms (accepted, expected behavior), the culture of a school will affect what programs are chosen, will influence the intensity of the behaviors, and affect the duration of the behavior. Understanding the culture and framework of the school organization will determine the effectiveness of the various programs the school decides to implement (Robinson,1994).

CHAPTER III

RELATIONSHIPS, THEORIES AND METHODS

Myself as Researcher

Narrative is the conversation through which the openness of each participant can come forth and the unconditioned can be revealed in new forms of gesture and language. This can only be achieved through evaluation and theorizing. Narrative research is not a search for preconceived ends, but a search for meaning as life is unveiled through the acting and speaking of the participants. The "reality" that is presented is both the narrator's and the researcher's interpretation. The researcher frees the speaker to let the unformed emerge into new awareness, and the interchange which follows has the possibility of moving both speaker and listener to new heights of being. What is presented depends greatly on who we are, what is said and by whom. I, as researcher, have been influenced by personal and professional relationships and experiences. I have become more aware of my own inner self which has made me much more sensitive to the narrator's inner self.

As an exceptional children's teacher, I have experienced relationships with children of all ages, classes, ethnicity, gender and handicapism. I began my teaching career with high school students. I naively believed that school's intended purpose of helping all children regardless of race, gender, social class or handicapism was being perpetuated by those of us in the teaching profession. Unfortunately, I learned that inequalities and inequities existed because teachers were disempowered and students were uninvolved.

I moved to the middle school where I felt that I could make a difference in the lives of the students. I discovered that certain behaviors and attitudes were already established that were almost impossible to interrupt. Standard practices that were used to assist individual students, were actually intended to enhance the process of the economic and cultural reproduction of class stratification. The routine practices were beneficial to a few students, therefore, legitimizing the process to administrators, teachers, and the community.

Feeling a sense of hopelessness, I decided that I should try to teach elementary students. I postulated that elementary students would not be

passive learners; that they would interact freely with their teachers and with each other. I assumed that the students would be highly involved in their own learning. To my chagrin, I immediately learned that I (and the other teachers) managed the system. Prespecified goods and services were organized around the passive consumption of the student. I saw many students that were uninvolved, isolated and discouraged because most decisions were being made with little or no input from them.

Once students enter the school they are inundated with rules, structures, and practices that teach them what they cannot do. Students learn who they are in society through the sorting, selection, and hierarchical practices that go on in school. These structures, practices and ideologies are virtually invisible-- they are hidden parts of the curriculum that lead to the exploitation of students (Vallance, 1973). Students are taught to be passive beings who eventually fit perfectly into an unequal society. Bowles and Gintis (1976), Spring (1984), and Apple (1985) argue that schools reproduce the economic and social relations of society and therefore tend to serve the interests of the dominant classes.

As a graduate student I have recognized that not only are students uninvolved, but teachers are as well. Curricula decisions are determined by "downtown" or state agencies. Teacher voices are frequently not heard. Teacher disempowerment is connected to how they feel toward their students (Fine, 1985). Educators that believe that no one listens to them or that school policies do not reflect what they think are much more highly critical of students and more pessimistic. Disempowered teachers may help produce disempowered students which are usually the ones that drop out (Fine, 1985; Giroux, 1988; and McNeil, 1981, 1986, 1988).

According to Liftin (1988), schools in which educators more often feel that they do influence policies and practices, are schools in which student success is much more likely. Unfortunately, these are schools that serve predominantly white, upper-middle class students. Very few students are in need. The students that are most in need are served in schools in which teachers are denied serious involvement in decision making. Schools that serve predominantly low-income youth usually utilize administrative techniques that are rigid and teaching methods that emphasize basic skills without allowing critical thinking to evolve. These features are most likely to

precipitate high dropout rates (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, and Rock, 1986). These youth begin their lives the most in need and are the most likely to be exploited because of race, ethnicity, gender and class and then attend schools that are the most impoverished where they are likely to receive a substantially different, less adequate education.

With the emergence of site-based management, school reforms are beginning to occur. Legislation and policies are aimed at eradicating inequities and inequalities in school. Now that the voices of teachers are being heard, I as an educational researcher, question why the voices of students are still predominantly being suppressed. My experiences with students who are handicapped guided my desire to explore the connections between school and those that are silenced by its system.

Production and Resistance: Its Relationship to School Failure

In the United States, low-income youth are offered education as the most likely route to economic mobility. The public school system is built on the principle that it is accessible to everyone regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or social class. Besides the continuing problem of equal access, there is also the problem with equal outcomes. Legislation cannot guarantee equal

outcomes regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or social class. It is the structure of the school system that supports and guarantees unequal outcomes and tries to legitimate the process through practices and policies that appear to be just (Ryan, 1981).

The good intentions of individual adults within the school system are silenced by the actions of private business. Curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluations are influenced less by public interests, but much more systematically by corporate, proprietary, parochial, and private schools. Schools become important sites for social reproduction generated by the dominant rules and practices of our society (Spring, 1989).

Apple (1986) argues that the role of schools is to keep the poor in their place by teaching them the proper behaviors and skills for becoming "good workers" and to keep the dominant classes in power by teaching them the skills necessary to "manage and control". McCarthy and Apple (1988), Apple and Weiss (1983), and Giroux (1983) have conducted research that shows that schools reproduce the status quo and maintain structural inequalities based on class, race, and gender.

The curriculum (through what texts say and do not say) attempts to foster the meritocratic ideology that success is guaranteed to those who work hard and achieve in school. Education is portrayed as the key that opens the door to opportunity, choice, mobility and job success. The experiences students bring to school clearly contradicts this message. They have seen what the world of work has given their parents, acquaintances, and themselves. They become highly cynical of the school.

The school experience is more "profitable" for students who are already more economically advantaged. High school diplomas seem to do very little for most low-income students of color. Schools help maintain the existing power structures in society's social and economic spheres by exploiting the educational and cultural experiences of youth. Thus, schools help expand markets and help control labor and people. "Deviance" is a by-product that is created by schools.

"Deviance" is seen as resistance by students, parents, and communities. It is guided by a desire for freedom. Giroux (1983) states that the analysis of the resistance is guided by

> . . . a concern with uncovering the degree to which it highlights, implicitly or explicitly, the need to struggle against domination and submission. In other words, the concept of resistance must have a revealing function that contains a critique of domination and provides theoretical opportunities for self-reflection and struggle in the interest of social and self emancipation (p.259).

Their resistance sometimes penetrates the power structures which causes reform to occur, but more often than not, the coping strategies of these groups only aid in the legitimization of the school's policies and practices. Schools respond more quickly to pressure to change when it comes from the most powerful groups. Schools are very slow to respond to change when the least powerful are the ones exerting the pressure (Nieto, 1992).

Previous legislation has brought about many changes in our public school system. In the 1990s, every child can boast that s/he has access to a public education. It is also during the 1990s that some groups can say that access is not "equal" nor "equitable." It is during the 1990s that many school age children are being silenced by what is deemed "fair, deserving,

and natural." The least privileged voices are being silenced while the most privileged voices are being amplified.

Many students are abused and neglected in the educational system because of race, ethnicity, gender, and social class. They are labeled "at risk" and society blames them, instead of focusing on the structures, policies and practices that place them ultimately at risk. Low-income public schools are more likely to be controlled through the process of silencing voices. School failure is more evident, therefore, schools need to hide and distort the discrepancies between the ideologies they espouse and the lived experiences of the students, parents and communities (Bourdieu, 1986).

Blame is deflected from the school and is placed on the inferiority of students and their parents or on the economically depressed areas in which they live. Inequities are condoned rather than explored. Overall, classrooms are not built on trust and educating, but built more on control and conformist actions. The chasm between those who "know" and those who do not "know" is expanded (McNeil, 1981).

Students who are in the margins learn to blame themselves and eventually drop out of school. Other students drop out because they can see

the "false world" the school is portraying. They know through experience that schools cannot keep the promise that education offers. These youth that drop out are viewed by society as being academically and/or socially inferior. The practices that led to their school failure are kept hidden and left to continue without much criticism.

According to Rumberger (1987) social class is the biggest indicator of who will eventually drop out of school with 22 percent of the lowest quartile and 8.9 percent of the highest quartile. Low-income White students drop out more frequently than African-American students and Latino students and in the highest quartile White students drop out much less frequently than do African-American students and Latino students. Overall, young men drop out much more frequently than do young women.

Barro (1984) found that drop out rates decrease as teacher-student ratios increase. Drop out rates increase when teacher transfers and moves are high (Combs and Cooley, 1968) and student achievement falls (Wehlage and Rutter, 1986). A study conducted by the Hispanic Policy Development Project (1987) found that low-income youth who dropped out were more

likely to describe their teachers as uninterested in students than those students who eventually graduated.

Students who are most in need of stimulating and creative educational experiences too often are given large doses of prescribed, tedious, and basic techniques (Ekstrom et al.,1986). Emphasis is placed on rote memorization instead of on comprehension skills. Little or no interaction among students is encouraged (Anyon, 1980). Rigid rules and discipline policies are strictly enforced (Barro,1984; Oakes, 1985). An atmosphere of competitiveness and individualism is highly emphasized and nurtured.

The entire structure of the school caters to the more affluent, white male student. Females, working class students and minority groups are virtually "invisible" in the curriculum (Nieto, 1992). The more advanced students are more likely to engage in creative and much more innovative techniques. Emphasis here is on comprehension and critical thinking skills (Anyon, 1981). The parents of these students are loud to boast on the effectiveness of school policies and practices. They assist schools in maintaining practices that lead to unequal outcomes for students.

One practice that is continued is tracking although research by Oakes (1985) has shown that tracking is ineffectual. Tracking neither increases student achievement nor does it promote positive attitudes about school. Tracking actually has the adverse effect. It further alienates students that are already alienated from the school experience because of their income or background.

The cycle of school failure is perpetuated through tracking. Again students most in need are placed in the lowest tracks, exposed to the most worn-out teaching methods. Teachers do very little to encourage them. Soon the students become discouraged or bored and eventually drop out (Nieto, 1992).

Tracking is sustained by the most powerful and is clearly used to sustain the class, race, and gender stratification in our society (Spring, 1989). Low-income students and/or students of color make up the majority of the students that are found in the lowest track. This alienation from school life leads to uninvolvement and passivity which in turn leads to a student's decision to drop out (Nieto, 1992). Classroom activities are unconnected to the student's reality (Freire, 1970). The vision of academic pursuits becomes

blurred and obscured by this alienation. Students begin to identify with the "dumb" label given to them by the school (Gouldner, 1978). The adolescent is held accountable. The drop out is viewed by society as the failure and the school is once again given legitimacy.

Some people benefit from the power structures of the school and many people lose. White male students are the biggest benefactors and low-income, people of color are the biggest losers. Schools do very little to change the process of discrimination. Some administrators and teachers attempt to be "color-blind." The results are devastating. By refusing to acknowledge differences, these adults are essentially denying the identities of students, thus making them "invisible". Students' cultures are viewed as inadequate or non-existent. Students are taught to the "norm" and differences are labeled "deficient". Schools and society can then blame the students to explain school failure. Instead, school and societal structures that promote racism, sexism, and classism and promote the dominant class values are to blame.

My Relationship with People

I believe that knowledge does not exist without someone bringing it into the world. I also believe that knowledge comes through interactions with other people. Huebner (1984, p.121) sees knowledge as an " ...invitation to join hands with someone else in their involvements..." It is " a relationship with something that was, at one time, strange." By establishing a relationship with students "at risk", and listening to their meaning-making, we can begin to change their futures. In Thompson's (1978, p.226) words: "Oral history gives history back to the people in their own words. And in giving a past, it also helps them towards a future of their own making."

I have become aware of the various ways students communicate and construct meaning. For example, students use an "official" and an "unofficial" discourse in the classroom. The official discourse is guided by the teacher and the unofficial discourse is created by the students. The unofficial discourse can involve verbal and nonverbal language (Gilmore, 1983). Through observation, I also discover shared interests I have with many of the students. Mutual interests aid in building rapport and make talking easier. By listening first, I have questions that I can later ask during

the interviews. Their conversations provided pivotal starting points for my interviews.

As researcher, it is my responsibility to create a nurturing environment that allows students to take risks. Students need to feel that they can freely talk and offer critique. True research dialogue can only occur when the research project is presented as meaningful to these children and adolescents involved.

To gain access into these young people's world, I needed to gain their trust. I started this process by just hanging out in classrooms. I observed the students, allowing them to "show themselves" (Kohl, 1967). The knowledge I acquired through observation helps me understand the internal dynamics of the subjects.

It was crucial that I gain a sense of the "community" before implementing a successful design study (Agar, 1980). Farrell, Peguero, Lindsey, and White (1988) suggest that the researcher explore what the lives of the students are like and how school fits into their lives, before attempting to conduct interviews with them. In this way, the researcher can determine

the best way to enter into young people's realities and to know what encourage or discourage (Paley, 1986).

Not only was it important for me to gain the trust of the students, it was also imperative for me to gain the trust of the administrators, teachers and parents. It was vital that I be prepared to answer questions about who I was and the type of research I was doing. I know that I am entering as an unknown, without the authority or the trust of someone on the inside. Kohl (1967, p.9) states that, "no hypocrite can win the respect of children, and without respect one cannot teach." Without respect, I cannot gain the trust that will allow me access into the system. It was necessary for me to define my role and explain what I expect to discover. I was conscious that I was dealing with issues of power in attempting to enter the school system. I needed to understand the "culture of power" I was entering (Delpit, 1993).

Theories

Theoretical Issues

Qualitative research began in the hermeneutic tradition. Eisner (1979), Donmoyer (1980), McCutcheon (1979), Vallance (1978), and Barone (1979) are the early pioneers of this field. Now narrative research is being

"discovered" by various professions; law, medicine, psychiatry and psychoanalysis, Catherine Riessman (1993, p.6) observes. The aim, then and now, is at particular understanding (Pinar,1988). Narrative researchers interpret the world around them instead of merely mirroring what they see. They cut through the seen surface into the realities that lie underneath. "(N)arrative . . . has intuitive appeal to people who become weary of variables and the quantification of the positivist approach," Ruthellen Josselson (1993, p. XV) writes.

Riessman (1993) asserts that the purpose of qualitative research or narrative is to learn how subjects create order out of their experiences in order to rationalize events and actions in their own lives. Most individuals make sense of their experiences by locating them in a narrative form (Bruner, 1990; Gee, 1985; Mishler, 1986). "(E)very study of narrative is based upon a particular understanding of the speaker's self. At present, definitive features of narrative studies differ widely depending on their author's deeply held beliefs about the nature of self," Casey (1995, p.4) writes. "Understanding of self is not narcissism, " Pinar (1988, p.150) argues; "it is a precondition and a concomitant condition to the understanding of others." The analysis of

the data has to do with "how protagonists interpret things:" (Bruner 1990, p.51). Language and emotions are transformed into a work of art.

The goal of the narrative researcher is to illuminate and realign ideas from prior frameworks, building on the insights of the subjects she has studied. Ultimately, "(w)hat is at stake is a fundamental reconstruction of the relationship between the researcher and the subject of the research," (Casey 1995, p. 36). According to Casey (1993), "(I)nterviewers need to respect the authenticity and integrity of narrators' story, to see them as subjects creating their own history, rather than as objects of research."

Recently educational researchers have used the narrative form to give "voice" to those that are excluded or marginalized by the school system. In order to present the reality of those that are unrepresented, the researcher must learn the language of the speakers. The final product must reflect the voices of those interviewed. Cohen (1993, p. 292) asks: "How can we position ourselves as less masters of truth and justice and more as creators of a space in which those directly involved can act and speak on their own behalf." The interpreter must shape the stories/data she has collected, but she must honor the integrity of their analyses during the shaping.

Narrative is a kind of "Bildung" or "paideia"; it is a curriculum that is in the process of being or becoming (Manen 1990). The aim is to elucidate human experience. It is a process of discovery. Every narrative is a recollection of lived experiences. It resonates around a structured cultural framework of meaning and is shaped by certain patterns of inclusion, omission and disparity. The antinomy of particularity and universality are mediated through the researcher's use of selectivities, slippages, and silences (Popular Memory Group, 1982). Narrative is valuable in that no research is void of the researcher's evaluations, explanations and theories (Popular Memory Group, 1982, p.228). The narrative researcher needs to be sensitive to the subtleties observed in human nature. She must not sit in public judgment of others. The researcher must strive to bring a full interpretive description of some aspect of the lifeworld to our reflective awareness (Manen 1990).

Methods

Methodological Issues

In qualitative research, very structured interviews are rarely used (Stenhouse, 1984); however the researcher does need a formal plan by

which to follow. There must be an explicit purpose. Narrative research without questions is impossible. Crucial information that may become relevant to a case may not be "predictable". It is imperative that the researcher ask good questions. The key to remember is that qualitative research is more concerned with questions than with answers. The researcher must be able to allow an answer to lead her to new questions and further inquiry (Yin, 1994). According to Kohl (1967, p.14), the researcher has to "react intuitively and immediately." The researcher cannot predict what responses the informants will give.

Drawing upon anthropological methods, Quantz (1992) states that "to conduct an interpretive interview successfully, the interviewer should be careful not to assume understanding anything." The use of conversation instead of a more formal interview technique (question-answer) allows the research subjects to respond more freely (Spradley, 1972). By feeling more at ease, subjects are able to have a greater voice in the research process (Fontana and Frey, 1994).

How does a narrative researcher construct meaning from the subjects' responses? There are various forms used among narrative researchers. The

most widely used forum is phenomenological themes. Themes are "the experiential structures that make up that experience" (Manen 1990, p.79). Meaning constantly varies. It depends on the experience of the interpreter to give some type of order to the data she collects. In narrative research the researcher is taking a "slice" of peoples' lived experiences and searching for ways they make sense of it. In Agar's (1980, p.49) words: "Fieldwork presupposes an interpretive framework; and in interpretive framework, cuts into the world like a jigsaw, leaving much of the wood behind." The researcher must take these "slices" and fix them in a way that provides a more reflective meaningful understanding of the experience.

The researcher must make a concerted effort to view data in completely new ways. The researcher, according to Manen (1990, p.86) must ask, "What is the 'edios' and how can I capture the 'edios' by way of thematic reflection?" It is helpful to use Descartes' method of systematically doubting yourself; forcing the self to examine basic premises (Agar, 1980). In Quantz' words (1992, p. 179), the researcher must make an attempt "to leave behind, temporarily, the organizing principles of the researcher and take on the organizing principles of those being studied." In order to present the

reality of others, the researcher must learn the language of the speakers. The final product must reflect the voices of those being interviewed.

Methodology

Introduction

This study is designed to gather cultural data from subjects on their perceptions of school. Data includes topics such as the quality and effectiveness of help that students who are struggling receive, the perceived clarity of lessons that are presented, the student's perspective when interpreting events and environments that appear to have affected their self-image, and the overall level of personal satisfaction of the students engaged in both service delivery models. The focus is not solely on the student, but rather on the interaction between the student and his or her environment. Through the use of narrative, I hope to bring the struggle people are experiencing to the forefront. By giving them voice, they may be able to reconstruct their futures in whatever ways they choose.

The numbers of students being "labeled" are increasing as well as the number of students "dropping out", the on-going problem of defining what the school can do to prevent these problems continues. The high student dropout

rate is affecting the economic and social spheres of American society. Schools are faced with a much more diverse population of students. Many students have diverse needs that are causing schools and teachers to question their abilities to meet the demanding challenges presented to them.

Racial and ethnic minorities constitute a disproportionate number of at risk students. For example, two to three times as many African-American students are labeled mentally handicapped or behaviorally-emotionally handicapped than are White students (Heller, Holtzman, Messick, 1982). All students that make up the at risk population are "alienated, segregated, and rejected" in the school community (Wang, Reynolds, Walberg, 1992).

In a national study (Ekstrom, et al. 1986), school alienation was the chief characteristic of dropouts. Dropouts are usually passive participants in their school experiences. Alienation begins when the first teacher makes a decision concerning the placement of the student into a group based on perceived ability or achievement. Teachers in later grades make judgments based on these particular groupings. For example, students become labeled "teachers' pets," "troublemakers," or "nobodies" in the class as a result of these expectations (Gouldner, 1978).

By recognizing that research's role is to serve as a heuristic function, allows the door to new and alternative forms of research to emerge which may serve different heuristic functions. This particular study endeavors to create an alternative approach to research. The main concern is to give voice to the students who are interacting with others; in the home and at school. These young people are actively formulating theories of what school is about and why.

The Subjects

Participants ranged in age from eight years to seventy-nine years old. There were seventeen subjects; nine males and eight females. Seven of them were African-Americans. I interviewed three male African-American elementary students, ten middle school students (6 boys and 4 girls) of whom four were African-Americans, and four female dropouts (ages 16-79). The subjects represented all socio-economic levels of society and each was identified with a label (with the exception of the three older females in the study); six of the informants were Learning Disabled (LD), four were Behaviorally/Emotionally Handicapped (BEH), three were At-risk, and one was Academically Gifted (AG).

I decided to drop the three older subjects whose ages ranged from fifty-six to seventy-nine. Their school experiences were too different to be used. "Labeling" was not a practice used by the school during the time the three women attended. I wanted to determine what effect "labeling" had on students from various socio-economic backgrounds, so I could not use their narratives in my final analysis.

Table 1

Student Participants in

my Research Project

Race and Gender

	African-Americans		**White Americans**	
	male	**female**	**male**	**female**
Elementary	3	0	0	0
Middle	4	2	4	2
Dropouts	0	0	0	4
Total	7	2	4	6

The Sample

I Interviewed students that represent two school systems in the state of North Carolina. Geographically, the school systems are in the Piedmont region of the state. The first is a city school system. It has six schools with approximately 2800 students. Elementary students in grades K-5 are in three elementary schools. All students from the three elementary schools are served in grades six, seven, and eight at the one middle school. There are two additional sites where students can be served if they require services beyond the regular classroom setting. At the secondary level, there is one high school that serves students in grades nine through twelve. Grades K-12 are total year round. Their schedule is on a 45-15 day track.

The 1994 Student Population comparison shows that the African-American student population is 18.3 %, the Asian student population is 2.4 %, the Hispanic student population is 1.3 %, the Native American population is 0.2 %, and the White population is 77.8 %. The percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch is 30.2 and 21.8 % of the students are identified as "special population" students.

A 1990 Family Profile shows that 85.9 % of the mothers are in the labor force and 84.0 % have both parents in the labor force. There are 9.7 % of 6-17 year olds below the poverty level and 24.4 % of the students are from single-parent homes.

A 1993-1994 Dropout Profile reveals that 4 % of the Hispanic male students, 8 % of the Black male students, 17 % of the White male students, and 4 % of the White female students drop out of school. Failure to attend is the main reason given for quitting. The system now ranks eighth in North Carolina with a duplicated count of 1.72 %.

The second is a consolidated city and county school system. It consists of twenty-eight (28) schools with approximately 13,400 students. Twenty of the schools are rural and eight are located in the city area. Students are drawn from a general population of 92,931 of which 23,803 reside within the city area. While the county is a predominantly rural, there is a growing industrial base. Most recent census figures show 32.7 % of the city's population is composed of minority groups, while 17.7 % of the county is comprised of minorities. A high percentage of the students come from homes at or below the poverty level. In the school system, 29 % of the

students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, and 29 % of the middle and high school students are identified as "special population" students. The current dropout rate (4.54 %) is above the state average and has increased for the last two years. A recent survey done in the Spring of 1994 by the Search Institute, Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors, reveals that the middle school youth that the school system serve believe that teachers do not care about them (55%) or believe they receive little encouragement from their teachers (54%).

I asked teachers, guidance counselors and dropout prevention teachers to select students that were from all socio-economic stratifications. My only stipulations were that the subjects were labeled; SLD, B/EH or At-risk and at least one student from each school be a "minority". The federal definition of SLD (Specific Learning Disabilities) is

> a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an *imperfect* ability to listen, think, read, spell, or do mathematical calculations. The term

> includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, of mental retardation, or emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage (USOE, 1977, p.65083, emphasis added).

A student in North Carolina must have a fifteen point discrepancy between achievement and ability for placement in SLD. The federal definition for a student identified as B/EH (Behaviorally/Emotionally Handicapped) is

> (i) The term means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree, which adversely affects educational performance: (a) an inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; (b) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and

> teachers; (c) inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; (d) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or (e) a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (Education of Handicapped Children, *Federal Register*, Section 121a.5, 1977).

There are many definitions used to describe the term "at risk" although racial and ethnic minorities constitute a disproportionate number of at risk students. Those students most likely to be considered at risk come from single-parent homes, lower socio-economic levels, have parents that did not finish high school and are performing poorly at school.

After my first set of interviews, I also stated that I preferred students that were outspoken. I requested that the teacher or counselor explain to the student what was expected and see if the student was interested before I sent permission slips home to the parents.

After interviewing elementary and middle school students, I decided that I should expand my inquiry to include students that had dropped out. I found the four subjects through drop-out prevention teachers, friends and

relatives. I was interested in hearing their reasons for having dropped out of school and see if their stories were similar to the students that were still in school. I chose to interview dropouts from various time periods in order to see if the mission of the school has changed to meet the needs of the students over the years, but during the analysis I decided that the older women did not fit into the schemas that began to develop.

The Prospectus

After receiving the name of a tentative informant from one of my sources, I would schedule to visit the classroom so that the teacher and student would get used to me. After a few days of observation, I would meet individually with the subject and talk about my research. I said that I was interested in finding out about "pull-out" programs, "inclusion" and "at-risk" students. I said that the interview would last approximately thirty minutes. If the student was interested, I would send a permission slip home to the parent(s). I told parents that I was a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro studying Educational Leadership. I said that I was interested in gathering as much information as possible about their child's experiences in "pull-out" classrooms, their feelings towards "labeling"

and what they think it means to be "at-risk". I informed them that I would be examining grades, attendance and suspension records, observing and conducting interviews. I assured them that fictitious names would be used. Some of the parents had questions that they addressed either to the teacher, counselor, principal or exceptional children's director. I was aware that I was entering as an unknown. No one could comfortably predict what my role would be. I did not have the trust or the authority of someone on the inside. Parents had to feel confident that I knew what I was attempting to do. After the parents were satisfied that I had gotten the proper clearance; only one parent decided not to let her child participate.

Analyzing the Narratives

First, I spent many long hours transcribing the tape recordings into written form. Afterwards, I read and reread the transcriptions over and over tackling the material trying to make generalizations out of the texts. I was shocked and overwhelmed by the cruel reality of what the young peoples' stories revealed. Being "at-risk" and "marginalized" has become like an epidemic. I was offended to discover that poor children and black children are the ones who are most afflicted.

I used Casey(1993) as a guide. Casey derived patterns from the texts themselves using Bakhtin's theory of discourses, together with models for the analysis of metaphors (Kliebard, 1975) and languages (Huebner, 1975). Bakhtin's use of intertextuality allowed me to focus on metaphors of language. According to Bakhtin (1981), pluralistic social situations create a multiplicity of languages. So, in my research, I saw the language of school further stratified by gender, social class, age and race.

Bakhtin says, " a word in the mouth of a particular individual is a product of the living interaction of social forces (Bakhtin in Clark and Holquist, p.220). Bakhtin's theory allows not only for the voices of the students to be heard, but more importantly that they be taken seriously by the professional arena. The voices of the marginalized can be celebrated because of the theories Bakhtin has encouraged and eloquently articulated.

> Dialogism is not intended to be merely another theory of literature or even another philosophy of language, but an account of relations between people and between persons and things that cuts across religious, political and aesthetic boundaries. Despite the enormous range of topics to which

it is relevant, dialogism is not the usual abstract system of thought. Unlike other systems that claim such comprehensiveness, Bakhtin's system never loses sight of the nitty-gritty of everyday life, with all the awkwardness, confusion, and pain peculiar to the *hic et nunc*, but also with all the joy that only the immediacy of the here and now can bring.

And unlike other philosophies that opposed radical individuality in the name of the greater primacy of socially organized groups, Bakhtin's philosophy never undercuts the dignity of persons. In fact, dialogism liberates precisely because we are all necessarily involved in the making of meaning. Insofar as we all involved in the architectonics of answerability for ourselves and thus for each other, we are all authors, creators whatever order and sense our world can have (Clark and Holquist, p. 348).

CHAPTER IV

IDEOLOGIES OF THE SELF IN THE NARRATIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE "AT RISK"

"Yet the toughness covered up their fragility. These were often children inside, wrapped up in bodies that belied, had to bely, the fear and confusion and feelings of self-worth inside." (Michael W. Apple, 1991 , p. 217).

Introduction

All of the students in my study are "labeled" by the school system they attend. Three are labeled at risk (one White female student and two African-American male students), eight are labeled learning disabled (two White female students, four African-American male students and two White male students), four are labeled behaviorally/emotionally handicapped (two African-American female students, and two White male students), and one African-American male student is labeled academically gifted. Even though all of these young people are labeled, I have discovered that their school experiences and curriculum knowledge are distinctly different. There is a great deal of public discourse on who is to blame for such inequities. Parents

tend to blame the teachers; teachers are inclined to blame the parents and the adults blame the children. Unfortunately the children's voices are the ones not heard. These young people tell me that not all children and adolescents are treated the same and the differences depend on their economic circumstances. In this chapter I present the contrary perceptions of young children and adolescents on their relationships with significant adults in their lives-- both at home and at school. I show the differences by contrasting the three socio-economic levels represented in my study; "overclass/privileged," middle class, and the "underclass/working class." The analysis of the data revealed five general subschemas under the heading "School"; 1) Consultation vs. Coercion, 2) Who is to Blame?, 3) Curricular Matters, 4) School System, and 5) The Future. Under the various schemas, I discuss the differences depending on the student's socio-economic class.

Eric Erikson (1963) believes that children develop a sense of trust in the world, self autonomy, and the initiative to interact with the world. According to Erikson, these three developmental elements are learned from the family. All of these young students in my study developed within problematic economic and familial backgrounds. They all lack confidence in

themselves to varying degrees and lack trust within the system. Perhaps they all lack a sense of security and wonder if anyone can help them. Not only is this true at home, it is also true at school. Neither home nor school provides: a purpose, an opportunity to build on their strengths, or the responsibilities to gain empowerment.

Social Identity and How It Corresponds to Family and Socio-Economic Class

"Remember my sweat, my pain, my despair. / Remember my years, heavy with sorrow-- / And make of those years a torch for tomorrow. / Make of my past a road to the light / Out of the darkness, the ignorance, the night." *The Negro Mother,"* (Langston Hughes, 1931, pp.16-18).

It is my belief that educators should investigate the influence of parents' work and what they earn and its impact on a student's attitude and values. My study reveals that the cultivation of personality based on socio-economic class should not be ignored. The parents' occupation and level of income help shape the students' views of their relationships with the significant adults in their lives.

In my study, many adolescents that are in the "underclass/working class" socio-economic level unfortunately live with daily occurrences of violence and tragedy in their lives and many are betrayed by their "loved ones" in the relationships to which they are committed: "My mom told me I couldn't move back in with her." "I first had sex when I was eight years old." "My dad will be gettin out of jail soon." "His father is in jail . . . " " His dad was in jail." Yet in the midst of these pervading threats, these young people survive because not all of their experiences are negative. In what "middle class America" perceives to be a horrible existence, in reality, can be very positive. These young people's survival is dependent upon the quality of the relationship(s) they have with their parent(s) and/or significant other adult(s) in the home.

Let me introduce you to four students; Lauren, Keisha, Tameaka and Brit and let them tell about their problems. I talk a great deal about these students because they seem to be more typical of the students in my study.

Lauren, a White female student living in poverty, recalls her continual struggle with her mother and father:

> Besides, my mother, ever since I was a Freshman told me that I would just get pregnant and quit anyway . . . My mother has nervous breakdowns and is on lots of medication. I think she trying to come off some of it now . . . My father drinks and loses his job and then he is out of work for months at a time.

Keisha is a middle class, African-American female student; although I periodically talk about her under the working class category. I classify Keisha as middle class because she lives with her paternal middle class grandparents. Keisha speaks the same language as the students in the working class even though she exhibits a lot of middle class characteristics.

Keisha's mother and father were not married when they had her. Keisha's father, Konnor, left after she was born. Konnor keeps in close contact with Keisha. Konnor has married and now has three other children. Keisha spends one or two weekends with him each month. Her mother, Sharon, has never married, but has lots of "boyfriends." Sharon has two other children. None of Sharon's children live with her.

Keisha wants to live with her mother because she claims that her grandparents are too strict. She has talked to her mother and asked to be able to return to the house. Her mother has told her she cannot return. It is important that the reader not only focus on the marital status of these families, but rather, focus on the relationship these young people have with the significant adult(s) in their lives. Keisha says, "My mom told me I couldn't move back in with her. She said I was doing much better living with my grandparents. She say I'm more respectful."

Tameaka, an underclass African-American female student does not have a relationship with her natural father. Tameaka says that she has only seen him twice in her life. Tameaka is now fifteen years old. Her mother has since married and Tameaka usually calls him by his first name because it is hard for her to accept him as a "father figure": "When my (long pause), my step-father asks me to do something I say nope, unless he has some money. I just don't like him and I never will."

What kind of role model does Tameaka have so that she can understand her own relationship with her own children some day? Listen as she describes her first sexual experience:

> I'd like to have a gun so I can school someone. I stayed up late last night and I have a stomachache. I first had sex when I was eight years old. I thought it was a game and I called it "stick point." It hurt the first time. It was not with a relative and I don't remember how old the guy was. My sister told on me and my Moma took me to the doctor and then I got a whoopin when I got home.

Brit, a young White male student living in poverty, is in a similar situation. Brit's natural father lives in another state and he seldom sees his father. Brit's mother is remarried and he cannot seem to build a loving relationship with his step-father: "My step-daddy called me stupid and stuff. He don't appreciate me playing football and I don't appreciate him breaking up my TV."

Some of the African-American students know their fathers but have very little contact with them because their fathers are incarcerated. A ten year old African-American male student describes one of his friends, "He didn't like teachers and he didn't like to listen and his dad was in jail."

Another African-American male student that is eight years old tells about a friend's father, "His father is in jail and he gets in trouble with his teachers and he doesn't have any friends." A nine year old African-American male student excitedly tells about his father, "My dad will be gettin out of jail soon. He be comin home."

The reader must not concentrate on the situations in which African-American males are absent or minimally involved in the family. It is important that the reader focus on the relationship the children and adolescents have with the parent(s) or significant other adults in their lives. The reader must not ignore middle income, educated, and successful African-American male role models. There are many "father present" African-American families and many families with "absent father" homes that have positive male role models (Majors and Billson, 1992).

The African-American male students talk a great deal about their mothers. Racism and social oppression prevent many African-American males from providing for their families; therefore, making many families "father-absent" (Majors and Billson, 1992). " Nurture" as presented in the narratives of Black women teachers" writes Casey (1990) " . . . is not limited

to women, it is expressive of relationship within community and it is not separate from the exercise of authority " (p.317).

To the African-American male students living in poverty and that depend on AFDC, the term, "mother", has several meanings. One is "mother as father": "Well, my mom comes home and I jump up and go start cleanin my room and then I do my homework," one third grader says. A fourth grade student comments, "Well, my moma makes me do my homework when I first get home. One time she let me go outside before I did my homework. It didn't take me all night, but it almost did.

Another is "mother as nuturer". One African-American male student that had been laughing during the entire interview suddenly gets serious and says, "My mom is a Christian. She says that I have to finish school. She will get mad at me." Another African-American student states matter-of-factly, "My moma get mad if we quit [school]."

And then there is "mother as teacher". A third grade student announces, "She [mom] helps me read. She helps me a lot." Another students proudly says, "My mom reads to me." According to Majors and Billson (1992) the young male focuses on his mother because of his daily

exposure "to the problems and sacrifices of his mother's attempt to raise a family without a co-provider . . ." (p.95).

All of the female students living in poverty discuss their "ideal family". They all believe that they do not have "perfect" homes. Their assumptions are based on the messages they get from the media; magazines, television and advertisements. This is in sharp contrast to the students in the overclass and middle class. None of the students in the overclass income level and only one female student in the middle class discuss the "ideal" family. Perhaps these students believe that they already have the "ideal" family based on the good relationships they have with the adults in their lives. Tameaka describes her "perfect" family:

> Husband, three girls and one boy. Live in some cool place; Africa, Tennessee, or Oklahoma. It far away from my family. They are aggravatin just like I am. I ain't gonna support no man. I mean they got to hustle foe their money and I got to hustle foe my money, but I ain't goin to support no man!

She then begins to talk about her sister and how different they are:

> My sister is smart and I'm not. She is decent and I'm not. You know she is a smart girl, but we go a different road. I'm not mad about it. She is serious and I'm not. She will walk away and not fight and I don't. She can fight, of course!

Tameaka is reflective of her own personality in relation to her sister and the other people in her life. Her sister, Racheala, has a baby and a steady boyfriend. Racheala gets along well with her mother and step-father and is allowed greater freedom and more responsibility. Racheala is slim and is always being told how attractive she is. Tameaka is extremely heavy and is upset that she does not have a boyfriend. Tameaka is often ridiculed because of her large size.

Keisha, discusses her "ideal" family. Keisha is the only young woman in the middle class that discusses her "ideal" family. I think that it is appropriate to place her comments about family with the underclass females in my study because she comes from an underclass family, but is currently living with her grandparents that are in the middle class income level.

> They [her children] won't be no rug rats [behave wildly]. I like to live in a big house, two kids; a boy and a girl. If it be retarded, I'll give it away! Umm. If more it will be a accident.

It is interesting that Keisha mentions having a retarded baby and giving it away. During her interview Keisha reacted very strongly to the term, "resource", and wanted me to know that she was not "dumb" or "retarded". She may believe that her mother "gave" her away because she is "retarded". An association she makes because she is used to be in "resource", but is now in an alternative school for aggressive youth.

> If I am married or not married it will be okay. If I ain't married then okay, I got my freedom.

Keisha does not believe that she loses her "freedom" when she has children, but ironically she does believe that she loses it when she marries.

> But I ain't gonna have no big hooptie, a big car. I'll have a bad car. They [her children] can date. I'll teach them everything. I don't care what age they start datin cause they

> gonna have a boyfriend or girlfriend anyway. But they ain't gonna, I'm gonna have them under control.

Keisha no longer wishes to live with her grandparents because they are "too strict". She wants to live with her mother so that she can have more "freedom".

> They ain't gonna be talk back, but I ain't gonna beat them or nothin like that. I'm gonna raise them the way they need to be raised. I ain't gonna raise them like I was raised. I don't want to raise them like other people. I want to raise them my own way.

It is interesting that Keisha does not want to raise her children the way she was. Keisha lives with her paternal grandparents and rarely gets to see her mother. Keisha has two sisters and only visits them a couple times a year. Keisha is very tough and says that it does not bother her that she does not live with her mother. Keisha declares that she only wants to live with her mother so that she can have more freedom because her mother is seldom at home.

Lauren lives with both her mother and father. Her mother is addicted to tranquilizers and her father is an alcoholic. Lauren wants her children to have a better life than the one she has had:

> I don't plan on having children for a long time. But when I do, there will be rules. I don't mean that I will be too strict, but they will be responsible for certain things. You see, my parents never had any rules for us to follow. They never checked our report cards or cared about our grades. I want them to know they are cared for and loved. I want them to know that school is important.

Even though Lauren's parents are unsupportive, she has been successful. Lauren dropped out of school and then returned on her own. Lauren was Junior Marshall last year and scored 1200 on the SAT. She plans to attend a community college and then transfer to a university. The poor relationship Lauren experiences with her parents is one reason she dropped out of school. She is currently married to a young man who is in the Marine Core. Lauren's husband, Chris, encourages Lauren to be the best she can

be. He supports her decision to return to high school. Chris is the positive relationship Lauren needs. She currently lives with her parents who still do not believe that she is going to graduate from high school. Lauren has a part-time job and pays rent and board. Lauren is trying to convince her sister and brother to go back to school. Unfortunately their parents laugh at the suggestion.

All of the students from "middle class" families in my research know both of their parents. Only one student (African-American female) lives with her grandparents because her mother and father never married and her mother feels that she does better living in a stable environment. None of the students focus on their mothers. Perhaps it is because there are no "absent-fathers."

Many of the African-American middle class male students make references to their fathers. Several talk about playing with their fathers: "I was gonna play with my daddy." "Well, I can say he [father] do play. I can't tell you what we do in our house. I used a dirty word. That's all. We play it.(whispering) We wrestle." "I was gonna play with my daddy. I pitched to him." Some other middle class African-American male students talk about things they do together and things they do not do together: "He lets me read.

He doesn't read to me." "He don't help me with my homework. He let me go everywhere with him. And a third grade student tells about his father (and mentions mom) discussing college plans: "Well, my mom and my daddy said he want me to go to college cause he didn't. It cost a lot of money. It was a lot of money to pay."

The students of parents in the middle class income level talk about happy things they do with their fathers. The students of parents in the underclass/working class income level talk about fathers in jail or more often than not, do not mention fathers at all. Their "silence" speaks loudly.

The young people that comprise the middle class in my study talk about their future plans. All have discussed their plans with their parents They do not have "hoop dreams" or set goals that do not parallel their academic accomplishments. One African-American male student is only in the third grade, but his parents have already begun to discuss plans for college. These parents want their son to be able to do more than they were able to do. It is not uncommon for middle class parents to want their children to have more than they have. There are underclass/working class families that espouse "middle class" values as well. These families have known

friends or family members that have "made it" which inspires and gives them the determination to want to make things better than the conditions in which they grew up. "Well, my mom and my daddy said he want me to go to college because he didn't. It cost a lot of money. It was a lot of money to pay." Another young, middle class African-American male student states: "I want to get a job and buy a house. A nice, wholesome job. A job like my mom have. She make $9.25 an hour." An African-American middle class female student exclaims:

> I want to finish high school and go on to college. I don't know which college, but I don't want to go to a community college. Maybe own my own beauty salon. My mom fixes hair and she say I am pretty good too.

The two middle class White male students have discussed their plans with their parents, but neither knows exactly how to go about finding out how to implement them: One says, "I would like to take college prep classes if they let me. I don't know what I want to do. I want to get a job after high

school." And the other says, "We talked [parents] and I would like to go to college. I thought about teaching English, social studies or computers."

The middle class White female student knows several jobs she would like to have. Her mother tells her that there is a high demand for speech pathologists because the county is currently searching for a speech pathologist. The other two jobs just seem nice to her: "I want to go into interior decorating or I want to teach kids with Down's Syndrome or a speech pathologist."

Today more and more young people are able to go to college with the help of government grants and loans. All of these students who wish to attend a college or university in all likelihood will. The increase in the number of students receiving degrees has flooded the job market. The middle class will eventually saturate the job market and where will that leave the working class? The working class will soon become the underclass. Are schools preparing students for the world that awaits them?

Students of the parents in the overclass/privileged income level have concrete plans for their lives and know how to accomplish their goals. They do not depend on luck, their teachers or society to make their plans

come true. They know that they can make the school system work for them. One White privileged female student's father is on the school board. She knows that he has a great deal of "pull". She also knows that all of her teachers and her principal are aware that her father is on the school board. Her plans after high school graduation are:

> I'm gonna go to college. I want to go to UNC in Greensboro. I'm gonna be a speech pathologist. My parents told me that it is a good field to go into at this time. I know they only accept so many people each year.

When asked about staying in "resource" at the high school as opposed to the college-bound curriculum, she was adamant that she would not stay in "resource":

> I'd quit before I would go. I would get the teacher to help me after school. Yeah, my dad told me, he's on the school board. He likes it [inclusion] a lot and would fight to keep it in the schools.

Both of the privileged male African-American students in my study know what they want to do and even know exactly where they want to go. One of the students is in middle school and wants to play football professionally, but knows that only a few people ever succeed:

> She [mom] asked me what I was going to do if I went to college and I didn't make it playing football. I told her I was going to be a computer technologist or go into architecture cause I like to clean up the house and make stuff. I need something to lean back on.

The other student is in the fifth grade and already has a good idea about what his future is going to be like:

> I want to go to college; Florida State, Wake Forest or Georgia Tech because I want to be a marine biologist. I like sea animals and stuff. I like killer whales and dolphins. My mom told me a good place for me to go would be UNC in Wilmington.

All of these students have made fairly rigid plans for their lives. I wonder what will happen if their plans go awry. Will they be resilient and flexible as the students are from the middle and underclass/working class? These students have a feeling of entitlement. If they do not receive what they feel they are owed, then what happens? Do they work harder, give up or go on a shooting rampage?

Social Identity and How It Corresponds to School and Socio-Economic Class

Certain critical theories of education correspond in important ways to these students' life stories. Scholars (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Basil Berstein, 1977; Michael W. Apple, 1979; and Anyon, 1980) argue that public schools provide different curriculum knowledge and experiences for students contingent on what socio-economic class s/he represents. Race, socio-economic class, culture and gender asymmetries texture the skills and opportunities that schools distribute. "Individualism," "competition," "mobility," "meritocracy," and "marriage" are emphasized in the unofficial discourse while discussions of "class," "race," "gender," and sexual

arrangements", which comprise the critical discourse, are de-emphasized or virtually nonexistent. The two discourses are in direct conflict.

Berger and Luckman (1987) point out that societies are pluralistic. According to them, there is a complex division of labor and hierarchy in the social structure. A "symbolic universe" is handed down throughout the generations. Each student regardless of his or her socio-economic class, seeks to define the system so s/he will know the role s/he is to play and act accordingly. The student must first come to understand the "self" that lies inside.

Some of the students in the study feel that they cannot construct their own identities because their identities are being shaped by the significant adults in their lives, including their teachers. The students are constantly being told that a "good" education will lead to a "good" job.

The students in the overclass/privileged category have a neat and tidy sequence of plans; plans for the present and plans for the future. These young people not only have goals for their lives, they also have worked out the details for accomplishing their goals. Accumulating credentials and possessions are important to the students in this income level. They feel that

they are entitled to the best the schools have to offer. Even when these children and adolescents are not achieving school "success", they feel that they deserve to be helped and more often than not, demand the help. Not one of these students in my study feels uncomfortable questioning authority. Jean Anyon (1980) refers to the people in this income level as the "affluent / professional". She states that the "affluent / professional" people are allowed the freedom to make decisions that pertain to their lives. They are given more control and more responsibilities by adults.

Will succeeding in school really help these students living in poverty secure a "good" job? Most of the working class jobs are disappearing throughout the country. Will the working class slowly disappear along with the plummeting job market and eventually become the underclass?

It is my belief that societal changes have tried to mask the inequities and convince the poor and minority groups that institutional racism is a thing of the past. In DuBois' (1903) words,

> The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a vile and gifted with second sight in this American world-- in a world which yields him no true self-

> consciousness; but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation this double-consciousness, this sense of also looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. (p.8)

Perhaps the students are speaking out of a "double consciousness"; showing the adult world the perception we want to see.

"Be good." "Don't talk back." "Don't run wild." "Stay at home." "Keep out of trouble." These are familiar phrases to youngsters in the lower socio-economic level often labeled the "underclass." The terms, "underclass" and "working class," are both used to classify the parents of the students in this investigation. Indeed, the parents often float in and out of each category. The parents may be working for a while and stop receiving government assistance, then something happens and they have to return to welfare in order to survive.

It seems that the negative is constantly being accentuated in these students' schools. School is not seen as a safe refuge, instead it is a place of

frustration and despair. A "diluted" version of the curriculum is offered in the belief that such concessions will most benefit the students (Nieto, 1992). Jean Anyon (1980) found that "poor relationships" and "resistance" characterized the "working class". Some examples of resistance by students are; misbehavior, vandalism, and poor relationships with teachers (Anyon, 1981, pp. 3-41). It is not important what the students do-- just don't get into trouble.

The distinctions between the middle class and the working class are not completely clear. Jean Anyon (1980) says that although some families' incomes may be in the middle class level, some characteristics of their work is still part of the working class. Other families who are in the upper-middle class level may share characteristics with families in the overclass/privileged income level. According to Anyon (1980), persons in the middle class level have more "autonomy" and share in the decision-making process more than those persons in the underclass/working class.

Consultation vs. Coercion in the Schools

All of the students in my study receive "extra" assistance from the schools they attend. Some of the young people are aware of the referral

process and even have a chance to participate while others are told what to do and are not able to participate in the process. The privileged students' stories and the middle class students' stories are quite different from the stories the students in the underclass tell. The underclass students are not involved in the referral process. They are not aware that a referral is in process nor have their parents been made aware of the process. Perhaps the parents are notified, but evidently nothing has been thoroughly explained to them.

Privileged Students Speak About Consultation

A privileged African-American male middle school student says, "I was pulled out in the 7th grade. My mom and my teacher talked about tryin to get me into more math and tryin to learn me how to do it better." Another privileged young African-American male student talks about being placed into the Academically Gifted program, " My mom told me they picked me cause I'm one of the, I was one of the smartest in the class or something like that." He continues, "My sister is in it too. It makes my mom feel good."

Kristen, a privileged young White female student, tells about her experience being placed in "resource" for reading:

> Well, my mom told me that I was going to go down to that classroom and work on my reading and all that and I didn't like it cause other people would found out that I was going into a special class and I didn't know if I would feel comfortable with that.

These privileged young students are aware of what is happening to them at school. Their parents are well-informed regarding school procedures and are able to discuss these procedures with their children.

Underclass Students Speak About Coercion

In stark contrast, the young children and adolescents in this socio-economic level experience "being singled out". They believe that they are "conspicuous" because of their race, gender and socio-economic class and at the same time perceive themselves to be "invisible" to the adults in the schools because of their personality or sense of "self". Historically African-American females have been excluded the most frequently in the schools (Nieto, 1992). They conceivably feel that they have the least to lose by expressing their opinions the loudest. One of the economically disadvantaged African-American females talks about being different on the "outside", but

being the same on the "inside". She says:

> Everyone has their own way of expressing themselves and doin what they want to do. People are different. They got their own way of doin things. I know I am different, but people are all the same.

Tameaka is upset that her teachers want her to behave like everyone else. She explains that sometimes she wants to "just be foolin around" and "havin fun", but once she is labeled a "trouble-maker" she is stuck with that label throughout her school career:

> Some people can be helped and some can't. Try to help and if you can't help them, that's all you can do. Just give us a chance. We are just kids. Remember ya'll were the same back then too . . .

She recalls why she was placed into "resource": "They say I caused too much trouble. That's why they put me in resource." Angrily Tameaka says, "It pissed me off a whole lot," then softly adds, "It really did." Tameaka is upset because she says that she nor her mom knew that she was going to be

placed into "resource". Tameaka explains, "One day when I got to school, they just said, Tameaka, you got to go. You are out of here." Another low-income African-American female student, Nicole, is upset that she found out that she was being transferred to a special school for aggressive youth on the same day she was scheduled to leave. Nicole says that she decided that day "not to care". If the teachers and the principal wanted her to leave, then she would leave:

> I ain't goin. They ain't really gonna send me. Then it was like I didn't care. They thought I was really disturbed like I was crazy. It was just that I don't take junk off nobody. The teachers thought I was retarded. Then I thought it would really help me to get away from there.

All of these students have discovered that school is not "inviting". They are made to feel insecure and helpless. They are forced to develop their own coping mechanisms. Some of the students resort to fighting and others become passive victims.

Middle Class Students Speak About Consultation

The middle class students in my study reveal that they and their families were involved in the decision-making process that determined if they were to be placed into "resource" classes. One middle class White male student tells how he was placed: "I was sort of glad I was going to get some help. The teachers and my parents told me. They asked me if I wanted to go." Another middle class White male student says, "We talked (parents). I felt it would help me."

Kelly, a middle class White female student, discloses that she was involved in the placement process. She says, "She (mom) mentioned it to me about going into that class." After much thought Kelly says, "I told them that I hate to fail so I am going to another class to get some help and stuff." She says that resource is okay at the middle school because she stays in the general classroom. The school she is attending has "inclusion" classes where the "resource" teacher teams with the "general" education teacher. At the present, the high school does not have "inclusion" classes. Kelly firmly states,

> If they don't have more teachers at the high school,

> but had it like the old program pulling people out, I wouldn't be going. I want my mom to sign me out. I'm not going out in high school and that's all I can say!

Another middle class White female is cognizant that parents can possess the power to make placement decisions. She describes how her mother was able to get her brother placed into speech class: "Moma just took him to school and mentioned it to somebody and they got him in speech."

Who is to Blame?

While most research focuses on what adults; parents, teachers, administrators, and educational researchers have to say about why students are not performing. Adults focus much of the blame on the students. No one allows the students to speak. I want to know who they blame for their problems in school.

Privileged Students Talk About Who Is to Blame

All of the privileged young people in my study do not put the blame for students misbehaving and/or not learning on the teacher; nor do they

blame the students. These privileged students blame the school systems they attend for the failures they see.

Joey is a privileged African-American male student believes that he can help students who are struggling better than the teacher can: "I make A's and I help somebody sometimes who don't understand. I think the kids like it when they have a problem. I use their language that they can understand." The teacher chooses him because: "She sometimes she uses just the people that understand it quicker to help other people," he says. Joey thinks that more students could be helped if his school still had a tutoring program:

> We used to have a tutoring program two to three years ago, but it was just 5th graders helping like second and third graders. Nobody was like helping the older ones . . . Maybe it would encourage them [students that are failing].

Jackson, another privileged African-American male student, describes what one of his teachers did wrong:

> I got extra help, but the way the teacher explained it, I just could not understand it. She would tell me

> how to do it and not show me exactly how to do it. But my father would use apples and oranges and stuff like that. We didn't have stuff like that in school. I mean it was kinda hard for me to learn like that.

Jackson then tells why he thinks there should be two teachers in each classroom: "I can get more help. When I raise my hand, one of the teachers is open and stuff and she can just come and help me." A White privileged female student also believes that there should be more than one teacher in each classroom: "If you have two teachers like when one is working on something else the other one can still help you and well I think that is good." She then discusses why she does not like being placed in a "resource" class:

> The teacher [general education teacher] can explain stuff and like in being pulled out, you have to have someone else [special education teacher] explain it to you. And like they don't have examples and stuff like that on the board. And they [general education teacher] like if you don't understand you can ask them and they will understand what you are talking about."

Working Class Students Talk About Who Is To Blame

Several of the low-income young people I interviewed are deeply troubled by the incidents they encounter in their school experiences. These daily occurrences at times confuse them and at other times make them angry. It is difficult for these students to know what to expect from the school or from their teachers.

A low-income White male student tells why he no longer seeks the help of his teachers: "They say, 'Oh, you know how to do it,' and I get mad and walk off," he says. Several African-American male students living in poverty also express dissatisfaction with the treatment they have received from their teachers. One distressed student claims that he only started fighting when the teacher would not help him: "I started gettin upset with the teachers. Like I would start fightin and stuff and I would go to resource," he explains. Another economically disadvantaged student acknowledges that he is too afraid to ask for help. He has been in trouble too many times and does not want to get the teacher mad at him: "Teachers know more than kids, but I still don't like asking for help," he says.

A hardened young African-American child says, "When I get mad I try to keep it in me." He does not let the teacher know when he is upset because he believes that the teacher will not do anything to help.

Lawrence, a poor African-American male student has had a similar experience. He tells about students making fun of him and picking on him in the bathroom. Lawrence says that he has told his teacher many times about what is happening to him, but she has not done anything to help. Lawrence has stopped telling the teacher, but the picking is still a problem: "It be in the bathroom and I don't tell the teacher. I just keep it to myself," he says quietly. This not only affects African-Americans. A poor White male student shares his frustration: "She just lets me sleep until it is time to go," he sighs. He believes that the teachers do not care about him: "They have passed me on because the teachers don't want me in their classrooms for another year. So they just went ahead and passed me," he gently declares.

One low-income African-American male student is angry that a teacher can display so little respect for him: "Like they [teachers] just irritate me. She like calls out my grades--and my grades are bad! And she calls them out in front of the whole class," he moans. Several other African-American male

students talk about perceived injustices: "I get my name up for nothin," one remarks and another says, "He never brings his homework back and he never goes to detention, so he doesn't know what to do."

Middle Class Students Talk About Who Is To Blame

The middle class children and adolescents in my study tend to absolve the teacher of any wrong-doing. These middle class students blame others or themselves for any perceived failures. One White male student will not admit that being sent to a "resource" room by his general teacher bothers him: "It really didn't bother me a lot cause I know she was tryin to help me. Well, what she was doin was probably the right thing so it didn't bother me none," he reasons. Several middle class African-American female students defend the teachers' actions. One says, "They [teachers] are okay. Some are okay and some are nice and some are just wackos. The wackos are the nice teachers." Another female student remarks, "Sometimes it's not the teacher's fault. It's your fault cause you shouldn't be doin it. It's accordin to what you do to make a teacher mad." She then pointed at me and said, "We need teachers."

Although these middle class students are inclined to absolve their teachers of wrong-doing, they do lean toward being much more critical of them. One middle class African-American female student tells why she does not like some of her teachers: "I don't like teachers cause of their attitude. They don't listen to what you got to say." She continues to talk about what kind of teachers she would like to have:

> We need teachers as long as they wouldn't be mean-- no attitude problems. They understood you and willin to talk to you and they willin to help you and talk things over wid you. And not tryin to be bad or stuff.

Her "right kind of teacher" sounds just like the "right kind of student" most teachers describe they want in their classes. It seems as if this middle class student expects her teachers to behave the same way they expect students to behave.

Students Speak About Curricular Matters

Overclass Students Speak About Curriculum

These privileged students from the "affluent / professional" level are quick to give advice. They are interested in keeping their school's image clean--the best the school can be. Jackson, a privileged African-American male student discusses how to best promote his school's image:

> I would probably pull them [special students] out. Cause if they needed the extra help then, like, when he [principal] announces over the intercom and stuff about the CATs [California Achievement Tests], and which grade (which homeroom scored the highest) was higher, you know, it would be better to pull them out and let them work to build up their abilities and then let them go back in the regular classrooms and know what they are doin and stuff like that so CAT scores can go higher.

Jackson wants the "special needs" student removed long enough to teach the skills necessary to score well on the California Achievement Test, yet he does

not believe that all "special learners" should be placed in a classroom together:

> I would probably say that they need to stay in the classroom. I suppose because they would have more focus on what they are doing cause you see like here those guys over there, they be tellin me all this kind of stuff they be actin wild in there and stuff like that and be tryin to make it like it is a joke you know. They be actin up and actin wild in there fightin people and stuff like that. And I think that because they are pulled out I think that is why they have that advantage to do that cause they were pulled out of class. Especially if all eight have problems. Then they are tryin to out do each other.

A privileged African-American male student named Joey, is critical of the Academically Gifted (AG) program that he is in at his school. When asked how AG differs from the regular program he answers, " Extra work. Harder, ugh, ugh, busy work." Joey wants to do away with "so much

homework." "We get homework in AG plus all the other classes," he says. Joey wants his school to do more interesting things:

> I want to do more interesting things like when our class went to the Outer Banks. To the sand dunes, that tallest one, Umm. We went to all the lighthouses and stuff. We went on the beaches and stuff at Cape Hatteras. I think it was Cape Hatteras. We went on the beach.

Kristen, a privileged White female student, is critical of the "resource" class at her school: "Discussions don't really take place cause you don't have all different kids. You only like have two or three kids come out of one class and we can't have too good of discussions," Kristen says. She adds, "I think you get more out of discussions than you do from just readin the stuff." Kristen believes that she should remain in the general classroom because: "Well, I did pretty good last year and I was in the regular class and I did real good on my end-of-grade test," she says.

Underclass Students Speak About Curriculum

The students living in poverty talk about curriculum much differently. Jamal is an African-American male student that is in elementary school. He eagerly talks about school:

> Yeah, I like school (hand waving back and forth).
> The good side and the bad side," he says. The
> good side (laughs) is we play games, eat lunch,
> eat breakfast, go to PE, go on trips. What I dislike
> is homework. Almost everyday homework.

I believe more students would continue to enjoy school if it were not for the overwhelming amount of homework. Even the AG student in the privileged class talks about having too much homework and that most of his work is simply "busy work".

> The thing I tell you that bad . . . well . . .something
> I don't like some . . . something I don't like, science.
> I don't like social studies. They hard. Ugh . . .
> some things I don't like about . . . stuff that like . . .
> well the one I don't like about social studies is that

> we . . . last night I had to do something about, you know a forest like that and I wasn't there to do it so I had to get help at home. . . I miss what they (general classroom) go over. But I like Ms. Hart's class. At the end of every day we get candy.

Why do general education classroom teachers make the "resource" student accountable for work missed while in the "resource room"?

Tyrone is another low-income African-American male student. He likes going to resource classes because: "Every time, every holiday she gives us stuff like candy and on our birthday she give us a piece of cake," he says. Tyrone likes school. He says, "I like to do math. I like English. I like every subject we do." As he hangs his head, he talks about what he does not like: "When I get my name up on the board. One day I didn't get it up. She [teacher] never said nothin," he softly comments. Quickly Tyrone raises his head and his eyes are beaming:

> My, my, my French teacher . . . I told him that I was playin drummin with my feet. I was playin the drummin somewheres else and he thought it

> was someone else and I say it was me and then he told me to come outside that day. Now he 'members me and am proud of me ever since. I didn't get my name up that day!

Darius is an economically disadvantaged African-American male student in middle school. He unhappily talks about his report card, "I failed three classes. I failed social studies, science and careers." He tries to explain why he has failed:

> I don't know. Well, well, well, in social studies, things she doin I can't hardly do. Like, she tell me just to write out of a book to help my grades since I can't do what they do. So, I write out of this book and I get a grade-- something to keep me busy. Well, I made a 60 and if I wouldn't be writin out of this book, I be like failin even worser.

Why doesn't Darius ask for help when he does not understand what the teacher is explaining? " Well, I ask for help, but I just work on my own," he says. Darius then begins to talk about his "resource" class.

> I think regular classes will help me more when I get out of school, but right now I like resource classes. Cause if I was in regular classes, well the resource teachers go easy on me more than the regular classes do. Well, it is much easier in resource than it is in regular classes. . . If you were in all regular classes, you would probably improve your behavior.

Brit is another middle school student. He is a White male student living in poverty who is experiencing similar frustrations:

> I got regular (consistent). My grade was 33 in social studies, 33 in science and 60 in reading. If I get frustrated, I just close my book and put it in my bookbag. Zip my bookbag up and lay down and go to sleep. If I get upset, Mrs. Luckland kicks me out of class and gives me afterschool detention.

Brit says that he does ask his teachers for help. This is the kind of help he says he receives:

> Yeah, I tell my teacher that I want to help my grades

> and that is why she gives me stuff to do, like writin out of a book. I have a partner that helps me out. I copy off her paper sometimes if I can't find my answers in the book. I get her paper and copy down the first word and then I go and try to look it up in the book. But usually, she [teacher] allows me to have a partner and lets me just copy the papers.

Brit talks about his experiences in the "resource" class:

> When they pick on me, I say that I would rather be in resource classes for a half of day than be in regular classes the whole day. You can, well, sometimes in resource you don't have to do no work and you pick and play games and stuff. And in regular classes everyday you have to do work day in and day out every period except third and that's when we go to lunch. . . Regular classes help you more cause in resource all we do is third, fourth and fifth grade work and I'm in eighth grade.

Brit, with tears in his eyes adds:

> If they take resource classes out and have us learnin the same thing instead of doin this little kid stuff and be doin the same work and bein payin attention and learnin the same as regular people are, I'd feel better cause I would still be learnin eighth grade English. My grades would get better (emphasis added).

Tameaka is also upset about "resource". I just mention the word "resource" and it sends her off on a tirade: "I had been the same way. Same old Tameaka. You know I'd be the same no matter where I be or where I go or who hold me down (physical restraint). I'd be Tameaka," she adamantly retorts. Tameaka then adds, "It makes them more mad bein in there in those resource classes. That's how it made me-- madder and act worse." I ask Tameaka to compare the work she does in resource to the work she does in the general classroom. Tameaka's eyes roll as she begins to tell me. "Easier, a lot easier. Easy as I don't know what. That's why I think I was in so much trouble. I was in ISS [in-school suspension] so much so I could get out of that class!" she responds. Tameaka then adds, "School is not borin. It is the

work and the teachers that are borin. School is fun and the students. It is just the teachers and the work and everything else that is borin."

Homework, "borin" work, making up work missed in the general classroom because they are in "resource" classes, "busy" work and "kiddie" work are frequent complaints of the underclass students in my study. These students are disgruntled by the type of work they have to do in "resource" classes, yet at the same time they enjoy "resource" because of the "treats" they receive. Are "resource" teachers trying to "bribe" these students instead of giving them a strong, educationally sound curriculum?

Middle Class Students Talk About Curriculum

The middle class students in my study are not completely pleased with all of their schools' practices and policies. These students are able to identify problems and then offer possible solutions. It is interesting to note here that all of the middle class students and all of the privileged students in my study are in schools that have incorporated "inclusive" practices into their programs. None of the underclass/working class students are in schools that have "inclusion" models.

Steve is a White middle class student who does not believe that he is different than most other students: "I would feel better if I did not have this problem with math, but most people probably has problems," he says. Steve believes that "pulling" students out of their "regular" classes is not the most appropriate solution. "Some of them might feel that people will make fun of them," he says, "You need more teachers," he believes is the best answer.

Alex, a middle class White male student complains about "resource": "Then I had to do sixth grade math and reading and I had to do two maths and two reading," he says. Alex thinks that the school should keep the "resource" teacher in the classroom with the "general" education teacher. "I like it when the teacher, the EC [exceptional children's] teacher comes into the room cause if you were stuck on a problem the other teacher might be busy and you have them to help you on it," he explains. Alex says that he probably would not be in "resource" if he did not have to write so much. He suggests that the school, "Put computers in every classroom to help get more information and not so much handwriting." He also believes:

> I think it is best when they come into the rooms,
> when they put the EC teachers in the room to give

> the people, the special people that need help (pause). When I get stuck on a question, I'd have to wait until I got to the resource room if there wasn't another teacher in the room.

I do not understand why Alex would have to wait until he got to the "resource" room before he could receive help. Do "general" education teachers only work with "regular" students?

Kelly is also upset with the school's curriculum:

> Well, I just spent hours studying my spelling words and big words, and I still can't spell, and I would fail my spelling tests. And I would cry and cry cause I would study them and I'd go in there and moma would call them out and I couldn't spell and I would have just looked at them! And I would cry and cry and it would upset me. And then I would fail my spelling test and my teacher I guessed talked to my mom or something and then she mentioned it to me about goin into that class. I just said, okay, whatever.

It seems to me that Kelly's teachers could have been more accommodating. Perhaps Kelly could have been given a multiple choice test and concentrated more on definitions and how the words could be used in writing. Kelly talks more about her experience:

> We done work in the room [resource] out of our regular spelling book and when we went back in there [general class] any, ugh, my teacher had a girl, a really, really smart girl and what I missed she would send my over to her and whatever I missed, she would help me get caught back up. When you get pulled out of class, you feel left out and like during breaks everyone was talking and I would have to go to class and I didn't like it.

If these students are in need of specialized help that cannot be obtained in the general education classroom, then why are they required to make up work missed because of time spent in "resource"?

A middle class African-American female student is also upset about the "resource" program. Keisha says:

> Make you feel dumb. I ain't in resource! They act dumb. We use to be in resources, but some people didn't need resources cause they might be a grade behind or something. Cause if they in the eighth grade and they'll put em in third grade book and they'll get behind in their regular grade and they'll not know how to do the stuff most kids learned how to do in the same grade and they'll be behind.

Keisha is in an alternative school placement and is currently being mainstreamed back into her regular school. She is disturbed by the fact that she has not had the opportunity to work on her grade level and is having a difficult time in the regular classes she is in. Keisha also finds fault with the end-of-grade test. She thinks:

> The test should not be allowed. The teacher should know how much you learned or think you have learned. When you get your report card, that should tell you how much you know cause sometimes the end-of-year tests have something on there that you haven't even took.

Keisha believes she knows why she scores poorly on the test. "Like the math is not on my grade level. If I had math on my grade level maybe I could probably pass the test. That's what gets me behind," she says.

Kenny is a middle class African-American that believes that some students should remain in the general education classroom and some students should not:

> The kids that be tryin should stay in there where they could start learnin and they don't have to go out of the room. Cause if they do, kids are goin to start thinkin they are dumb or stuff like that. The trouble-makers should be pulled out cause they ain't takin the time to learn nothin.

Kenny's school also has an "inclusion" program. He tells why he does not want to placed in a "resource" class:

> I don't want to be in no special ed class or nothin cause they [students] will probably think I am dumb or somethin like that. I learn more in regular class cause if you get pulled out they [resource teachers]

> probably can't tell you as much as the regular teacher can bout the kind of homework you get. They probably would only tell us to write the word, but the regular teacher would tell us to write a page and stuff like that.

Kenny seems to believe that "resource" work is easier than the "regular" classroom work. He also does not believe that "resource" teachers know as much as "regular" teachers. From my experience in the public schools, general education teachers think the same way as Kenny. They do not believe that "resource" teachers work as hard as they do. Kenny does not want the school to discontinue the practice of assigning homework. "I would keep homework in the school because if you don't do your homework, you ain't goin to get a good education," he explains.

Student vs. System

Privileged Students Talk About the System

These privileged young people are able to make the "system" work to their advantage. They do not see the inequities that are around them. Maxine Greene (1988) seems to be talking about such students when she states, "Visible or invisible, the world may not be problematized; no one aches to

break through a horizon, aches in the presence of the question itself. So there are no tensions, no desires to reach beyond" (p.122).

One privileged young African-American male student does not appreciate the fact that most adults believe that grades reflect what type of student you are. Jackson, thinks that people can be smart even though their grades are poor:

> The part I don't like about school is when like if you, ugh, ugh, make like a bad grade then that, that, ugh, that depends on if you're smart or not. I know a lot of people who make real bad grades and they're smart and they just say they don't want to and stuff like that. They be tellin me stuff like that.

Perhaps these students do not want to conform to the dominant ethos. Maybe they do not want to be stigmatized as, "nerd," "geek," or "whitey conformist".

If Jackson had a magic wand and could organize schools any way he wanted, he does not see too many things to change. " I don't know. I'd

probably leave it the same. I'd probably have a longer lunch time. We have to eat in about fifteen or twenty minutes," he says.

Another privileged African-American male student named Joey, does not want to see the schools change. He makes all A's, often volunteers to assist others and is in the AG program where he gets to do "fun projects and stuff". Joey is really into the "system" and cannot understand why someone else cannot be inculcated as easily. He is fully aware of the orderliness of the school. To him anyone should know the rules and simply follow them. Speaking of another student, he says:

> He didn't like teachers and he didn't like to listen. He was always in time-out and stuff. Sometimes he just wouldn't do it [school work]. He'd just, like if he had spelling or math, he just let it go. He acted like he didn't hear.

Kristen, a privileged White female student, believes that students should be consulted before the school system makes major decisions. She thinks that she and others should be able to give their opinions concerning "inclusion":

> You could bring other kids in and ask them what they thought and then like, if I get like bothered by it [being pulled out], and he'd [superintendent] like see they were bothered by it and well, I think it's more better because you will have two teachers and when like one's working on something else the other one can still help you.

Kristen is given the opportunity to dream about the changes she will make to the school system if she was in charge. She says, "I would do away with, ugh, ugh, ugh, I really like school. Well, I wouldn't change it."

Working Class Students Talk About the System

Exclusion is a powerful operating mechanism in the public schools today. The least privileged, usually those students that make up the underclass and students of color, are continuing to witness unfair practices and policies that are kept masked and hidden under the auspices of "good intentions" (Fine, 1991).

Lauren tries to explain why her brother decided to drop out of school and then discloses her own distressing reasons as well:

> My brother was the rebel at home and at school. He never got along with his teachers. I guess home bothered him and he acted out at school. I think he just wanted someone to care. He was always in so much trouble that he just quit. You see, I was just the opposite. I was quiet in school and did my work. I made good grades and the teachers never bothered me.

Why do students have to endure so much pain? When will the adults in schools begin to communicate effectively with their students?

> Well, I, maybe I just didn't decide to quit one day. It's just that you can only miss so many days before they fail you and I had missed the maximum number of days I was allowed and I was going to fail, so why not just quit. Nobody cared. I had always missed the maximum number of days as long as I can remember. I don't really remember elementary school, but I do remember middle school. I was absent a lot.

> I guess no one ever said anything because I made good grades. I was quiet in class and that with being absent a lot should have been a warning sign.

Exclusion is a powerful force at work in the schools today. The adults' silence was enough to "push" Lauren out.

> Sometimes I would cry for no reason. This was when I was in high school. The teachers would be nice and ask if I was okay, but no one ever really took time to try and find out. I told her everything was okay and she accepted my answer. If she would have pressed me or called me into her office one more time, I probably would have told her the truth.

Lauren desperately needed to know that some one cared that she existed. She reached out, but found no adult willing to acknowledge her.

> I found out that life was tough after I had quit. I could not find a good job to make enough money to live off of. I didn't want to live at my sister's. I didn't want to end up like her or my parents. The school

> never contacted me about why I had quit or to ask me to return. I just decided that I wanted to do better than my parents had done. I wanted to get more out of life than they had. The only way I knew to do that was to come back to school.

The school Lauren attends has a "dropout prevention" program. The program supervisor is suppose to contact all dropouts and try to convince them to return to school.

Tameaka recalls her disturbing experience from her elementary years that leads to her being placed in a special school for aggressive children and adolescents:

> It's like in the younger years, I was nice and all that and people used to beat me up because I was short and scared. But now I was in third grade two times and I changed a lot. People made me mean.

Tameaka also is searching for some one to care. She seemed to be completely unnoticed by the adults in school until she began fighting. She than began to receive attention; albeit negative, nonetheless, it was attention.

> They picked on me and I started fightin. It was my own fault. I make my own decisions. I want to go back to regular school, but it is too late now. I am quittin. I been in this school three years and I ain't go out yet. I am quittin if I can. I have been here three years and it ain't helped me none. I ain't learned nothin at this school. I learned some things. You got to ignore some people as long as you can. But you can only go so long and you got to take control over what you want to do.

I tell Tameaka to describe what the "perfect" school would be like. She asks, "My own school?" and I respond, "Yes. Your own school and you can have things anyway you want." Tameaka smiles and then begins to describe her "perfect" school:

> I would have kids in there. They would come to us on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday and they got to learn somethin. But on the other two days they can just sit there and trip. But in order to do that you got

> to learn somethin for those, for them three days. If you don't learn nothin on them three days that week, then you got to go to school on Thursday and Friday and learn.
>
> I would get some Black teachers that would teach the kids.

Jamal, an elementary student, tells why he thinks students drop out of school. He goes on to tell parents and the school system what can be done to help prevent students from dropping out:

> Some drop out cause, some have girlfriends and they think they are bad that they can drop out then. Then when their girlfriend, they drop out of school cause of their boyfriend did. It is bad cause they don't have a good job or work at a job that don't give em a lot of, that don't pay that much. Some drop out when they go to juvenile hall. They might of shoot somebody. They drop out. They [society] take away all of their guns. The parents could keep their kids at home or let them go play with or just go to a place where they won't get in trouble. And what teachers could do, they can send

> them to a place where they can help them and they can't do nothin like they are now.

Jamal wants to feel safe in his community and at school. He expects the adults to make his environment a safe refuge.

Tyrone talks about why he struggles in the classroom. He is in the fourth grade:

> I read like, uhmm, you know I don't have that much at home. I go to this classroom, this class and she gives me books to read. Like, *There's a Monster Under My Bed*, and, ugh, books that little kids have in kindergarten like that. I can read pretty good, but not that much.

How does a fourth grade student do his class work when he is not able to read on his grade level? How did he get to fourth grade and not be able to read? How long will it take before Tyrone's frustrations over not being able read be misinterpreted by the system as insubordination and hostility?

I ask Tyrone why he thinks students drop out of school. He becomes defensive at first and then starts to explain why some eventually quit:

> Who they are, are not any of my cousins. I don't know nobody that quit school and my cousins and nobody! (long pause) Well, cause they want to get a job before they start college. Somethin like that or they want to get a car. If they don't get a job or a car they might go back. This one commercial says, uhmm, 'Be cool. Stay in school.'

Darius, an African-American middle school student, wants to change the in-school suspension (ISS) policy in his school system. He believes that being in ISS is what gets students behind in their work and will eventually cause them to quit school:

> I think I would change ISS. Children should always be like in their classes cause they be missin out on certain things. Like, when you in ISS, you don't really do nothin. You just be doin a whole lot of work. You know like if you were in your regular class, you would know what the subject was and

> know what they were talkin about. I would keep everything else the same.

Brit a low-income White middle school student who also feels strongly about the need to take ISS out of the schools:

> I would keep all of the nice teachers and some of the teachers that were kinda of rough. I'd keep the rough teachers and keep all the kids that get in trouble all the time in their classes. You would go to the rough teachers instead of to ISS, but they would still be nice in some ways. (tears in his eyes) Well, I would tell them to take ISS out so I could learn instead of bein in ISS all of the time.

Brit refers to teachers that make him work as the "rough" teachers. He wants to feel challenged by the adults at school. How can Brit and other students who are frustrated by the curriculum begin to learn if they are removed from the class and miss the teacher's instructions and class discussions? Brit, like so many other low-income students, just wants an adult to notice and respect him.

Several low-income students comment on being retained. One African-American female student says, "They get bored. They too old to be in that class." An African-American male student justifies his reason for thinking about dropping out. "Like some people are eighteen in the tenth grade and kids think they are dumb. I flunked one time and I'd like to go, but that is why I'm quittin," he says. Tameaka, as we have already heard says, "I was in third grade two times and I changed a lot. People made me mean."

Nationally the dropout rate doubles for students who have repeated a grade, compared with their age peers (Barro, 1984). The experience of being retained affects the psychological and educational well-being of the student. These students, who are already in the margins, are disappointed when they are held back and often feel justified to drop out.

Middle Class Students Talk About the System

Steve feels that he would do better in school if "classes were smaller and I could have more time," he says. "I guess you need more teachers," he adds. Another White middle class male student does not believe that his school system needs to change. I ask Alex if he had the power to organize the school system any way he wanted, what changes, if any, would he make?

Alex responds, " I would just leave them the way they have them." I tell another middle class male student to pretend that he is now the superintendent. What if he could be in charge of all schools in the system and could do anything he wants to reorganize them, the teachers, the principals and the students? Kenny thinks for a moment and then answers, " I would change the decorations, the color to black and white, black and gray or black and gold. One of those colors. I'd keep the teachers, homework and everything else the same."

Keisha, tells why students drop out of school:

> Cause at the age of sixteen, they [teachers] tell you can drop out of school. When you sixteen you got a choice to drop out or keep going. Someone turns sixteen thinks they can quit school and still get a good job and make money. If they can get a good job without going to college. Or they think they workin too hard or they get tired of school. Or some teenage girls get pregnant and they got no one to watch their kids. If they stay in school they got a better life ahead

> of them. They think it is funny that they don't come to school. They think they can drop out when they want to or come when they are ready.

Does having an age requirement cause young students to believe that adults are endorsing the option to drop out? Keisha explains why so many young girls she knows is pregnant:

> They don't use protection. Some of them wantin a baby. Some of them just happen. Most of my friends are pregnant, my cousins, and my sister. They keep thinkin that I am gonna be next. I guess they be out doin their own thing. They should use common sense to use protection. Some of them out of school cause they got nobody to watch their babies. Some have one or two by the age of eighteen. They gonna do it no matter what you say. So just tell them about protection so they like won't catch nothin. They go wid their boyfriends-- doin it anywhere.

I believe that adults must recognize the connection between school and home; they are partners in education. The school and the home are where young people learn the cultural constructs of how men and women should be.

> They gonna be like they gonna be. The only thing you can do is talk to them. It don't matter what age you say they can drop out cause they gonna drop out whenever they want to.

It seems that adults are denying children of their childhood. Through their actions or lack of actions, adults are; telling children they are not wanted, giving children no boundaries, denying self-respect, and limiting communication.

I ask Keisha to create any type of school she wants. She can change school any way she wants. Keisha creates the following school:

> Cafeteria food is bad. Cooking lessons. Can make or bring our own food. We need teachers, so that's no problem. Teachers as long as they wouldn't be mean. No attitude problems; they understood you and willin to talk to you. And they be willin to help

> you and talk things over wid you and not tryin to be bad or stuff.

There is a distinct contrast between what she knows and what she wants:

> Sixth grade not allowed at middle school. They don't know how to hang. Let seventh and eighth graders have some classes together if they don't make below a C.

All students in my study have pretty much conformed to the practices and policies of the system. No one wants to drastically modify the way thing operates in their schools, although some would make a few cosmetic alterations.

Future Plans of the Students

Privileged Students Talk About Their Future Plans

The privileged students in my study have made concrete plans for their future. These young children and adolescents know where they want to go and know in which field they want to major. None of these students use words like; "hope," "wish," or "I'd like to". All of these privileged young people say, "I want to" when talking about the future.

Jackson, a privileged African-American middle grade student, has a plan and a back-up plan:

> My mom asked me what I was goin to do if I went to college and I didn't make it playin football. I told her I was goin to be a computer technologist or go into architecture cause I like to clean up the house and make stuff. I need somethin to lean back on.

Another privileged African-American student knows exactly what he wants to do. Joey is in the fifth grade:

> Go to college. Florida State, Wake Forest or Georgia Tech because I want to be a Marine Biologist. I like sea animals and stuff. I like Killer whales and dolphins. My mom told me a good place for me to go would be UNC in Wilmington.

Kristen, an overclass White middle school student, also has made concrete plans for her future. Kristen's father is on the school board and has helped her decide which field to go into based on need. As we have heard before, "I'm gonna to college. I want to go to UNC in Greensboro. I'm gonna

be a speech pathologist," she states. "My dad told me there was a shortage," Kristen adds.

Low-income Students Speak about the Future

The low-income male students in my study eagerly talk about their future plans. They have plans, but just how pragmatic are they? Two African-American male students in elementary school talk about making it "big" like Michael Jordan. One says, "Play basketball, baseball or any sport. If I get hurt then I'll wait till I get killed. I like sports the best." Another student says, "Play basketball." I ask what will he do if he does not play professionally and he responds, "Well, he [Michael Jordan] still get money cause he owns half of the Chicago Bulls." Very few athletes ever play professionally. These students' "hoop dreams" will very likely never come true. What is the school doing to help them realize more alternatives?

Darius, a low-income African-American male middle school student, is in "resource" classes for math, reading and language arts. He is currently failing science and social studies. Are his plans for his future any more sensible than the underclass elementary students with the "hoop dreams" ?

"Finish high school and get a job. Go to college and be a veterinarian," he says.

Brit, a White middle school male student is a similar situation. He is in "resource" and is failing all of the regular classes he is taking. Brit is suspended much of the time. He is rarely in any of his classes for long because he gets kicked out before the class is over. However, Brit has definite plans for his future. "After I get out of school, I'm goin to work and go to college. And after college go into the military like my brother did," Brit declares. The military used to be a viable option to many economically disadvantaged youth. Today, the military has raised its criterion and very few students who do poorly in school get accepted.

The two underclass female students have "reasonable" future plans. The African-American student wants to "Work, of course. Work and go on wid my life," she says. Lauren, the White student is married, but wants to continue her education:

> I married the man I had been dating for almost three years. He is in the service and is going through basics and stuff. After I graduate, I will

> be moving with him to wherever he is stationed.
> I scored 1200 on the SAT, but it isn't enough
> for a full scholarship. I guess I will go to a community
> college and then transfer. I want to go into accounting
> and become a CPA or learn French fluently and
> become a translator. I think we may live in Italy
> when he finishes his training.

Lauren dropped out of school when she was sixteen. She stayed out of school for a year and a half before she returned. Making good grades and scoring high on standardized tests are not indicators of who will stay in school.

Middle Class Students Speak About the Future

In my study both male and female middle class students view education as the means to "getting ahead". These students have plans for their future, but they are not as rigid as the privileged students' plans are nor are they as impractical as the underclass/working class students' plans.

Kenny views education as the way to keep off of the streets:

> I like it. School will help me get a good education and help me keep my grades up and keep me off the screets and keep me from selling drugs and stuff like that. School is better than bein on the screets because what if you have like a little kid or somethin while you are goin to school. And, ugh, you take a job is better than bein on the screet so that you could get money to feed your children and put shelter over your head.

Kenny has plans for after high school graduation. "Get me a job and buy a house. A nice, wholesome job like my mom have," he says.

An African-American elementary student says that his parents have talked to him about going to college. His parents want him to go to college even though they were not able to. "Well, my mom and my daddy said he want me to go to college cause he didn't. It cost a lot of money. It was a lot of money to pay," he says.

Several White male middle school students think that finishing high school will be beneficial to them. One student knows what he would like to

do. "Go to college. I thought about teaching English or social studies or computers," he replies. The other student simply responds, "Get me a job."

A middle class female student knows several jobs she might want to have. "I want to go into like interior decorating or I want to teach kids with Down's Syndrome or a speech pathologist," she exclaims. The other female student in the middle class, an African-American, is sure that she wants to finish high school and then go to college, but is unsure of what kind of job she wants to have:

> I want to finish high school and go on to college. I don't know none, but I don't want to go to a community college. Maybe own my own beauty salon. My mom tell me I am good at fixin hair.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions

Introduction

This research study was conducted in order to unveil the discriminatory practices of educators based on what socio-economic class a student belongs. Underclass/working class, middle class, and privileged children and adolescents were interviewed in order to gain insight into what they perceived their relationship with the significant adults in their lives to be like and how these relationships affected their lived experiences. These young people's varied positions toward teachers, the system, curriculum, and their futures were the result of the critical relationships they had with their parent(s) and / or significant other adults in their lives. The children's and adolescents' successes and failures were the result of positive and negative relationships with significant adults at home and at school and unfair school practices. Their stories revealed a "behind the scenes" look into the differing hodgepodge of circumstances that foster or hamper each student's progress.

Academic Scholars vs. Students

Most scholars and school personnel would lead one to believe that students of color and those from economically disadvantaged families are most at risk of dropping out of school. The term "at risk" has been used to describe minority groups from inner-city schools and tagged on to characteristics of poor students of all cultural backgrounds whether from urban or rural schools. These students are usually segregated because of school practices such as ability grouping and special education.

The economically disadvantaged students in my study reveal that they are indeed labeled "at risk" because of their race and socio-economic status. These students are made to feel "singled out" and "pushed out" by the adults in their schools. The low-income students say that school personnel thought differently about them. "They thought I was really disturbed, like I was crazy. The teachers thought I was retarded," one student exclaims. Another student says, "They say I caused too much trouble. That's why they put me in resource." Others talk about the experience of being singled out. "Resource make you feel dumb," one student expresses. Another student

claims that resource made her feel "retarded and I am no retarded child either!" she roars.

Dropouts have been portrayed as "depressed, helpless, hopeless" and with little or no choices throughout psychological, sociological, educational, and policy literatures (Fine and Rosenberg, 1983). Youths are depicted as unreasonable and/or academically inferior by the policies and practices the schools employ.

The students' stories do not agree with the experts. These students do not begin their school careers feeling "hopeless," depressed," or "helpless". They soon learn after they enter school that the adults think they are "unreasonable" and/or "academically inferior" as the result of being ignored, excluded and often denied an education. "She just lets me sleep," or "Nobody says anything to me," are common occurrences in these students' schools. They want to learn and in the early years ask for help, "I tell my teacher that I want to help my grades," but the teacher only "lets us copy the papers." "I still don't like asking for help," is a common response from students who have received little or no assistance from their teachers which results in "E's, E's, bad grades."

According to Fine (1991), a primary reason that students drop out of the school experience is "family problems" and the students in my study tend to agree. "Some of them drop out of school cause they got nobody to watch their babies. Some have one or two by the age of eighteen," she says. A fifth grader reasons that "they wouldn't have to (drop out). They just feel like they would have to." He explains, "Like if their parents were always fighting over stuff or their parents were dealers or something maybe." A third grader thinks that girls drop out of school, " cause of their boyfriend did," he says. A young man theorizes why a friend of his is experiencing so much difficulty in school. He says, "He didn't like teachers and he didn't like to listen and his dad was in jail." A fifteen year old contemplating quitting reflects, "I first had sex when I was eight years old."

"Family" problems is a big reason why students drop out of school. If educational researchers know this, then why are "school" and "home" not beginning to work together as "partners" in education (Martin, 1992). According to Martin (1992), schools need to become more responsive to the needs of today's parents and children. She states that today's school must become a "schoolhome" where all children feel safe and nurtured.

Mann (1986) asserts that if students are retained and not given effective remediation, they are forced into a cycle of "cumulative failure". The students' stories concur. One student talks about friends of hers that have been held back. "They get bored. They too old to be in that class," she says. Several students talk about how it feels to be retained. "Like some people are eighteen in the tenth grade and kids think they are dumb. I flunked one time and I'd like to go, but that is why I'm quittin," one remarks. Another student says, "I was in third grade two times and I changed a lot. People made me mean. They picked on me and I started fightin." One young lady explains why she quit even though she was in the top ten percent of her class. "I had missed more than the number of days I was allowed and I was going to fail, so why not quit," she says.

"Whiteness" and "maleness" are predominantly represented in textbooks. Students of color, students with disabilities and female students are usually omitted which adds to the student's feelings of inadequacy. These students are made to feel "invisible" and worthless by the public schools because they are denied a "voice" in the making of their own histories. Jean Anyon (1980) states that the student has no control over the "content," "process," or "speed" of the work.

These young people learn quite forcefully that the best thing for them is to stay out of the way. They become passive, reactive victims who are not in charge of their lives. "I was quiet in school and did my work. I made good grades and the teachers never bothered me," one student says. She eventually dropped out of school because like so many of the other students she felt that "no one cared." Her brother also quit school. His sister tells why he quit. "I think he just wanted someone to care. He was always in so much trouble that he just quit," she says. Another student also feels that no one cares about him. He says, "They have passed me on because the teachers don't want me in their classrooms for another year. So they just went ahead and passed me." Initially the students are hurt by the inattentiveness. "I don't think nobody can help," they say. Then the hurt turns to indifference. "Then it was like I didn't care," they say.

Privileged and middle class students of color and with disabilities are not denied a "voice" in the making of their own histories. These students do have control over the "content," "process," and "speed" of their work. The students are not intimidated by the adults at school. "I'll confront her [teacher] and ask why she said it," one student exclaims. Another student

says, "I'm not going," when told that the teacher wants to send her to a "resource" class. Several other students know their parents can go against the school's decision. "I just want her [mother] to sign the papers so that I could get out of it [resource]." Another student says, "I want my mom to sign me out." In absolute contrast to the students in the underclass, these overclass and middle class students are aggressive and proactive. "You could bring other kids in and ask them what they thought," one suggests. Another student states, "My dad told me. He's the school board."

Even though African-American students and those students from the economically disadvantaged groups constitute a predominantly high proportion of those students who eventually drop out, there is a glimmer of hope that prevails. These students are aware of the limits imposed on them through unfair and unequal opportunities (Kluegel and Smith, 1986) yet they acknowledge the potential to access the forum needed to eradicate the very same inequities they have had to endure (Fine,1991). These young students struggle with the belief that education will unlock doors to a better, much more rewarding life because they only have to look at their own situations, families and friends to discover the apparent injustices.

These young students maintain trust in the adults at school. "And what teachers could do, they can send them [students] to a place where they can help them and they can't do nothin like they do now," one student says. Another student happily remarks, "I didn't get my name up that day." Children forgive the adults at school regardless of the treatment they receive. "Teachers are nice, " one student mentions. Another student imparts, "I don't want to stop school, iffen [even] though I get mad at the teacher. But I get over it." After years of indifference, students begin to be less forgiving. "I'd still be the same. Same old Tameaka. I'm not goin to change. They can send me off, hold me down, but I still be the same, smart mouth Tameaka," she asserts. Some students find strength in adults outside of school and the home. Lauren's positive relationship is with her husband, Chris. "I scored 1200 on the SAT," she proudly announces. Another student wants to be able to "finish high school and get a job," he declares.

Privileged and middle class students do not have to struggle with the belief that education will unlock doors to a better future. These students can look around them and see the rewards their families and friends are enjoying. The teachers of these privileged and middle class students are gearing their

educational experiences and curriculum knowledge to best meet their needs. "The teacher can explain stuff," and "If you don't understand, you can ask them," are common phrases heard in these students' stories. These students know that they are doing well in school. "I did real good on my end-of-grade test," one student remarks. Another student says, "I volunteer in class a lot." "I was a tutor," a student says. These young students can make the adults and the system work for them. "Now I can get more help," he says. Another student remarks, "She can just come and help me."

Not all low-income students become passive, reactive victims. Some students in my research study were not afraid to point a finger and say, "Wait a minute. I am not at fault." Lauren, the student that dropped out and then returned says:

> I do blame the school for some of my problems. Someone could have seen how sad and upset I was, but no one was willing to get involved. Making good grades should not be all there is to school. Somebody needs to care.

She is unsure if the school will ever change, but is hopeful. "I am still

working on my life. I hope I can trust the school system when my children are there," Lauren states.

Several students declare that they could make school better. One says, "I'd have teachers that would know what they were doin." Another student says, "I would get some Black teachers that would teach."

Summary

From the works of the following critical authors, Apple (1986); Apple and Weis (1983); Aronowitz and Giroux (1985); Althusser (1971); Carnoy and Levin (1985); Dale (1982); Eisenstein (1988); Giroux (1988); Gramsci (1971) and Hall (1985) come a series of assumptions pertaining to public schools being public spheres. Schools are in a continual struggle between and among interests of the "State," "capital," "labor," "educators," "community representatives," "advocates," "students," and "parents." There are two main discourses that grip the public schools and they are in direct conflict with each other; the official interpretation and the critical interpretation. Social relations are stressed throughout the curricula while making invisible the effects of "class," "race," and "gender". Educators must initiate the emphasize on the critical interpretation before true reform can begin.

Certain scholars and the students in this study agree that social identity does correspond to the attitudes and values a student internalizes. Teachers need to become aware of each student's perspective in order to educate them fully so that s/he may develop into an active, critical student. Low-income students and students of color need teachers to instill in them a faith that they can overcome economic and social injustices and then provide realistic means for doing so. The parents and the children of the underclass/working class need the knowledge and the power to adequately prepare them for the struggle against the many injustices they face. This may seem like an impossible task, but it should be a struggle every educator should aspire to wage. Students need to be shown respect and genuine care regardless of socio-economic class, gender, race, or handicapism.

Successes and failures, according to the narratives of the students in my investigation, depended upon the relationship the student had with the adults in their lives, unfair school practices, and the student's sense of "self". The kind of relationship the student had with the teacher, the types of school practices to which the student was exposed and the student's sense of "self" were all influenced by the student's socio-economic class.

The analysis of the students' narratives unveiled that low-income students served by the schools in my study believe that teachers do not care about them or believe that they receive little encouragement from their teachers. It also revealed that many students served in special education pull-out programs do not feel challenged and that expectations for them are low. The students do not see work as meaningful. Many of these students reveal their self-esteem is lowered by being singled out.

Conclusions

Schools can affect change and lower dropout rates by providing a more caring, nurturing environment (Byrk and Thum, 1989). Teachers must learn to acknowledge student differences instead of remaining "color-blind." By not allowing themselves or their students to talk about race, culture, gender or ability, teachers are silently endorsing the dominant culture and making others who do not "fit" invisible. Schools should be places where gender, race, ethnicity, language, socio-economic class, and ability can be openly discussed. Student differences should encourage teachers to investigate various ways learning is affected. Provisions should be made based on differences instead of labeling the student or the student's behavior as

deficient. Schools and society need to stop blaming school failure on race, gender, ethnicity, class or handicapism and learn to accept the blame for creating environments that put students at risk. Schools should actively seek reform that allows the voices of all students to be heard and nurtured.

Schools must become inclusive and fully integrated. Race, gender, language background, socio-economic class or ability should not be the basis for separating students (Wang, Reynolds, and Walberg, 1992). Traditionally students have been labeled and separated depending upon race, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic class. Minorities often make up the bulk of students in special education classes even though they represent low percentages of the school population. The number of students being labeled has vastly increased over the last two decades.

Tracking and labeling practices must be replaced by better ways to deal with diverse groups of students. Many advocates support the belief that children can and should learn in more inclusive classrooms. Equity must be ensured before schools can attempt to provide educational excellence. All students must be educated in the most effective ways possible.

Teachers must raise their expectations for *all* students regardless of race, gender, class, ethnicity or ability. "Worn" and "watered down" teaching methods must be done away with and replaced by excellent teaching practices for all students. Schools must provide only one curriculum for all students through inclusion in the general education classrooms. Teachers must be well-trained in meeting the many diverse ways children learn. During the 1990s many students regardless of whether they are or are not classified are in need of more specialized help. Schools must be prepared to positively impact these students through teacher training that emphasizes students and not content.

The world is made up of people from different races, socio-economic classes, gender, and abilities and I believe that schools must be reflective of these differences in each classroom community. Children in segregated classes cannot be made a part of the broader school or world community. Only through a sense of belonging, caring and community within the school setting can students begin to develop more fully (Noddings, 1984).

Inclusive practices in the classroom promote effective adult dialogue that is necessary to produce change in educational policies based on morals

and ethics (Staub and Peck, 1995). Inclusion is an educational philosophy based on the belief that all children should fully participate in general educational settings regardless of race, gender, class, ethnicity or ability. Inclusion treats children as children with a focus on ability. No one is intellectually excluded because of the diversity of classroom activities. There are no fancy teaching methods of technologies. Teachers concentrate on the individual strengths of their students. Students achieve a self-defined "sense of self" by being involved in classrooms that nurture individual differences. Inclusive classrooms provide a process for schools to ensure equal access and the means for achieving equal outcomes.

Inclusion refers to the commitment to educate all students to the maximum extent appropriate in the school or classroom that the students would normally attend regardless of race, gender, socio-economic class, ethnicity, language background or ability. The goal of inclusion is to create an environment where all children can learn and work together. The goal is not to become inattentive to individual differences, but to look for ways to build inclusive schools that will acknowledge student differences and needs and respond in a caring, nurturing context. Integration of all students can be

fully incorporated without conflicting with achievement or restricting the rights of any one person.

Currently, there is much debate among educators over the inclusion issue. Many educators feel that inclusion is just another fad that has prompted fear and frustration in teachers and parents. These educators believe that the inclusion phenomenon is overwhelmingly sweeping through the country and there is a rush for educators to jump on board.

Inclusion places the emphasis on how differences bring children together rather than focusing on how their differences separate them. The United States has always been multicultural; it's just that now we are trying to remove the belief in the inherent superiority of some people and the inherent inferiority of others. Inclusion allows for the equitable outcomes as well as equal access. The reality of diversity is already here and it is up to the schools to grasp the opportunity to help prepare society for a diverse future.

Recommendations for Future Study

Since this research verifies that students who participate in inclusive classes sustain a higher level of personal satisfaction and perceive that the quality and effectiveness are much greater than in pull-out programs, there are

implications for future research provided in this study. These include the following considerations: 1) pilot programs, 2) staff development, 3) test scores, and 4) case studies--"voices" of parents, teachers and students. Future research on inclusive methods will provide new approaches to become more effective in efforts to help students experience success in school.

School can be a site of frustration and boredom for many students. These students receive little or no rewards from the educational system and are faced with many humiliating situations. The structure, policies and practices of the educational system puts them at risk for school drop out, substance abuse, social alienation and lifelong underachievement. These students are generally misunderstood and mismanaged by schools causing detrimental effects in society's cultural and economic spheres.

Schools are faced with an ever-increasing number of children with diverse needs. Some students are classified, but many students remain virtually invisible; their differences labeled as "deficient" by their teachers. The majority of these students are placed in the lowest levels where they receive worn-out teaching methods. They are put through the drudgery of drill and repetition. When more innovative teaching methods are not used students become more discouraged and bored.

Inclusion is a way for schools to become more effective in dealing with diversity. Teachers must be taught to recognize individual needs; to develop the student's strengths and stop looking for weaknesses. Teachers must openly acknowledge student differences and stop being color-blind. Color-blindness leads to a dominant value system that negates all other values. Students are made to feel alienated and inferior. When individual differences are openly recognized, students are actively engaged. They are no longer "invisible".

Inclusion is a broadly conceived educational model. It must include an extensive in-service education program for all teachers and administrators. The staff must be taught how to recognize and describe students systematically; then implement strategies that will foster development functioning rather than "labeling" students. Teachers must then be shown how to teach students to better understand themselves. Students will begin to develop a greater insight and a much better sense of personal efficacy.

The school systems must begin to train personnel in the inclusive delivery model as a means of including students with a greater diversity of needs in the "general" education program. Weaknesses need to be

recognized and cautions need to be taken. Strategies will need to be implemented that ensure that all students will be taught in terms of what is best for them.

School systems need to be supportive of the Goals 2000 Educate America Act that is aimed at raising the nation's very low level performance. In response to its own local underachievement, school systems need to propose to initiate more collaboration of resources among existing agencies and the schools, and to strengthen existing programs so that school becomes less humiliating and more rewarding for children and adolescents.

With the commitment to implement a strong program of continuous staff development and to the belief that every child can learn, the school systems then need to implement the inclusion program in the schools. The professional staff development program should be based on a "trainer of trainers" model and should assist teachers in understanding underlying reasons for a student's learning difficulty. Once initiated, the inclusion model should enable the schools to be more effective in dealing with students who have difficulty keeping pace with the ever-increasing demands of school. The schools should generate new and more informed perspectives about the efficacy of active learning pedagogies for different kinds of students.

Teachers should begin to recognize an existence of patterns of dysfunctions among students that will provide insight into the neurodevelopmental dysfunctions, their impacts, their diagnosis, and their optimal management at school and home. Through inclusive practices, this knowledge can be shared with all teachers and make them more sensitive to the developmental stages of children and to provide them with the tools for developing strategies.

Strategies for Implementation

Strategies for implementation of inclusive delivery models of instruction based on the findings of this investigative research study could include the following:

- Enhance teacher understanding, sensitivity and management of students with learning difficulties and behavior problems.

- Present workshops on how to increase adaptive strategies that meet individual learning and needs in diverse group settings, i.e., increased use of heterogeneous classes, collaborative learning strategies, peer-assisted learning, and progress mastery learning.

- Provide opportunities for collegial interaction and planning.

- Help all students better understand themselves as evidenced by formal and informal evaluations.

- Actively engage children in discussions that will promote greater insight and a sense of personal efficacy.

- Use surveys and case studies so that students can discuss and learn about individual differences.

- Ensure a single educational system for all students through integration of special needs instruction within the general education program.

- Reduce the emphasis on categorical pull-out programs as a way to address unique learning needs.

- Utilize interventions based on identified instructional needs and not arbitrary program labels (e.g., learning disabled, emotionally handicapped, gifted).

- Utilize current research on learning styles and cooperative learning through consultants, staff development and training.

- Encourage parental monitoring of their child's school performance and seek meaningful involvement of parents in the schools and with their child's education.

- All schools will be sensitive to the cultural, aspirations, and needs of students and parents, recognizing that family patterns and responsibilities have changed dramatically.

Evaluation Methods

Each strategy is stated in performance terms and proposes an evaluation method. These should be carried out as stated. The effectiveness of each activity should be closely monitored at the time it is applied so that formative evaluation can occur.

- Collect information on factors that have been identified to be significant prior to development and implementation which will serve as a baseline for later comparison.

- Gather subjective data that will include educator and student perceptions of cooperative teaching such as the quality and effectiveness of help that students who are struggling receive, the perceived clarity of lessons that are presented, and the overall level of personal and professional satisfaction of the educators engaged in inclusive teaching, as well as that of their students.

- Local surveys of educators to identify and agree upon component processes that the program requires and evaluate regularly.

- Measure effectiveness of increased student achievement through data such as school-wide test scores on standardized tests, informal reading inventories, curriculum-based assessment measures.

- Collect information with questionnaires.

The evaluation process should employ the triangulation of data sources. With triangulation the construct validity will be strengthened. The process of using more than one source of evidence makes the study more convincing and much more accurate. The researcher should use structured surveys, open-ended interviews and a review of test scores; both formal and informal. These procedures will lead to quantitative data as well as qualitative data.

All investigators must be trained so that each person knows how to carry out all data collection techniques. A database should be organized to increase the reliability of the research. The data should contain enough information so that each reader can draw independent conclusions. The study will require accurate notes, documents, tabular materials, and narratives. The researcher and investigators will need audiotapes, microcomputer diskettes,

computer, storage space, computerized files, and filing cabinets. Another main element will be to hire an external observer. This observer would need to be able to have access to all notes, documents and narratives so that s/he would be able to follow the chain of evidence. The observer should be able to trace the steps from initial research questions to conclusions or from conclusions back to the initial research questions.

These procedures will ensure quality control. The process will result in a much stronger construct validity and a higher reliability. Investigators must be highly trained so that formal procedures will be adhered to.

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