SYSTEMIC AND DISCRIMINATORY DISCIPLINARY PRACTICES AND A TEACHER'S STRUGGLE FOR A MORE SOCIALLY JUST AND EQUITABLE EDUCATION SYSTEM

by

Diane Caruso

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts
Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis looks at how I became a teacher. I write about my experiences of, and implications in, different disciplinary practices of supply teaching and in various teaching positions I have held. Despite my resistance, I learned that to teach in a mass schooling system that some forms of discipline were necessary. I began to see the relation of teaching within the larger political and social context and to explore some of the discriminatory features of the education system called schooling and the limits that teachers function within. Racism, anti-racism and homophobia are some of the systemic relations of power that I look into. Streaming is another major systemic problem that I take up. What I wish to make central are the possibility and difficulties that a teacher struggles with to make teaching more socially just and inclusive in the face of the systemic, discriminatory disciplinary practices of the institution of schooling.
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One of the greatest influences on my developing sense of social justice was Philip Corrigan. He always made his students feel as if they were each the most important person. What a wonderful teacher! Philip will always have a special place in my heart.

To my friends and family, especially Gord, thank-you.
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BIBLIOGRAPHY:
INTRODUCTION

This thesis traces a journey from 1982 to 2000. During this time I went to Teachers' College, taught as a supply teacher, a long term occasional and a full time teacher. I have taught in many schools in the Greater Toronto area. My 'method' is one of personal, autobiographical reflections and interpretation. These reflections from the changing standpoints of preservice student, school placement, occasional and 'regular' teacher in different schools/contexts has provided me with certain insights. I provide personal accounts and 'situated' interpretation. However there are 'limits' to my approach. While there may be similarities as well as differences with others, these accounts are my own and can't be generalized. They are also not meant to be definitive. I think the personal narrative is a context in which we can see the larger social and political systems. I attempt to demonstrate that a certain type of discipline and power is anathema to a socially just and equitable education. This position is an evolving one based on my experiences as a teacher and my reading of texts. Lee Anne Bell, (1997) defines social justice education as:

...both a process and a goal. The goal of social justice education is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure....in which individuals are both self-determining (able to develop their full capacities), and interdependent(capable of interacting democratically with other)....involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others and the society as a whole. (1997, p.3)
The first part of this thesis deals with "practice teaching" while I was studying to become a teacher. At that time I learned of the many ways that discipline related to teaching and schooling. I document the lessons I learned from the Faculty of Education and practice teaching, about disciplining myself and others, classroom and time management, curriculum, school knowledge, rules, codes of conduct, forms of dress and address, and punishment. I was shocked by this thing they called teaching. Teachers seemed mainly concerned with different forms of disciplining. I thought most of the issues around discipline were unfair. I thought that these experiences were unfortunate and isolated instances in these few particular schools where I did my practice teaching. After teaching for several years, I came to see that there was a larger program of disciplining in schools, education and society. This 'program' can be called, "moral regulation".

Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer conceive of moral regulation as a "project of normalizing, rendering natural, taken for granted, in a word, 'obvious' what are in face ontological and epistemological premises for a particular and historical form of social order". (Rousmaniere, Dehli and de Coninck-Smith, 1997, p. 6)

At the end of each "practice teaching" section I reflect on some of my observations to understand why there was such a focus on discipline and how these things came to be taken as "normative and normalizing practices of school discipline" (Rousmaniere, Dehli and de Coninck-Smith, p. 13). I document the resistance I often felt towards those who were disciplining and morally regulating me in their efforts to teach me to become a teacher.
Throughout my thesis I show the contradictory nature of the relationship between schooling, discipline and power. Like Rousmaniere, Dehli and de Coninck-Smith I am interested in,

...how power operates in modern societies through dispersed practices of regulation, and how the organization of modern power comes to be imbued with morality in the broadest sense. In order to ask how formal schooling aims to shape the everyday conduct, sentiments, and values, as well as the knowledge and skills of children and adults who come in contact with them. (1997, p. 9)

In Chapter 2, I write about my teaching career since Teachers' College, beginning with supply teaching. I note the difference between theory (Teachers' College) and practice (teaching). I try to show the structures of power and discipline at work in the schools and society. For a long time I thought it was enough to write that, "...particular practices reproduce either structures of domination and subordination or representation of identity, difference, and inequality" (Grossberg, 1994 p. 6). And so, included here are accounts of racism and homophobia and how they were "handled" by myself, students, other teachers and administrators. "Such observations are not unimportant; we do, after all, need to be constantly reminded of the racist, sexist, xenophobic, and homophobic dimensions of our social and cultural lives" (Grossberg, 1994, p.6). However, my preoccupation with identifying certain disciplinary structures as unjust, lead to a great deal of individual blaming. I had to situate the central contradiction of teaching- "teaching the individual and managing the class"- as a systemic problem. As Rousmaniere, Dehli and de Coninck-Smith explain:
Investigations of moral regulation entail more than the tracing of histories of particular disciplinary regimes. Also significant is an understanding of the broad ethos and concrete practices of representation that are specific to capitalism and modern forms of regulation and rule. Such a focus provides a perspective that helps to historicize the construction of, and relations between, the social and the individual. (1997, p. 6)

I have borrowed mainly from the writings of sociological, cultural, historical, feminist and critical pedagogical theorists to help place my experience into a broader context of power relationships. I attempt to understand how, "...adults are also caught up in regimes of discipline and moral regulation, albeit in different and often conflicting ways" (Rousmaniere, Dehli and de Coninck-Smith, 1997, p. 9).

I am not arguing against all discipline; mass schooling demands certain kinds of discipline and order. It is the discriminatory nature of certain forms of discipline that are problematic. One of the strongest examples of this is in the various streaming policies that have been an integral feature of all schooling. In Chapter 3 of my thesis I write about my experiences of streaming through practice teaching onwards. Unfortunately the history of schooling shows that ideas of equity were often not at the forefront of the founding fathers' intent. Rousmaniere, Dehli and de Coninck-Smith write; "From their inception, formal schools in Western capitalist societies have been designed to discipline bodies as well as to regulate minds" (Rousmaniere, Dehli, and de Coninck-Smith, 1997, p. 1). The struggle continues. Those practices that serve to deepen the inequities that already exist in schooling and society continue to be a major problem. I try to show how streaming is contradictory to the idea of a socially just and inclusive education system. This analysis continues to be
particularly relevant in Ontario as the continuing devolution that steaming is has reached a particularly cruel and unjust level with the new "restreaming" of education by the current Harris government. I agree with Curtis, Livingstone and Smaller that, "The core programs of public schooling in Ontario sembody the interests of powerful business and affluent middle class groups" (1992, p.2). Notions of a socially just and equitable school system seem the furthest from the agenda of a currently popular view of education which is fueled by the corporate sector. As Curtis, Livingstone and Smaller explain:

Present developments also give rise to serious doubts about the "natural" progressive effects of education. The increasingly tight connection between the public school system and the labour market, in the present context of "global restructuring" and the move for "competitive excellence" undercuts the progressive expectations of public education. (1992, p. 50)

An increasing emphasis on discipline and power is one requirement of such a pro-business/schooling system. Viewing this as the panacea for all of educational woes is regressive. The wider social and political context of schooling is rarely seriously considered. It is making schooling less democratic, socially just and inclusive. My experiences as a teacher in the classroom have continuously shown me that certain disciplinary methods and ideologies of power and control are the most undesirable way of being with students. I agree with Maude Barlow and Heather Jane Robertson (1994, p.24) when they write, "Schools warrant criticism, but they are being criticized for the wrong shortcomings."
On September 5, 1984 I was accepted to the Faculty of Education. The program consisted of four components: Curriculum and Instruction, Foundation Courses, The Contemporary Classroom, Complementary Studies, and Practice Teaching. I chose Dramatic Arts and English as my 'teachable' subjects under "Curriculum and Instruction". These were the two subjects that I would become qualified to teach in high school. Class-time for English and Dramatic Arts was four hours for each per week. We also had to take three Foundation courses, one from each of the departments of Educational Administration, Educational Psychology, History, Philosophy and Sociology of Education. I chose Philosophy, Psychology and Administration which consisted of two hours of study per course every week. Another compulsory course was the Contemporary Studies courses. These were, Computers in Education, Guidance Practices, School Law in Ontario and Special Education. These courses took two and a half hours per week. I chose "Reading in the Secondary School" from the "Complementary Classroom" component. These topics were taught in the second half of the year for one and a half hours, twice a week. I also took the optional Religious Education course which took two hours a week. Practice Teaching consisted of three, two week assignments at different high schools in Southern Ontario. These were chosen for you by the Faculty.¹

¹ I will use the terms 'Faculty' and 'Teachers' College' interchangeably in this thesis.
Practice Teaching #1

Discipline and control are an integral feature of schooling and it manifests itself in a multiplicity of ways. I approached Teachers' College and practice teaching feeling that I would not have to discipline students. To me "disciplining" was "telling people off or being mean". Why would young people need to be told off? I remembered my own displeasure at being treated like a child in high school. With all the new and fair sounding things I was hearing at the Faculty and in our reading, I was sure that schooling was more equitable than I had experienced it.

Another aspect of disciplining was "classroom management". I didn't know what this was and when I heard it in conversations at the faculty I just figured it was the odd authoritarian and controlling person who was concerned with it. I felt, after all, that young adults don't need "managing". I was sure they could manage themselves. It was something that I never even thought about. I would hear a bit about this at the college as some of my colleagues asked the professors about it. I was not worried for if I thought about it at all, I thought that if I presented a good lesson and the students could see that I was nice and fair, they would just listen and respect me. As I discovered on my first practice teaching assignment, this was not the case. Not only did the students seem unable to manage themselves; I was supposed to manage them.
My first practice teaching assignment was on October 12, 1984 at a Catholic high school in Southern Ontario. I observed my associate teacher "W" for about one week.

One day I was teaching a drama class. For the first time my associate teacher "W" had left me on my own with this class. I had observed them to be "rambunctious" but "W" seemed able to get them to do what he wanted with a minimum of effort, though there were the usual arguments and protestations. I just assumed that I would go in and "do" what I thought I had observed "W" to be "doing". It didn't seem like much: "W" told the students what to do and they did it. At the beginning of the class I waited for the students to enter and sit in a circle, as I had observed "W" doing. Many would not sit in the circle. I asked them repeatedly and finally a majority sat in the circle. I could not believe what a struggle this was. I asked the students what kind of game they would like to play. Much disagreement arose. At times I interjected but this did not help. I felt that students would eventually come to an agreement on their own. They did not. Finally I took a vote and decided that we would play a game that I had seen them play with "W" and one that they seemed to like. It was called, "Matthew, Mark, Luke and John". It is a game that involves all the students sitting in a circle. The students must maintain a clapping rhythm while being ready to respond and call. This takes a great deal of concentration and everyone must be willing to cooperate. Even though the majority of the students chose this game they complained and argued with each other and me over the choice. Students played the game but "cheated". They "refused to go out" and were generally uncooperative. Some students said, "I hate this game, let's play... or, let's start again". I said they could start again, but that
proved disastrous. We played other games with the same results. I thought I was allowing
the students choice. Finally, I went on to the next activity of the day. I told the students
what we would do and gave them a brief lesson. Students talked over me and interrupted
constantly. I had to repeat myself several times, stop and start - until I was beginning to feel
frustrated and upset. Students were mimicing me. It seemed that no matter what I did to
"deliver" my lesson, nothing worked. Eventually I just walked towards the back of the room
and began crying, in total frustration. A student went to retrieve "W" from the English
office. He arrived immediately and asked me what had happened. I sobbingly replied,
"Everything fell apart, they wouldn't listen, they wouldn't do anything." "W" took over the
class while I sat paralysed with fear. After class I had to explain what happened to "W" in
more detail. I said that I had been assertive (as he had directed me to be on the previous day)
and had tried different techniques to get the students' attention, but nothing worked. I was
sure that the students only listened to me when "W" was in the class and that they resented
my presence. I told "W" that my relationship with the students, "Just wouldn't work". The
solution as I saw it was simple. "W" must take "his" class to teach. I could teach the other
two classes. His drama students didn't like me. How could I counteract something like that?
Surely "W" would agree! He did not accept my rational resignation. In fact, much to my
horror he said that if there was a problem, you had to work it out. I couldn't throw out a
lesson because it didn't work. I would have to do the lesson over on another occasion. It
didn't matter what the students thought - every time they didn't like something didn't mean
that they didn't have to do it, said "W". They would never do anything if this was the case
and the teacher would not be respected by the students. I thought that being a "practice"
teacher and being the "real" teacher were two different places of power and so could not agree with him. "W" evaluated the students and I did not. After this incident "W" explained some of the "logic" behind his teaching. The "circle" was not only the form in which the students performed games, but also a controlling device. I asked questions about structure and found that the amount of time spent on an activity partly depends on its nature. I learned that I should wait until I had all the students' attention before talking. I had assumed that most of them would just be quiet because I or someone else, was speaking. To quiet the students, I could shut off the lights or wait silently for the students to be quiet. The teacher could send a student out into the hall and speak to her or him later or the offending student could be sent to the English office where "W" would then deal with her or him. The student could also be sent to the principal or vice principal's office. I asked "W" how I was to know when to use which method. He said that it depended on the nature of the misdeed and that I should use my discretion. I really had no idea that any of this was going on in "W"s" teaching since it was not something I could have learned in the week I had observed him. As well, since disciplining and controlling wasn't something I was even aware of, it was not something I would be looking for. Although I found some of "W"s" suggestions helpful I generally disagreed with them. First, they seemed petty and stupid, as if he were treating the students like kids. As I saw it, most of the students would have to be sent into the hall. How could that system work? I did not want to appear unfriendly, bossy and autocratic, because those were the attitudes that as a student I hated about high school teachers. I thought students were always complaining about not being treated like
adults. Why wouldn't these students cooperate with me? I was a "nice" person and showed them a lot of respect.

One of the scariest things for me was standing in front of the students, teaching them material I was unfamiliar with. Throughout my first practice teaching session I stayed up until two in the morning working on lesson plans and trying to rehearse and memorize what I was going to say to the students on the next day. I never thought of assuming a different role with the students. Yet, upon reflection, this was the very thing that "W" wanted me to do, as I began to discover by the oral and written comments and suggestions he gave to me after each lesson I taught. Later I realized that "W"s" command or presence in the class did seem more central to his teaching style than the context of what he taught. He seemed like a "natural". When I observed "W" teaching in the first week he often had no formal plans for the class. Many times he would look something up a few minutes before the class were to begin and would say aloud, "What will we do today"? Other times "W" would have a brief outline of what he was going to do with a class. Once "W" was in the classroom however, he seemed to know exactly what he was teaching. I thought he must have taught for many years to know his material so well that he could just go in and teach without planning or being nervous. In his evaluation of my performance "W" seemed only to pay attention to my classroom manner. This aspect of the work was not the most important concern for me.

The Tuesday of the second week of practice teaching, I started teaching the grade 9 Basic level English class. "W" gave me a copy to the play "Twelve Angry Men" and told me that I was to do this with the students. He wouldn't give me any time lines or tell me
what to do with the play. The latter part suited me, though I thought I would be criticized for the time lines, as I had already come to see the importance that teachers place on them.

I rearranged the seating in the class and had students choose parts to read. Inside my copy of the play I kept a sheet filled with microscopic instructions on what to do, when to speak and how to speak. I was very nervous. Being watched by "W" didn't help. I tried to respond to the students, as I had seen "W" do. There were many unexpected interruptions to my plans. Some students read painfully slowly or poorly. Others fidgeted, played around, whispered and talked. Some students complained and became bored because they claimed they didn't have a long enough part in the play. Although surprised at the students, I wasn't upset by the interruptions. I empathized with them. I felt some were frustrated because they were not able to read well, and some were just bored. I was surprised that many students had difficulty reading, but thought their "behaviours" were okay. After all, they were kids with a new teacher. They weren't being mean. I also felt that I had done fairly well since this was my first time teaching.

"W's" notes and discussion with me afterwards showed me that he did not think that my manner with the students was okay. His objections revolved around issues of discipline and control of the students. Here are some quotations from his written notes:

1. "W" wrote that I said:

"Does anyone know where we left off?"

"W" wrote that I should:

"Ask a specific person"
2. "W" writes:

"Don't respond to them if they answer out of turn. [tell the students] Put your pencils and pens down - gain their full attention!"

4. "W" writes:

"Rob and Roy [fooling around] - stare them down!"

5. "W" writes that I said:

"Can you put those away?"  "Can you hand these out?"

"W" writes that I should:

"Be imperative! Put these away!"

6. "W" writes:


I was surprised that "W" commented on these petty items. I thought, if anything, he would criticize the material I was teaching since, it was new and I was uncomfortable with it. I also thought he was overreacting. "W" observed me the second day and thought I was doing better. When "W" was watching, I tried to act "stricter" so that "W" would approve. I found it strange and rude not to ask the students to do things, not to say "please" and "thank-you". I was not comfortable just telling them what to do. Upon reflection I can now
see that the kids had learned this 'code' of their relationship to the teacher throughout their history of schooling. I was probably more uncomfortable with what I observed than they may have been. However, at this time, I thought schooling should be a negotiating process, though I had no idea of the extent of the implications for such a way of teaching at the time.

On the afternoon before my last teaching day "W" had drawn me aside to discuss my final evaluation before he put it to paper. He admitted being very confused about me. He thought that I lacked authority and confidence. Yet, after watching me in the grade 12 Drama class he was unsure of his assessment. There I had gone "into role", a technique whereby I was able to question and be "assertive" with the students. "W" had walked into class while we were doing this activity and was obviously pleased with the performance. Later he praised me for being confident and in control, if only I could be more like that in all the classrooms! I hid behind the role-playing mask and could be comfortable there with the knowledge that this authoritarian person wasn't really me - it was only a role. "W" valued most what I valued least: authoritarianism. Perhaps "W" saw authoritarianism as the necessary role for surviving teaching? Maybe he was protecting me?

I learned this teacher in role by observing my drama teacher at the faculty "do it" to us. I hated it because I didn't understand what was going on and was not allowed to ask the teacher questions. I never understood whether we were playing the high-school student role or if we were learning how to assume a role in the drama class. The problem was that the teacher - in - role was still the boss with all the power. In the Drama class at the Faculty I often did not understand the expectations. Were we supposed to be students or
As students, it seemed as if we were being treated as subjects, but as teachers we were respected and empowered.

On my final evaluation "W" wrote:

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT:

During the latter part of her assignment she exhibited a strong sense of command in Drama.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

In Drama she required more exposure to Drama instructions at the College. With that her confidence will strengthen.

PUPIL-TEACHER RAPPORT AND PUPIL INVOLVEMENT:

Diane needs to develop a sense of presence in the classroom... All she requires is a little more self-confidence in dealing with her students particularly in Drama.

I did tell "W" that I hated telling other people what to do and I didn't want to scream at students because I could see myself and didn't like the image presented. Angrily and defensively "W" exploded, "Do you think I like to see myself screaming? It has to be done!" I also thought that he treated the students in a condescending manner, while he was different with his colleagues. This was difficult for me to grasp. At the time I thought he must have liked how he was behaving or he wouldn't have been that way.

I had learned that the students seemed to "naturally" be in opposition to the teacher. I thought I had much in common with the students and tried to be honest and
understanding, while acknowledging my power as "teacher". By the end of this first practice teaching assignment I discovered that most students did not appreciate my efforts. I struggled to understand this, while trying not to give into my feelings of dislike for some students. I also felt that it was the teachers' faults, as well as the educational system's, for students behaving "this way". I did not want to believe the "I told you So's", teachers who believed that you had to be authoritarian and autocratic with students. Just because it appeared to be that way didn't mean it had to be so. Maybe this was an anomaly specific to some teachers? Surely there had to be different students?

For a long time I had difficulty understanding this seeming contradiction amongst students and their teachers. Although students constantly complain about the strictness and authoritarianism of some of their teachers and schools, many appear to prefer the safe, authoritarian position they offer when they are confronted with alternatives. As Colin Hunter, explains:

Often, when more freedom is offered to pupils and students who are used to more autocratic and paternalistic conditions, it is rejected or abused. A more open way of being isn't necessarily an easy alternative. As Kohl remarks, "Autonomy, the ability to make one's decisions and self direction, the ability to act on one's decisions and self direction, can be quite painful to people who have grown up in an authoritarian system." (1980, p. 228-229)

People often mistake the absence of authoritarianism as a sign of incompetence. In popular usage the term 'discipline' often means, 'authoritarianism'. The latter has a negative connotation that 'discipline' usually doesn't have. I'm borrowing from Erich Fromm's (1965) writing about sadomasochism as one facet of the authoritarian personality
to shed some light on the contradictions between authoritarianism and freedom (i.e., the idea that some choose authoritarianism over freedom) that I write about above. He cautions us that sadism and masochism are parts of all our personalities. It is when one of these traits are dominant that we can speak of the "sadomasochistic" character:

...the sadomasochistic person .... admires authority and tends to submit to it, but at the same time he[sic] wants to be an authority himself[sic] and have others submit to him[sic]....the tendency will usually be to repress the feeling of hatred and sometimes even to replace it by a feeling of blind admiration. This has two functions: (1) to remove the painful and dangerous feeling of hatred, and (2) to soften the feeling of humiliation. If the person who rules over me is so wonderful or perfect, then I should not be ashamed of obeying him[sic] (Fromm, 1965, pp. 186-188).

And:

For the authoritarian character there exist, so to speak, two sexes: the powerful ones and the powerless ones. His[sic] love, admiration and readiness for submission are automatically aroused by power, whether of a person or of an institution... Just as his "love" is automatically aroused by power, so powerless people or institutions automatically arouse his [sic] contempt. The very sight of a powerless person makes him[sic] want to attack, dominate, humiliate him[sic].
(Fromm, 1965, pp. 190-191)

"Discipline" is a big point in schooling. I remember how professional development or school initiated workshops on "discipline" told us that the goal was self-discipline. In fact, a Ministry of Education document from the 1980's called, "Basically Right", writes about the importance of students "learning" self-discipline. What we call self-discipline sounds like what Fromm regards as "internal authority". He writes:

Instead of overt authority, "anonymous" authority reigns. It is disguised as common sense, science, psychic health, normality, public opinion.... Anonymous authority is more effective than overt authority, since one never suspects that there is any order which one is expected to follow. In external
authority it is clear that there is an order which one is expected to follow.... in anonymous authority both command and commander have become invisible. It is like being fired at by an invisible enemy. There is nobody and nothing to fight back against. (Fromm, 1965, pp. 189-190)

I think many teachers who are recent graduates of Teachers' College often have fresh ideas about education and what their role will be like with students. However, they soon encounter seasoned teachers who tell them that all their good intentions don't work, that students need structure, discipline and control. Still not believing the experienced teacher, the newcomer tries teaching in a more democratic way, only to find that their "good intentions" are sabotaged by the very people (students) that they think they are trying to help, as well as by other teachers and administrators. I have often been told by staff members, "That's not the way we do things around here...." Connell, explains how teachers come to take on a certain identity:

1. Emotional pressures that push the teacher toward a strategy of control.
2. Both from moment to moment (giving orders, praise, sarcasm, asking, pleading, shouting, facing kids down in direct clashes or dodging the issue or sending them to the deputy and over the longer term... dilemma about taking moral responsibility for what kind of people the kids become...)
3. The emotional consequences of a particular practice of teaching; the kind of person one is becoming or has become...
   (Connell, 1985, p.119)

He goes on to argue that,

By pursuing a particular strategy one becomes a particular kind of person. With some teachers the commitment becomes so routine that person and strategy grow together, so to speak; and in meeting them one is hardly conscious of the join, merely of an established persona. (Connell, 1985, p.118)
Disillusionment sets in as the new teacher begins to see that although this may not be the most desirable relationship, it is "the way it's got to be". Alternatives are no longer envisioned: "we tried and they didn't work".

"W", other teachers and administrators were quite right about the importance of discipline. The school as an institution could not exist in the same form if there was no discipline (i.e., classrooms with twenty to thirty kids and a teacher). At the time, I could not see the subtle ways in which discipline works and so dismissed all discipline as a negative thing. I understood that I had power, even though I didn't necessarily want power, especially as power relates to knowledge. I didn't understand that teachers have to have some discipline and control. The challenge for me, later in my teaching career, was how to discipline in the most democratic way in a non-democratic institution; a usually contradictory and often impossible set of relations. Constructing a relationship with a classroom full of students and a relationship with a few people, were two quite different experiences.

There was a gap between the emphasis put on discipline in the schools and the virtual absence of talk about disciplinary issues at the Faculty of Education. After the first practice teaching assignment many students wanted to talk to their professors about discipline and how it seemed the only thing the teachers in the school were concerned about. We were also angry. We felt unprepared to go into the classroom. At the Faculty we were taught theories about schooling, but we didn't seem to be getting what the teachers "out there" were demanding: classroom control and management. After all, we generally weren't used to
being with a classroom of students. Our professors answered some of our questions, but mostly dismissed our concerns. It was as if this problem was too mundane for them to waste their time on. The professors seemed to be protected from all that. I mean, how much disciplinary power would they have to exert with us a mostly willing population of adult students? This made me feel as if there was an elitism with those at the Faculty having the best prize-teaching "us"- while those at the high-schools were the labourers who would have to worry about disciplining students. This issue seemed to create a divide between practice and theory. The teachers seemed to have contempt for the professors, who they saw as teaching prospective teachers "nothing", while the professors seemed contemptuous of the teachers for not being "progressive". By the second teaching assignment in 1982 we were being pulled over to the more "practical" teaching side, as teaching in the classroom is what we would be doing. We needed to know how to do it. Sometimes I would tell my associate teachers, "That's not what they told us at the Faculty", or "We learned ...." As "W" told me once, "The College teachers will fill your head with a bunch of liberal ideas that don't work in the class." Many of my colleagues complained by the end of teacher training that "it was a useless waste time" and, "I didn't learn a thing." Others have documented similar sentiments as to teachers' views of the usefulness of Teachers' College. Connell writes:

The problem with the college was that they could not connect the daily classroom practices in the schools with what they were teaching. College professors ignored our practical concerns. (Connell, 1985, p. 160)

This divide is noted by Martyn Denscombe in "Keepin Em Quiet":

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It was a common complaint that teachers straight from college failed to appreciate the necessity of gaining control prior to any attempt to inculcate knowledge and the training establishments were frequently indicted for their overemphasis on establishing personal relationships at the expense of stressing the centrality of classroom control to the practical activity of teaching. (1980, p. 71)

While many of my colleagues in the Faculty of Education were concerned about learning more and better discipline, I wanted the complete opposite. Many of the teachers in the schools and at the Faculty seemed to raise only initial questions about the idea and purpose of discipline and control in schooling. It appeared to become entrenched in everyday practice as a necessity. Without it schooling would not work.

The structures of discipline and control are often not noticed because many teachers, apparently, don't have a problem with it. They see it as necessary to schooling and learning. Maybe they are familiar with working with people in a controlling setting? Many teachers seem to share an ideology about the importance and value of schooling. Often they have been a success at schooling and its' whole integral network of discipline and control. Mardle and Walker (p. 101) explain, "People who come to be 'teachers' may have particular experiences in common which are significant in shaping their responses as teachers." I think that after the initial possible discomfort and bother, that many teachers come to include discipline and control almost effortlessly into their repertoire of 'teaching', to such an extent that to imagine otherwise would seem 'unnatural'. As Connell explains:

...teachers are people who were good at academic work. For a significant number of them, academic competition was the means of shaping their interest in the job itself... the traditional social function of teaching as a means of upward mobility from the working class, still operates. (Connell, 1985, p. 158)
And, later he writes:

Most teachers have been selected in the schools through the competitive academic curriculum; some came into teaching as a result of their parents attachment to this form of culture. It is likely to be close to both their personal and professional identities. (Connell, 1985, p.173)

Practice Teaching # 2

My second practice teaching assignment in 1984 was at a high-school with approximately twelve hundred students. I taught grade ten and eleven English. I will call my associate teacher "X". I observed "X" teaching for five days. Then I began to conduct some of her classes.

After my associate teacher "X" observed me teach she filled out foolscap pages with "Observations and Suggestions". I learned from her list the things that were considered appropriate to the teacher role and things that were inappropriate. Here are some of the items "X" included in her extensive list. Unacceptable to the teachers' role, were:

Giving the students the answer, background noise, no homework, taking too long a time on one activity, not giving students enough time to think, vague unclear questions, being opinionated with students, not balancing activities, not knowing the students' names and therefore not seeing them as individual identities, not telling students to copy down notes written on the board, not applying discussion to text, not reinforcing students answers, not telling
students that their answers were right or wrong, telling students, "No", and arguing with students.

Under "Observations" "X" wrote:

That by involving students in reading you are settling them down and giving them a focus. Asking a variety of students, relating students personal opinion to text, "shushing" them to be quiet, not saying 'I think', open ended questions, making students feel that what they said was important, making students feel you are listening, and - nice variety in the teacher's voice.

I wanted to defend my position to "X" by telling her that I gave the students the answer because they seemed to be struggling, but I did not. The background noise was minimal and, I thought, acceptable. Why did the students need homework when we were covering all the material in class? If an activity is taking too long, how do you know? So what, if it is? Isn't the point to have a good discussion, even if it goes over some predetermined time limit? Why do you have to balance activities? How am I supposed to remember all those students' names when I am so nervous I can barely remember my own? Don't students just take notes off the board if they feel they want them? Why do I have to tell them every little thing? Why is it if I say or do one thing you want the opposite? I can't be every way at the same time.

Initially I tried explaining my reasons for saying or doing what I did, but "X" didn't care, wouldn't listen and continued to write down a comment on everything I said or did. I was nervous to say or do anything and often acted in opposition to how she had criticized me on the previous day. "X" was big on techniques of questioning. I had heard of this but was not very familiar with it. "X" told me that the way I was asking questions was wrong. I had to
let the students ask me many questions and not vice-versa. When I observed "X" questioning the students I was disgusted. To me she was playing a game with them. She knew the answers she wanted and she would hint, give clues and rely exclusively on her cadre of "bright" students to answer. When no one volunteered or seemed to know the answer she still wouldn't give it to them. Occasionally she would ask a student who was not one of her cadre. It was as if by answering her questions the "bright" students were reaffirming her own intelligence and questioning power. I couldn't understand this display. It didn't seem to benefit the kids though it seemed to boost "X's" ego. "X" told me, "You shouldn't give up on students so easily, they will be less willing to answer for you." I didn't think the majority of her students were answering her questions, only the "smart" few that she praised highly.

Upon reflection, I have found "X's" questioning techniques were part of the whole relationship of power that she had with her students'. A. D. Edwards describes this relationship well. He writes:

Typical classroom talk constitutes the 'working-out' of a power relation' in so far as the respective rights and obligations of teacher and pupils are the basis from which they 'accomplish comprehensible talk and action'. The teacher has authority in so far as pupils address him[sic] and respond to him[sic], as though he[sic] is indeed in charge. In orderly classrooms, and in the central business of instruction (the 'lesson proper'), pupils normally listen when required to do so, bid properly for the right to speak themselves, and convey in their contributions to 'discussion' a willingness to set aside their own knowledge as irrelevant unless and until it fits into the teacher's frame of reference. Indeed, 'good discipline' might be defined as a teacher's capacity to construct and maintain this kind of discourse, and his[sic] authority is regularly manifested and reconstituted in the routine patterns of classroom talk. (Edwards, 1980, p. 240)
And he goes on,

In most classrooms, sharply defined boundaries between "knowledge" and "ignorance" mark the pupil's main communicative role as that of a receiver of news. In so far as the teacher's expertise is accepted, he[sic] is entitled to do most of the talking, to do a great deal of telling, and evaluate most of what his pupils are permitted to say. (Edwards, 1980, p. 237).

And:

Pupils have to be prepared to make explicit what the listening teacher knows already, or what any "competent" pupil should know by that stage of his career in that part of the curriculum. Yet it is also common for the relevant display of knowledge to be very inexplicit, ...launched the teacher into filling out an answer which was itself highly allusive. Such verbal elaborations by the teacher help to maintain his semantic control by presenting a full authorised version of what the facts 'really' are. What pupils 'can mean' is located within the teacher's frame of reference. In relation to the knowledge being handed down to them, their existing knowledge is likely to be treated as slight, partial or defective. (Edwards, 1980, p. 239)

I wasn't aware that this was how a classroom was supposed to look. I didn't get the impression from Teachers' College that it would be like that. I'm not sure if I just didn't understand the lesson Teachers' College was teaching or maybe I did 'get' it. I stubbornly would not accept "X's" classes as being the norm. Many years later, my classrooms still don't look much like this, though I know more about disciplinary methods. "X's" control of every aspect of her class made it seem very artificial and robotical.

I found "X's" concern for the psyche of some of her students seemed contradictory to the moral regulation she imposed on many of her other students. Connell, explains:
There is a pervasive moralism about the way many teachers talk about their work. The familiar formula of the 'bad home' as an explanation of kids' failure in school is above all a formula of blame. Kids who are difficult to control are very often seen as lacking 'responsibility'; the contrast with 'good' kids is a moral one....The concepts used for discussing kids, such as ability and disruptiveness, good and bad homes, generally arise from the schools' own practices and psychologize the social relations involved (1985, pp. 181-182)

Years later I have come to understand that this individual blaming needs to be socially and historically contextualized. I think "X" was what Marjorie Theobald (1997) refers to as a "willing agent[s] of moral regulation". However I would like to think that all those teachers who could be described as such might be looked at (as Theobald does) without "...recriminations, but to new and interesting connections between educational system-building, moral regulation, and individual subjectivities" (1997, p. 163). "X" was not unlike many of her predecessors in her focus on control and discipline in the classroom. Kate Rousmaniere (1994, p. 118) explains how it is that the teaching "profession" came to shape female teachers identities in 1904 so that they came to see themselves as individuals who had to take all responsibility for their teaching. She writes that:

...the emphasis on the individual personality of the teacher laid the weight of classroom problems on the individual personality, emotional makeup, and psyche of the teacher, and isolated the responsibility for the teacher's work away from the social and political context of the school and onto the individual teacher's own identity

"X" was probably acting in what was an acceptable and "professional" definition of what it means to be a teacher in this time. She was morally regulating others as she was
regulated herself. Paul Olson writes about how it is that teachers tend not to see the lack of success in their schools:

...the conception that schools function as institutional agents of the reproduction of class structure runs counter to teachers' own intuitively felt and experientially desired understanding of teaching from which, despite adverse conditions, they gain both joy and dignity. It is useful to remember this as a critical point of pedagogy and praxis, since it is at this moment of conscientizacao (Freire, 1970, 1973, 1978) that many teachers begin, as we attempt to explain our theories to them. Teachers resist critical models largely because the ethos of critical explanation defies their memory and their grasp of their own lived experience.
(pp. 219-220)

Practice Teaching # 3

Within schooling time, there are patterns; the school day, week, and year. And within this structure; the school day—punctuated with a beginning, many fragmentation's and interruptions, and ending— is the crystallization of the educational schedule. The routinized fragmentation of this educational schedule is a crucial fact which most sociologists ignore. Again, it is the crucial regulative control on the labor process of teachers. Central to school time is the timetable (taken in it's daily or weekly, and it's annual—or school year—meanings) the patterning of school organization which brings everything and everybody together. We thus have drawn to our attention, once again, how a human, social construction, a product, can turn into a neutral and natural set of constraints which "has to be obeyed". Here the product of our powers acts back, objectified and reified as the powers of product. Any "new" activities have to be 'fitted in'. But beyond the timetable, as a series of concentric waves, are the consequences for what the timetable does not allow: producing all that 'extra' work (which is not at all, extra; without it schooling
could not operate) for teachers beyond the scheduled schooling time for which they are paid. (Corrigan, 1984, p. 22)

On my third practice teaching assignment in February of 1984, at a Catholic high-school, I met, "Y".

It was with this "associate teacher" that I learned about the importance of the timetable in secondary schooling. Again, this aspect of schooling was something I never really thought about. I just thought teachers planned out generally what they wanted to teach in a period and just did it. The timetable at this school was particularly confusing. It was run on a six day cycle of seven 35 minute periods a day. Most periods were doubled up so that a student would have English for two consecutive periods or for 70 minutes per day. I saw the same students on alternate days. Each day had a different class schedule. I taught three grade 11 English classes, two grade 10 English and one grade 9 English class. One day I prepared for the wrong set of classes; they were not until the next day. Panic-stricken I asked "Y" if she could take these classes. She replied vehemently that she was not prepared. I would have to do them. As it turned out, these classes went well because I was not as afraid of saying the wrong thing and resorted to relaxing. This was something that, so far, I had not been able to do.

I was afraid that I wouldn't "know" enough to talk about or teach in a 75 minute period (my previous practice assignments consisted of 40 minute period). "Y" criticized me constantly for spending too much or too little time on a particular activity. "Y"s" insistence on "timing" turned me into a "clock watcher". She indicated to me that my inattention to timing was a serious problem. I simply had no idea of how much time to spend on an
activity. I was not used to thinking in terms of such exchanges. I assumed that once I was more familiar with content then organization would follow. I didn't know that the curriculum of each school is different for the same grades. I found myself cutting lessons off abruptly because I would suddenly remember to look at the clock. In this way, I could ensure that I stayed within the time allotment set out for activities as preset by "Y". "She" reasoned that it wasn't fair to the students when I went "overtime" on an activity, because then I deprived them of the following activity. Couldn't you just do it the following day? Apparently not, there was a different lesson for the next day. Well, sometimes you could carry on, but not, it seemed, when I was teaching. Again you had to know when you could and when you could not carry on. Knowing the difference was a mystery to me. I thought it made no difference. So even though I was excited and the students were, too, I had to cut short a discussion on one occasion because we went "overtime". "Y" commended me on this better usage of "time". It was always the same, twenty minutes of USSR (uninterrupted, sustained, silent reading). This I found difficult, if not impossible, to enforce. The students were in a social grouping, so they wanted to socialize. The lesson followed with questions, and then a final fifteen minutes of "Journal writing". "Y" told me that the Ministry of Education had implemented this journal writing, reasoning that students who were not writing, would do so if they could write anything in a private journal during an allotted time, without regard to marking, spelling, grammar, and so on. This prescribed time for writing seemed to defeat the intention of creativity. Moreover the teacher read and marked this journal, while telling me that it was private and "not really" marked.
"Y" suggested to me that I put questions on the board before students entered so I didn't waste class time. I did. She gave me several written comments telling me to get the students settled, close the door and to check for uniform passes at the beginning of class, to start teaching immediately.

I came to realize that the main difference between "English" classes of 40 and 75 minutes were in the shortening or extending of journal writing, or USSR(uninterrupted, sustained, silent reading) time. Some teachers leave time for homework. Some don't. My initial impression and fear that I would have to engage the students in discussion for 75 minutes were unfounded. Most English classes are divided. "Y" believed that "timing" was crucial. Perhaps she was more preoccupied with it than all the other associate teachers that I encountered. Now I feel that the attention that "Y" paid to timing was, in part, a tactic to make her feel more confident and in control. When I asked "Y" if she was ever afraid that she wouldn't remember what she wanted to say, she said that she did feel this, but she countered it by keeping her briefcase opened on her desk with her notes in view of only herself. She was hiding behind those notes. Like all the other associates, "Y" also found it necessary to be viewed as the "knower" at all times in front of her students. Though I was a student also, she was able to drop her teacher role at times to respond honestly to some of my queries. It was during our conversations that "Y" demonstrated a genuine concern for the students.

Here are some of the comments "Y" wrote to me following my first lesson with the Grade 11 General level class:

1. Not, "Can you"? JUST TELL THEM
2. Class Control - Have them do what you want all the time in this class - little chatter - hard to get them on topic - general level - want to change.

3. [you] lost them - [I] didn't feel you thought of what you wanted to accomplish - "L" - at the front - pushing it. Direct them to take notes. ... If you want them [students] to write you have to insist.

- poem needs more of an introduction - students need to be better prepared "frame of mind".
- [you gave them] lots of questions for 15 minutes.
- place questions on overhead
- if focus is mood you need to provide for proper mood in the classroom. In the grade 10 I didn't feel you were comfortable with what you were doing - not well thought out class "["Y" " is referring to a poem that she gave me to do on Halloween. I thought the poem was not very good and too young for these students. I couldn't tell her I didn't like her poem] If it were me I'd redo the poem.

So I did her poem again. "Y" said, "You had them eating out of the palm of your hand."

Then she criticized me for "going on too long" and "going off topic."

In the grade 10 class we were doing the theme the Quest. The Quest was always seen positively and in terms of the individual hero. Here are "Y's" comments to me after she observed me teach this class twice:

- get them settled right at the beginning.
- close door - hall noise.
- ask for uniform pass [if students were not wearing their complete uniform the teacher was to send her/him to the office before allowing them back to class. I never noticed these things, and if I did I would not think that they were important]
- [you] seem at ease - confident... Maybe you accepted too readily Columbus' quest for wealth.

Routines: - work them [students] till the end [of class]. 1 student at a time to the washroom - if everyone seems to want to go tell them in 5 minutes.
- [students] don't go to the lockers during class [they] do without [this is in response to my allowing the students to go to their lockers].

At each school, the curriculum choices were made by the teachers. Although they wanted me to be creative, excited and innovative, the reality was that the possibilities were
very limited by the associate teachers' constant interference. Often they would give me a
piece of their own material that they really wanted the students to have. This was the case
with the Halloween poem for "Y". However, they never gave me questions that would help
me with the material. It was always a test - and as soon as I did something unsatisfactory, I
would be told. They never told me anything beforehand about how to teach. They also
never talked about their own attempts to become a teacher. This would have been very
helpful. The associate teachers, while having some "practical" suggestions, assumed that
all teachers taught the same way. I started to see a pattern that my teachers held certain
things to be self evident - a key set of generally non-spoken rules. These were all the little
disciplinarian things that, I guess, you had to experience to know about. We certainly
didn't learn these things at the Faculty. These disciplinary strategies, while of some use,
also become taken for granted as the only way of doing things. I have come to see that they
inform the way schooling can be viewed by teachers, students and parents.

Back in the classroom I was teaching a grade ten class. We were doing Steinbeck's
"Short Short Story of Mankind". After my first day with this class, "Y" wrote:

1. Be more directive - not "can you please"— TELL THEM. - establish your presence.
2. In terms of individual lessons - be more specific re: objectives - maybe we could
discuss these together prior to commencing.

3. Make them [students] aware of your directions - your expectations STUDENTS
NEED MORE DIRECTION.
4. Don't give them more time then they need. -give them 10 minutes - reasonable
time - can always give more.
5. -If you expect them to take down notes tell them.
On the last day, at "Y's" request, I had the students "evaluate" me. Some students seemed to know what made a "good" teacher - items that I had previously associated with the autocratic and controlling teacher. Granted, "Y" had probably prepared them by giving them "guidelines" on how to evaluate me, but I cannot help thinking that students, though they may benefit and like teachers with a less controlling, autocratic style, they also may see them as being aberrant. My experiences in teaching since this time bear out this for some students. So although we "got along" well, some students saw fit to tell me or write comments about what I was doing wrong. Here are some of their comments on what they considered NOT learning: No red pen (except for underlining), no using pencils, no messiness in notebooks allowed, and no talking out of turn! I asked the students (when "Y" wasn't present, because she too enforced these things) what difference it made what color or kind of tool they used, as long as they wrote something. Who cares whether it's messy or neat? The students replied that the teacher would not allow them to write with anything but blue pen. Some student also wrote that I had spent too long on one activity and too short on another. The students also complained that they couldn't understand my blackboard organization (only after "Y" pointed it out to them). It seemed that the teachers shared a certain understanding with their students about their practice teacher. It seemed that the teacher had temporarily empowered the students by letting them know that they were helping produce a teacher here and that they were to assist in getting the practice teacher to know what it meant to be a good teacher. With some associates this could take on a nasty "ratting" tone. A student in "Y's" class wrote to me on the last day, "I don't think that next day the class would tell ["Y"] they
don't understand anything she's [me] taught because she's explained herself very well and
detailed" (February 22, 1985).

At the time I could not understand what the big deal was about these
inconsequential issues or why each teacher seemed obsessed with them. Since that time I
have found these seemingly insignificant "little" things do make a difference, they signify a
larger program of individual self-discipline and moral regulation. As Philip Corrigan
explains:

''It's often asked why so much 'trouble' is taken and caused in schools around
the seemingly minor and trivial infraction (dress form and styles, chewing
gum, talking out of turn, elective mutism, apathetic listlessness, hyperactivity
and even gender confusion!) These are in fact all measurable signs of
expressivity, part of that rich texture of transformed power which we
collected under the name of the symbolic, whether, ritualised or routine, and
central to the moral regulation project of the school. (1986, pp. 9 - 10)

And so I learned from all of my associate teachers that I was to pay a great deal of
attention to the moral regulation of the students as a form of discipline. It was taken for
granted by my associates that I was already morally disciplined (in my teacher role anyway
that seemed to be the expectation) and would therefore just transform this "rightness" to the
students. I was quite resistant to what I thought were judgments of myself and students. I
didn't think this was teachers' business.
On my last practice teaching assignment at a Catholic high school, I developed a real
dislike for the subject Dramatic Arts. At the time I "blamed" the teacher and students for
promoting stereotypes and discrimination. I observed my associate, "Z", for two days in her
Drama class. She joked around with the students quite a bit. The students performed little
skits for her. Two boys would do a skit that consisted of the one playing the aggressor, a
"drunk" at a bar, while the other played the victim, a homosexual. The "homosexual"
would try to "pickup" the "drunk". The "drunk" would finally sober up and become the
student, who would start hitting the other boy. Two other boys had a, "comic" repertoire that
consisted of petty vulgarities and hitting and running after each other, kind of like the "Three
Stooges". The students did their "routine" as often as they could get an audience,
regardless of the assignment. "Z" would roar with laughter and clap profusely at the
students, as did the rest of the class. The students performed this routine regularly with little
variation in theme and action. Were the students and teacher simply satirizing
discriminatory attitudes? I don't think so. Homophobic attitudes seemed to be reflected in
the students violent role playing. I thought "Z" would address the students, but she did not
seem to see it as a problem. Maybe she interpreted the acting differently than I had.
Several students wanted to play act television scenes and two thirds of the class would not
work on the assignment. Mostly, the students acted out were their own fears, but these
fears were encouraged, at the same time as "Z" professed love and cooperation among students. This was another contradiction that I found difficult to understand.

Another difficulty was on how to evaluate students in Drama. "Z" said she gave the students daily process marks out of 80 and final presentation mark worth 20%. I tried this but it did not work; the majority of students did not work on the assignment. When they got up to present, they would play act some TV skit they had seen. Students would ask for extensions to complete assignments and then complain that I had given them too much time and they were bored.

Once I had arranged for a woman to come in to the class to do a "characterization" mask demonstration. The woman had the students join in her demonstration and asked them to be especially careful of her fragile hand-made masks. One student banged the mask on the steel chair several times. I was embarrassed. When the students were asked to play the role that the masks suggested to them (there were no human gendered faces), they were unable to do anything. It seemed that they had no stereotypes to act out.

A Summary of Reflections

In Chapter 1, I wrote about my individual experiences of learning to discipline (or resisting learning) students. Armed with progressive theories, I saw, at this time, that the obstacles to socially just education were individual teachers and schools being too authoritarian. For a long time I thought this way. In fact, the education system encourages
this type of individualistic blaming. It keeps the knowledge of systemic problems hidden. I am not in favour of authoritarian teaching, however, as I was reminded by Kari Dehli and the writings of R.W. Connell (1985), teacher's practice must be seen in the context of the larger social-political system. "There is every reason to think the problematic character of discipline is built into the very structure of mass schooling." (R.W. Connell, p. 104). So "X", "Y", and "Z" were not 'bad' people, but as Connell writes:

...it is important to recognise that the disciplinary responses of teachers in general are intelligible and reasonable responses to situations they have been presented with over which they have (in the short term) limited control, and in which they often have little room to manoeuvre. (1985, p. 105)

And:

Though nostalgic appeals to the 'better discipline in the past' imply that discipline is always the same thing, and schools just have more or less of it, this is not so. 'Discipline' is not a thing, it is a state of play in a very complex set of relationships between schools and their clienteles, teachers and students, administrators and teachers. (Connell, 1985, p. 109)

In the third chapter of my thesis I write about streaming; the "More social and systematic practice of 'sorting and slotting' students... a practice that teachers perpetuate, often in spite of their best intentions as individuals" (Dehli, 2000, a personal communication). Here too, are echoes of the difficulty I found with understanding the
relations of power, especially my own implication in such a relation. For now, I was the teacher!

The next section of my thesis relates to the first part, but gives a wider, and more comprehensive context to some of those early experiences. I have been teaching for thirteen years now and so I draw on that set of experiences as well as the readings I have done since then to explain some of those things I have experienced in schooling and education. I have used the materials of authors from several schools of thought. Included are the influences of cultural studies, feminist, critical pedagogy and other theorists. My attempt at making sense of my experiences has been a long and often confusing process. Being simultaneously the subject and object of inquiry is difficult.

This part of my story is about the contradictory role disciplinary structures have on "becoming a teacher". I have taught in a variety of schools, each with their own "personalities". I have also taught many "kinds" of students. There are many differences between the schools and differences in how I experienced them, depending on my role as a "student", "supply", "long-term occasional" or "regular" teacher. Though there are differences in disciplinary structures, there are also similarities. These structures are representative of the complexity of the larger society and dominant ideologies of the time.
CHAPTER 2

SUPPLY TEACHING AND LONG TERM OCCASIONAL TEACHING

When I graduated from Teachers' College I supply taught for four years with both Catholic and public secondary boards. Most of my experience was with the latter. I observed what students and teachers were like, without being committed or privy to the "politics" or inner network of the schools. I learned about disciplinary structure and classroom management by teaching and by listening to the students, and to other supply and regular teachers’ comments.

Supply teaching involves discipline without the power to back it up. You don't have the support of other teachers and you don't evaluate the students, the source of much of the teachers' power. The supply teachers' status is akin to that of a practice teacher. You are not a "real" teacher, as the students would say.

Supply teaching is typically a "stressful" job. I could see that I had to gain the students' respect very early on. I learned that they liked you to be "cool". That meant many things: being friendly but not too friendly, having a good sense of humor, allowing some behaviours and not others. Sometimes you should even report kids to the office - this
seemed to assuage students' sense of justice and avengement. All these prescriptions came from what students told me, generally about other teachers and how they acted. Some supply teachers were seen as too lenient and as "pushovers". If you were 'too nice' the students felt that they could "pull the wool over your eyes". According to many students, being a pushover was worse than being an autocrat. They seemed to see the latter as being compatible with the definition of "teacher", while the former designation definitely was not.

What you looked like, how you sounded, the colour of your skin, and your gender were also important factors determining for you whether the students would make your time with them hell, or not. This would be determined often before you did or said anything. Some of these things operated together, some did not. Students at one school complained about one teacher. They said they couldn't understand her "accent". I have heard this from many students and other "regular" teachers, who seem to equate 'accent' or dialect with a lack of knowledge.

For me, "supply teaching" meant adapting, observing, listening and learning. It meant the continuous playing out of tricks and pranks each time you entered a class. Each time I went to a new class, it was worse: always facing the unknown. I thought a lot about what I was doing and why I was doing it. Each time I entered a class, I tried to incorporate my view of students and how things could be. There was not much room for engagement in this teaching position. It was disempowering.

"Regular teachers" hold much animosity towards "supplies". "They" think "we" get paid too much and that we do nothing more than baby sitting. I rarely experienced any recognition of the type of work I did. I believe this was so because most of the "regular"
teachers had come from a very privileged time when there were many jobs available to them. They did not have to supply teach, so they had no empathy towards those teachers. "Regular" teachers were surprised when you couldn't get a full time position and often intimidated that there was something wrong with you.

"Regular" teachers would often complain about supply teachers not following instructions, treating students too leniently or to harshly or letting them go to the washroom or library when they weren't allowed. Thus impossible and contradictory situations were guaranteed. Students' resentment towards supply teachers was often supported by their teachers, even though the same teachers would not allow the students to question their own authority. "Are you a Real Teacher?", the students would ask. Teachers left lesson plans that the students would either follow or ignore. I didn't teach much in the way of curriculum. Often you were in a subject area that was not your own.

Supply teaching taught me about the very contradictory nature of discipline in the schools. Much of what I learned was from trial and error and listening to others. Although Supply teachers receive the general rules and regulations of the school, along with the discipline policy these were generally worthless to the in class realities. If you 'played it by the book' then you would be sending most of the students to the office most of the time. And, that wasn't "cool". I learned very early on that administration doesn't want to deal with problems though their official policy states different. You learn that sending kids to the office means you can't handle it yourself. You are perceived to be weak and, a "bad" teacher. There is an invisible line however. It might be okay on one occasion to send a student to the office and you might be well received, but ultimately you run the risk of
becoming the problem. You hear other teachers talking about this and you learn how you can "handle" situations. Supply teachers' classroom management strategies were limited compared with the regular teachers. "Regular" teachers' power partly comes from the continuity of control they exert over students, as well as the power and control that comes from evaluating students. Ironically, I think it was this lack of power and control that helped me to work on what I call "creative" ways of seeing and being with kids while I was a supply teacher. I didn't have much control, so I focused on what was important to the relationship I could establish in the moment, while simultaneously surviving the experience.

As I got to know more about students my perceptions about them changed. Previously, I felt that (following my own schooling experiences) most students were innocent victims. I began to see that this was often not the case.

Throughout my four year supply teaching time, I had two long term occasional contracts consisting of approximately 3-4 months each. I came into school "X" when the "regular" teacher went off on sick leave. I was hired a day and a weekend before the job started. I was very anxious. I taught English and Mathematics. One example of how I learned and came to think of disciplining and control relates to a difficult grade 9 mathematics class I was teaching. I was very frustrated with this class and didn't know what to do. Many students were failing and refused to work and would constantly touch, hit and bother each other. I thought I was very nice and fair to them. When nothing worked I called in another English teacher in to advise me. She observed my class and started to tell the students to move seats and be quiet. Some of this worked. They seemed to be shocked into obeying. Some students just told her off, saying she was not their teacher and what was
she doing in their class anyway. The head of the Math department found out about my class and came in to observe. Although she was "nice" to me, her solutions were that I should exercise more control. This didn't really work either. I always felt that I had to be careful and do everything perfectly, as I was being watched by other teachers. I found out later that my friend, who was in the English department and who had tried to help me, was told to mind her own business by the Math department.

Racism, Anti - Racism and 'Managing' Incidents

High school Dramatic Arts is often the site where racism, sexism and homophobia, as well as other forms of violence, are represented and reproduced. On occasion I have experienced it quite differently. I have come to understand that the reason all this violence comes out in Drama and not as much, for example, in English and other classes, is that as Drama teachers we are giving voice to the students in a way that is not the norm in other classes. Drama is traditionally the "allowed" space for all sorts of expressivity usually denied in other class subjects. English class for me, also became the site for much discussion, including the expression of many forms of discrimination. I became the listener of all types of expressivity, not necessarily all pleasant or even directly related to me. The problem is that if the students' discriminatory attitudes are not addressed (only listened to), then the teacher is contributing to the reproduction of these attitudes. I have seen, as I
commented above, teachers who seem to think there is nothing wrong with this, some think it is funny, even though the same teachers would tack on a unit on anti-racism to their curriculum. Some teachers may not see or do not know how to address these issues. Admittedly this is a very difficult undertaking. Having a whole class of students "gang up" on you is not very pleasant and I can understand why teachers don't want to or can't address some problems. The complexity of this 'issue' may be another reason why school boards do not have clear policies or regulations and few resources to support effective intervention.

One reason that some teachers can't address issues of discrimination is that we don't know how to proceed. I don't remember being taught about how to relate to students in classes at the Faculty of Education. I think the expectation was that the teacher be "firm but kind". The Education Act states that the teacher is in "loco parentis". Students would be reasonable if the teacher was. Of course the reality of the classroom was, again, quite different. I believed in encouraging dialogue among students. What a shock! Students expressed anger, racism, sexism, homophobia and many other forms of discrimination and hatred. We were never taught at the Faculty of Education how to deal with this.

The more I experienced students, the more I began to feel that the materials in the English or Drama curriculum were not enough to explain the complex set of contradictions that arose in any classroom. Importantly, nor were any school solutions from administration. If these existed at all they were in the form of rules and codes of conduct of the "Thou shalt not" variety. Disciplinary, punitive dictums from on high which had nothing to do with how to create a more just, socially inclusive classroom. The times that I did go to
administration with concerns (those administrators who were somewhat supportive of me, then at best they would advise me to use my authority to "lay down the law". What's the problem? "Diane don't take these things personally!" A multi-concerted approach was necessary. But often I felt that my efforts were fragmentary at best.

Another problem for teachers is a lack of role models. All my role models for a more socially just, democratic and liberatory pedagogy were in books. While books, former teachers and professors have certainly helped inform me, having a teacher in my school as mentor or, a friend with similar educational hopes would have been great. I am not denying that these teachers exist. The nature of teaching often makes it an isolating practice. Demands of time and the necessity of solitary time (for marking and research) leaves little time or desire to get together with colleagues.

Another aspect of teaching, for me, has been how to engage students' voices, while simultaneously making the class a safe place for everyone. People (including myself) say and do things in a classroom that often make it very difficult to "get along". As Kari Dehlí (2000, personal communication) says, "Learning is hard, and confronting one's prejudice is the hardest learning of all! There are their risks and my own risks." I have struggled throughout my teaching career with this. There is never a comfortable easy way. Often I have felt that my efforts were fragmentary at best. This learning is a constant evolutionary process that is never final and is never an object you just "get". How could it be? The people are always changing. I am changing. There is much trial and error.

In the next section I write about some of the "incidents" that occurred around issues of racism and sexism. While these are context specific they are not aberrations. I attempt to
show the often complex nature of engaging students in discussion. And the difficulty of trying to teach in a more democratic, socially just way.

In my third year as a full-time teacher, I was teaching a grade 12 Drama Class for a suburban, southern Ontario Board of Education. The majority of the students were "white" males. About a third of the class consisted of "white" females, and there were a few "black" males. In their role playing, the students were stereotyping people of East Indian background. I had observed them do this earlier on a few occasions. Each time the students spoke in what they considered to be an "Indian" voice, the whole class would break up and laugh. Other stereotypes often accompanied their role playing. Whatever the assignment, the same students would do the same discriminatory things. One young man would play the same homophobic skits no matter what we were doing. I told the students several times that this was inappropriate. I didn't mind them showing discriminatory acts if they were also showing their audience that they thought that this was problematic. They would respond good naturedly to my concerns, "Oh miss!" - as if this was one of my idiosyncracies.

One day after a racist skit, I explained to the whole class that this was racist, and so on. What started out to be a discussion turned into a stoning. Eventually, I had to leave the room. Even "nice" kids who didn't agree were encouraged by their classmates and shouted me down so they could win this "argument". I was wrong, they were only having fun. This was Art/Drama and how dare I curtail their rights? I was censoring them. Some "white" students turned to their "black" classmates and those "of color" to seek support against me. We generally got along fairly well, though they didn't really know me yet since this was early on in the year. They wouldn't know how I would act or react to different issues until
they arose. The next day, I read a long letter to the class describing some of the history behind the terrible things that had been done in the name of so-called art and, or movies. I gave them examples of "white" people painting themselves with shoe polish to be "black". I gave them examples of the violence done to Native Indians through the stereotypical movies and so on. I explained that these seemingly neutral or "funny" things that they were doing had a history and it wasn't funny. They listened quietly and I heard a few angry people talking about me. (I can't help thinking that at times like these, the student's silence is bought because of my final resort to being the power as teacher.) Generally I told the students that this was how I thought and this was something for them to think about. Racist comments continued during the year, though somewhat less openly. Had I driven them underground, or was this a sign that some students were beginning to understand about power and privilege? I suspect it was mostly the former. I addressed most instances of racism as problematic each time something was said or done. I tried to dialogue and listen, though the students who were most vocal expressed how wrong I was.

Near the end of the year some of my student "friends" were complaining to me about how their school wouldn't allow them to have a special display for "Black History Month" and that none of the teachers did anything about racism in the school and so on. (As a new teacher I was not very aware of what other teachers were doing, as I was too busy surviving.) I sympathised with my student friends. At the same time I told them that addressing certain things is very difficult for individual teachers, partly because it is very difficult to know how to discuss "issues" without starting a war. I reminded them that at the beginning of the school year they had all "jumped on me", when I tried to disagree with
the class. They said they were sorry for that. I also realize that students are in a position of subordination because they are students and because they may not be of the "dominant" group in a classroom or school. Lee Anne Bell describes the "internalized oppression" of a person in a subordinate group:

It includes such feelings as inferiority and self-hatred and often result in self-concealment, resignation, isolation, powerlessness, and gratitude for being allowed to survive (Pheterson, 1990). Internalized acceptance of the status quo among subordinate groups can also lead them to turn on members of the group who challenge it...prevents solidarity and working together for change. (Bell, 1997, p.12)

One challenge I face as a teacher is to get both groups to feel why it is important not to be an oppressor. This work is also difficult because the definition of subordinate/dominant, oppressed/oppressor is not an easily defined thing but a set of ever-changing relations:

...neither individual identities nor social groups are homogeneous or stable. Individuals are constituted partly by group relations and affinities that are "multiple, cross-cutting, fluid and shifting" (Young (1990, 48) in Bell, 1997, p. 10).

I still find it difficult and stressful trying to talk with students in a classroom about potentially "volatile" issues. Often these discussions are a result of a students' comments in class. There are always many ingredients at play here. What are the relationships of power in my class? Do I fully understand the issues and have enough information and history to be informed myself? What role will my power and authority as classroom teacher have on the discussion? Will I make classroom relations worse? And I have done that too. Why should I expect students to understand when adults often refuse to. Also students are already
in a disempowered position where it may be easier to be a part of the crowd. Many times students would not be vocally racist and, in fact, believe they were not racist, for it was not "cool" to be seen as racist. There was some pressure not to be racist from different schoolwide initiatives, including campaigns to combat racism. These campaigns never touched or taught about white privilege, and systemic discrimination however.

I noticed early on, in both English and Drama classes that if you asked about discrimination or racism, the "white" students (who were usually a majority in the class) would talk about how affirmative action and employment equity were unfair and racist. They would also speak of what some "black" person had done to someone they knew (often adding that the incident had not made them racist). Usually this effectively silenced the "non-white" members of the class. Some "white" students' could not understand the concept of prejudice. I often would not know how to respond to the students. I learned to frame the topic or question differently, so that we weren't just hearing from the dominant group. At one school I was at there was a large minority of "black" and "Asian" students. Some of the girls in one of my classes were quite vocal in providing personal examples of racism. This was very beneficial. Some times a "white" student would add their experience of what she called a "black" person being "racist" towards her. She felt that her "incident" was similar and as painful as the histories the "black" girls were describing. I often found that some "white" students would look to me for confirmation (as a "white" teacher in a doubly power relation) regarding their discriminatory remarks. For example, Black History Month in one school was only mentioned in hushed tones. I sometimes overheard "white" students complaining about it. They thought it was unfair to "white" people's history.
Himani Bannerji captures the essence of the "petulant, white" attitude towards equity when she writes:

...cultural projects with a political nuance - such as Black History month, for example, or heritage language training - are precious to us. If these simple assertions or acts of representation threaten white people it is their own task to think through why they feel so. Their fury at not being central to every project - a furious feeling of exclusion when they never noticed the absence of others in their world unless forced by others to notice it - is also their own political business. Quick charges of "reverse racism" and sneering about "political correctness" regarding minimum, forced concessions such as multiculturalism or Human Rights - are not wounds in which we have to apply a salve. These angers and complaints come from being dislodged from centrality - from white feminists, for example, at being shaken in their claims of victimization, or from a collective guilt and anger of those resting on white privilege who resent having to feel guilty. (1995, p. 38).

Some administrators and staff in the schools where I taught aid in the reproduction of racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of oppression through denial. What gets mistaken by many as "there are no problems in this school" are weakly disguised power and control methods that make schooling the wrong place to discuss "these" issues or question the overt or hidden curriculum. Some of those in power(including teachers and administrators) act as if racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of oppression don't exist. In efforts to smooth things over and avoid "all - out - wars" (I guess), things are not named for what they are. Naming them would probably force you to admit that you have a problem that requires more than short term, stop gap measures to fix. The schools don't seem equipped to do this, nor does there seem to be the will. You just have to go into any high school to see
that behind the "nice" facade are the breeding grounds of discriminations, that are rarely addressed in more than a "one-off" way. I do not mean to suggest that there is a conspiracy or that all staff members in a school are a unified group. However, there is systemic discrimination in schools. I will relate one story of some students racist behaviours at a school where the vice-principal claimed to me once that there was no racism.

Once, at a suburban southern Ontario school where I taught, an "incident" occurred which demonstrated the potentially volatile nature of discussions of racism. My classes consisted of mostly "white" students with only one minority of students "of color". One of my students, who I will call Karen (a "white" student) started complaining about another student in the school (the students who were sitting nearest my desk often told me about their lives). I listened. It seemed that a girl (I will call her Anne, a "black" student) had called Karen some "nasty" names because Karen was hanging out with a "black" guy. I agreed that this name calling was awful and asked Karen what could be done. I asked Karen to discuss this with me later. She did not respond. She got angrier and angrier as she repeated the episode to those around her. Suddenly she said, "I don't know what those people expect?" I asked her what she meant by "those people." She continued, "They're always talking about racism and here they are the most racist of all people." Often students labeled many form of discrimination as racism. Karen became increasingly agitated, abusive and racist. She said that it was no wonder that her father didn't like "them". I tried talking to her. I told her that what Anne had done may not have been "right", but to say that she had done it because she was "black" was not "right". I tried explaining to her. I asked
her if she would like to go outside of the class to talk. Now we were drawing an audience. She told me the story because she expected my support. She argued and began screaming at me. I told her she didn't need to be screaming. She said she was not racist (no one said she was) because the guy she was "hanging out" with was "black". All of a sudden other members of the class seemed interested. One boy said something about Karen being a racist. (All this only took a few minutes.) The bell rang. The next day we were in the library. One of the students in my class was with Anne (the object of Karen's disaffection) in the library. I "knew" something (perhaps a fight) was about to happen. I spoke to the two girls who said they just wanted to "talk" with Karen. But I could tell that this wasn't about talking. This girl had heard that the girl in my class was "a racist". I asked the girl to talk to me first before she did anything. We talked for the rest of the period. I tried to explain the context and agreed that what the other girl was thinking was problematic. I talked about how we could bring girls together to talk about these things. We left on good terms, with Anne agreeing to meet with Karen if I set up a meeting. Anne also admitted that she came in with the intention of beating up Karen. Meanwhile one of Karen's friends kept coming up to us, standing beside me asking me what I was talking about. After class this girl and her friend called me a "sellout", for talking to Anne. I told Karen about the idea of a meeting with Anne to talk about what each of them were feeling. I said I would be present if they wanted. Karen (who didn't appear afraid of anyone) asked if I wanted her to get beaten up. Eventually and reluctantly she agreed to meet with Anne. I was to set it up. I was sick for a few days and when I came back Karen was very angry with me. She said she was not going to meet with Anne and I because Anne and her friends had circled and threatened her in the
washroom. Karen felt betrayed by me because I had always listened and been empathetic to students' concerns, including any incidents of unfairness. I tried to talk to her further but she dismissed the whole thing. I went back and spoke to the class about racism in general. I wrote them a letter which I read to them. It explained (briefly) the nature of white privilege and how racism happens, how people are hurt, my responsibility to all of them in the class, and how we could talk about these things in class and in our lives. The students seemed quiet and thoughtful afterwards. One person asked if I said this for the students in the class as a result of the recent "incident". I said that what happened was an indicator to me that we needed to discuss this and that they needed to know where I stood.

Upon reflection I see many things that I could have said or done differently. I think some of the difficulty arises because I am reacting to a volatile situation. Different types of volatile situations occur almost daily in a classroom full of people in a non-voluntary relationship to one another. The English curriculum often teaches stories or novels about different issues. Students are reluctant to recognize the racism behind each others' actions, as they cue up to take sides. They have been schooled to believe racism is wrong, so their racism gets named something else. By applying different names, administrators, teachers and students make racism, the object, disappear. In doing so they further disguise the nature of racism and prevent any real attempts to learn about it and change. If racism (and sexism, too) doesn't exist anymore, then why is anyone digging beneath the surface to demonstrate that it does? The attempts to discuss our own responsibility or role are met with a great deal of resistance from teachers, administrators and students. Students generally know who the oppressors and victims are in any given text. And they are often outraged at
any unfairness. Students often say that they would not put up with any kind of unfairness. Their solutions are often to fight or leave the oppressive situation. Often the students blame the victim for not fighting back. I try to get students to identify with characters in texts. I relate my own stories of being victim or victimizer (of course it is often not so clear cut). I also try to provide examples from society. Students often write about when they were younger and victimized. Very few write about being victimized in the present (even when I have observed them to be so). Students, however, rarely identify themselves as a bully or victimizer and often defend their own acts of violence against another person as justified.

How can students learn about the roots or systemic nature of discrimination when those that they are supposed to go to for guidance, teaching and discipline are often a large part of the problem?

As teachers, we are often told that we are to give issues of discrimination to the Guidance counselor's or vice principals to "handle". We learn this both officially and unofficially. We are told about the chain of command by other teachers, the guidance counselors, administrators and the school rule book. The rules vary in each school. Often you learn by relating to the vice principal or guidance counselor what occurred. This, however, is not always practical. Students say a lot every day in class. I am supposed to be teaching them. You cannot just send someone to their guidance counselor; they must have an appointment. Sending a student to guidance also takes the student out of the classroom context. They need to understand within the class dynamic how to relate to one another. If I wanted to remove a student from the situation because I felt it was necessary for the well-being of the class and the student I could not send them to the guidance counselor. My
only other option would be to send the student to an administrator. This doesn't work either.

Administrators often limit their role to that of a punitive discipliner. A punitive attitude does nothing to help kids understand their responsibilities. I have tried sending students to an administrator and have found that the students come back to class worse than before. For now they can add anger to their discriminatory behaviours. The lesson they may have learned, is that they can't express themselves out loud in a classroom. Also when an administrator doesn't listen to the particular circumstances, but just slaps on a punishment (i.e., zero tolerance premise) the student may feel overwhelmed and angry as this just reinforces their already feeling the injustice of (some of, the students, especially students who have a "record" of "trouble in the office") life. They have not learned about the roots of discrimination. It often turns out that if a "good" student does something they may not be sent to the office because their infraction may be seen as a forgivable mistake, or they may be treated nicely by administration who would also view the situation as a "simple mistake", the reasoning being the infrequency with which the student commits infractions.

This discrepancy in treatment is not missed by the 'bad' kid, who may view this as further injustice. There is usually a lack of belief surrounding the deeds done by some kids; "They're such a 'good' student!" Of course, there is an air of expectation and resignation ("nothing can be done") around that 'bad' kid doing bad things. I have met a couple of administrators who could actually talk to most kids (not just the few worthy chosen). Most do not. Some of the administrators that I have dealt with view incidents of discrimination as just that: isolated incidents with no underlying cause or relationship to power relations in schools and society. Here is one example of a vice principal's treatment of a student.
A student in my class told me that another student in our class had been 'persecuting' her in their physical education class. This student, "B", told me that she tearfully related the story to her mother. "B" and her mother met with the vice principal. "B" told me that the vice principal was very sorry and was very helpful. He wanted "B" to report any further problems to him. He assured the mother that he would take care of this and made her feel that this was an isolated incident at the school. During the next class "B" approached me. One of the students in our class was harassing her, kicking her seat, laughing and pointing at her. I didn’t observe any of these things. The other student wrote "B" a note saying at first that she was sorry for picking on her in phys-ed with her other friends, but that she had changed her mind because "B" had gone to the office and got her in trouble. The main perpetrator of nastiness towards "B" was "A". "A" was a "regular" in the vice principal's office. "A" came into our class and started screaming and referring to "Her", and "That Bitch". I told her she was not going to do this in our class (she had a history of this type of behavior, though she was more recently less expressive of her anger). We had worked on our own relationship and her relationship with other students. I told "A" that we could discuss this after school. She chose not to. After speaking to several students it turned out that, indeed, several female students were forming a gang against "B". "B" was from the United Arab Emirates, as were the two other girls who were being persecuted. "B" said the other girls were afraid of "A" and her friends. "B" said she was not afraid and so she told on "A". Some of "A's" friends in the class told me that they were not pleased with "A's" actions, and had told her. I agreed that what "A" had said was inappropriate. I could see that "B" was still being persecuted and asked her if she would like me to go to the vice principal. She
said, "yes". At first the vice principal was sympathetic, but as our conversation continued, he said there was another side to the story. He said he had talked to several other students and that "B" did not try to assimilate and this was why she experienced problems with the other students. I was astonished as he continued with this line of reasoning. I knew both girls quite well. I told the vice principal that I understood what he was saying, and it was called, "blaming the victim". He didn't acknowledge this, but proudly remarked that as he told one concerned parent: "There is no racism in this school, look we have this multicultural festival - all our kids mix." The vice principal was looking to me for affirmation. When I tried to say that students were often forced to stay in what others called their "own" groups, he said that according to his sources, "B" was not doing this. I said she was lonely and that I had spoken to her on several occasions. I had encouraged her to write about her experiences about how difficult it must be to come to a new country. The vice principal replied that several girls in the school also wore the veil (hajib) and that "B" didn't even try to mix with them. "B" did not wear a hajib. I told him again that I understood perfectly what he was saying, it was called "blaming the victim". I also told him that there was a sight passage on the exam about this very issue. I left his office.

The vice principal that I write about is well respected by staff and administration. I feel his style of doing business is similar to other administrators. He is perceived to be a person who listens. He was quite discriminatory in his assumptions, while simultaneously believing his actions to be fair. I think he was coming from a position of white privilege, and he had never seen this as problematic. In fact, our society, including the schools, rarely questions the privileged. "There is a strong belief in western superiority among some
educators at all school levels" (Rezai-Rashti, 1994, p.78). I also believe that while administrators have quite a bit of power, they are quite selective in using it. Some rule infractions are punished right away and, consistently, others are not. Students having problems within the school setting is something that the administration cannot resolve, because they will not look at underlying causes. Schooling does not seem to be set up for that. Short term disciplinary solutions, which are often used by administrators also rarely work. How could they work to address problems such as racism? To deal with underlying causes would mean doing education differently, looking at the relationship between people and structures.. It might mean a process of educating staff and a change in curriculum. Instead, I find that schooling largely ignores, denies, and so makes light of real concerns and causes. Many times I have tried to explain a situation of racism to an administrator, teacher and guidance counselor. I have looked for guidance from them. They do not like my naming, and they rename a situation I am familiar with. I think possibly the job of administrators, counselors and teachers are to diffuse volatile situations. It seems crucial to school administrators that incidents of violence (for example) be hushed up, so their school will not get a bad reputation. A bad reputation means that parents send their kids to other schools.

Sometimes issues of abuse get confused with race. Rezai Rashti explains that some educators:

...seem bent on racializing gender issues pertaining to minority students. Sometimes, problems that are perceived by school personnel as being related to a students' "home culture", in fact have little to do with specific cultural practices. They could well be the types of problems encountered by any typical adolescent. (1994, p.78)
At one school I had a friendly relationship with one of my students. She was having problems with her father and her brother. We spoke at length, over a period of several months. I asked her if she would like to see a guidance counselor who I thought would be helpful. My friend reluctantly agreed. I thought the counselor could provide some community support and other information. I sat with my friend as the counselor minimized her concerns. The counselor also tried to deny and modify the young woman's story. My friend told the counselor that her father had been hitting and abusing her. The counselor asked her what she meant by hitting. She asked if her father was just hitting her with an object, like a shoe, thus implying that this wasn't a big deal. This silenced my friend, who had expected to meet a supportive person, as I had told her. The counselor told her that what she was describing wasn't really abuse. She also asked the student if she wanted to be separated from her family. She said this was what would happen if the young woman did anything further about her experiences. The counselor said to her, "You know what I mean?" She gave the student the number for a local East Indian Woman's organization. My friend left dejected, probably mad that she had put her trust in me. She felt nothing could be done. I listened and watched as she daily became more depressed and desperate. The guidance counselor drew me aside later and told me that she hoped I wasn't getting involved in this girl's situation. She warned me about the violence of Sikh men.

While I understand that students can be very manipulative and my friend could have been manipulating me, I chose to think otherwise. My reasons are that I developed a relationship with this student who would come to chat with me informally. In class she
would hardly speak and was very quiet in front of the other students. This student would just show up at lunch or after school and stand in front of me. I felt she wanted someone to listen, to speak with or just to be a friend. At first she said very little. It was as if she was testing me to see if I could be trusted or was the type of person that she wanted to talk to.
The subject of her home life came up only after we had talked for several months. She started talking a little about her father as we became better acquainted. Usually there were just brief mentions of family. Slowly her father figured in our conversations more. I had asked her several times if she tried speaking to her mother, father, sibling or relatives. She said she couldn't. Her brother told her father that she was speaking to a guy at school. This, it seems, is when the father started abusing her. Over a period of a several weeks I tried to convince my friend to visit the guidance counselor. This was the first time I "advised" her. I thought perhaps the latter could "do something". I was probably hoped that she could speak to the parent or help in some way. I didn't think she helped at all. Goli Rezai-Rashti, a race relations consultant for a Toronto area Board of Education, writes that we should be aware of the intersections of racism and sexism in the schools. Rezai - Rashti suggests that students can be manipulative and that their stories need to be checked out with the family. I believe this is the responsible and respectful way to proceed, however I did not do this. Maybe I did not do this for some of the reasons Rezai - Rashti suggests, such as my own prejudices. I feel that I did know my friend fairly well and I believed her. I also have felt from past experiences that speaking to the parent can make it worse for the child, especially if the child is being abused. My experience of kids who were abused were of both males and females from different backgrounds. I do think that in most cases there is very little that
can be done for the child in cases of abuse, regardless of the child's background. Abuse is a systemic problem. The way I view it is that abuse in schools, and in society, is "handled" by short term strategies, that don't get to the roots of the problem.

Anti-racist initiatives in the school, while important, are not enough. These issues come up in the class as the students relate to each other. There are no programs (there are curriculum initiatives) that tell you how to navigate and negotiate your way around these daily lived experiences. I sense that many people who design anti-racist curriculum think that your authority (questionable to someone concerned about power relations) as teacher is all it takes to deliver an anti-racist message which will be accepted by a receptive audience of students. No problem! Right? The teacher simply delivers the message and students, being subjects to teachers authority, will be educated from their ignorance (because in this scenario all you have to do is educate the ignorance out of people- how easy!)

My experiences were never easy, nor did they follow a prescription of "How To's". As a teacher you don't want to hurt anyone or silence them. At the same time I try to make a democratic safe space for everyone. Although students initially can be very angry (as I have attested to here) I have found our relationships to have withstood these types of "incidents". I think it is a credit to those students I have taught that they do listen and maybe have become more understanding people. I'm never "satisfied" with the way I deal with "situations", as I could always think of how I might have done it better. But, in the classroom you don't always have the luxury of choosing your moments. I have been informed by every little interaction with the students, and in turn these relationships have
informed all the one's that followed. However I feel that this is not enough. There is more that I and my colleagues could work on to make anti-racism part of our everyday practice with students.

I think it would be useful for schools to hold courses teaching the history of colonialism and teaching about white privilege. While we have had "equity" groups of teachers in schools these seem to have fallen by the wayside in recent years. The reasons for this are a topic in themselves which I will not go into here. We also have an equity group at the school board level, consisting of teachers. This, too, is in jeopardy of folding. The three teachers that organize it are tired of running it year after year.

There are books out that are based on the principles of teaching for equity. The ones I am familiar with seem like well-planned, thoughtful ways of approaching curriculum. These are not the regular texts that you see in the departments. I attend a York University Equity Conference most years where they sell this type of book. A lot of ideas and networking comes from these sources. However, these sources are something that the individual teacher has to search out and basically do on their own. Very few teachers attend from each board for differing reasons. One main reason is that it is difficult to get PD (professional development) days off. High school teachers no longer get the few guaranteed PD days since the Harris government gutted educational funding. Teachers may apply individually to attend a workshop and get class coverage, however there is a very limited amount of PD money, so only a small minority of teachers could attend. Some positive (albeit limited) policies and resources were put in place regarding equity initiatives by the
previous provincial NDP government. The current Harris Conservatives have removed and rolled back any progressive initiatives.

In my experience, the equity groups never seemed successful at reaching the majority of teachers and administrators. They are very poorly attended. Some teachers and administrators seemed quite resistant to the equity ideas. Instead of seeing equity as integral to our way of being in life, unfortunately it is get's seen by many as just one more separate add-on to an already heavy day. We also have an Equity officer for our school board. At one of the schools I worked in, at our equity committee invited the officer in. It seemed that the same narrow group of teachers on staff were interested in what the officer had to say the rest seemed not to be. Some of the reasons for the resistance may have been the extreme pressure and time constraints that teachers working conditions involve. It may be from a lack of concrete materials offered to the teacher. Often ideas of equity are perceived as "just one more thing pushed on us from above". Another reason for the resistance may be it is often easier to not disturb the status quo. Questioning our own privilege is hard work... it can be upsetting, conflictual to 'rock the boat.'

During the 1990's committees were started up in the schools on different topics with teachers being asked by principals to volunteer to join a group. The groups were never truly voluntary, and if you chose not to join you had to go and speak to the principal. There was an Equity group. Now in 1999 at the school where I am teaching, the old "success" committees have been replaced by the "Secondary School Implementation Teams". The staff has been divided; there is no choice to membership there. And ironically or not, there is no
equity group. While issues of equity may not be important to Ministries of Education, Boards of Education and schools, I feel it is even more important now not to let go because the system has made it difficult to do otherwise.

Teachers flock to courses on testing, the new curriculum, grading and computers. Many teachers feel that they need to know these items that relate to their job. I guess the question is how can teachers come to see work of anti-racism as crucial to their job and life? Perhaps the initiative could come from the "ground-up"? Getting students involved as well as parents is crucial if this is to be an on-going project of learning. I think students are better situated to make demands on the system. Simultaneously, there needs to be strong leadership by the principal who gets involved in what is going on and has a strong sense of what is going on and why it is going on. If only some in the system are committed to anti-racism, then those individuals often become targets of their opponents. These individuals risk becoming examples to others of why not to practice equity. This is not to say that the struggle is less worth doing. It is just that a network consisting of different groups is needed to be committed to the idea and practice of anti-racism in order for it to work. And, indeed, I think that communicating to your colleagues is something that needs to be worked on. Workshops on how to do this would be helpful. The schools where I have taught "do" some multicultural initiatives. However, the marginal nature of these initiatives is problematic. Goli Rezai-Rashti makes the crucial distinction between anti-racism and the multicultural approach. She explains that an:

...Anti-racist approach, made a radical theoretical departure from mainstream multiculturalism. The latter's emphasis had been on the transformation of individual's attitudes and prejudices; the former, however, shifted that focus to the study of institutionalized forms of racism. It maintained that racism is
manifested in the policies and practices of larger institutions.... Henry Giroux... said it bluntly: "multiculturalism should mean analysing not just stereotypes but also how institutions reproduce racism and other forms of discrimination." (Rezai-Rashti, 1994, p. 76)

I feel that most schools have not even tried the multicultural approach let alone an anti-racist approach. It is easier for many to believe that racism, sexism and other forms of discriminations just don't exist. After all, we did those "multicultural" things in the 1980's. Let's move on! There are only individual problems (due to individual ignorance), therefore we don't need anti-racist or feminist educators. And so it is in schools.

As an individual teacher I try to "love" my students. This means that I see myself as trying to facilitate each person to an "ideal of becoming 'all that s(he) may' "(Olson, p. 219). Or as hooks (2000, p. 137) describes love, "...as the will to nurture one's own or another's spiritual growth, revealed through acts of care, respect, knowing, and assuming responsibility..." While other teachers and friends would describe me as passionate, intense and caring, some would often preface it with the word, "too". Now, while they may be concerned with my well-being and often "stressed-out" state, I feel they are not understanding my position. In fact, I once thought everyone was like me. And I didn't think I was more caring than others- I assumed we were all the same. A part of me believed in what I was doing( so much so that I never saw this as separate from my teaching, I just came to see it as my way of being and what I struggled toward), but another part of me came to understand that this "loving" must be kept quiet because it would be seen as a negative. Only a couple of colleagues saw my way of being as valid and were loving teachers themselves.
I happened upon bell hooks' article, "Eros, Eroticism, and the Pedagogical Process" (1994, p.114). For the first time I saw my attempts at being a loving teacher were thought of as positive and desirable attributes of teaching. How different this was from the books, courses, rules and regulations on disciplining students! While hooks is referring to her experiences in a university setting, I find that being a loving teacher is just as important in the high school setting. hooks writes that a feminist pedagogy always tried to bring the body back into the traditionalist view of the mind/body split so critical to much of Western thinking. She explains:

Feminist education for critical consciousness is rooted in the assumption that knowledge and critical thought engaged with in the classroom should inform our habits of being and ways of living outside the classroom.... Concurrently, it was expected that we would bring a quality of care and even "love" to our students.... The classroom becomes a dynamic place where transformation in social relations are concretely actualized and the false dichotomy between the world outside and the inside world of the academy disappears. In many ways this is frightening. (hooks, 1994, p. 115)

hooks writes about expressions of love she has received from her students. I have also received many expressions of love from students over my years of teaching. I know other teachers also receive these. However, there is this thing called professionalism that seems to deny the reality of a teacher having a loving relationship to students. After all, the Education Act states that teachers are "in loco parentis", as kind but firm parents. And you just get the feeling that being a loving teacher is not really valued. You learn this by word of mouth, by negative evaluation by administrators of teachers, and by teachers comments about each other.
hooks writes:

Well learned distinctions between public and private make us believe that love has no place in the classroom. Even though many viewers could applaud a movie like THE DEAD POET’S SOCIETY, possibly identifying with the passion of the professor and his students, rarely is such passion institutionally affirmed.... Teachers who love students and are loved by them are still "suspect" in the academy. Some of the suspicion is that the presence of feelings, of passions, may not allow for objective consideration of each student's merit. But this very notion is based on the false assumption that education is neutral, that there is some "even" emotional ground we stand on that enables us to treat everyone equally dispassionately. In reality, special bonds between professors and students have always existed but traditionally they have been exclusive rather than inclusive. To allow one's feeling of care and one's will to nurture particular individuals in the classroom to expand and embrace everyone goes against the notion of privatized passion. (hooks, 1994, p. 117)

Another notion that hooks refers to that I have also some experience with is students' discomfort and lack of familiarity with the loving teacher. It seems that many students experiences of a loving teacher are about exclusion, unfairness, class "pets" and so on. The idea of a teacher (indeed any person) loving (all) her students may be something a student doesn't have much experience of. Students are initially (and sometimes later) uncomfortable with my expressions of love. Some students are suspicious of my motivation. Some think they are guaranteed great marks, while some are jealous and they want to be the only one who is "special". After students become familiar with me (and sometimes this takes a whole semester, and some may never trust or believe in my caring) they come to trust my ways.
Recently I taught a class in a vocational school, where the students were among the most oppressed, oppressive and disempowered people I have been with. At different times through the semester these students found my caring and loving all of them hard to take. Certain people wanted me exclusively and worked hard at telling me what I should do to discipline other students. I would talk to the students about this seeming jealousy of anyone they perceived to be getting special attention. I would explain that they all got special attention, that I tried to talk to all of them about everything. I would elaborate about specific incidents when they each received "special" attention. I think the students understood this but it was difficult for them to live this loving and caring in their everyday classroom relations. Perhaps much of their experience denied the worth of this view. The students fought against each other constantly. There were times when you knew they "got it", however. Like the time one student, "P" was angry because I didn't call "V" into the classroom right after break. She maintained that if it was "P" or another student in class I would have told them off. "P" said it was just because "V" was in a wheelchair that she got special treatment. I tried to explain to "P" that she and all the students got special treatment. I reminded her of her almost daily 'lates' to class, when I didn't send her to the office as other teachers did. That was special treatment. I said that "V" was never late and she was only a minute late and she had explained to me why this was. "O" happened to be in the hall when "P" brought her into the heated discussion. "You always give "O" heck," said an injured "P". "O" confirmed this. I said that "O was seventy-five minutes late every day, upon which she immediately disappeared to buy chips, then she would proceed to her five minute break for which she took 20 to 30 minutes. Still, I did not send down "O" to the
office because she had a child at home and I figured she needed the extra time. "P" brought another student, "C" into the fray. "P" thought this incident was the same as the time when "C" was being mean to another student and I talked to her for about an hour about it. (This was another incident about the disempowered "picking on" the disempowered). I could see that even though "P" was clearly the victimizer she was seeing herself as the "victim". "C" said to "P" that she had learned something and did not "pick on" the other student anymore. "P" would not see it and started crying. I said we all thought she was great and how sometimes we feel bad about ourselves and then take it out on others, and so on. Then I had to try and convince "V": to come back in the classroom. And so it would go. It was very difficult for many students to see kindness extended to others, especially if they thought the other was not worthy. When I attempted to draw parallels between themselves and others they were most reluctant to see the other point of view. They usually though they were deserving of compassion and love but others weren't. The classroom was often filled with discussion and argumentation. In the end I know they knew the difference. It wasn't easy. I also understand that students experiences of life were in opposition to such a notion of love. hooks writes about similar feelings that her students had:

In students' journals from various classes I have taught there would always be complaints about the perceived special bonding between myself and particular students. Realizing that my students were uncertain about expressions of care and love in the classroom, I found it necessary to teach on the subject. I asked students once: "Why do you feel the regard I extend to a particular student cannot also be extended to each of you? Why do you think there is not enough love or care to go around?" To answer these questions they had to think deeply about the society we live in, how we are taught to compete with one another. They had to think about capitalism and how it informs the way we think about love and care, the way we live in our bodies, the way we try to separate mind from body. (hooks, 1994, p. 118)
I try to think of the students I teach as able to learn something, even if it is not when and what I am trying to teach them. I also try to listen as if they, too, know things. I also try to think that they are worthy of the best. I try to help them connect to what we do in English courses. I often use personal narratives to make those connections and as a means of encouraging them to do the same. I bring in contemporary issues that relate to something we are studying and try to get the students to bring in ideas, stories and such. I've had speakers come in. I talk to the students periodically about what I'm trying to do in the classroom. I try things that would get students to communicate with each other in the class and to see each other as worthwhile. I try to model that behaviour myself so the students can see that I think of them as worthwhile. In the final analysis I am the "boss" and do have to step in and be an authority figure. Some situations call for that. And yet for all my efforts, I never feel that I am in a perfect class. My classes never are like that. I am usually struggling, for as Kari Dehli (2000, a personal communication) says, "This work is never 'done'... it's ongoing and surprisingly difficult."
Homophobia

One of the most difficult topics to discuss in school is homophobia. While students acknowledge that racism is bad (and I know there was a history to get to this point), many students do not regard homophobia in the same way. Most schools will not deal with this, nor will they support the teacher who does. There have been many cases where teachers have been fired or not supported for discussing homosexuality in class. Heterosexuality is also seen as a taboo subject by some principals. Local schools want to "play it safe". In my experience, there is a climate of fear surrounding the discussing of sexuality.

One time in my grade 9 class I told a girl that I thought her outfit was "cute". She said, "I hate it when people say "cute", it sounds so gay." I told her that "cute" was just one of those words that I overused, but I meant it in a nice way. Some students were making fun of the idea of the word "gay". I asked them if there was a problem with being gay, as they seemed to be saying. A few students became very angry with me. We discussed this heatedly for the majority of the class. The most vocal students said it was wrong to be gay.

I questioned them on their assumptions. Some students used the Bible as the justification for their homophobia. The students became increasingly angry and frustrated with me as they tried to shout me down. I tried not to make this a win - lose debating situation where anyone's feelings would be hurt. Often this type of discussion ends this way. I have to be very careful. One girl in the class who was known to speak her mind was able to say that
she thought there was nothing wrong with being gay. Many of the students sat silenced by the discussion. One student said to me after the class that I was looking at her with anger and she thought that now I hated her. I reassured her that I didn't hate her, but yes, I was angry. I also reassured her that her disagreement with me would not mean she would lose marks and so on. (I have since learned to reassure students at the beginning of the year and during the year about how to "read me". I do not want them to read disagreement or anger as a withdrawal of caring but as a part of dialogue.) A couple of weeks later I brought my students to a play put on by young students from another school. The play illustrated homophobia. After viewing this play one of the previously most vocal and angry students came up to me to say she was sorry, she never knew that was how "they" thought.

At one school where I taught, a parent complained about a teacher of family studies who discussed sexuality, even though this was what the course was about. The teacher was doing a brainstorming exercise where the students say words and ideas connected to a topic. The teacher wrote all the ideas the students contributed onto the blackboard. The students copied them into their notebook. One parent who read his son's notes didn't like some of the things that were being discussed. She took her complaint to the principal, the Board of Education and the Ministry of Education. A panel of trustees had to vote on whether this teacher should be fired or not. She was not, though some voted she should be. I know this teacher and this was not someone who you would describe as a risk-taker or "radical".

I think that parents often do not know what their children are learning in high school. Historically the schools have fostered the idea that most parents (often depending
on their social class) do not need to have a voice in their child's education. We seem to be living with the backlash to that at the moment, as some parents feel that, indeed, they do have the right to know what is going on in the schools. Some schools still act like the parents have no rights. Schools should be accountable to the parents and students.

Educational history also shows us that schooling has often been the site of great injustices. However, the Ontario Conservative government (2000) has created a crisis in education. "Accountability" is one of the catchwords of this 'crisis'. Parents and the public are made to believe that the only thing that is stopping their child from getting a great job is the poor schooling system. There is no political or social responsibility on the government's part. Bad schooling and teachers (and sometimes, students) are all that is preventing each child from becoming a marketable object. "Accountability" is a way of monitoring and blaming teachers. I think if the schools, administrators and such were committed to and understood their own policies, then they would be more clear on what to do when an irate parent questioned the individual teacher. As it is now, I have seen a few examples of individual teachers being the subject of "witch - hunts" for teaching the curriculum. In each of the cases the individual teacher has been left to defend themselves. The union can only play a role if the teacher makes them aware of the situation. Many teachers don't. The onus from the administrators has been on the individual teacher to prove that she or he did not do something wrong. This illustrates that the administrators do not know the curriculum of the different departments, nor policies governing schools. It also shows that all the policies on anti-racism, anti-discrimination, anti-homophobia, and so on are fairly useless pieces of
paper unless administrators make it clear (i.e. communicate to the parents with the help of the teachers) that they are committed to the struggle for the schools to look like this.

In the last few years I have taught in more affluent schools where the parents have more of a voice. Some of these parents have questioned the moral precepts of certain books in the English curriculum. I have heard teachers defending books such as Margaret Laurence's *Stone Angel* to parents. Some students also question the Christian morals of particular books. Teachers are often on their own to support the curriculum.

I have focused on how I and other teachers address some of the discriminatory attitudes and viewpoints as they arise in the classroom. When I step back from the immediacy of the classroom, I can see the more systemic face of discrimination. I understand, as Basil Bernstein said, that, "Schools cannot make up for society" (Corrigan, 1986). And, as Barlow and Robertson write:

> Indeed, the symptoms schools have been told to address restrict them to a very limited analysis of the underlying disease. The problem of youth violence has been reduced to how schools should cope, and perhaps how to provide students faced with assault with "more skilled responses". Teachers have been discouraged from naming sexism and racism as underlying issues, not only with their students but within their profession. Schools must deal with the result without naming the cause. (1994, p. 8)
CHAPTER 3

STREAMING

Learning to "Sort and Slot" in Teachers' College: Creaming off the Top

In this chapter, I write about how I learned about "streaming" in schools through my experience at the Faculty of Education and in the classroom, practice teaching assignments and in some of the teaching positions I have held. Under the heading, "Streaming at the Bottom End: Vocational Schooling and Learning to Discipline", I discuss my experiences of streaming, particularly during the two years I spent teaching at a vocational school. I will look at NDP provincial government attempt at a more equitable educational system in the section, "Destreaming Grade Nine". In, "Analysis of the 1994 Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation Survey" I look at the limits and possibilities of this critique. Throughout the chapter my main premise remains; that streaming is a discriminatory disciplinary practice.

When I went to Teacher's College in 1984 I didn't know what the term "streaming" meant. I assumed that streaming was the same as the two, four and five year programs of my high-school days in the 1970's. (Students were streamed then, but I never heard anyone use the word "streaming"). For me this was something unquestioned and 'natural' in those days. I slowly learned that streaming was grouping by ability, through sporadic discussions in the guidance class at the Faculty of Education and on practice teaching assignments. The latter form of learning usually came from casual comments by associate teachers. I didn't
ask for explanations, since I thought that to do so would make me look unknowledgeable about something that seemed obvious to others. From the start I also experienced a sense of fear that anything I said or did that was not viewed as 'teacherly conduct' would end up as a negative comment on my final evaluation. This feeling only increased throughout that year.

My initial objection to what I was hearing about streaming was that it sounded unfair. It became obvious that affixed to the differing streams were varying degrees of privilege and opportunity. Despite the denials and qualifications that prefaced comments from teachers and students, I learned that the "basic" and "general" level students (for that is how students in lower classes came to be labeled) were often referred to and treated in derogatory ways, while their "advanced" and "enhanced" (just look at the language here!) were privileged in comparison.

On my first practice teaching session my associate, "W" told me that he taught grade 9 basic level English, and grade 11 and 12 advanced level Drama. On the way to class one day, and by way of introduction to the grade 9 basic level English class, "W" told me that the students in this class could be difficult, due to attitudinal and behavioral problems. I thought that "W" was very harsh with these students and I felt sorry for them. He would walk around with a stick in his hand, which I found quite intimidating. The students also seemed afraid of the stick. A few times during my training, "W" mentioned the basic level students' "need" for structure and discipline. "W's" written suggestions to me on how to teach these students focused on the importance of gaining control. He wrote to me on one
occasion: "Be imperative!" Though "W" emphasized the importance of discipline and control in all the classes, he seemed to stress it in the basic level classroom.

Back at the Faculty of Education I took a "guidance" course as part of the larger course called "The Contemporary Classroom". The guidance course ran for about one month. One session was about "streaming". A few of us "students" voiced our concern that "streaming" seemed to favour certain individuals. The teacher, "C", was very defensive about the practice. He made us feel that our concerns were misplaced, misinformed and naive.

Streaming was simply the method whereby "students could do exactly as they wanted to do." So, for example, "Kids who wanted to go to university would take advanced level courses. Students who wanted to go to community college needn't bother themselves about taking courses at the advanced levels; the general level courses were designed for them. Those students who CHOOSE not to go to College or University, but have other interests, such as entering the work force, could take the General or even the Basic level courses." "C" said that everybody had different aspirations and there was nothing wrong with being a garbageman if that made one happy. One 'older' woman student disagreed, saying that most parents would not be happy if their SONS were garbagemen because parents wanted their children to do better than they had done. Some students tried to "put this woman in her place"- as if she was illiberal or inhumane- dismissing her as a product of the past. I asked "C" what effect streaming had on those people who didn't know what they wanted to do after high school. His response was dismissive and said: "A York University survey showed that students in grades 7 and 8 know what they wanted to do."
Most of the more vocal students agreed with "C" that "streaming" was about choice and hence it was the best of all possible worlds. Any attempts to discuss the negative effects of 'streaming' were subsumed by the teacher, with claims that we didn't have time for this. Slowly I was beginning to see how we, as prospective teachers, were supposed to view streaming as an equitable phenomenon that we couldn't question. Almost everyone treated it as if it were a "good" thing. By observing professors' comments and responses to streaming, students could take a cue for survival about what issues you were to challenge or shut up about. No one wanted to fail Teacher's College and professors' dismissive, silencing and, at times, angry reactions to students who had the "wrong" viewpoint, taught us a lesson about survival. The "right" attitude we were to embrace regarding 'streaming' was confirmed on many other occasions.

The teacher that probably taught me the most about the unfairness of streaming was "X", my second associate teacher. She was the teacher who attached the most explicit derogation to the different streams. Once "X" asked me where, what and at what level had I taught on my previous practice teaching session. I told her that I had taught grade 9 basic level English; the rest were drama subjects. "X" informed me that they didn't have basic level STUDENTS at her school -- it had a fine reputation as an 'academic school'. She continued happily, "They are not as good as us, but WE shouldn't say that." She also remarked how 'standards' must have changed since she had gone to school. I did not tell her that my degree major was in Sociology. "X" proudly confided that she had taken voice lessons and attended school hockey games early in the morning in an effort to improve herself for teaching. She recommended that these and other self-improvement efforts were
what I, too, should be "open" to doing. Another obvious source of pride to "X" was her
grade 12 'enhanced' class. "X" referred to students in this class as "enriched", although she
admitted that she shouldn't be calling them this anymore, since the Ministry had changed the
label to "enhanced". (It seemed that the term "enriched" had derogatory connotations).

Several times during my session with her, "X" said that this was her favourite class.

"Sometimes they just boggle my mind ... even I have learned from these students ... this is a
fun group ... they eat up all the info." "X" seemed reluctant to let me teach this class and
told me exactly what she wanted me to do with them. "X's" privileging of the students'
knowledge by virtue of the students being in this "special" class was always apparent. On
one occasion this "privileging" involved me, for "X" had made known to her class that I was
"new", a "non-knower" and therefore someone to whom they didn't have to pay much mind.

A student in "X's" class disagreed with something I had said, saying that I was wrong. I told
the student that she was using the Old Testament of the Bible to support her opinion, while
I was talking about the New Testament. The student didn't believe that there was a
difference. She went to "X" after class to complain about me. "X" chastised me, saying
that the student was an EXPERT on The Bible. I tried to explain to "X"—to no avail. "X's"
privileging of "enhanced" students was out of character with her treatment of other students.

At the end of each class "X" confronted me with a lengthy list of Observations and
Suggestions (criticisms) of my teaching. These criticisms also included how I should have
disciplined students in the advanced level class. "X" wrote: "[There is] Background Noise!
No Homework?" No such minute criticisms were given to me after teaching the "enhanced"
classes. When I mentioned to "X" that there was a discrepancy between the homework given to the two levels, she said that the enhanced students did not have to have regular homework because they were "intelligent" and because it was assumed that they would do it. It appeared that homework was a punishment for students who were perceived to be less able. There was never mention of the "enhanced" classes having disciplinary problems, yet these students were doing the same sorts of things (acting like students) that their counterparts in other classes were doing. I was trying to impose the same types of disciplinary "tips" on the enhanced level classes that "X" was telling me to use in the advanced level classes. The enhanced level class followed the advanced level class on the timetable. On one occasion a student told me that the students in the enhanced level classes did not have to do things in the same manner as students in other classes, since they were "enriched". The students said they were "allowed" (meaning privileged) and I was to relax with them.

I couldn't believe "X's" change in demeanor upon entering the 'enhanced' class. I found her carefree, happy attitude odd and false. It had changed in the time it took to walk from the 'advanced' to the 'enhanced' classes. "X" did not think her "other" classes were "smart" (other than the few students that she pointed out to me), and she treated them as if they knew nothing. They acted accordingly at times. It was as if they were playing out a self-fulfilling prophecy. "X" treated her "enhanced" students like adults that she liked. The students in this class were "allowed" to eat in the class, talk during class, make excuses, be funny and witty, discuss their ideas, to be listened to and respected and go to the washroom without permission. "X" trusted these students because she thought they were smart. Students in her advanced level classes were not assumed to be as intelligent. None of the
previously mentioned "allowables" were available to them. I thought that these were natural items, not privileges. "X" made me understand (however unwittingly) that all these seemingly petty items were controls she used for and against the students.

"X's" differential treatment of students in the "advanced" and "enhanced" classes is very similar to those Jean Anyon found in her study in working-class, middle-class and executive-class schools. Anyon explored the different attitudes and expectations of teachers in the various schools. Though I write about streaming within one school by individual teachers, the attitudes of teachers towards students (in different level classes) are similar in Anyon's study and in my observations. Curtis, Livingstone and Smaller summarize Anyon's findings:

In the elite school, children had teachers who were polite to them, who made no nasty or sarcastic remarks, and who gave few direct orders. In this atmosphere, students were encouraged to work through problems analytically and to conceptualize rules in ways that they could apply to a range of problems. While they were expected to work hard, they also enjoyed considerable freedom of movement. The contrast between this school and those with working class students was stark. In the latter, Anyon found that students were taught to follow rules, often in mechanical manner and in the absence of choice. The teachers rarely explained the objective of the work students were assigned and students spent too much of their time copying from the board. Students resisted teachers' attempts to make them learn in this way and teachers were at times content when students did not work, as long as they were quiet. (1992, p. 72)

The pleasure that "X" derived from teaching the enhanced level classes was understandable. It is flattering to "teach" students who are able to learn easily. It is also easier to teach smaller classes. It is more difficult to teach classes with students of mixed abilities (advanced level classes seem to include more of a variety of abilities than the other
two levels). These classes are also generally much larger, as they have a higher enrollment.

By the time the student gets to high school they have developed cumulative coping strategies whose roots aren't always obvious. A highly controlled class may give the appearance of more well behaved students. This, in turn gets translated into students who are easier to teach. The more disciplinary ways of teaching students appear to work. The nature of teaching time, makes short term disciplinary solutions inevitable to teachers. Alternative disciplinary styles are hard to imagine, as there doesn't appear to be a plethora of legitimized role models available to new teachers. As Curtis, Livingstone and Smaller write:

Many of the reasons that students, especially working - class and ethnic/racial minority students, do not do well in schools lie outside the control of teachers in the large classes, in the pressure on teachers to cover the standardized curriculum, and in the lack of opportunities and resources for teachers to offer innovative curricula, courses, and programs to students, not to mention the multitude of regulations, policies and procedures that determine where and how teachers shall carry out their duties. (1992, p. 4.)

Less disciplinary approaches, where the teacher is trying to make a more democratic classroom, can appear to be chaotic. Administrations in some schools reprimand teachers for a class that seems noisy and disorganized. In one school, the teachers are made to keep their classroom doors open so that the administrator can walk down the hall and observe the classes. The principal never said why we had to keep our doors open, though s(he) assured us that it wasn't to 'check on' us. S(he) then continued to say that our classes should be quiet anyway. The assumption is that your class should never be so noisy that it would disturb other teachers and students in other classes. Teachers at this school do not see this as an issue. This "rule" is not written anywhere, but is one of those controls that teachers
enforce by word of mouth. It is not something that is readily observable by visits to a classroom. With frequent evaluations (monthly report cards in one school where I taught) and more accountability to parents regarding evaluation, a more democratic system is hard to defend and develop.

"X's" attitude reflected official policy of the schools. She was playing by the rules, and, of course, this is most valued by administrators.

I also discovered that despite assurances from the Ministry and professors at the College that streaming did not label individuals, only teaching subjects, the opposite was true. "X" told me about individual students in her "enriched" class, some of whom "excelled at everything", "a few excelled in one or two subject areas" and, "a girl who shouldn't really be in the class but she wanted to be with her boyfriend."

OSIS (Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior) states:

these terms [levels] refer only to courses not to students.

Basic level courses:

should serve the needs of the student who may not participate in post secondary education and provide a good preparation for direct entry into employment.

General level courses:

should be considered as appropriate preparation for employment careers, further education, education in certain programs in the colleges of applied arts and technology and other non-degree granting post-secondary educational institutions.

Advanced level courses:

should... prepare students to entry to university or to certain programs of the colleges of applied arts and technology.

(OSIS, 1984, 4.6 "Levels of Difficulty")
Each of these "levels" determines where students can go and who they can be in the world. Students taking basic level courses can't go to university or college.

One myth about streaming involves the Ministry of Education's (OSIS) distinction between individuals and classes in relation to streaming. The distinction attempts to make streaming sound reasonable, equitable and fair, a matter of choice, by making it seem as if students take only some subjects at different levels. It is my experience that students do become identified by the level at which they take most subjects. "Smart" kids take advanced and enhanced courses (though this category seems absent in the document) and they do take most, or all of their subjects at these levels. It is especially important that they take their academic, university-bound subjects at the appropriate level.

It is interesting that those kids who know they are going to university understand the importance of taking the right level, as do their parents. Those kids who are not university-bound but are taking advanced level courses, seem oblivious and unknowledgeable regarding streaming, and requirements for further education. While this may seem obvious (that is, why should you need to know about something you are not going to do or use?), I maintain that the omission narrows the future learning possibilities and earning capacities of the student. It seems that the program of streaming in schools fulfills its purpose and intention of streaming in life. What appears to be an accommodation of students of differing abilities is just another structure to ensure the privilege of the few. As Curtis, Livingstone and Smaller argue:

Educational discrimination is a systemic political problem ... biases against those from less affluent backgrounds are inherent in the form and content of the public school system. From its origins in the middle of the 19th century, public education in Ontario has worked to ensure that the vast majority of
working class people remain in their class or origin, while recruiting a very small and select minority of them for social mobility .... (1992, p.1-2)

Many of the students who have been classified as smart, enriched, enhanced, special or whatever, have a history in the elementary school of similar treatment. Students are treated in an 'enhanced' or, 'better' way by teachers and friends and the school. The students and parents become familiar with and learn to expect a school system that treats them in a specific way throughout their schooling career. As Connell writes:

In a streamed high school where the academic curriculum is hegemonic, the kids who have best reason to 'expect results' are those in the top streams. These are the kids for whom the academic curriculum is working well and who are being favoured by the schools selection mechanisms. Their purposes are likely to coincide with the teachers, and the result is likely to be a well established hegemony of the staff in upper stream classes. This can happen whether the teachers' technique is pupil-centered or teacher-centered. (1985,p.134)

Streaming benefits those in the "top" stream. Another problem with streaming is that it contradicts the idea of learning for many/most students. Learning should not limit you and ensure that you always stay in the same social place. Streaming does just this. It presumes that knowledge is already predetermined in an individual and that you can only gain enough knowledge for the social category you are in. It is very difficult for a student to defy these streams, since they are so wrapped up in one's self-identity and identification by others. Moreover, it is very difficult for a student to change from a general to an advanced level class, though the opposite change is relatively easy. If students are having difficulty in a subject and/or failing it the teacher may alert the guidance counselor who may in turn
speak to the student about dropping to a more 'manageable' level of study. The student may also request a change in course level. I have rarely heard of a student's request to 'drop down' a level being denied. However, I have rarely heard of a student who wishes to change from a general to an advanced level course. Most students and parents don't even seem aware that it is a possibility. This is not surprising in a system that limits the idea of learning to streams. I think that many teachers, guidance counselors and administrators come to think of students in terms of inherent ability and levels. "Intelligence" then, becomes something that is basically fixed in individuals. It also becomes a sign of worthiness: the more intelligent are more worthy of the best schooling and society has to offer while the not so intelligent are less worthy of a 'good' place in schooling and society.

Another example of the Ministry's privileging the "enhanced" levels is seen in the section of the OSIS document regarding evaluation:

Student achievement in such courses [enhanced] shall be reported at the advanced level so that all students taking an advanced level course, whether it is enriched or not, will receive assessment based on comparable standards. This is particularly important when students submit their results to post-secondary institutions. (OSIS, 1984, 4.6 "Levels of Difficulty")

There is no official difference in evaluation of students in enhanced and advanced programs. However, enhanced programs then have the privilege of smaller classes, more specialized curriculum designed to meet the students' individual interests, teachers who want to teach this elite, prestige from being in the "smart" class and evaluation at the same level of difficulty as the advanced level. That is, students in an enhanced level class are being evaluated by the same standards as the advanced level students. Students at the advanced
level are not given this break and evaluated at the easier, general or basic level of difficulty. They are evaluated with the more difficult standards designed for the advanced level. In a system that bases worthiness on evaluation, this "favouritism" is blatant. There are more benefits and resources for those going into higher academic programs than for those going into 'lower' streams. Curtis, Livingstone and Smaller write about the difference in special-education programs:

In the four years from 1984 to 1988, the number enrolled in gifted programs in Ontario rose by 341% (from 3,369 to 11,488), at a time when the overall secondary population actually decreased by 5%. And as "gifted" classes were skyrocketing, those going into lower-level special education (that is, those labeled "social maladjusted," "learning disabled" etc.) rose as well - by 85% (from 25,901 to 47,921) (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1988). All reports suggest a skewing here on the basis of race, class and ethnicity - in one direction for "gifted" and in the other direction for many others. (1992, p. 94)

I taught an "enhanced" math class during a supply teaching day and asked some of the students about the meaning of being in an "enhanced" class. One student said he had more creative fun. He had been in an advanced Math class the previous year but did not do well because he was too "bored", so he switched to "enhanced" Math, where he would be "challenged". The student continued: "We're not treated better ... [pause] well I guess we are ...[pause] in regular classrooms the teacher comes in, teaches his stuff and that's it ..., but this teacher has fun with us ... it's because of our mentality ...." I have never heard a student in the general or basic level class use the words "bored" and "challenged" to get her or him into a higher class level. In fact, when a student in a basic or general level class uses these words, the effect is quite different often getting them into trouble. There seems to be no
way "up" for these students and this appears to be a built in premise of the schooling system.

The "smart" kids can learn, the "dumb" kids cannot.

Explicit in the philosophy of these programs is the assumption that some kids designated as "gifted" require more "stimulation" and "challenge" to realize their "potential" than do "normal" students. The terms used to describe these students vary: "brighter", "exceptional", "more intelligent", more "creative", etc. To be sure most school officials would be quick to deny that these students are in any way "better" human beings than their classmates. However, such students clearly receive better than average treatment at school. (Curtis, Livingstone and Smaller, 1992, p. 65)

The authors argue that:

there are no provincially prescribed methods to determine who the "gifted" are. Some boards use standardized tests despite evidence/studies that show that these tests are often biased in favour of children from dominant cultures reinforces the concept of "gifted" as being characteristic of the dominant culture. (ibid., p. 66)

And:

...frequent complaints have been raised about allocating resources to them [gifted] at the expense of the regular classrooms. (ibid., p.66)

I'm not sure whom the authors were speaking of when they wrote of "frequent complaints". I usually hear complaints from people who think that the 'gifted' students are being held back by other kids and suffer from a school system that doesn't serve their needs. Resources are also given at the expense of the general level classes, with their high number of students. The general and basic level classes are also suffering because of the recent attack on technical subjects (except computer related courses) in the vocational schools. A colleague in a school that amalgamated the vocational and "regular" high school told me that the principal
informed the staff that the basic level class numbers would have to increase or else they would get huge OAC classes (which no teacher teaching them would want). Vocational subjects are supposed to have a lower student - teacher ratio than the ratio in "regular" subjects. The principals' directive denies the special attention that is supposed to be given to students in a vocational classroom, as well as ignoring one positive (smaller class sizes) aspect of schooling for vocational students. It also pits vocational teachers against "regular" teachers in a numbers game.

Streaming at The Bottom End: Vocational School and Learning to Discipline

I taught at a vocational high school for two years. The subjects I taught were English, Drama, and People in Society. I also taught English with Section 27 students (students under the age of 18 who were in the protected custody of a group home) in a segregated classroom for approximately two months. The subjects at this school were taught at the special basic, basic and general levels. This was my first full time teaching position. I was hired in October after the school year had already started. I knew little of what the differing levels meant. What I learned seemed to come from casual comments made by my colleagues about
the students. These comments, while not exactly flattering, were also mixed with defensive and protective attitudes towards them. I came to the school with the knowledge given by well-wishers and others that this school was one of the worst places you could teach. I was told that it had very BAD, tough kids.

What I faced in a classroom were 15 students of varying abilities and behaviours. The majority of students were white males. Some students had major attendance problems. Some could barely read and or write and would not do any work. Some were major disturbers. Most were labeled with some learning disability. Some were poor; some had physical disabilities; some were passive; some were aggressive; and some were violent; some hid (literally under their coats and hats, some by being silent) and some were protected. Most students seemed not to want to be at school. These students did differ from the kids in a "regular" school, in that all the "troubled and troublesome" students populated every class. Vocational school appeared to me a 'dumping ground' for society's failures. The apathy was, to me, palpable.

Teaching students who are so oppressed doesn't mean that you can start teaching them about their oppression. You knew that these students had a history of similar negative experiences of schooling that directed them here. The damage already done to these students is underestimated. They weren't suddenly going to transform.

I thought that if you were fair, worked to expose bias, were open and provided curriculum of interest to each student, then you would be on your way to a democratic
classroom. I believed that most people can learn in a nurturing environment. In this school, however, I was faced by all of the students with all kinds of problems. No previous schooling, teaching or life experiences had prepared me for the variety of people I would be teaching. Generally, I got along quite well with most of my students in the vocational school. At times, very difficult students could make your classroom a very hateful place. I tried to show them what respect was by respecting them, though to practice respect was often a real struggle. For example, it is difficult to teach the student who is totally resistant, the one who is constantly victimizing another student and today starts to spit on him because he says he wants to give the student AIDS because he is a "geek". Or, you can't get his attention. Or the entire class of boys who refuse to stop playing games and listen, no matter what you are doing, even if you are doing something that would capture their attention, something they could relate to. The classroom dynamic often severely limits what can be done. It can, on the other hand also be the starting point. Some students would totally disrupt everything all the time. I might know why a student behaved the way they did and would not send them to the office or to guidance or out of the room. I also realized that those avenues were often useless, (although at times they did serve as a much needed reprieve for all those involved) because they could not get at the long term, deep seated complex reasons for the student's behaviour. Then the student would return to class, doing the same types of things that got them sent away in the first place. But now they were mad at you and you still had to deal with them.
Being able to deal with students was the first step in the disciplinary chain. If you had problems you were to send the student to the guidance counselor or the administration, depending on the problem. You could also phone a parent. If a teacher came to rely on the administration for help with students, at some point he or she would be seen as not being able to control the class, or to handle the situation. A sign of success was if the teacher didn’t send down referrals to the office. Then she would be seen as either not having problems with students or able to handle these problems herself. If you did have problems, your competence as a teacher would then be questioned by other teachers and administration. The administration tell the staff that we should refer the students to them, and official school rules were written in documents outlining the proper disciplinary procedure for a teacher to follow. Teachers come to realize that the reality is different. They often complain that they get little or no support from administrators, despite contrary rhetoric. I learned about discipline from the experience of teaching: from observing and reacting to colleagues. Theirs’ was not the official talk. Herein lies a difficulty for a new teacher: the contradiction between what is stated officially and represented partly by the administration, what you want to believe, and the daily reality of students and teaching (where there is always an exception to the rule). The novice teacher learns about this part of the hidden curriculum for teachers through work experience and other teachers. What you end up doing often bears little resemblance to the official version, especially in a vocational school. The 'official version' of discipline and curriculum only 'works' for a minority of the students. Some students are able to fit into these versions. It is my experience that students at a vocational school rarely fit into the official prescriptions of schooling prepared for them.
Curriculum standards often seemed like a farce. Many of these students were so low in reading and writing skills. Other students refused (passively or not) to demonstrate their skills. "Doing" work often looked 'messy'. I couldn't help thinking that if another teacher came into my class she wouldn't think we were "doing" anything. In fact, we may have been miles away from the curriculum. I felt that what students had to say about themselves came first, and I was pleased if they even got to that. That could never be predicted. I often felt that the contents of the books on the English course were stupid for most teens. They were geared for their reading level. They were simplistic, moralizing and stereotypical. When I became more experienced and confident, I sometimes scrapped the curriculum and would bring in newspaper articles, do drama and other things I thought would engage the students (these strategies could also be incorporated into the curriculum). I would ask the students what they would like to do and offer alternatives. Sometimes this "worked" and more often I felt that it didn't. So, while I believe that you must provide relevant materials and engage the students, this is not always enough. Critics often argue that students don't do well because they are not challenged. This is part of the mix, but it is much more complicated. Another reason some students may not do well in school are the effects of poverty on them.

While poverty per se is not a cause of failure in school, the "damage inflicted" (Davies, 1997) by poverty can be. I have worked with many poor, neglected and abused kids. This is not to say that all the poor are abused, nor are all abused people poor. However there did seem to be an abundance of poor kids who were abused at this school. Davies explains:

...there are social workers and doctors and local politicians who know very well that among some of the very poor white communities, there is something
like and epidemic of child abuse - physical, emotional and sexual. But, with a few brave exceptions, they are most reluctant to admit it, for fear of giving the poor a bad image. It is the same story with the truth about levels of crime committed by poor people, or about levels of alcohol addiction or domestic violence or the neglect of children. Well - meaning defenders of the poor mask the truth about what is happening to them, insist on being positive about their achievements and construct images of their courage in the face of austerity. (1997, p.235)

Some students can barely function with others in a classroom, while others appear to be doing so because they are not disruptive. Students should have a safe environment to learn. That is probably one of the most difficult things to achieve. For example, it might take a whole semester to get students to ever listen to one another. I remember one class in particular. Every time someone would try to say something, other students would constantly "put them down". This made many students not want to say anything. The bantering often took the form of escalating joking. It was cruel and silencing and insured that nothing else went on. It was constant "dissing". In one class, the "guys" would punch each other in the arm. Inevitably, one student would fall on the floor (they were sitting with chairs balanced on two feet, while their own two feet were on the table in front of them) which would cause and uproar. They never seemed to tire of this. One day this "punching" continued while we were waiting for the dismissal bell, only this time, one of the "guys" punched me by mistake! Or there was the day they were stuffing little bits of paper into the film projector (unbeknownst to me, of course) until I could smell something burning. Efforts at discussion and role-playing were often futile.

The lack of self-esteem (especially in this environment where these students had a history of failure) experienced by many of these students manifested itself in abuse,
intolerance and disrespect of others. One of my students, "C", used constant humor to avoid
doing school work and to prevent anyone else from doing anything. He seemed "high
spirited". "C" once told me about being tied to a chair and whipped as a child and told me
that he lived on the street in Toronto off and on. When I showed concern, he laughed at me
dismissively. He became increasingly distressing throughout the term, yelling obscenities at
everyone throughout a class. I tried to speak to him but he just joked about my concern.
My teacher, mentor friend and guidance counselor suggested that I give "C" chances and
then report him to the office. "C" told the guidance counselor that he did whatever he
wanted because I let him do it. So I followed all the steps and "C"s" behaviour changed for
a week. Actually he wouldn't speak to me. He became the same disruptive person after
that. "C" and I had been friends in the previous year but by this time (upon reflection) he
seemed to be totally out of control. At the time I saw his behaviours more as a personal
classroom problem. I met "C" recently. He said he had been in and out of jail twice for
drink-related charges and he was trying to get his life back on track. He said he didn't know
how we teachers had put up with the likes of him. He also spoke of the difficulties he had
experienced and since he was a very young person with a drinking problem. "C" was just
one of several students in a class with "problems".

One time in the same school, one of the students' threatened to shove her reading
book down another girl's throat if she did not "shut the f... up". I asked her if she needed to
take a walk around the school. She did. One student in the Section 27 class tried to turn the
teachers' desk over on me because I asked him if he had a pencil. One student pretended to
read the paper, though he couldn't read. He would never let me help him, because he
couldn't admit (even privately) that he had a problem. One student wore a hood and would keep his face covered and would never speak, while another could barely respond to me other than to reply how he was. They all knew though if you were being fair to them or not. They spent a lot of time complaining about the injustices they experienced in some classes.

There was the student who got kicked out of the house because he wasn't doing well in English. The father couldn't understand that his son was failing. I told him that his son would not do any of the written or oral work. The father thought that as when he went to school there were ways of making the son do it. He spoke about beatings and such. He thought I should make his son do his work. The son could barely write a sentence and so would not write. He would not sit down, he would not listen, he would not say what he thought. He walked around pushing books off his classmates' tables, laughing and making fun. I talked to him a lot. He seemed to think I was worrying for nothing. What could I/we do? Was there any topic he was interested in? Nothing came of our chats. Sending him to guidance and the office also had no positive effect. The father was very angry about his son and decided to punish him. I didn't know about this. The son was out of school for a week and a half. When I asked him where he had been, he responded, "You should know, you got me kicked out". I had no idea. Since then, I have been cautious about what I say to parents.

On Parents' Night, out of 40-50 students, I might have 3 parents show up. Often these were the parents of the students who were doing well. I cannot help thinking that for some of these parents, schooling didn't hold out the carrot of success.

For each of these kids I have described there were many others in the class manifesting some form of resistance to classroom learning. Truancy was a major problem
for a minority of students. Parents were called and administration dealt with the students. All this was to no avail (as far as I could see) to the chronically absent high-school student. It was very difficult to get students to improve their reading, writing and speaking skills. Their oral skills were generally the strongest so I tried to capitalize on these. Many of the students were very social and although they may not have liked school (especially the academic subjects) they attended because their friends were there.

An example of the ambiguous nature of power that the individual teacher had in relation to the system is in their relationships with administrators. Here I provide an instance of that relationship that occurred during my teaching at the vocational school. I learned by being told by my teacher/mentor friend that you had to document every incident with "problem" students. This seemed excessive and paranoid since these students all seemed to be problems when set against the regular school kids and standards. Also, I felt that with all this documentation, I would purposefully be putting myself in an adversarial position with students. I was having difficulty with one student, "A". He started school about one month late because he "didn't feel like coming". This late start was a problem as he seemed out of sorts with the class dynamic. He was constantly trying to assert his presence as an authoritarian. He would swear at the girls in the class for no apparent reason. If I asked him what was wrong or urge him to be quiet, this would provoke a heightened round of verbal abuse. He was nasty and would pick on and intimidate kids. He made it quite plain that he would not talk to me ever and that he was in control. I spoke to the parent, the guidance counselor and the vice principal several times. After exhausting several avenues for dealing with the student, the vice-principal and guidance counselor set
up a meeting between the student, the principal, guidance counselor, parent and teachers of the student. My teacher/mentor friend had advised me all along to document what was going on with this student. Surely my case was obvious, and wasn't this all a bit paranoid? I protested. After all, I was a kind and patient teacher who was not like some of those mean teachers (so I thought) whom students had a "real" complaint against. This student was notorious for these types of behaviours, after all. My patient, kind friend explained that the administration, while at one point seeming to support you, would change in another meeting. "Do not trust them, they don't care about you". I still could not believe this but I documented everything. I went into our meeting. As soon as the parent raised objections to what was being said by the vice-principal and principal the vice-principal started to act as if I was the one who had manufactured the student's behaviours. All of a sudden I was being blamed. Another teacher spoke of the student's behaviour and the multitude of chances he had been given over the years. Then the principal spoke of this. The blame was being shifted from me almost imperceptibly. I said very little during this exchange. The parent started to tell her son that he had been behaving like this for a long time and he must finally accept responsibility. I also felt that had this parent not been a single working class mom with a history of negative relations in the school (i.e., she had middle class power and voice and knew how to assert this) the principal would have decided in her favour - regardless of what I had done or not done. This 18 year old boy began to cry. I felt very bad that I had taken this so far and began to question myself. You are supported as long as it is easy to be supportive, when there is nothing to lose. As soon as a student, parent or trustee questions the teacher, the administration will go with the safest bet. They don't want to entertain the
threat of publicity and thus there isn't a trial for the teacher. There is no defense. It is easier for them to agree with whoever complains. Students, parents and teachers become victims of this power play. So, in upholding the administration's rules, regulations and discipline you can get into trouble. You can get in trouble without even being aware of it. You're damned if you do and you're damned if you don't.

By my second year of teaching at this school, it was easier in the sense that the kids knew me, I had a reputation and they were okay with me so we didn't have to go through these initiation rituals. They often told other, newer students to leave me alone because I was okay". Although I portray these students as having difficulty learning, I did like being with them and we did have fun.

I was declared "excess" at this school in June, due to declining enrollment. I was placed by a principals' committee and the OSSTF at another school. The next year would see the amalgamation of this vocational school and the high school next door. I thought students would welcome this opportunity to be affiliated with the other school. I reasoned that the connection to the "academic" school would result in a better image for the students at the vocational school who often referred to their school as the "no knowledge college". I spoke to the students in a few of my classes about this. Although they knew they were negatively labeled they still thought that this was the best place for them. They felt they got "special" help here. And yet their regular daily remarks about teachers, the curriculum and other aspects of their schooling contradicts that they were even getting an okay education. I discovered that they were very defensive about "their" school. They didn't want to be affiliated with the other school. They thought that they would not receive attention and
would not get special help. This was interesting because I often felt they were not getting much help at all here. Many of these students would have experienced a lack of success in elementary schooling, which is why they would be sent to a vocational school. In the destreamed elementary classes these students would have been at the bottom of the class. When they came to high-school at least some of them felt that being in a vocational school meant they were getting special treatment. They might even be at the top of the class in a vocational school which was probably an improvement from being always at the bottom of the class in elementary. Or, students felt comfortable with students who they perceived as of similar ability to themselves. They felt they were not the "worry" in the class. The students were afraid of being put in a class with what they called "regular" kids. They were afraid that they would appear stupid, for they had internalized the labels given to them long before they reached high-school. This fear is rooted in their experiences in elementary school. Some of the students talked tough about things that they were going to do if anyone (from the other school) said anything to them. This tough facade was something cultivated by these students as a defense mechanism and as a way of understanding, surviving and making sense of their lives. This rough and tough attitude permeated their schooling lives as a counterpoint to their told, reinforced and internalized "lack of ability". So while many of the students appeared confident, rude, honest, direct, "behavioural problems", "in your face", and able to stick up for themselves, in fact these were well practiced coping strategies. Once I got to know the students, I came to understand just how vulnerable they really were.

The teachers at this school were also defensive about where and what and whom they taught. They too were labeled. With the imminent amalgamation of the two schools, many
teachers seemed afraid that they would have to teach advanced level courses. I heard teachers saying, "We can teach their [advanced level] kids, but can they [advanced level teachers] teach our kids"? Some of these teachers didn't have the confidence to teach advanced level courses, because they didn't have a teaching degree and they were scared, they also seemed afraid of their colleagues' imputed intelligence. Some did not want to change because they had been doing the same thing the same way for 15 to 18 years. Some seemed afraid of the more challenging curriculum at the other school. Some had it fairly "cushy" and did not want any direction from anyone else, especially since they had been teaching so long. Some teachers were not thrilled with the idea of the stricter surveillance and accountability of teachers in the "regular" school. The division between mental and manual labour was very apparent here, with most of my colleagues affiliating themselves with the latter. They associated the academic school teachers with the former. This was a division that both sets of teachers seemed to uphold. A few teachers would "go with the flow" and seemed pleased with the amalgamation.

As a result of my experiences I believe that streaming, whether it be vocational schooling, or in a "regular" schooling is undesirable and contrary to the idea of learning. All students should be integrated into one school. Of course our ideas about schooling would have to change to be so inclusive. The following section outlines my experience of grade nine "destreamed" classes. This "partial" destreaming may have contributed to the present backlash against destreaming.
1990 - 1991 NDP Government in Ontario decided to destream grade 9 courses. The process of "getting everyone on board" was less uniform than might be supposed. Teachers may be told about the new way to do things through several venues. We may hear about it through the monthly staff meeting or department meetings, and through teaching or union bulletins. Of course the media is our first inclination of change.

A teacher who has not taught grade 9 in a semester or year then s/he may not know too much about streaming in the classroom. I write here, in 1996, about some of the things I have observed about the grade 9 destreaming program. At different times in the past four years I have taught grade 9 English and Drama. Drama is different from other subjects regarding streaming since it is in practice destreamed.

In many of the schools where I have taught, Drama was offered until grade 12 at the "general" level of study. Then there is an "advanced" OAC course, that is supposed to be academically more difficult, with an emphasis on more writing than the previous drama courses. Students in grade 12 "general" level Drama may take the OAC course without an advanced level prerequisite. This is not consistent with the policies of taking the same level subject throughout high-school for the other courses. The head of department at one of the schools that I taught in argued with the principal for getting the level of Drama courses changed from the "general" level to the "advanced" level. This, he reasoned, would lend
legitimacy to the Drama program (which was often seen as a "bird course"), as well as providing a more logical continuity from grades 12 to OAC. He also fought to get a Grade 9 Drama program into the school. Most schools have Drama starting in grade 10. Some drama teachers say the students are not mature enough in grade 9. It has been my experience that the grade 9 students are the most enthusiastic and interested students of all the grades. The head of the Drama department reminded me that we always taught drama as a destreamed course. I had forgotten that, and had taken for granted this way of seeing classes and teaching. The idea of streaming is very much a part of many teachers' consciousness. It's taken for granted status makes it seem as natural. It is not just people who are not pro-kids who come to see streaming in this natural way, as I try to explain in the following anecdote.

A teacher, "B", of the Developmentally Challenged (D.C.) class at a school I was teaching approached me to tell me that he was putting one of "his" students in my grade 9 class. I told him that was fine. "B" explained all about this girl. I admit I didn't know much about the program at the school. He seemed reluctant to "integrate" this girl because he had never integrated any of his students into classes in the school. He assured me that she looked "normal". The student, "C", would also be integrated into an Art class. "B" seemed unsure of this move and appeared to be preparing me for the "worst". I forgot most of what he told me as it was the beginning of the year and there was a lot to remember. I tried to make it so "C" was not pointed out as special (read: derogatory). I never told other students that she was from the D.C. class. "C" had some things in common with other students, in other ways she was different. But this could be said of every student. This is what I wanted "B" to
understand. "B" kept treating "C" as if she was special and worse than other students. He would come to visit me and when I said that "C" was doing fine he acted in a disbelieving way, as if I was being naive, or lowering my standards just to accommodate "C". I found it difficult to communicate with him at the time as I was on edge and thought he was disapproving. Eventually, I would come to talk to my head of department about what was becoming an issue. Some of the things that stick out in my mind about "C" are how some of her "behaviours" became identified and treated by "B" as if she was being "bad". I did not see it this way. On one occasion a very defiant "C" came to me saying in no uncertain terms that she was not putting some stupid costume on for the play her group was doing. So I told her that this was okay and that people put on costumes because it can be fun and it helps them get into role. But, if it makes you feel stupid than you shouldn't do it. I told her a few times that it was no big deal. She seemed surprised by my answer, her tone suggesting that she was getting ready for an argument (this was "C's" method of communicating with me for a while). When I told "B" this he seemed to interpret the situation to be "C" not doing what she was supposed to, even though I explained that I thought it was about self-esteem and that forcing her would not be helpful. I also told "B" that this was not uncommon. Many kids refused (this refusal took me a while in my career to learn how to deal with, i.e., what happens when everyone refuses? - as would sometimes happen) to do things (especially in Drama) and usually there would be a reason, though it was not always immediately available. Yes, sometimes, especially when tired, I felt like refusals to participate were ruining my plans and I didn't always handle situations in the best way. In my responses to the kids I would try to keep in mind that there were reasons that they chose to do or not do something,
that were often not directly related to me. I tried to give them time. Sometimes I tried to persuade them.

Once "B" walked into the middle of my class to get "C". She told him to "fuck - off" and he suspended her. I knew she was embarrassed that he entered the class because his presence announced that she was associated with him and he was vaguely known as the teacher of the "dumb kids" and so she, too, must be "dumb". This was the last person she wanted to be identified with. "B" didn't see her defiance in this way. "C" wanted to fit in; to be seen as "normal" by her classmates. I thought she was doing well. It seemed the more she was treated like one of the others by the other students and myself, the more willing she became to participate. A common feeling for most of us! She would never join in the games we played at the beginning of each class, and I figured it was because these could be intimidating, even though they were designed to get people to know each other. There was one game that "C" would join in, however, and she excelled at it. It was a game involving concentration and memory. As a teacher you have to be careful with "allowing" certain kids not to participate, as this can backfire. Other students, looking for a scapegoat or thinking the teacher unfair will question the student and the teacher. So, students who do not want to be "singled out", may inadvertently be the object of other students' attentions. Some students were questioning me about "C" in front of her. "Why doesn't she have to play?" They thought I was being unfair. I had to explain and give examples of how we all have things we are not comfortable doing and that "forcing" someone might not be in their best interest. And, I explained how I tried to be sensitive to all of their ways.
"B" wanted his assistant to come in and observe "C" in my class because she wasn't doing much in her other classes. The assistant was just to drop in. I was not very comfortable with this because I felt that when the assistant saw "C" she might interpret her as "doing nothing". Sometimes "C" did sit back, as other students did. A person not familiar with a Drama classroom may come in and observe the students to "be doing nothing". At times I also perceived the students to be "doing nothing". But, Drama is a process that can't necessarily be observed. Yes, the students do discuss their lives at the same time, but that is part of a process of working with others. I would walk around and "guide" them and "help" when needed. The assistant never came in because "C" was apparently cursing at her and not getting along. "B" also told me that "C" was "strongly against" having the assistant observe her. "C" would often tell me that "they" treated her like a baby. Again "B" spoke to me about "C". I think he couldn't understand why "C" was doing well in my class because she wasn't doing well in another class. I said that "C" was like other kids. He said that "C" was sexually promiscuous. I asked what he meant by this. "B" explained that she would "offer" herself to any guy and had no sense of responsibility - she was like a little kid. It may well have been that she was less responsible than some of her peers, but I couldn't see how my willingness to teach her alongside other kids should be affected. "B" treated my willingness to have "C" in my class (and I guess what seemed like my casual attitude to his concerns) as my lack of knowledge, and he kept trying to inform me about how abnormal "C" was. "B" only spoke to me one more time that semester. He was concerned that I was passing "C", and that she would get and "advanced level" credit. He seemed to think that if I wanted to pass her she should get only one half credit, or she should get the credit at a
general or basic level. He thought that I was compromising my standards and that it would look bad for other kids if "C" got the credit. Again, I was angry, but unable to respond very much. I had never thought that she should get less of a credit. My marks showed that she did the work and was passing. I told my head of department about this dilemma. We spoke about how "outsiders" often didn't understand Drama. He also had observed this girl himself and saw that she was participating, often more than many other kids did. He agreed that it wasn't fair and said he would speak to "B" about this. The "head" explained to "C" about my concerns, and the way of Drama in general. "C" then agreed that the mark could be left.

I was fortunate that my head of department had a similar ideology about the Drama program and students. Many of the Drama teachers I have met have a more understanding approach to students. This may be because Drama is destreamed. At the end of the year, in his farewell speech, "B" mentioned that he had learned from me about integrating the "D.C." students into the classroom. I wished that I had been able to set aside my own fear to communicate with him more. Although I never thought about it much, now I see that I have often found myself in the role of student advocate (I never thought of this as separate from my teacher role). I have often felt powerless and defeated when someone was threatening others (and myself/my belief systems). I will state my position, but feel defensive and attacked and often cannot engage in dialogue. Now, I can see the systemic roots of this experience.

Michael Apple writes about how the "labels" that have been used by the "helping" professions can have a less than helpful effect:

...many of the ameliorative reforms school people propose in schools, and the
assumptions behind them, have the same effect—ultimately harming rather than helping, clouding over basic issues and value conflicts rather than contributing to our ability to face them honestly. 

In the process of using clinical, psychological, and therapeutic perspectives and labels in schools... as a mechanism by which schools engage in anonymizing and sorting our individuals into preordained social, economic, and educational slots. (Apple, p. 175)

And he continues:

The labeling process, thus tends to function as a form of social control, a 'worthy' successor to a long line of mechanisms in schools that sought to homogenize social reality, to eliminate disparate perceptions, and to use supposedly therapeutic means to create moral, valuative, and intellectual consensus. The fact that this process can be deadening, that it results in the elimination of diversity, that it ignores the importance of conflict and surprise in human interaction is too often lost in the background in our rush to 'help.'... by the very fact that they are shared assumptions, the product of specific groups of people, and are commonly accepted by most educators (if not most people in general), they only become problematic when an individual violates them or else when a previously routine situation becomes significantly altered. (Apple, p. 175)

Destreaming in English meant, to begin with, that there was a new course-outline to teach and learn. Often, as teachers who are switched from one subject area to another, and one grade level to another, you often are struggling just to keep up. What we are going to teach is only known to us just as we start to teach the course. New courses can be the source of much anxiety. Often, there is not much practical help from other teachers, as they are burdened down with their own work loads. Even if other teachers are helpful, doing a new course with new evaluation procedures is often a process of trial and error. So,
some teachers complain about the extra work destreaming means as well as being anxious and unsure of exactly what it is that we are supposed to be doing. Teachers get paralysed by all the paperwork we get telling us "how to do it". What are meant to be guidelines and reasons for doing things, become interpreted and used as "the canon". Generally, it seems that teachers like to obey.

When I taught my first destreamed grade 9 English in February of 1994 I treated it as if it was partially a new course. I had taught the grade 9 course only once at this school, a year or two previously and I could hardly remember it. I found that I had to read some new things, but some of the texts were the same.

My first impression of the grade 9 class was that there were only 15 students. I have never cared what level I was teaching, or whether they were "mixed", if only I had a small class. So all I could think of was that I had this small class and that I could really do something with them. We were a very caring class, though we also had to work at it. A part of caring was helping each other and working with other students, being tolerant of each other. Finding out the students' learning habits takes a while. I am reluctant to test students immediately or look at their past records, as we are encouraged to do. I can't remember the students' names for a few weeks anyway, so I would never be able to attach a face to a file. I don't want to start judging the students because this often becomes a self fulfilling prophecy. Although I came to see that the students were at different places in terms of English, this is also the case in streamed classes. I couldn't really see the difference. I can remember feeling badly about a month after the course began. It was Parents Night and one student's mother came in with him. She wanted to know how her son was doing. I said I thought he
was doing well. She asked to see his marks and I showed her. Many marks were quite low and some assignments were not done. Mrs. X seemed puzzled at why I thought her son was doing well, though according to his marks he was borderline in terms of passing. I told her that her son was very hard working but didn't always finish, but that he could hand his assignments in later. Mrs. X didn't seem convinced that her son was working very hard and began lecturing him on how he must try harder and how stiff competition was for university and jobs. She was also concerned about his attitude, which I assured her was "just great". I wondered whether she realized that what he did do was great for where he was at. He worked really hard and always asked for help when he needed it. I had observed him to be reading "The Adam's Family" book. This is a book for people who have been reading for a few years, maybe grade three, and the project that this student excitedly described to me and painstakingly worked on for hours at home and a week in class was a big box painted black, with Styrofoam cups as turrets and a drawstring bridge; the Adam's Family castle. He met my criterion of illustrating in some way the book they read and so he did well. I was conscious that some of my colleagues would be appalled that I "let" him read this book to begin with. Even though they have time set aside in class for independent reading many teachers restrict the students' reading to what they consider to be worthy literature. The independent reading time is supposed to be for the students to choose their own reading material. I take this seriously. Limiting them is not choice. Teachers may control the students' reading in many ways. This includes telling students what they can read, approving their books, to giving out a limited list to choose from. Some people would not think that this individual should be in this class and be achieving the same grade as the other
students. This particular student was labeled a slow learner and I did feel anxious that I may not have helped him as much as I could have. I often feel that in any classroom. I didn't focus much on him individually nor did I necessarily think about him being "slow". I expected the students to help each other. I would circulate and ask them if they were okay and I would be available for help, but I did not like to harass, or force them to come to me for help. I believe that they could come to me whenever they wanted. How the teacher is with each student is watched by all the other students. The students take cues from you. This student was really a part of this class because he wasn't differenced by the other students or myself because of his grades in English. He was not identified by his "ability" in English.

Special Learning Disabled(S.L.D.) teachers that were assigned to each student often gave the teachers of those students a page of suggestions and recommendations, strengths and weakness of the student. Although as teachers we are supposed to modify our program to meet the needs of the students, when we do this we are often perceived as lowering our standards. When I have questioned some of the guidance, ESL and SLD teachers about an individual student, they have told me not to lower my standards. (I never felt that I thought in terms of standards, I just tried to get each person to do something.) This seems very contradictory to their suggested strategies. The students don't understand, nor do the parents, that their kid is progressing fine, even though they are not getting an "A", or in the case of other grade levels, may be failing. You are supposed to individualise a program for a student with certain learning disabilities. Sometimes it was perceived by students and other teachers that you were "too easy" if some weaker academic students "passed". Though
if several students "failed" the teachers would be questioned. The administration (and others) wanted it both ways at the same time.

Despite all this we had fun in that grade 9 destreamed class: we ate, we chatted about what was bothering us about events that had happened that day and in our lives, and we got through the course. It wasn't that I was naive in the sense of trying to wipe out the differences between us, but I tried not to focus on them in a way that would bring derogation on the individual. I did not want to limit the students' possibilities, in what they could do and how they could imagine themselves. The students listened, supported and helped each other. Some knew others from grade 8 and some didn't know anyone in the class. I believe because they were listened to they listened to others. I do not mean to give the impression that they were perfect and that they all were communicative and loving each other. We argued and negotiated and some times they would "work" and at times they didn't want to.

I remember one girl who was a year older than the others. She had failed grade 9 English and had the reputation of being tough. The students seemed to defer to her. One day we were talking about our anger and she said that she had assaulted a teacher - and we talked about that as little as she could. Another day this girl started screaming at the very gentle student I wrote about above because they were working on a project together and he forgot his part at home and it was due that day. This girl was angrier than seemed warranted and the other students' eyes got very big and he just froze. He couldn't even respond to her. She looked ready to strike him. The whole class seemed paralysed, as did I - momentarily. They protected one and respected the other one, seemingly out of fear. I told the girl that it was okay that they could submit their project the following day without a
penalty. She started to come out of her focused, almost trance-like, anger. I laughed and said, "I don't think you could see how you scared him, he was shaking and shocked." And she hadn't. This wasn't her intention, as she was usually rather protective of him in an understated kind of way, if someone else threatened him. She apologized to him and we continued. This was just one example that could have taken place in any class.

In 1993 I attended an English department meeting. One of the teachers presented her plan for getting the 'really bright kids' of English and Math into their own separate class. As she explained it, these kids were "drowning" in the "regular classes". This teacher was very concerned with their plight. The eight teachers in the room nodded their agreement. What did we think? Some spoke of the appalling behaviour of many students who prevent other students from learning. I noted that similar concerns, energy and resources were never extended to the "general" level students, for whom these arguments could be made. If we were talking numerical concerns, something budgets could justify, why weren't we looking at the general level courses, where there were a very large number of students? Why weren't these classes made smaller and given the individual attention that the special class they were talking about would be given? Often, general and advanced classes were large, twenty-seven to thirty students, while enhanced classes were maybe one third smaller, with ten to fifteen students. I have heard the teachers explain that they could not find enough kids for their gifted classes in their schools. This was a small number, "the Cream" after all, that they were talking of making special classes for. I said that the general level courses were shit, they had not been revamped in years and the books were garbage. I reasoned that we might try to do something for this growing population in our school.
instead of focusing on the enhanced, who always seemed to be the focus. Of course, if the enhanced course was established, then the numbers of students in other classes would increase substantially. I asked: "Why are these special programs always for the "smartest" kids? Why are teachers eager to teach these classes which are protected as if they are little prizes, only certain teachers get to teach them?" No one answered me, though the assistant head of the department told me I could revamp the general level courses. "All the courses, by myself", I asked? A rather tall order for a teacher (in June) who had never taught a full semester of English in that school.

Though there is a general acknowledgment that general level classes are large and we have the same old books, there never seems to be the same concern. The unspoken (and sometimes spoken) feeling I often get, is that the "advanced level" kids deserve better because they are willing to learn, whereas the "general level" kids are unwilling to learn so it doesn't really matter what you give them. Why spend time on them?

The result of the English meeting was that the teacher proceeded with her plans for the "smart" Math and English students. I mistook our presentation by the teacher in the English meeting as a discussion before the implementation. It was only a formality. A few weeks later I was presented with the reality of this meeting. A note was distributed to all teachers of grade 9 students asking us to recommend whether the students in our classes should go into a general or enhanced level program for grade 10. I returned this note, blank, to the teachers who issued it. A little while later some students came up to me to thank me for putting them in the "smart" [enhanced] class. It appears that the guidance teacher and other teachers had looked at the students' marks and placed them there, despite. At the end
of this school year a guidance person sent a memo around to all teachers of grade 9 asking us to recommend the students for a level for the following year. I signed all of "my" students up for the "advanced" level courses in grade 10, though I found out the following year that the guidance counselors had placed them in the level they saw "fit".

One concern that teachers have with the smaller destreamed grade nine classes is that the other classes will be larger. So those who don't teach grade nine aren't necessarily committed to the smaller classes, though as teachers they usually have no say about class size, anyway.

Comments I hear about destreaming from my colleagues are the same comments I hear from those who teach the "general" level English classes. Teachers often think that the "less smart kids" shouldn't be in their class. There seems to be this idea that they are holding the other kids back. Part of it, I feel, is the guilt that we feel as teachers if we can't see that we are helping the student. We would like them to become a part of someone else's problem. It seems that many teachers think that certain students are "unteachable" (i.e., dangerous to other students, disruptive, violent, and so on) and shouldn't be in a class with "regular" kids. And, students who aren't as successful in school often are disruptive. I think that the effect that the disruptive students' have on the class and teacher is often glossed over by the literature that is proposing more democratic classrooms. The theory is, if a teacher is democratic and has a democratic curriculum to deliver, then a democratic classroom will be the result. It is at this point that the theories are contradictory to practice. That is, they fail to take into account the systemic relations of power and knowledge. "Teachers become the kind of people they are, partly because they participate year in and year out in a school
system of a particular kind." (Connell, 1985, p. 119) Schooling as an institution is hierarchical and undemocratic. Because they fail to acknowledge the existence and power of the institution many democratic theories are seen by teachers as utopian at best. The onus then falls on the individual teacher to 'make it all happen'. An extremely difficult and often impossible situation to be sure. What 'happens' is, as teachers we blame ourselves, our colleagues and our students for 'our' failure to make our classrooms look the way they do in the progressive literature. This does not make the struggle for a more socially just education system less worth engaging. However it does acknowledge the limitations of such a struggle. It is necessary to frame it thus in order to survive. I have had some very rough times. Connell captures the essence of teaching when he discusses teachers emotional involvement. He writes of a particular teacher:

She is inside these relationships as a teacher. In a real sense these emotional relationships are her work, and managing them is a large part of her labour process. (Connell, 1985, p. 117)

The issue of blame is often brought up. It must be the parents' fault or the teachers who taught the student before. Some teachers seem to think destreaming is extra work. I can't really agree with that, because as I have written above, I think all classes have students at different levels. But I think if you start with the attitude that destreaming is not right then you are going to consider those kids at the lower end a burden or an excess. It seems also that many teachers like to teach kids who are academically "smart". They feel that it is easier, more rewarding, and I think, a reflection of their own teaching and self-worth. For servicing the academically more able is what the school system is best at doing - what it
seems designed to do. Connell (1985, p. 92) questions where the pro-streaming,
"...conceptual categories of ability and pace, this unit of teaching, and this conception of
learning actually come from..." His response is:

...that they arise from particular educational practices; specifically that they are generated by, or at least strongly shaped by, the competitive academic curriculum. To the extent that the school defines its offer of teaching in terms of this curriculum, 'mixed ability' becomes a problem and streaming a resolution of it. The connections are so close that streaming can virtually be regarded as the institutionalised form of the competitive academic curriculum. It is very difficult to run that sort of curriculum without a streamed school. (Connell, 1985, p. 92)

Analysis of the 1994 Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation Destreaming Survey

I use the 1994 Ontario Secondary Schools Teachers Federation (OSSTF) Destreaming Survey to illustrate how limited and experimental this single attempt at destreaming was. The results of this survey were presented in the OSSTF CRITICAL ISSUES SERIES: Monograph #6. It shows that the majority of the 2900 teachers who taught the grade 9
destreamed classes in 1993-1994 were against the destreaming. Fifty-seven per cent "strongly disagree" that the "Grade 9 program in my subject areas was beneficial".

Eighty-four per cent "strongly disagree", that "Destreaming allowed me to give more individual attention to students." Sixty-one per cent strongly disagree that "I was able to keep the stronger students challenged." Fifty-two percent "strongly disagree" that "Destreaming increases self esteem in students". Fifty-two percent "strongly disagree " that "I am satisfied with the student evaluation procedure. Fifty-two percent "strongly disagree" that "I am satisfied with the student promotion procedure for grade 10."

These results, I argue, are not surprising. It may be the case, however, that those who are for streaming are just more vocal in their opposition to destreaming than advocates of it. In my view, the survey was a set up designed to elicit the pro-streaming responses supported by some teachers and OSSTF. Each of the questions begs one answer. It is a very superficial document that doesn't get to the crux of the matter.

My interpretation of destreaming, using this document, is in conflict with the majority of respondents, especially in the area where the majority "strongly disagreed". I found that the grade 9 program in my subject was beneficial, though only 20 percent of respondents agreed with me and 23 percent were unsure.

Destreaming, in a sense, allowed me to give more individual attention to students, because my class was smaller. And there was a commitment in the school where I taught. All programs had smaller grade 9 destreamed classes, since this program was in its infancy. The OSSTF survey, however, flags quotes taken from the survey; all of which are against destreaming. Under "Typical Teacher Responses", "Numbers have increased unbelievably."
It is impossible to give individual attention to students in an adequate manner if there are 32-36 students in the class." This increase in numbers, while a major deterrent to effective destreaming, was not my experience at this time. I don't understand what the connection is between a rise in class numbers and destreaming in this survey. We were warned, however, that numbers could go up in the future this is in blatant disregard on the policy makers' part to any serious and effective implementation of destreaming. A smaller class does allow you to get to people to see if they need help. In my class we could all give each other attention, it was easier to listen, easier to talk and easier to have a class discussion.

It is interesting to note that in response to several of the questions, just as many respondents are "unsure" as are those who agree that the destreaming was generally a "good thing". Eight percent thought that students did receive more individual attention and 8 percent were unsure if the students did. Eighty-four percent didn't think destreaming allowed them to give more individual attention to students. Twenty one percent thought they were able to keep the stronger students challenged, while 18 percent were unsure and the majority were unable. I'm not really sure what this means. One quote of the monograph said, "Weaker students are feeling overwhelmed with the workload and stronger students do not feel challenged." Though I have often heard this as a defense for streaming I am inclined to believe it is an elitist statement. For the next question on whether destreaming increases self esteem in students, only 14 percent agreed, while 34 percent were unsure. I would say in the long run destreaming would increase self-esteem. That so many were unsure seems to be because the effects of one year are not readily observable. Also, I question how truly destreamed a class can be when the curriculum and the schools are still
academically competitive. Furthermore, students come out of a streamed system (even though our elementary schools are not officially designated as streamed) and the educational system as a whole is streamed as is the consciousness of the teachers. And, of course, society is "streamed", so it would be naive to expect that one year's pilot program could wipe out the injustices of the schooling system and to judge it as "working", "beneficial", or "producing" self-esteem in the grade nine students. How can destreaming work when most of the teachers have not "bought into it"? In my grade nine class we did work at improving each other and our own self-esteem. It "worked" because the class was small enough, because the dynamic of individuals happened to work and because we worked at it! This, though, is not a feature that is or should be exclusive to "destreamed" classes. I also feel that grade nines are particularly open to learning. Some of them are excited, and eager.

Sixty-six percent of respondents to the OSSTF survey said that destreaming increases student frustration, 23 percent were unsure, while 11 percent strongly disagreed. I hear this comment coming from my colleagues from time to time and it is used in conversations to justify streaming. Again, I find this may be in part an elitist view of what schooling is or could be. For me this question is tied to the issue of standards. I also hear the same people saying that we cannot lower "our" standards! However, student frustration could also be a result of the lack of commitment to streaming by the schooling system at large. With the change from the provincial NDP government to the Conservatives streaming has been reinstated for grade 9 students and the categories renamed.
An example of the confusion for teachers regards the contradictory nature of teaching the hegemonic academic competitive curriculum while simultaneously being asked to de-stream. It seemed, all the jargon aside, that we were still teaching to a standard. One well-meaning teacher I know was concerned when his student was passing even though the student was very weak in the English language. The student was passing because the teacher "allowed" the student to do the work over and over again. The teacher thought he was doing a good thing but was also worried about his reputation to the teacher that would have this student in English for the following year. The teacher also felt he was doing most of the students' work for her when he corrected it. Where do we draw the line on who to help and how often. There also seems to be a common assumption among teachers that there is a shared standard. Though everyone's standards seem their own we do have evaluation guidelines that teachers are expected to follow and tie in with the idea of the standard. The standard is never regarded as the social construct it is and teachers are in awe of "It" and fearful of "It" and also use it to justify their practices in teaching.

Returning to the OSSTF survey, while 24 percent of respondents agreed and 24 percent were unsure if they were satisfied with the student evaluation procedure, the majority were dissatisfied with it. Again I'm not sure whether the teachers disagree because the more and diverse opportunities for evaluation - hence more fair, made the "weaker" students more successful (which might be interpreted as a lowering of standards) or whether the teacher respondents thought that there was just too much evaluation. One quote in this monograph says, "I just about drowned in marking." There was a lot of marking because the courses were new and because of accountability. More and different forms of evaluation are pushed
on teachers and defended as more fair to the student. Teachers are told that the public wants more evaluation as a sign of the former's accountability. Evaluations becomes a panacea for all types of educational problems. They become so entrenched in teachers everyday work by virtue of the bombardment that principals and others(workshops on evaluation) subject us to, that you can hardly remember a time when it wasn't so. That evaluations are a social construct with a socio-political connection is not remembered or even acknowledged. This is in direct opposition to the spirit of destreaming to begin with, but that conflict is never addressed as an issue. The practical work is what the teachers come to see; destreaming means more marking. The majority of survey respondents were not satisfied with the student promotion procedure for grade 10. The meaning of this is also vague. Though when I looked down the columns of numbers in this survey I could tell that the largest numbers in the strongly disagree columns would be those comments against destreaming, and those numbers largest in the strongly agree column would be showing the same favouritism. The items that were scored highest in the strongly agree column were those that showed a negative response to streaming. These generally asked about the effect to teachers workload of the destreaming in grade nine. Sixty-eight percent thought that their workload increased dramatically teaching the grade 9 destreamed program. Of course the teachers are trying to learn all the new curriculum and evaluation while simultaneously teaching it. I did not really feel that my workload had increased that much partly because I wanted to remain clear about the purpose of destreaming I didn't allow the volumes of jargon around the destreaming to detract me. The sheer volume of information on curriculum and especially evaluation as well as the method of delivery to an already stressed teacher body was surely a recipe for
failure. The stress around getting the Ministry testing done however was perceived by myself and others as a significant increase on our workload. The test took a week. We had meetings on how to administer it and the instructions for each section were extensive and multiple. Again, workload is a critical issue to teachers and I am not denying that it is or should be a determining factor of the implementation of something new. However, this simplistic category on the monograph doesn't let the respondent see the complexity of the issues.

Sixty-two percent thought that classroom management was more difficult due to destreaming. This to me reinforces the idea that teachers have that "behavioral kids" are in the lower streams and that is the place for them. There are many students, for who manifest a wide range of "behavioral problems" at the general levels. However, that there are a lot of people who have problems learning in the schooling setting does not mean that they are best served, or learn better when they are all lumped together in one general level class. My experience is the opposite. As I wrote above, "my" destreamed class was great partly because of its small size.

It is interesting to note that a lot of the teachers who were teaching the destreamed classes didn't seem to know very much about destreaming and didn't feel they were adequately prepared for it. Forty-nine percent felt that they were not provided with sufficient information about the reasons for destreaming. Sixty-one percent didn't think that the in-service training opportunities were scheduled within the regular school day which is a definite deterrent to acceptance by teachers as it increases significantly their workload.
It seems that the OSSTF and the majority of teachers want to throw out the program because it is extra work and it doesn't work. The survey was self-serving, as the majority was already opposed to destreaming. I think it is significant that the number of respondents who were more positive about their experiences of destreaming as well as those who were unsure of the effect of their destreaming practices, together add up to around half of the respondents in any given category. This is somewhat encouraging for destreaming, and suggests that some teachers, maybe more than it appears, favour more fair practices in schooling.

I am writing this section in 1998, the Ontario Conservative government is preparing to "re-stream" the grade 9's. It seems that those in power now are pro-streaming:

The corporate establishment remains solidly opposed to democratizing policies that run counter to established hierarchies of ownership and control in private enterprise. Other elite associations representing private schools and "bright" children express similar opposition. Most other interest groups are either supportive of destreaming or ambivalent on the issue. Professional associations of doctors, lawyers and engineers, for example, espouse equality of opportunity principles, but only within the context of restrictive occupational hierarchies that will maintain their own status; they are, therefore, typically ambivalent about destreaming. (Curtis, Livingstone and Smaller, 1992, p. 120-121)

What many teachers and the OSSTF may be objecting to, may not be destreaming itself, but the specific destreaming they experienced. This is an important difference. Lack of time, large class size, inadequate curriculum, increase of teachers workload, lack of overall understanding, systemic contradictions, all made for a particularistic version of destreaming that was unpopular with many teachers. Hopefully, teachers, parents and
students will come to see the inequities of streaming and the possibilities of a destreamed system.
CONCLUSION: "WHAT IS TO BE DONE?" OR TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

Although "less than equitable" schools have always been with us, I'm afraid that in the current (2000) educational climate, there is the danger of losing our way. As the government and other interest groups try to convince us of the necessity of all of their discriminatory disciplinary structures of power, we must be equally convincing that this anti-democratic view is undesirable.

My thesis documents some of the problems I have experienced around the notions of power and inequality in schooling and education. From who, how, what and why we are taught as teachers to the teaching of who, what, why and how we teach students are the lessons of moral regulation and disciplining, hegemony and resistance. "Everyone" it is claimed, has equal access of opportunity to education. Therefore anyone who is unsuccessful has only themselves to blame. I have also observed that a large number of students who are "turned off" of education. Mass schooling will continue to alienate more and more students. Many people I speak to think the problem is with "other people's kids" and with a lack of discipline in the schools. The same people often think the solution is the private schooling system. I disagree with all of these ways of viewing the system, as well as their solution. Public schooling needs to truly represent all of the public.

Any discussion on how to transform education needs to be, in part, a discussion about the purpose of schooling. One "function" of schooling is to provide jobs. The current
Harris conservative government of Ontario, as well as past governments, like to blame unemployment on the schooling system's lack of work-suited graduates. This notion has become part of an everyday common sense knowledge, especially prevalent in times of capitalist economic crisis. In the introduction to his book *The Education-Jobs Gap: Underemployment or Economic Democracy*, D.W. Livingstone, explains:

In spite of the historical record, most private corporate and government leaders continue to promote more formal schooling and training programs as the antidote to unemployment. The oversupply of educationally qualified people on the job market has been disguised by employers' inflation of credential requirements, as well as by scantily based imputations of persistent specific skill shortages and general expressions of dissatisfaction with the quality of job entrants. Specific technical skill requirements for many jobs in private market-based economies are continually changing. But the need for narrow new technical skills, which can often easily be acquired on the job by those who have an adequate general knowledge base or job experience, should not be confounded with a lack of general knowledge and skill to do the work. (Livingstone, 1999, p. 5)

This certainly has been my limited experience working six years in two different factories; one that distributed greeting cards, the other a bottle making factory. While the hiring officer told me I needed a grade 12 education, there were many people at both factories who had no or limited schooling. I did not feel I needed any formal education to do either of the jobs. It was more important that I had a work ethic that agreed (somewhat) with the long, hot hard hours of work, keeping up the pace, with little protestation.

Livingstone turns this schooling for work ideology around:

The most pertinent social policy question is not "what work requires of schools?" but "how can work be reformed to permit fuller use of peoples' current education and continuing learning capacities?"...*most of us*
continually learn much more work-related knowledge than we ever have a chance to apply in paid workplaces.... there is very little research that has linked progressive economic alternatives with education and learning. (Livingstone, 1999, p.10, emphasis in original)

People have little choice when they are desperate to find a job but to take more schooling; the government/business sanctioned justification and solution to unemployment. "In spite of widespread rhetoric about illiteracy related to both basic learning skills and computers, there is little reliable evidence of declining skills and much to support the improving quality of education and learning in most countries" (Livingstone, 1999, p. 6). Livingstone continues that although efforts to acquire more education may fulfill a personal desire, "More and more highly qualified people cannot find any decent jobs"(Livingstone, 1999, p. 6). Much of the complaints against employees have been generated by the "special interest" of the business-management sector. Although it is not exactly the topic of this study, I do not generally find the goals of management and some teachers in school to be incompatible with the schooling for business approach. In both world views, it often seems as if it is necessary for individuals to be disciplined to accept their lot/status in life as if one's life were fated to be so. Livingstone argues:

Neo-conservative regimes are now trying to cut back and privatize costly schooling provisions. Budget cuts are certainly increasing problems of overcrowding, violence, teacher burnout, student alienation and discriminatory selection in public schools, colleges and universities. But, since work remains central to most peoples' sense of self-worth and useful work-related knowledge remains central accessible through diverse sources, these restrictions continually prove unsustainable and the social pressures to share more strategic information and decent work with other capable people continue to mount. This conflict between the proliferation of useful knowledge in democratic societies and the efforts of elites to gain private or exclusive control over strategic work-related information through the
construction and execution of "expert knowledge" has been the central educational contradiction of advanced private industrial market economies. (Livingstone, 1999, p.9)

And he goes on:

Rather than thinking about the paid work-schooling link in isolation, we need to consider all the interactive relations between current paid work, unpaid work, schooling and informal learning in order to begin to narrow the education-jobs gap. I identify and assess three very general economic alternatives, shareholder capitalism, stakeholder capitalism and economic democracy.... Whether elitist or democratic versions of human resource coordination prevail in the application of useful knowledge to meaningful work is likely to be one of the major political struggles that will shape the social character of the next millennium. (Livingstone, 1999, p. 11)

It is with all this in mind that I want to consider "transforming education". I believe that mass schooling has been almost in opposition to the idea of student diversity. Some of the students who perform best in schools are those who can learn best in that limiting environment. In other words, the system suits them. For many others, schooling is boring, tortuous and so on. Many of these others are oppressed by the system because they are not of the dominant discourse by virtue of their race, gender, sexual orientation, knowledge base, attitude, learning style, and class. The "system" has difficulty in viewing diversity as successful.

Yet the schools have promised that, indeed, the system is diverse with "equality of opportunity". So if you don't succeed it is your own fault. Curricula (in English, anyway) have partly attempted to be more inclusive for a while now. As teachers we are constantly being asked and pushed to rework our subject. The lack of a systemic overhaul led these initiatives to be marginalized and left up to the interpretation of the individual teacher (though teachers often tried to standardize the departments' teaching; although not
necessarily to make it more inclusive). The Ontario provincial Conservatives have taken this up to produce more standardized curricula. One of the goals in our English subject documents is to foster lifelong learning. Again, this meets with a diverse set of responses. Mass schooling has to truly represent and serve all the people who attend it, and are interested in it. It needs to change its thinking to include diversity in every aspect of its rationale. I think this involves a paradigm shift. Schools don't exist in isolation to the rest of society and so there has to be a radical departure from current and dominant notions of schooling in the rest of society. This involves a more "socialist" vision of what society could be. So, where to start? George J. Sefa Dei, Irma Marcia James, Leeno Luke Karumanchery, Sonia James Wilson, and Jasmin Zine have written a book about inclusive education, *Removing the Margins: The Challenges and Possibilities of Inclusive Schooling*. The book for me, is a way to proceed - an idea of how it could be. Dei et. al., define "inclusivity":

...We intend our consideration of 'inclusivity' to mean that viewing difference is political and not neutral. We also believe that for inclusive schooling and education to create substantive structural and social transformation, participants must avoid reproducing a dominant hierarchical ordering and classifying of bodies by race, class, gender and other hegemonic categories; rather the negotiation of multiple knowledges must take place on the terms of all participants and not just through the conditions imposed by the ruling class. (Dei, et. al., 2000, p. 13).

Some of the approaches that the authors advocate are "holistic and anti-racist". These approaches:

...can provide teachers with a framework within which to redefine practice in ways that consider all children in all of their complexity and a way to challenge and propose ways that learning can happen in schools. (Dei, et.al., 2000, p.247)
The authors believe that knowledges should be more inclusive, and they give the examples of indigenous knowledges and spirituality. Both knowledge bases are seen as positive approaches to learning. They write:

Indigenous knowledges are situational, contextual and localized, yet despite their specificities, indigenous knowledges are of general application. The idea of no sole/private ownership of knowledge is embedded within indigenous thought systems, meaning that no knowledge can be bought and sold in a so-called "market place of ideas". Instead indigenous knowledges are for general ownership and public consumption. (Dei, et.al., 2000, p. 241)

Indigenous knowledges can question the present "Euro-centric" (Dei, et. al., 2000) monopoly on knowledges in the schools. They also address the issue of representation. While indigenous knowledges present the possibility of more "multi-centric" knowledges, the authors caution us:

...in avoiding a problematic romanticization an over mythicization of knowledge systems.....Some knowledges have discursive sanctions against their misuse for injurious as well as non-conforming purposes....As indigenous knowledge systems are used to rupture a linear, secular, materialistic and ahistorical reading of the reality so, too, can culture, tradition and history be presented as unquestioned truth. (Dei, et.al., 2000, p.245,246).

The authors also suggest spirituality as an important feature of holistic education that should be included in curriculum. "Spirituality" loosely defined, is an exploration of the inner self that may or may not also be religious. Dei and his co-authors believe, "...that the classroom and school become an environment where students feel safe, valued and empowered"(Dei, et.al., 2000, p. 248) in order to do this work.
I agree with these authors' work around inclusivity, yet the simplicity of this statement belies the struggle and contradiction that one faces when trying to do this work. Still, it provides hope and a course of action. Another important element of inclusive education is language integration. The authors feel that language is power and so the barriers to language communication keep people in an oppressed situation. First languages should be integrated into the curriculum. I have been witness to students being prohibited and reprimanded for using their first language. While I understand the rationale that students won't learn a new language if they are using their first language as a crutch (this is the same rationale for French immersion) I don't agree with first language exclusion. Students are further isolated if they are not comfortable and unable to communicate to anyone. The authors also argue that language inclusion means that the student comes to see their language and culture as validated if it is used in the classroom.

Another element of inclusive pedagogy is the idea of representation. The authors state that global education, diversity and equity education are good practices for ALL students. They also caution us that there is the danger of creating a "master-narrative or representations of ethnic groups through 'patterned depictions' that are narrow and essentializing."(Dei, et.al., 2000, p. 256). Some teachers take the knowledges of the "cultural Other" and simply add them on to satisfy (for example) an equity mandate. I agree with the authors, but I don't know how you can get people to see things differently to incorporate these inclusive views into their world view. It is also important that representation also means teacher representation:
not as token representatives, but in recognition of their skills, abilities and the broad funds of knowledge they bring with them into the classroom. However these teachers should not be regarded as "speaking for" or representing their entire cultural or ethnic group, nor should they be on call to "perform" as part of the school's multicultural offerings. (Dei, et.al., 2000, p. 257)

Community-based education is another example of inclusive education. By community the authors mean that everyone in the community should be called upon to take an interest in educating the child. Education should not be the sole domain of schools. Many positive actions have come out of this community based education. Board of education officers liaison with the parents of marginalized and minoritized youth. In thinking about community schools, I wonder what the definition of community is? I live and teach outside of Toronto in the suburbs. I wonder in the large high schools, what would a community look like? In Dei, et.al.'s study one community came together around trying to supplement the public schooling system that wasn't "working" for "black" students and other minoritized youth. The focus here is on:

a) attention to the individual learner;
b) integration of language, culture and spirituality...
c) inclusive governance and empowerment opportunities;
d) representative teachers:
e) inclusive curriculum and;
f) a sense of discipline
(Dei, et.al., 2000, p. 200)

These are areas that respondents to Dei et. al.'s study felt were lacking in the "regular" schools. The authors definition of success is:
Educating our children for "success" means educating them to develop a "critical consciousness" that recognizes and interrogates elitism and privilege, without seeking to emulate[d] it. (hooks, 1988.in Dei, et.al, 2000, p. 253)

These very definitions of success and possibility are opposite to the competitive, marks driven, narrowly defined concepts of education and success that much of society and, in fact, some of the respondents to the authors' study hold. I agree with all the above work that the community schools are doing to address the inequities and discrimination some youth experience in the public system. I feel that "the sense of discipline" is of a more contradictory nature than the authors of the study look at. I will concentrate on this in the following section. The authors write:

Community educational pedagogies also stress the need for strict discipline of the learner. In some cases, discipline was understood as part of a religious and spiritual dimension of learning which encouraged learners to be more attentive to the traditional norms of their faith and spirituality that helped them to make sense of the world and their rights and responsibilities within it. In other cases, discipline was understood to mean respect and tolerance for difference and diversity. Generally, for teachers and parents, respect was defined as something which is "given" to others and expected from students. (Dei, et.al., 2000, p. 206)

Some of the respondents in the study saw there to be a lack of discipline in the schools:

Confronted with a pedagogy which was unlike what they were accustomed to "back home", many immigrant parents feel that the current school curriculum is not stringent enough in providing students with "the basics", and they find early childhood education concepts such as "learning through play" to be superfluous. (Dei, et.al., 2000, p. 210.)

And:

Canadian teachers, she explained, are not demanding a high enough standard to meet with the expectations of Chinese parents: (Dei, et.al., 2000, p. 211.)
Dei, et al., argue that:

These conflicting values represent how educational expectations are culturally mediated according to differing standards. The challenge in a plural society is to address and accommodate the differences not by measuring them against a dominant standard, but by beginning to explore the possibilities for change based on different cultural ways of knowing. (Dei, et al., 2000, p. 211)

I'm not sure what the authors mean by "accommodate". To accommodate certain ideas such as streaming would be in direct conflict with socially just, inclusive education. The notion that the curriculum is not "stringent" enough is also problematic. The Conservative government of Mike Harris has certainly made sweeping efforts towards more stringent curriculum and to ensure more "discipline". That does not mean that his vision is socially just or inclusive. I think we have to be careful here. Although some of the respondents had a more inclusive idea about discipline (as reflected in the first quotation above), the overall impression from the material is that most minoritized parents and teachers in the study are critical of what they perceive to be a lack of authoritarianism in schools. This is a popular public perception that needs to be deconstructed. A 'lack of discipline' in the public schools is one of the main arguments that private schools use for their 'difference' and existence. However, I don't think the private schools (or anyone else) would claim that they were interested in a socially just and inclusive system. Authoritarianism may lead to a more disciplined class, but that doesn't mean that the students are learning in a more equitable situation even though they are sitting there causing no problems. More discipline doesn't necessarily translate into more caring. You can discipline and push kids without caring about them. My question is, "At what expense, education?" Maybe students would learn
more if, for example "I" was more authoritarian. But what else could they lose with this way of being? Strict discipline/authoritarianism is not in conflict with many students life experience. Although that may be the only thing students respond to seriously, this doesn't mean it is a desirable method of being with kids. This is just another version of the dominant discourse, knowing your place, an oppressive form.

Authoritarianism is contradictory to my notion of a socially just and inclusive education and contradictory to the authors' stated vision of inclusive knowledges and what it means to be a success in schools. Those students who have had a history of discrimination in school and society generally do not take well to authoritarianism from those they see to be the oppressor. In schools where I have taught, "disciplinarians" were often accused of being "unfair" and "racist". Students come into a class, often with their histories visible from the beginning. As a teacher, while covering the curriculum, I am at the same time doing much more. From the time they begin class, I struggle with the possibility and visibility of each student's anger, hatred of me, or what I represent to them, hatred of others and all of their life experiences. Although inclusive, socially just schooling would help, sometimes students resist. However, we should have more minority teachers. Though students would sometimes complain that I was "too nice", or that I "let people get away with too much", this was always directed towards other students. All the students wanted the special attention for themselves but thought that others deserved more discipline, even if "they" were "doing" the same types of thing. Over my years of teaching I have learned to talk to the students (some more, some less) about why I do things the way I do. About negotiating, about a safe place for all, about making mistakes, about not knowing everything, and how to balance this with
finally having some voice to speak to and be listened to as the "teacher". I think to have socially just, inclusive schooling, we need a socially just and inclusive society. I do feel this subject deserves more attention than it is often given.

For teaching to be more attractive as a possibility to a wider array of people, it would have to be experienced as more equitable to begin with by the student. If the education system were more equitable and democratic for the student, and not so narrowly academic, hegemonic and competitive (that is the education that is seen as worthy) it would attract a more representative body of people to be teachers. Many of the present aspects of 'normalization', such as who and what counts couldn't help but be expanded. It may well be that notions of what teachers and schooling could look like has expanded in the past 100 or so years. Since we don't have the luxury (if it is that) to start anew we have no choice but to work towards an equitable and democratic pedagogy in the present (that is, we can't wait for that perfect moment - there isn't one). I think it is difficult work and an ongoing struggle. With this in mind, I think that the Teacher's Colleges and associate teachers could work towards a more equitable system. I believe that for the most part they do try to prepare student teachers in a fairly progressive fashion. Much of teaching must be learned on the job and comes through the experiences of dealing with different people in constantly changing situations. "For all the research and talk about schools, getting people to learn remains something of a mystery. It is certainly an extraordinarily complex business, an interplay of intellectual, emotional, and social processes so intricate that it virtually defies analysis."

(Connell, 1985, p. 127) The everyday classroom practice is one of the sites where attempts
at creating socially just education often becomes problematic. I don't want to underestimate teachers' power, however we still work in a discriminatory system and unless things like streaming are 'ditched' it is difficult to see teachers making any real progress towards a more socially just system. The present Harris Conservative provincial government in Ontario is a force that must be worked against. Maybe teachers unions could get together with the Faculties of Education to educate teacher candidates. I think that it is important for new teachers to understand that there are a myriad of possibilities in ways of knowing and being, and that these should be welcome. An understanding of the teacher's relationship to the schooling system would be helpful for the aspiring teacher. What are the difficulties and limitations of a critical pedagogy? What does an equitable and democratic pedagogy look like? What things detract from an equitable pedagogy? Does it look different depending on your position in society and in the schooling system? Why does it look different? What do these terms even mean and for whom? How does it work in the classroom? Going through some case scenarios would be helpful, though of course every situation couldn't be covered. Maybe some of the Equity groups I have spoken about (mostly teachers and some non-teacher guest speakers) and members of the community involved in working with people could teach the teacher in training about their different perspectives. All this, while keeping in mind that 'real change' means the system must change.
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