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A Critical Ethnography of Pupil Resistance to Authority: How Pupil and Teacher Identities Create Spaces of Resistance in the Contemporary School.

A thesis submitted for the degree of

Master of Philosophy

By: Steven Fortune

Supervisor: Professor Carl Bagley

School of Education

University of Durham
2010.

Abstract:

This thesis employs a critical ethnographic method to examine how high ability pupils in a comprehensive school in an area of relative social deprivation express resistance to authority. The identities which teachers adopt in response to pupil resistance are also critically examined. The focus of the study is a group of nine high ability pupils. Data was collected through observing these pupils in forty-three lessons and conducting eleven group pupil interviews. Sixteen members of school staff were also interviewed. The research was conduced over a three month period (May to July) in the summer term of 2009.

Building upon neo-Marxist resistance theory the aim is to inject a degree of construct validity into the concept of pupil resistance. By avoiding the tendency to romanticise pupils' often petulant and nihilistic behaviour the aim is to revitalise resistance theory by providing a more valid account of how and why pupils resist school authority. The aim is also to critically evaluate how pedagogic practice responds to pupil resistance and to assess the potential for pupil resistance to develop into a wider Marxist transformative agenda.

It is argued that certain high ability working class pupils express a form of *constructive resistance*. This behaviour challenges the social classifications of schooling through constructively questioning the equity and competence of pedagogic authority. It is argued that constructive forms of resistance reflect the ability of pupils to critically assess their social environment and resist perceived injustice. It is also argued that pupils who express constructive forms of resistance have the potential to question the social classifications of wider capitalist society.

The critical element of this thesis argues that current pedagogic practice is inadequate in engaging with pupil resistance; teachers adopt identities which seek to suppress pupils' critical awareness. It is further argued that for constructive forms of resistance to develop wider meaning teachers must critically engage with pupils' cultural expression through developing critical forms of pedagogy which reference pupils' cultural heritage.

Acknowledgements:

This thesis was conceived from my experiences as a pupil and teacher in comprehensive schools in the North East of England. Many of the characters I encountered have had an indelible effect on my attitudes towards education in working class schools. From the camaraderie of my school mates whose character and self-belief overcame bleak economic prospects in the 1980's; to the teachers who taught me (some with dedication, some with indifference); to the pupils I have taught (from the diligent to the resistant to the recalcitrant); to my teaching colleagues (from whom I have witnessed a remarkable dedication to the welfare and education of economically disadvantaged young people). Too many names to list but you all shaped my belief in the emancipatory power of learning.

I would like to thank all of the pupils who agreed to take part in this study. Their comments, diaries and interpretations were an integral part of this thesis; without their enthusiasm and co-operation the project would have been impossible.

My final and heartfelt thanks go to Professor Carl Bagley whose supervision and direction were stimulating, constructive and always encouraging.

Thank you.

Declaration:

This thesis is my own work and has not been offered previously in candidature at this or any other university.

Statement of Copyright:

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Glossary of Acronyms:

APP	Assessing Pupil Progress
AVP	Autonomous Visible Pedagogy
BSA	British Sociological Association
BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
CALM(ED)	Creating an Alternative Learning Model
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
DCSF	Department for Children Schools and Families
DT	Design Technology
ESRC	Economic and Social research Council
FSM	Free School Meals
GCSE	General Certificate in Secondary Education
LEA	Local Education Authority
MVP	Market-Dependent Visible Pedagogy
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
RAF	Royal Air Force
RE	Religious Education
SIMS	Schools Information Management System
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
UCAS	Universities Central Admission System
WWF	World Wrestling Federation

Chapter 1 - Introduction:

1.1 The Research Problem:

Pupil resistance to authority is a concept which has played a central role in neo-Marxist analyses of schooling (Willis 1977, Anyon 1981, Aggleton and Whitty 1985, McLaren 1993). Neo-Marxist approaches to the role of education in capitalist society have portrayed schools as sites of class contradictions where working class pupils conflict with the authority of teachers and the curriculum. Within these approaches the concept of pupil resistance has remained relatively undefined and nebulous. Some approaches have taken an all encompassing definition whereby any act of defiance becomes resistant behaviour (Anyon 1981). Such an approach can easily romanticise petulant and nihilistic forms of behaviour. More rigorous definitions (Aggleton and Whitty 1985, Fernandes 1988) have sought to distinguish 'resistance' from 'contestations' or general oppositional behaviour – challenges against localised forms of control rather than the wider power relations of capitalist society. The prevalence of this form of behaviour in empirical studies can somewhat emasculate the concept of pupil resistance, reducing it to a local challenge to authority without any wider social significance.

More contemporary ethnographic studies (Jackson 2006, Dickar 2008) portray pupils negotiating conformity and resistance; resistance is linked to 'laddishness' and gaining status within the peer group. The wider socio-political significance of resistance is lost as pupils are portrayed as conforming to the dominant neo-liberal discourse of competitive individualism and meritocracy.

Willis (1977) infused pupil resistance with the concept of 'penetrations' – insights which working class pupils possess regarding their role and future expectations in

capitalist society. The danger with such an approach is that it may attribute a clearer intention to pupil resistance than actually exists. The intention could feasibly be *recusancy* rather than resistance – an opposition to elements of schooling without the desire for change. Contemporary neo-Marxist ideas (Rikowski 1996, 1997, 2002, 2005) have sought to realign educational theory to the economic base of society. Schools are interpreted as heavily capitalised institutions involved in the production of the commodity of labour power. Pupil resistance in this context has the potential to impact upon the production of the 'weak link' in capitalist society – the variable commodity of labour power.

Neo-Marxist theories of pupil resistance must also consider the contemporary trend towards higher standards and level of achievement in working class schools. Resistance has been associated with working class males in schools which tolerate or are powerless to prevent their opposition and underachievement (Willis 1977, McLaren 1993). The current dominant neo-liberal discourse works to expose and rectify underachieving schools. Resistance theory must therefore move beyond analyses of the disaffected working class underachiever and embrace a wider spectrum of pupil identities.

Within neo-Marxist analyses of schooling the concept of pupil resistance to authority has remained incipient. Defining resistance and placing its relevance into a wider social context has not been fully developed. There is a need to avoid romanticising pupils' often petulant and nihilistic behaviour as 'resistant' and also to develop the concept from being a restricted form of localised contestation. There is also a need to illustrate the forms that pupil resistance takes, how the other social actors of the school

interact with this and to develop the meaning of resistance within a wider cultural context. Marxist resistance theory also needs to acknowledge more recent ideas within Marxist theories of education. There is a need to realign Marxist analyses to historical materialism (Rikowski 1997) and consider pupil resistance as contradictory to capitalist society.

1.2 Research Aims:

The critical ethnographic approach of this thesis aims to examine through observation and interviews the following:

- The identities which high ability pupils adopt in a school in an area of relative deprivation. The focus will be on the resistant behaviours of high ability/high achieving pupils and the different ways this can be expressed. The aim will be to inject a degree of construct validity into neo-Marxist interpretations of pupil resistance.
- The 'critical' element of the study seeks to assess current pedagogic practice to investigate how the identities which teachers adopt interact with pupils' cultural expression. The aim is to investigate the role that teachers play in pupil resistance to authority – their actions, reactions and interpretations of pupil resistance and the effects these have on the pedagogic process. The ways that teachers respond to pupil resistance and mediate it through effective pedagogic practice is viewed as having the potential to harness resistance and develop it beyond a form of localised contestation.
- The cultural expectations within a school in an area of relative deprivation will be critically examined. The expectations which pupils and teachers hold and how

these can impact upon resistance, achievement and cultural goals will be investigated.

- The wider political and transformative potential of pupil resistance will be analysed within a Marxist framework. Through focusing on high ability, high achieving pupils the aim is to investigate whether such pupils develop a form of resistance which can move beyond localised targets and develop a wider political agenda.

1.3 Significance of the Study:

This study seeks to develop and reconceptualise Marxist theories of pupil resistance to authority. Through focusing upon high ability, high achieving pupils the intention is to develop resistance theory away from the association with low achieving recalcitrant pupils. Such high ability pupils have often been marginalised in Marxist accounts of schooling (Willis 1977, McLaren 1993); their ability to achieve being interpreted as an expression of apolitical conformity. Through focusing on such high ability pupils and the ways they critically resist authority it is hoped that the concept of pupil resistance will be given a greater degree of construct validity.

The study also seeks to locate resistance theory within the current dominant neo-liberal discourse of education. Rising levels of achievement and participation in higher education suggest that working class pupils may have a restored faith in the ideals of competitive individualism and meritocracy. Resistance theory thus need to acknowledge that the educational environment and outlook of working class pupils has evolved and account for how these changes have impacted upon pupil resistance to authority.

Chapter 2 - Review of Literature:

This review is presented in three sections. The first examines theoretical perspectives underpinning the issue of social class and education. The work of Pierre Bourdieu and Basil Bernstein are examined in turn to provide a context for this thesis within theories of schooling in capitalist society. The second section looks at resistance theory. The seminal text *Learning To Labour* (Willis 1977) is examined along with other neo-Marxist contributions to the understanding of pupil resistance. Peter McLaren's (1993) ethnography *Schooling as a Ritual Performance* is examined to consider an alternative approach to resistance theory incorporating aspects of postmodernism. Two more contemporary ethnographies of schooling – Jackson (2006) *Lads and Ladettes in School* and Dickar (2008) *Corridor Cultures* are then examined to investigate pupil resistance within the current neo-liberal educational discourse. The final section investigates current debates within Marxist educational theory. Drawing on the work of Glenn Rikowski this section examines whether neo-Marxist explanations of contemporary schooling and pupil resistance can be reframed within a more traditional Marxist agenda.

2.1 Social Class and Education – Theoretical Perspectives:

2.1.1 Pierre Bourdieu:

Bourdieu explored the relationship between education and social class and how the education system can serve to maintain social inequality. The focus is on how the culture of dominant groups in society can control the economic, social and political resources which determine pedagogic practice. The embodiment of dominant class culture in schools works as a subtle strategy of social and cultural reproduction. This

process of reproduction is complex and never complete or perfect. There is no simplistic or deterministic reproduction through economic capital; rather Bourdieu focuses on how other forms of capital operate to tacitly maintain the hegemony of dominant groups.

Weber (1947) separated the concepts of class and status. Status for Weber becomes a form of social honour separate from an individual's ability to solicit reward in the market-place. Bourdieu (1997) connects class and status - they are interrelated through the link between economic and other forms capital. Economic capital is at the root of all other forms of capital; these other forms are "transformed, disguised forms of economic capital" (ibid:54). The economic roots of these other forms is therefore concealed; even form those who possess them. Bourdieu (1997) argues that the concept of exchange is too narrowly defined in economics to mean 'mercantile' exchange – exchange for profit. For Bourdieu exchange is symbolic as well as monetary. Moore (2004:84) explains that "All exchanges entail principles of order and relations of hierarchy and power". By separating symbolic and monetary forms of exchange the former becomes a neutral, disinterested activity. Bourdieu sought to establish how symbolic forms of exchange have their roots in economic capital and thus serve to maintain and reproduce social inequality. It is therefore necessary to examine how different forms of capital are accumulated and mobilised and how economic capital is able to transform into symbolic forms.

Important in this respect is what Mahar *et al* (1990:4) term Bourdieu's 'break with Marxism'. Bourdieu rejected the economic determinism of vulgar Marxism "which reduces the social field to the economic field" (ibid). For Bourdieu culture is not a reflex of economic factors. Mahar *et al* (1990) also explain that Bourdieu was critical of the

objectivism of some forms of Marxism – undervaluing the agency of social actors and ignoring the struggle and conflict of the social world. Culture and social institutions are therefore relatively autonomous from economic factors. A key concept for Bourdieu in this respect is the 'field' – "a site of struggle over a particular form of capital" (Harker 2000:97). For example the system of education could be described as a 'field' in which individuals struggle to gain the capital afforded by qualifications. Within a field various potentialities exist which can either transform or conserve the field. Position and success within the field will be determined by the amount and form of capital an individual brings into the field. Education as a field is therefore not economically determined but a cultural site where forms of capital are deployed by the social actors in a struggle for status.

In the field of education symbolic forms of capital will operate to maintain and reproduce social inequality. Bourdieu (1977) defines the 'symbolic' as phenomena which have their roots in the material forms of capital but are not recognised as such; for example language, dress, posture, style - all of which can afford prestige, honour and attention. There is a "misrecognition" (ibid) that these forms of symbolic capital are rooted in economic capital. Thus symbolic capital:

> ... conceals the fact that it originates in 'material' forms of capital which are also, in the last analysis, the source of its effects. (Bourdieu 1977:183).

This misrecognition is the root of the power and influence of symbolic forms of capital. For Bourdieu capital is convertible – it can be exchanged into various forms and the symbolic form is the most powerful. The symbolic "derives its efficacy not simply from its materiality but from this misrecognition" (Mahar *et al* 1990:5). Symbolic forms of capital come to be seen as normal, legitimate and valued – "instruments of knowledge and domination" (ibid). For Bourdieu (1977) domination is about more than a Marxist

notion of false class consciousness; domination is legitimated through symbolic systems imposing a 'correct' view of the social world. This 'imposition' operates in subtle and tacit forms. Like Gramsci's (2005) notion of hegemony symbolic capital legitimates domination by presenting itself as common sense. Bourdieu (1977) calls this process of legitimation 'symbolic violence' - the struggle between different symbolic systems to impose a certain view of the world.

A key concept for Bourdieu (1977) in this process of legitimation is 'habitus'; the dispositions an individual acquires within a field – "the generative, unifying principle of conducts and opinions" (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979:4). Bidet (1979:203) defines habitus as:

> ... the culture (of an epoch, class or any group) as it is internalized by the individual in the form of durable dispositions that are the basis of his/her behaviour.

Mahar *et al* (1990:11) cite Bourdieu's analogy that if the field is a game (where the struggle for capital is played out), then the habitus would be the 'trump card'. A particular habitus is developed through experience; it provides a set of objective possibilities linked to a person's social class. Individuals are socialised into certain expectations – likelihood of success in a field, the response of others to forms of behaviour. Different social groups will have a different habitus based on such expectations. Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) argue that schools adopt the habitus of dominant groups in society and treat pupils as if they all have equal access to this – "the dominant habitus is transformed into a form of cultural capital that schools take for granted" (Harker 1990:87). Such cultural capital is embodied in the habitus of the dominant social group and is defined by Mahar *et al* (1990:13) as "culturally-valued taste

and consumption patterns". It can be objectified in material objects such as books, art, instruments but the crucial aspect of cultural capital is the capacity to 'see' or interpret such material objects in the appropriate manner – the manner of the dominant class. The ability to adopt this manner of interpretation is grounded in habitus. Bourdieu (1997:47) explains that this manner is learnt via the family but is also endorsed in the education system – cultural capital is 'institutionalised' in the school. The economic capital of dominant groups is therefore transformed into cultural capital; those with economic capital can acquire the habitus necessary to access the 'codes' of cultural capital. The transformation of economic capital into cultural capital creates the illusion that academic talent is natural when in fact it is the consequence of habitus. Moore (2004:88) explains that the cultural tastes of dominant groups are translated into independent values; such taste is presented as "universal by virtue of some inner truth or necessity". Cultural capital thus complements the habitus of dominant groups. In the education system those who have acquired the cultural tastes of the dominant group have the advantage thus reproducing the economic relations of class. This process is not deliberate or conscious; the relative autonomy of the field of education separates the process from capitalist ideology. Schools are thus:

> ... effective in their role of reproducing class relations precisely to the degree that they appear to have nothing to do with them. (Moore 2004:89).

The social actors don't view themselves as being involved in any process of class reproduction; they rather see themselves as upholding the seemingly objective truth of what they value as cultural taste.

The role of the school in transmitting knowledge and culture is therefore complex – it requires a "mastery of a code of interpretation" (Harker 1990:89) which is facilitated

by the family. The school reinforces the inequalities started within the family by valuing the same cultural tastes and habitus – "cultural capital is added to cultural capital" (Bourdieu 1973:79). To succeed in education pupils from subordinate groups would have to acquire the necessary cultural capital – a form of *embourgeoisement* would be necessary. However for Bourdieu this is not sufficient; the process of schooling operates in many subtle and tacit ways to disadvantage subordinate groups. Harker (1990:89) outlines five levels of pedagogic practice which Bourdieu has proposed serve to perpetuate inequality in the education system:

Level 1: For children from subordinate classes lower success rates in education affect expectations; low aspirations become part of the habitus. A recurring theme in Bourdieu's work is the link between academic performance and cultural background. A 'class ethos' exists – a set of deeply held values which define attitudes towards cultural capital and education. Pupils' success in education therefore:

> ... depends appreciably on their perceptions of the probability that people of their social class will succeed academically. (Swartz 2000:209).

The objective opportunities as perceived through the habitus of subordinate groups thereby shape the subjective hopes of pupils. Bourdieu and Passeron (1979:42) refer to the "social function of elimination". Pupils operate a form of 'self-elimination' – a realisation that the objective conditions they face put them at a disadvantage which precipitates a rejection of the system. Bourdieu (1984:471) calls this "a 'sense of one's place'" and even suggests that for some subordinate groups academic success would imply or require the individual to reject their social origins; the required change of habitus would be so extreme.

Level 2: The initial degree of academic success which some pupils from subordinate

families achieve is not capitalised on. This suggests there is a 'double selection' process operating (Harker 1990:91). Firstly a lower success rate and secondly for those who do succeed the subsequent options taken don't lead to advancement. An example would be a bright student from a working-class background gaining high level qualifications but not opting to attend university. It is important to stress that such choices are not necessarily made out of ignorance. Harker (1990:91) suggests that an important factor is security – "which for many families is a synonym for 'success'". This implies a satisfaction with what is known and a suspicion of the unknown. Habitus may shape an individual's willingness to break out of the security of their family's cultural expectations; it may shape their perception of success. This issue has recently attracted government and media attention. Lord Mandleson in his role as Business Secretary responsible for universities questioned the meritocracy of the higher education system:

> Why, for all the work in the sector and all the seriousness with which it has tackled this question, are we still making only limited progress in widening access to higher education to young people from poorer backgrounds — especially at our most selective universities? It is not enough for universities simply to confer life advantages from one generation of professionals to their children. (*The Times* 2009a).

Bourdieu's analysis may suggest that the habitus of those students with the ability and qualifications may act to shape and constrain their choices.

Level 3: Those students from subordinate groups who do succeed and do make choices which advance their status "come to accept the criteria which recognised their success" (Harker 1990:91). The habitus of the school serves to homogenise pupils; the system:

> ... reproduces itself by recognising those who recognise it and by giving its blessing to those who dedicate themselves to it. (Bourdieu and St. Martin 1974:358)

Academic success is therefore predicated on conformity with the habitus of the school.

The system finds divergence from the dominant habitus difficult to accommodate. There may be an objective acceptance of cultural diversity but this

> ... masks an indifference or a dismissal of cultural differences, and teaching techniques take for granted a background in pupils which is true only for some. (Harker 1990:92).

The academic success of those from subordinate groups thus involves a form of assimilation into the habitus of the school. Such success serves to strengthen the system as it bolsters the apparent neutrality and meritocracy which are the moral cornerstones of its existence.

Level 4: Students from subordinate backgrounds who do succeed face a further form of tacit discrimination. The meritocratic ideals of the education system would suggest that all success is equally measured and viable. However Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) argue that the success of those from dominant groups is given a higher degree of recognition – success without the required cultural capital is denigrated as "laboriously acquired" (Bourdieu 1974:38). The 'easy brilliance' of the privileged student is compared to the 'pedantic plodding' of the underprivileged one (Harker 1990:92). Gorder (2000:226) cites Bourdieu's empirical work where he suggests terms such as 'studious' and 'scholarly' are applied to students from subordinate backgrounds in a denigrating manner. Therefore the subordinate classes can compensate for their lack of cultural capital by acquiring academic capital but this achievement is prone to a form of cultural denigration from the dominant class.

Level 5: Educational capital in the form of qualifications is described by Bourdieu (1974:42) as a "confidence trick". Awarding qualifications is the pinnacle of the education system; it legitimises success but it is the ultimate expression of symbolic

violence. Qualifications are the material rewards which are presented to those who have accessed and succeeded within the habitus of the school. As symbols of academic success they contribute to the process of allocating roles in society. Bourdieu (1974:42) argues that this *ideology of giftedness*:

> ... helps to enclose the underprivileged classes in the roles which society has given them by making them see as natural inability things which are only a result of an inferior social status.

Of course many individuals form underprivileged classes do achieve qualifications and high status roles. One effect of the process of accountability in schools (OFSTED, league tables, teachers' performance management) has been the overall rise in levels of achievement at GCSE and A level (*The Times* 2009b). In the French model Bourdieu (1977:171) argues that under such circumstances forms of symbolic capital such as appearance, accent, style come into play in the allocation of occupational roles; the habitus of the dominant group prevails. Harker (1990:100) suggests that private fee-paying schools in Britain serve the function of perpetuating distinctions between social groups as academic success becomes more universal. Also this process of apparent academic success across social class groups can function to maintain inequality. Suspicion of hereditary privilege can be tempered by the illusion that the education system is open and meritocratic. Reproduction of class relations occurs but is concealed by the illusion of subordinate class advancement. Any such advancement is superficial as the individuals lack the habitus to exploit their success.

Bourdieu's ideas provide a framework to analyse the link between cultural background and the pedagogic process. Issues affecting schools in working class areas such as underachievement, the clash between pupil and school culture and low

participation rates in higher education can all be debated within the framework of Bourdieu's ideas. However the following limitations need to be addressed:

1. Generalising Bourdieu's Ideas:

Bourdieu's work is based upon the French educational system – a very centralised system which Harker (1990:98) suggests is perceived by "Bourdieu (and French people generally) ... almost exclusively in terms of *training* and *selection*". In French society the allocation of roles is determined by paper qualifications to a much greater extent than in Britain. Archer (1984) suggests that the French educational model is the most centralised and bureaucratic in the world. The implication is that school habitus within the French system is more apparent and powerfully felt through the influence of the centralised, bureaucratic system. The bureaucracy affords dominant groups more scope and influence. Gorder (2000:227) also points out that Bourdieu's empirical work needs to be put in context. For example data regarding linguistic tests to a analyse the cultural capital of students "is drawn almost exclusively" (ibid) from the university sector and particularly the sector of Letters (the humanities). Harker (1990:99) therefore invites caution – applying Bourdieu's ideas to non-French educational fields requires seeing his work as "a *method* of enquiry rather than a completed *theoretical* edifice". The 'method' must be applied to the new educational field.

2. *Agency and Resistance:*

Critics of Bourdieu have suggested that his general theory is one of social reproduction – he does not account for social actors' ability to resist the forces of reproduction (Giroux 1983, Willis 1981, Gorder 2000):

> Working class cultural production and its link to cultural reproduction through the processes of resistance, incorporation, or accommodation is not acknowledged by Bourdieu. (Giroux 1983:90)

The implication is that a fatalistic, defeatist model is being presented by Bourdieu which gives no account of resistance or the potential for social transformation. Willis (1981:55) is critical of Bourdieu for portraying symbolic capital as "an inert possession, not contested". The ability to resist the effects of cultural capital is underplayed. Willis (1981) suggests Bourdieu presents a pessimistic view of society; one of inevitable social reproduction which gives little importance to the contestation and struggle which develops within the cultural production of subordinate groups.

Mahar *et al* (1990) argue that this is a simplistic reading and that the concept of resistance in Bourdieu's work is incorporated within the habitus of subordinate groups. Within a field the struggle for capital is affected by habitus - the class-based social grammar of taste, knowledge and behaviour. However habitus is not fixed throughout generations, it is a dynamic concept. Objective material conditions may shape habitus but between generations there is no simplistic socialisation process whereby habitus is passed from parents to children unchanged. Through each generation or iteration habitus will change and develop to some extent. Giroux (1983:95) argues that Bourdieu does not link ideology/domination to material, economic forces – he argues that the internalisation of a dominant ideology is not the only determinant of behaviour – "failures and choices of these students are also grounded in material conditions". However Bourdieu does link ideology to the materiality of economic forces. Harker (1990:100) argues that 'time' is the key element. Over time the material conditions of social structures will act dialectically with the practices of agents to develop a changing form of habitus. For

Bourdieu the school does serve to reproduce inequality but not in a mechanistic way. Harker (ibid) gives the example of unemployment – a material condition which can affect the habitus of all cultural groups. Individuals, families and schools can change their habitus in response to such material conditions – curricula can become more vocational, resistance to authority can rise. Bourdieu and Passeron (1979:87) use the concept of 'trajectory' – how individuals arrive at their position within a field. A person's 'modal trajectory' will take them to a position determined by their cultural capital. However divergence form this 'modal trajectory' will occur as people develop strategies in the struggle for capital. Habitus is therefore not a static, mechanistic concept – it "is a mediating construct, not a determining one" (Mahar *et al* 1990:12). The concept of resistance resides within the developing, iterative nature of working class habitus. Between generations habitus is not reproduced as a facsimile; the differences and iterations within the habitus are the key:

> It is what is not reproduced that is at once the engine of change and the arena for human agency. (Harker 1990:104).

2.1.2 Basil Bernstein:

Like Bourdieu, Bernstein's work addresses the issue of the role the education system plays in the cultural reproduction of class relationships; his aim being to prevent "the wastage of working class educational potential" (Bernstein 1961:308). Also like Bourdieu, Bernstein's ideas attempt to synthesise structural accounts of schooling with an account involving the cultural component of individual agency. His analytical approach involved taking a 'bottom up' approach; to investigate the rules of educational process and then link them to wider structural conditions and policy.

Central to this analysis is the concept of 'code'. A code is a "regulative principle

which operates at a very fundamental or 'deep' level" (Atkinson 1985:82). This 'deep' level indicates that a code does not refer to human action; it is determining, structural factor. Its 'regulative' aspect refers to its influence in restricting selection. Atkinson (ibid) uses the analogy of *clothing* to illustrate the notion of 'code'. The way people dress is subject to many influences – tradition, fashion, environment, occupation, age, comfort. Our clothing choices are thus influenced by 'codes'; "the code will regulate the selection and combination of cultural elements" (ibid). Bernstein's 'code' has many parallels with Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus'; both refer to how dispositions become internalised, both are mediators of authority and power and both are embedded in family relations.

Bernstein (1977) suggests that schools embody an educational code. The two dominant codes being *collection code* and *integrated code*. The meaning of these codes is directly linked to Bernstein's concepts of *classification* and *framing*. Classification "refers to the degree of boundary maintenance between content" (ibid:88) – the strength or weakness of the boundaries which exist between different categories. Thus a school with a traditional, academic curriculum with strong boundaries between subjects, strongly defined teacher's roles, pupils taught in ability sets would have strong classification. Framing refers to:

> ... the degree of control teacher and pupil posses over the selection, organisation, pacing and timing of the knowledge transmitted and received in the pedagogical relationship. (ibid:89).

With strong framing a teacher will dictate the structure of the pedagogic process and be able to control what is accepted as valid knowledge. Strong framing enables the teacher to prohibit common-sense, everyday knowledge – the teacher controls the classroom agenda and can direct and censor the content of lessons. An educational code described

as a *collection code* is characterised by strong classification and strong framing. Bernstein (1977:130) also suggests that a collection code is characterised by *visible pedagogy* – the message systems (curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation) are explicit. With visible pedagogy there will be an explicit hierarchy, explicit rules and explicit methods of evaluation (Atkinson 1985:157).

An *integrated code* is characterised by weak classification, weak framing and *invisible pedagogy* – the message systems and modes of control are implicit rather than explicit. The teacher will arrange a 'context' for pupils to explore; within this context pupils will have a wide influence to select and structure their learning. Teacher control over pupils will be implied rather than strictly set out. The focus will be acquiring a range of skills rather than the transmission of knowledge. Bernstein's distinction between collection and integrated educational codes is rooted in Durkheim's (1947) concepts of *mechanical* and *organic solidarity*. Mechanical solidarity – "where individuals share a common system of belief" (Bernstein 1977:38) is characterised by uniformity, "Solidarity which comes from likeness" (Durkheim 1947). Organic solidarity is "characterised by a complex interdependence of individual specialised social functions" (Bernstein 1977:38) – it allows increased variation and flexibility. A collection code (strong classification, strong framing) is indicative of mechanical solidarity and Bernstein (1977) argues that this will be reflected in the division of labour within the school. Teachers' roles will be ascribed and tightly classified following a prescribed curriculum; there will be a "segmental and hierarchical mode of organisation" (Atkinson 1985:151). Teachers will be isolated in teaching their own subject areas and the pedagogic process "is primarily a private matter" (ibid).An integrated code (weak classification, weak framing) marks what

Bernstein (1977) suggests is the trend in English schooling towards organic solidarity; it requires consensus and negotiation. Teacher identities will be flexible (achieved rather than ascribed) and there will be cross-curricula activity – a more complex division of labour.

Although Bernstein shared Durkheim's view of the change in social integration from mechanical to organic solidarity he did not share Durkheim's belief that the division of labour involves consensus. For Bernstein (1977) the growing complexity of the division of labour creates a shift in the type of social order and the codes which evolve from this are regulated by the dominant class:

> The group that dominates the principle of the social division of labour determines the extent to which positions in the social division of labour give access to specialised coding orientations. (Bernstein 1981:333).

The concept of power thus enters Bernstein's analysis through class regulated codes. The importance of educational codes is the role they play in social reproduction:

> Codes are mechanisms of reproduction and to that extent regulate and constitute what is reproduced. (Atkinson 1985:69).

To understand how educational codes are rooted in power relations and reproduce inequality it is necessary to examine how pupils interpret the codes. For Bernstein (1975) this process of interpretation was linked to linguistics – the language codes which pupils inherit form their families. In his earlier work Bernstein (1975 Part I) used the terms *public language* and *formal language*. Public language is short, has simple grammar, little symbolism and limited use of adjectives/adverbs. There is a "lack of verbal elaboration and explication of meaning and motive" (Atkinson 1985:43). Bernstein suggests that such public language is characteristic of working-class families – family roles are explicit, ascribed and segregated. There will be little exploration of meaning:

> Such a highly segregated family system will not provide an environment where the sensitive exploration and elaboration of personal intentions is encouraged. (ibid).

Public language is predicated upon shared meaning and common values. It provides:

> ... important means of initiating, synthesizing and reinforcing ways of thinking, feeling and behaviour which are functionally related to the social group. (Bernstein 1975:43).

In his later work (1975 Part II) Bernstein used term *restricted code* – signifying the regulative, shaping mechanism of the term 'code'. A restricted linguistic code is a ritualistic use of language involving predictability, assumed meaning and little room for innovation (Atkinson 1985:62). Edwards (2002:529) suggests that restricted codes are found wherever there is a strong sense of identity and a wide background of shared knowledge.

Public language can be contrasted with *formal language*. Formal language has grammatical order, expressive symbolism and a range of adjectives/adverbs (Atkinson 1985:43). The key difference from public language is that it has the capacity to invoke subjective meaning and motives – "subjective intent may be verbally elaborated and made explicit" (Bernstein 1975:47). Bernstein suggests that middle-class children are more likely to be socialised into formal language. The emphasis is on socialising the child

> ... into an environment where he is seen and responded to as an individual with his own rights, that he has a specific social status. (ibid:27).

In this family environment "personal intentions and sensibilities are explored" (Atkinson 1985:43). Formal language evolved into the term *elaborated code*. An elaborate linguistic code has meanings which are universalistic – they are not tied to a particular context. The social relationships which give rise to an elaborated code do not pre-suppose shared

identity; the consequence of this is that “much less is taken for granted” (Bernstein 1975:90).

It is important to point out that Bernstein’s approach of associating restricted codes to the working-class and elaborated codes to the middle-class does not amount to a ‘verbal deficit’ theory. Bernstein was not associating lower class educational disadvantage to verbal or cognitive deficiencies, as many critics have suggested (Dittmar 1976). Bernstein’s thesis was rather that different conditions of life create different priorities which in turn produce differences in what language is used for. Schools operate in a manner which is familiar to the culture of a middle-class child; they operate

> ... in accordance with the particular constellation of orientations which are congruent with those of the middle class and their use of formal language. (Atkinson 1985:52).

Restricted codes are not the sole property of the working class and Edwards (2002:529) explains that they carry “great expressive power”. Bernstein’s (1975) own empirical work suggested that restricted codes were a much more fluent way of communicating than elaborated codes; the shared meaning and understanding meant fewer pauses. Moore (2004) explains that the educational inequalities arising from linguistic codes are cultural rather than cognitive. What is differentially distributed between groups are *recognition* and *realisation* rules. Pupils need *recognition rules* to comprehend the educational code of the school; recognition rules “identify the specialised character of the educational situation and its demand for an appropriate response” (Moore 2004:139). They also need *realisation rules* – devices which help pupils to act and respond to the pedagogic process in an appropriate manner. The elaborated codes of middle-class pupils provide them with more explicit recognition and realisation rules. They are better able to ‘decode’ the

educational code of the school: they are better at distinguishing

> ... between that which can be assumed and taken for granted and that which is calling for a *demonstration* of understanding within a specialised context such as a classroom, tutorial or examination. (Moore 2004:140).

There is a clear connection between linguistic codes and educational codes. The strong classifications and framing of the collection code can be aligned to the ritualistic, non-innovative nature of restricted codes. The innovative and universalistic meaning behind elaborated codes align them with the weak classifications and framing of the integrated code. It is these links which form the basis of Bernstein's explanation of how power and educational disadvantage operate. Both collection and integrated educational codes are codes of control – "both imply an inherent power structure" (Gorder 2000:222).

The weaker classifications and framing of the integrated code does not involve a weakening of the inherent power structure. Bernstein (1977) linked the move towards the 'progressive' teaching methods of the integrated code with the changing structure of the middle-class. The wealth and status of the traditional middle-class was built upon economic production. This could be reproduced through the visible pedagogy of a collection code – middle-class children acquired the requisite knowledge transmitted via the explicit, visible pedagogy. The 'new' middle-class has a much more indirect relationship to the means of production – their power is more symbolic and cultural than material. They favour invisible pedagogy with weak boundaries, a more personalised environment and the flexibility to allow the child to direct and explore their own learning; this is congruent to the structure of the 'new' middle-class family. The invisible pedagogy of the integrated code is thus "a highly specialised code favouring and sponsored by the new middle-class" (Moore 2004:141). They are much more able to

'decode' and read the message systems of the school via their elaborated language code. Bernstein (1977) suggests that the battle between visible and invisible forms of pedagogy is therefore symptomatic of a wider ideological conflict within the middle-class. This highlights that Bernstein's approach is not just a comparison of different cultures but an analysis of different social roles within the division of labour.

For the working-class child with a restricted language code it is more difficult to penetrate the flexibility and implicit meanings of invisible pedagogy. The integrated code may therefore disadvantage the working-class child to a greater extent than more explicit, visible forms of pedagogy. Bernstein (1977) suggests that a visible pedagogy favoured the working class; the explicit message systems were easily accessible:

> From the point of view of working-class parents, the visible pedagogy of the collection code at the primary level is immediately understandable. (Bernstein 1977:138).

It is invisible pedagogy which "provides possibilities for highly pervasive and effective control" (Atkinson 1985:166). This form of control is implicit; it is "likely to be realised through diffuse criteria which are not readily visible and accountable" (ibid). There is a parallel here with Bourdieu's concept of 'symbolic violence' – legitimation and control via symbolic systems. For Bernstein (1990:134) such symbolic control is

> ... the means whereby consciousness is given a specialised form and distributed through forms of communication which relay a given distribution of power and dominant cultural categories.

The concept of visible pedagogy was further refined by Bernstein (1990) to analyse recent educational debates. Autonomous visible pedagogy (AVP) – an extended form of visible pedagogy which celebrates the autonomy and intrinsic value of knowledge. AVP imposes the strong boundaries of a classification code by elevating the value of pure

academic knowledge. The neo-conservative policies of the 1988 Education Reform Act with a traditional curriculum and accountability suggest a move towards an AVP. Bernstein (1990:87) was critical of the rationale of AVP:

> ... its arrogance lies in its claim to moral high ground and to the superiority of its culture, its indifference to its own stratification consequences

Sadovnik (1991) suggests that the higher the socio-economic status of a school catchment area the more likelihood there is of an AVP. For schools in areas with lower socio-economic status:

> ... the more likely the hierarchical relations are to be explicit, visible and authoritarian. (Sadovnik 1991:59)

However this visible pedagogy is not of the AVP type; it is what Bernstein (1990) describes as *market-dependent visible pedagogy* (MVP) – the focus is on the economic necessity of skills and knowledge. An MVP would be less focused on academic interests than the AVP – the increasing popularity of vocational qualifications in schools is symptomatic of MVP (Edexcel 2004 report a 100% increase in the use of BTEC qualifications). Bernstein (1990:87) argues that the implementation of MVP in working class schools is "a new pedagogic Janus" – it acts to reproduce inequalities. The existence of AVP's and MVP's raises the spectre of the social class basis of vocational forms of education.

Apple (2002) explains that for Bernstein social class was the fundamental dynamic. Bernstein suggests the distinction between AVP's and MVP's is rooted in social class. Likewise the symbolic control of the 'new' middle-class operating through invisible pedagogy of an integrated code confers educational advantage and facilitates social reproduction. Bernstein (1990) seeks to clarify the processes at work within the

systems which reproduce inequality. To suggest that working-class educational disadvantage is caused by the symbolic power of a 'new' middle-class culture requires a deeper analysis of the complexity of the pedagogic process. Apple (2002:609) suggests that it is necessary to find the mechanisms which connect different social spheres of fields; how the symbolic power of the field of middle-class culture is distributed and mediated in the field of education. To do this it is necessary to examine Bernstein's later work (1990) on *pedagogic discourse;* to look at the medium of cultural reproduction rather than what is being reproduced. The focus moves from what is being transmitted to the underlying *pedagogic device*. Bernstein (1990:183) describes the pedagogic device as

> ... a principle for appropriating other discourses and bringing them into a special relation with each other for the purpose of their selective transmission and acquisition.

Apple (2002:611) explains that the pedagogic device is a tool which allows us to see how factors outside the school can affect those within.

Bernstein (1990) points to the similarities in educational practices across nations and cultures to suggest that schools must have a high degree of autonomy from economic and cultural factors. If explicit pedagogic practice varies little across cultures then there must be more implicit mechanisms at work which transmit cultural messages. Bernstein (1990) suggests that pedagogic discourse is the mediating device between the fields of culture and education. It takes the discourses of other fields and transforms and reorders them creating the opportunity for the "play of ideology" (Bernstein 1990:188). Discourse in this context is akin to Foucault's (1979) notion of discourse – a system of thought composed of distinctive ideas and language. Pedagogic discourse takes the ideas and language of one field and translates them into a form suitable for another field. It is this

process of transformation/translation which facilitates cultural reproduction. Pedagogic discourse is a device which recontextualises knowledge between fields. The original discourse in its primary context is filtered through pedagogic discourse and develops a secondary context. For example a school curriculum is not primary knowledge; it has been filtered and rewritten into texts which are taught via differing teaching methods by individual teachers with their own cultural background/perspective. This process recontextualises knowledge by framing it within a new discourse. It is the way pupils respond to this recontextualisation via their own cultural competencies which shapes educational advantage and cultural reproduction.

Within Bernstein's analysis the agency of the child resides in the potential conflict between the code inherited through parents and the educational code of the school. Bernstein (1977:37) suggests that the school transmits two orders or 'complexes' of behaviour:

- The Instrumental Order – this involves acquiring the formal knowledge and skills of the curriculum.
- The Expressive Order – this involves acquiring moral values regarding conduct and character.

Pupils who are not involved in the instrumental order either through disengagement or low academic ability will be less receptive to the expressive order. Working-class pupils with restricted language codes who do not access the instrumental order may look to non-school sources for the expressive order – anti-school subcultures. The code and values of such groups may well seem more familiar and welcoming than those of school. Atkinson (1985) also suggest that in complex pluralistic societies the focus of the school's

expressive code can become confused. Diverse ethnic and religious values are characteristic of an integrated code where pupils are more at liberty to explore and select value systems. Restricted codes may limit the willingness of some pupils to access such a pluralistic system. The possible tension between the instrumental and expressive order contains the seeds of pupil resistance.

The value of Bernstein's ideas is that they provide a link between the interactions of the culture of schooling to wider social relations of production and class based power. The ability of pupils to 'decode' the educational code of the school via their own cultural competencies and pedagogic discourse is crucial in understanding educational disadvantage and cultural reproduction. What needs to be explored within Bernstein's framework is the complexity of the educational code and how pupils respond to this. The dichotomy of collection code (strong classification and framing) and integrated code (weak classification and framing) may be too simplistically drawn. Atkinson (1985) suggests an exploration of strong classification/weak framing and weak classification/ strong framing as the basis of an educational code. The former combination may suggest the potential for a very structured, hierarchical and academic curriculum with pupils gaining a degree of ownership of the pacing, organising and timing of their learning. In this context Bernstein (1971:38) proposes that framing often becomes relaxed and less focused on the learning process "for purposes of social control of forms of deviancy" - relaxed framing is often associated with less able pupils "whom we have given up educating" (ibid). Relaxed framing for high ability, high achieving pupils would seem to be a type of educational code worthy of investigation. Karabel and Halsey (1977) called for Bernstein to connect the micro and macro aspects of his work within a neo-Marxist

framework. Sadovnik (1991) counters that Bernstein never courted a neo-Marxist agenda although his work addresses many of the same issues.

2.2 Resistance Theory:

Although both Bourdieu and Bernstein give an invaluable insight into the interplay between education and wider economic and cultural factors the neo-Marxist concepts of resistance and the potential for social transformation are somewhat underdeveloped in their work. 'Resistance theory' developed as an approach which advocated the agency of pupils; the focus was on how pupils could resist the logic of capitalist schooling. This approach developed in the wake of more deterministic Marxist approaches (Bowles and Gintis 1976) which focused on the correspondence between the social relations of capitalist production and the social relations of the education system. Although Bowles and Gintis (1976) established the important connection between economic interests and the process of schooling the theory has been prone to criticism; the central themes of which are:

- The correspondence between economy and schooling is viewed as too crude and deterministic. Warren (1978) argues that there is a lack of clarity regarding the determinism of the economy rendering the theory weak and impotent.
- The theory was essentially functionalist in its approach – schools were portrayed as functioning to socialise workers into capitalist roles (Liston 1988).
- The theory fails to examine how culture can operate to either reinforce the correspondence between economy and schooling or resist it (Moore 1988).

- The theory was fatalistic regarding the Marxist notion of social transformation; school pupils were portrayed as accepting of capitalist ideology. (Hargreaves 1982).

It is the final two points above that provide the springboard for resistance theory. Bowles and Gintis (1976) focused on the education system's role in reproducing capitalist relations of production at the expense of examining the potential of the social actors to resist this process. Apple (1981:35) commented that what was needed was:

> ... an analysis that focused on contradictions, conflicts, mediations and especially resistances – as well as reproduction.

A key text in this respect is *Learning to Labour* (Willis 1977); a critical ethnography of the schooling and cultural experiences of twelve 'lads' in a Midlands comprehensive school.

2.2.1 *Learning to Labour* – Paul Willis (1977)*:*

Willis (1977) adopts a Marxist theoretical framework but avoids the more objectivist Marxist positions of Bowles and Gintis (1976) or Giroux (1984) by employing the research techniques of symbolic interactionism. Through participant observation and interviews Willis places great emphasis on the cultural production of the social actors rather than viewing their actions as being determined by structural forces. He concludes that the education system is not particularly successful at socialising pupils into capitalist ideology but rather reproduces social inequality in unintended ways. It is the very resistance of 'the lads' which functions to reinforce their class position.

For Willis (1977) the focus is on the cultural production of 'the lads'; the way they respond to the process of schooling and their perceptions of their future roles in the workplace shape their destinies. Willis (1977:22) suggests that the oppositional counter

school culture of 'the lads' is "the zone of the informal". If the school represents the 'formal' structure of rules and hierarchy then working class cultural opposition to this involves "a withdrawal into the informal" (ibid). Willis suggests that the 'informal group' is the basic unit of the counter school culture – "the fundamental and elemental source of its resistance" (ibid:23). It is through the informal group that 'the lads' express their opposition.

'The lads' cultural production within the school is centred around "having a laff" (Willis 1977:32). The ability to produce and appreciate humour is a defining characteristic of being a 'lad'. It distinguishes them from the 'ear'ole' pupils whose conformity has "forgone their own right to have a 'laff'" (ibid:13). For 'the lads' 'having a laff' wins space against authority; pedagogic authority is "explored, played with and used in their humour" (ibid:30). However 'having a laff' is not sufficient to counter the boredom of school. Their excitement is rooted in their masculine identities – fighting, intimidation, camaraderie, machismo. Willis describes 'violence' as "the most basic axis of 'the lads' ascendance over the conformists" (ibid:34). The ability to fight denotes honour and status. 'The lads' masculine identities also display overt forms of sexism and racism. Women are viewed as "both sexual objects and domestic comforters" (ibid:43). Although 'the lads' express their own sense of superiority over women their attitudes are confused; "whilst women must be sexually attractive, they cannot be sexually experienced" (ibid). The identities of 'the lads' female peers are essentially centred upon their sexual attraction.

McRobbie (1980) is critical of Willis for not highlighting the oppression of girls by 'the lads' counter school culture. McRobbie even suggests that the rapport between

Willis and ‘the lads’ is symptomatic of the wider marginalisation of women within the study making the text an oppressive experience for women to read. Although Willis (1981:67) accepts that he “did not specify clearly enough the oppression of girls” he counters McRobbie’s wider argument by suggesting that the sexism expressed by ‘the lads’ was used in context to highlight how their masculinity relates to their wider identities. These wider identities relate to ‘the lads’ perception of their future roles as manual workers; their masculinity expressed partly through sexism is part of their own self-belief in the significance of their future roles.

Willis (1977) contextualises the counter school culture within the wider working-class culture. Willis suggests that the counter school culture produced by ‘the lads’ parallels the shop floor culture of the workplace; both display the “same fundamental taking hold of an alienating situation” (Willis 1977:82). Within the shopfloor culture the same self-belief and attempt to gain informal control exists. The father of one of ‘the lads’ discussing his manual job expresses disdain for the inadequacies of the formal – “the managers couldn’t do it” (ibid:53). In both school and shopfloor counter cultures there is “the omnipresent feeling that they know better” (ibid:56). ‘The lads’ and their fathers believe that manual labour is superior to any form of mental labour or theorising. ‘The lads’ disdain for the mental requirements of school parallel their fathers disdain for the non-manual theorising of workplace management. One of ‘the lads’ bemoans breaking his pledge to go through a school term without writing – “I writ ‘yes’ on a piece of paper, that broke me heart” (ibid:27); this is paralleled on the shopfloor which “abounds with apocryphal stories about the idiocy of purely theoretical knowledge” (ibid:56). For ‘the lads’ school builds up a resistance to mental work; mental labour

carries with it "the threat of a demand for obedience and conformism" (ibid:103). Thus resistance to authority flows through this resistance to mental labour which is learnt in the school; the resistance of the counter school culture runs into the attitudes of the shopfloor culture. Willis (ibid:96) thus speaks of 'continuities' between school and work predicated upon a strong cultural link. This link between the school and workplace is not a 'correspondence theory' (Bowles and Gintis 1976) but rather a reflection of working-class cultural production within the two social sites. 'The lads' actively choose to pursue their future roles in manual work and await them with optimism. Their own culture supplies them with the criteria for these choices. The divisions between lads/ear 'oles, counter school culture/conformity, manual/mental prevail; these divisions are

> ... experienced as a division between different kinds of future, different kinds of gratification, and different kinds of jobs. (Willis 1997:97)

These parallels illustrate how Willis places 'the lads' counter school culture within the logic of wider working-class culture. Willis (1977:62) uses the term *differentiation* to describe how working-class culture separates from the formal institution. Working-class culture disrupts the meanings and exchanges which the formal institution expects; they are "reinterpreted, separated and discriminated with respect to working-class interests, feelings and meanings" (ibid). Differentiation does not imply a breakdown of functioning; it describes how the individual coexists with the formal institution. Willis (1977) describes how differentiation occurs through the teacher-pupil relationship. Echoing Bernstein's (1977) suggestion that the integrated code (weak classification and framing) has become the dominant educational code, Willis (1977:63) suggests that "the teacher's actual power of direct coercion in modern society is very limited". Authority must be won more by consent; on moral grounds. Willis explains that

this is built upon the principle of a 'fair exchange' – "knowledge for respect, guidance for control" (ibid:64). The process of differentiation through the counter school culture delegitimises this sense of 'fair exchange'. What the teacher offers in exchange for 'the lads' compliance is regarded with suspicion:

> The teacher's authority becomes increasingly the random one of the prison guard, not the necessary one of the pedagogue. (ibid:72).

The basic teaching paradigm does not appeal to 'the lads' culture; the process of differentiation does – once 'the lads' have withdrawn from the ethos of schooling "there is a huge reservoir of class feeling to be drawn upon" (ibid:73).

For resistance theory this differentiation or withdrawal is a crucial point. Munns and McFadden (2000) refer to a 'moment'; a decisive nodal point when cumulative disengagement leads to pupils withdrawing their allegiance to school values and ethos. In this sense 'resistance' is defined as the effect of repeated, cumulative disengagement. Willis (1983:124) also refers to this 'moment':

> ...there is a moment…when the manual giving of labour power represents both a freedom, election and transcendence. (Willis 1983:124).

Regarding 'the lads' Willis (1977:74) suggests that the wider cultural support which follows differentiation is crucial:

> Once the working-class boy begins to differentiate himself from school authority there is a powerful cultural charge behind him to complete the process.

Munns and McFadden (2000:62) argue that there are definable conditions which act in unison to produce the 'moment' of resistance. Feelings of powerlessness, disillusionment, an awareness of the frailties of meritocracy and wider cultural support from communities all combine to create an 'epiphany' of resistance:

> ...a consciousness of social position bringing forward creative moments of culturally produced responses which are generated from the local milieu.

The key aspects of this analysis are that resistance is culturally produced and targeted against features of the education system that pupils believe have failed them. Munns and McFadden (2000) examine the experiences of Aboriginal Koori students in an Australian school. The Kooris experience disadvantage in all areas of Australian society – education, employment, housing, health; a form of "endemic institutional and personal racism" (ibid:63). Koori pupils experienced all the 'conditions' which Munns and McFadden propose lead up to the 'moment' of resistance; the powerlessness, disillusion, disengagement and cultural support. The oppositional behaviour displayed by the Koori pupils was "inextricably connected to the protracted failure of this school…to deliver educational success." (ibid: 66). The pupils did understand that education was linked to future opportunity but they had reached their 'moment'. The decision to resist was made easier by the Koori community's anticipation and acceptance of educational failure amongst their youth; "there was cultural support for their opposition and resistance" (ibid). The Koori people did not reject education; they rejected the system which they believed was discriminatory. Resistance was an expression of cultural solidarity; part of the Kooris' collective conscience.

Reaching this 'moment' moves pupils into a new realm involving 'post-differentiated relationships' (Willis 1977:77). The tension between the formal institution of the school and the informal counter school culture is fully exposed. The principle of 'fair exchange' between teachers and pupils is abandoned. Willis reports that many teachers feel outrage at the breakdown of the teaching paradigm and withdraw their part of the exchange – the make knowledge beyond the reach of 'the lads'. The pedagogic

process breaks down as both sides withdraw their input. The behaviour of 'the lads' in these 'post-differentiated relationships' is an important as it reveals their expression of resistance. The empirical evidence presented by Willis (1977) shows 'the lads' disruption, vandalism, aggression, sexism, racism and recalcitrance. It is the intention behind these actions which is the key point of analysis. For Willis and other neo-Marxist analyses of education empirical accounts of pupil responses to schooling are insufficient. Pupils' resistance must link to wider structures of power and contain some transformative potential. The difficulty is in linking behaviour which empirical evidence suggests is often petulant, nihilistic and unsavoury to Marxist notions of social change. The difficulty is thus defining what potential 'resistance' has for social transformation.

Willis (1977:119) introduces the concept of *penetrations*; the insights that working-class pupils develop regarding being schooled in capitalist society. An example of a 'penetration' would be 'the lads' belief that academic qualifications would make little difference to their lives; despite constant advice to the contrary. Such penetrations are tempered by *limitations* – "those blocks, diversions and ideological effects which confuse and impede the full development" of the penetrative impulses (ibid). What develop from this are *partial penetrations* – insights which are obscured or tempered by limitations. 'The lads' insights are thus incipient and paradoxically contribute to their own low status and social reproduction. This paradox occurs because 'the lads' cultural production expressed through the counter school culture acts eventually to serve the reproduction of existing social relations of production. 'The lads' desire for manual labour and their sense of optimism and superiority which surrounds this leads to their own damnation – they perform low status low paid work.

The concept of *partial penetrations* invests resistance with a wider radical and ideological agenda. In 'the lads' minds they have seen through the dominant school culture, found it of no value and rejected it. Willis (1977:178) is however pragmatic about the intent; "They are not trying to be good class warriors; they are trying to be good 'lads'". Willis (ibid) suggests that the logic and intention occurs at the group level – "the culture provides the principle of individual movement and action" (ibid:121).Willis stresses the *creativity* (ibid) of the counter school culture and the role it plays in the formation of 'the lads' partial penetrations. Insights are not lessons which are learned and passively accepted; they are rather "lived out and are the result of concrete and uncertain exploration" (ibid:122). 'The lads' develop their resistant insights through the creative interaction of the counter school culture with pedagogic authority.

Willis (1977:130) illustrates this point through his account of the role *labour* plays in social reproduction. Willis suggests that 'the lads' have an insight (partial penetration) into the meaning of their own labour power. In school they are adept at withdrawing from the set tasks of work; they are skilled at "knowing, settling and controlling their own activities" (ibid). In the workplace labour power is the only variable commodity and Willis suggests the counter school culture "as if by instinct" (ibid:131) understands this. 'The lads' display an understanding of their own power to limit the quantity of labour they provide; they show "a responsiveness to the uniqueness of human labour power" (ibid:132). Willis is careful not to attribute any "critique or analytic motive" (ibid) to this action but suggests that their action "in its own way constitutes an attempt to defeat a certain ideological definition" (ibid). The creativity and cultural production of the counter school culture helps 'the lads' develop an awareness of the role

of labour power in capitalist society.

Willis (1977:145) is however pragmatic about the effect of such insights. He suggests that penetrations fall short of being the seeds of any transformative political activity as they lack organisation. Limitations act to distort and mystify 'the lads' insights; to change their "pure logic into a partial logic" (ibid). 'The lads' insights regarding manual labour are distorted by the value they place on it. Whilst dominant groups value mental over manual labour and reward them accordingly 'the lads' reverse this hierarchy. Their masculine celebration of manual labour stabilises the system of role allocation; 'the lads' attitudes allow "subordinate role to be taken on 'freely'" (ibid:151). They fill the jobs the dominant groups have no wish to perform and unwittingly facilitate social reproduction.

The fact that Willis portrays 'the lads' as being implicated in their own damnation has led to critics interpreting *Learning to Labour* as a study of social reproduction. Walker (1986) argues that Willis may rely on a romanticised notion of 'the lads' resistance and cultural production to avoid a position of left functionalism. The ultimate effect of 'the lads' opposition is a reproduction of class relations; Walker (1986:67) suggests that Willis' attempt to present their resistance as grounds for social transformation may be "an elaborate construction far outrunning the empirical evidence". Willis (1977:121) states that "the ethnography of visible forms is limited" – the validity of theoretical constructs like *penetrations* require a degree of methodological rigour. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) suggest that Willis' overall analysis requires a consideration of alternative explanations. Walker (1986:67) calls Willis' concept of *penetration* a 'posit' – a supposition which may be true but its validity is "not evident in

any sort of clear and pure form in the ethnographic data". An alternative account may well be that working-class cultural production is impotent to resist the function of the school in reproducing inequality.

Willis (1981) seeks to defend *Learning to Labour* against suggestions that it is a left functionalist study of social reproduction by clarifying the significance he places on cultural production. This argument is essentially an expansion of his conclusions of the original study – the suggestion of "the general possibility of effectivity at the cultural level" (Willis 1977:185). Willis (1981) argues that it is not inevitable that cultural production will lead to cultural reproduction – the cultural production of one generation is rarely identical to the next. Whatever culture *is* reproduced between generations will impact upon social reproduction - this is "an ever-repeated creative process which each time carries no more guarantee than the last" (Willis 1981:60). Capital is therefore never secure in its ability to reproduce itself; it does not determine cultural production and cannot control and direct the path of its own reproduction. Cultural production is not predictable and will impact upon social reproduction in complex, varying ways. Blackledge and Hunt (1985:209) are critical of Willis for claiming that attitudes towards work are passed on from school to workplace through the generations. They interpret Willis' evidence differently by referencing the attitudes of one of 'the lads' (Joey) and his father:

> Joey's father... clearly enjoys the recognition by management that he is doing a demanding job well and has a good, friendly relationship with them... Joey... unlike his father... is not on good terms with other social groups and classes

This criticism would seem to be supporting rather than undermining Willis' overall thesis regarding cultural reproduction – it is never reproduced as a facsimile. Like Bourdieu's

(1977) concept of *habitus* Willis is rather saying that cultural production has the scope to change between generations. The key distinction is between cultural and social reproduction. Culture may not perfectly reproduce itself but this will not necessarily affect social reproduction – the same social inequalities may persist.

Gordon (1984) suggests that the dominant ideology will partly incorporate and partly subvert working-class cultural production; the result may be beneficial to social reproduction as in the case of 'the lads' counter school culture. Willis (1981:60) argues that such a beneficial outcome is by no means inevitable; the whole process is "a highly inefficient and hardly intended method". The cultural production of 'the lads' is only one example of cultural production and one which contained many unsavoury elements. Willis (1981:64) explains "the lads culture suggests only one form of subordinate cultural production" – others may have greater potential for social transformation. If 'the lads' culture proved impotent this does not mean that all subordinate counter cultures will do so. Resistance theory may need to investigate those cultures than have often been marginalised in terms of their counter-hegemonic potential – high ability and high achieving pupils whose critical insights and cultural production may be predicated on more egalitarian notions than those of 'the lads'. Blackledge and Hunt (1985:216) argue that Willis ignores the variety of pupil identities within a school and suggest that conformity and resistance are not polar opposites. The conformist 'ear'oles' are presented in a very one-dimensional role by Willis. Their conformity is presented as a contrast to the oppositional behaviour of 'the lads'; they provide a foil for 'the lads'. Willis (1981:62) acknowledges that the 'ear'oles' were presented "more as a stylistic device than as a theoretical necessity".

Willis (1977:84) makes the observation that in working-class schools where a sizeable number of pupils are focused on academic success the counter school culture may function differently – "the option of being something of an 'ear'ole' might be seen somewhat differently". Since the time of Willis' original ethnography there are certainly more working class schools of this type.

Therefore although *Learning to Labour* may be an *account* of the social reproduction of the particular culture Willis studied, its wider theoretical approach suggests that for other cultures this is not an inevitability. Willis (1981:64) talks of "driving a wedge between cultural production and cultural reproduction" – developing the agency of pupils into a counter-hegemonic agenda. The role of the teacher would seem central to this. Walker (1986) raises the important issue of the relatively one sided approach Willis (1977) takes in exploring agency and cultural production. The cultural production of teachers is given far less consideration than that of the pupils. Willis' (1977:68) ethnographic evidence highlights two variants of the 'basic teaching paradigm' – "both are responses to differentiation or the fear of differentiation". Teachers are responding to the success of the counter school culture's success in breaking down the pedagogic process. The first response involves teachers attempting to create a moral agenda; an attempt to partially 're-integrate' pupils by appealing to their sense of morality. Teachers yield some ground to the pupils in exchange for order and temperance – "accepting with good grace battles which are already lost" (ibid:70). A senior teacher describes this as "careful containment" (ibid). The second response is what Willis (ibid) gives the general title 'progressivism' – congruent to Bernstein's (1977) *integrated code* with weak classification and framing. Bernstein (1971:38) proposes that framing often

becomes relaxed and less focused on the learning process "for purposes of social control of forms of deviancy". Relaxed frames often occur with less able pupils "whom we have given up educating" (ibid).

Willis (1977:81) explains that the 'most successful teachers' in the eyes of senior staff are those who can adapt the basic teaching paradigm and contain the counter school culture "without provoking incidents on the one hand or collapse on the other". Teaching pupils such as 'the lads' then becomes a process of "winning a form of consent" (ibid:83). The teacher identities Willis describes are passive and defeatist; their role is one of containment and collusion to maintain order. However in the concluding chapter of *Learning to Labour* Willis (1977:190) alludes to a form of critical pedagogy to address the issues he has raised:

> ... to initiate a specifically working class contents for pedagogic practice which would drop particular notions of subjects and specialisms and interrogate instead the nature and logic of different formal and informal working class forms and – not least important – their contradictory role in current cultural and social reproduction.

The value of Willis' (1977) study is that it examines the agency of working class pupils and the possible 'penetrations' their resistant behaviour might contain into the workings of capitalist society. Although 'the lads' cultural expression is ultimately self-defeating their resistance indicates that social reproduction through education is not a smooth and effective process. Willis' critics (Walker 1986, Blackledge and Hunt 1985, Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) raise important concerns about major aspects of the study. The validity of interpreting 'the lads' often unsavoury actions as 'penetrations', the one dimensional treatment of other pupils and teachers, accusations left-functionalism and the issue of Marxist social transformation require further development. Also the

relevance and transferability of a study over thirty years old to contemporary schooling requires consideration. The way that subsequent neo-Marxist ideas have developed in the wake of Willis' (1977) study will be examined.

2.2.2 Neo-Marxist Developments in Resistance Theory

The methodological weakness of resistance theory has been that the concept of 'resistance' lacks construct validity. 'Resistance' is presented as a broad, universal category which encompasses all forms of contestation and oppositional behaviour. Anyon (1981) invests pupils' cultural expression with a strong radical agenda in a study of five American elementary schools from different social classes. She argues that the social relations of schooling are fraught with contradictions and the potential for disorder. The school thus becomes a site of ideological resistance:

> ...rather than simply being conserving or reproductive, school knowledge embodies contradictions that have profound implications for social change. (Anyon 1981:4)

Hargreaves (1982) is very critical of the construct validity and causal links of Anyon's approach. 'Resistance' for Anyon (1981) seems to be operationalised as any pupil action or expression which goes against pedagogic authority. Refusing to answer questions, withholding enthusiasm, childish pranks are all given the status of indicators of an ideologically infused resistance. Hargreaves (1982:113) argues that this approach "appears to credit pupil action with the status of 'resistance'…by arbitrary designation". Anyon's method would seem to sidestep the issue of falsification; it becomes difficult to classify any pupil action as *not* resistant. The simple but crucial point of contention is that – "Not all oppositional behaviour can be seen as resistance." (Wright and Weekes 2003:11). For neo-Marxist analyses of schooling to counter accusations of romanticism

and left functionalism it would seem essential to construct a clearer definition of what resistance is and how it is expressed by pupils.

A further problem regarding the concept of pupil resistance in neo-Marxist theories is presented by Woods (1979). Woods argues that many pupils reject the goals of schooling and the means to achieve them but display no conscious opposition to the school's values. 'Retreatist' pupils reject academic ambition but don't replace school culture with any alternative values. This is an important distinction as it highlights how pupils' actions can be given a plausible explanation which has little to do with confronting authority. For example Anyon (1981) from a Marxist perspective considers 'withholding enthusiasm' to be a form of resistance and rebellion. Woods (1979) however argues that pupils withholding enthusiasm are not confronting pedagogic authority or ideology; they are expressing an apathetic disinterest. This is a key point of analysis which Marxist theorists need to address as the concept of pupil 'retreatism' emasculates the concept of pupil 'resistance'. Retreatism "provides a rather weak platform for collective social transformation" (Hargreaves 1982:113). If Marxist analyses of pupil resistance are to develop methodological and theoretical validity they must address the issue of how 'resistance' as a social scientific concept can be distinguished from non-ideological, oppositional or 'retreatist' behaviour.

Fernandes (1988) uses a Bernsteinian approach to define resistance and distinguishes between 'partial' and 'global' resistance. He argues that theories of resistance are incipient; one reason being that they do not fully articulate resistance within theories of social and cultural reproduction. Fernandes suggests that pupil resistance challenges two aspects of social reproduction:

- The sexual and social division of labour; inequalities based upon class, gender, and ethnicity.
- The inculcation of dominant ideologies.

Fernandes argues that pupil resistance must be analysed at both these levels. Resistance which challenges the framing of learning is a challenge against the sexual and social division of labour. Strong framing involve structured, disciplined learning and Fernandes argues that this benefits those pupils who have the cultural capital to succeed. Therefore strong framing reproduces sexual and social inequalities as dominant social groups can reproduce their status. However oppositional behaviour which targets the framing of learning is labelled as "partial resistance" (Fernandes 1988:175); it lacks any ideological focus and generally leads to exclusion or marginalisation of the perpetrators. Fernandes suggests that resistance which seeks to weaken classifications amongst social categories is a form of resistance which challenges dominant ideology. Whenever classifications are weakened, dominant ideologies are weakened. For Fernandes (1988:174) the targets of resistance need to be both the framing and classifications of the pedagogic process. The weakening of framing

> ...needs to be articulated with the weakening of the classification between dominant and dominated social categories. (ibid)

This combination is what Fernandes calls 'global resistance'. As strong frames impose little option on how pupils learn they help maintain strong classifications. A 'global', ideologically infused resistance will therefore oppose both frame and classification. Fernandes (1988:178) gives an example of what he considers to be 'global resistance'; a female student who gains a university degree in a 'masculine' subject and uses this knowledge to contribute to the movement against gender discrimination.

By looking at the targets of resistance in terms of Bernstein's (1971) 'framing' and 'classifications' Fernandes (1988) helps to more fully articulate the notion of an ideologically infused concept of resistance. By labelling resistance which targets only the frames of learning as 'partial', Fernandes addresses the criticisms levelled against Anyon (1981) that neo-Marxist resistance theory is too hasty to attribute all oppositional behaviour as ideological/counter-hegemonic. However the admission that 'global resistance' is a rare phenomenon (Fernandes 1988) still renders the ideological/ transformative potential of resistance somewhat impotent. If the vast majority of pupil resistance is 'partial' and fails to contest social inequality and dominant ideology then its political agenda would seem diminished.

Although neo-Marxist theories of resistance give pupils' cultural expression a radical/political agenda their weakness is that they must make a theoretical 'leap of faith' between pupils' actions and their transformative potential. Whether pupils' actions can be invested with this transformative potential becomes a key point of analysis.

An illustration of this more politically infused form of resistance is outlined by Mills (1997). Mills relates the story of an initiative in an Australian High School of a student advocate system. Senior pupils aged 16/17 were trained to speak on behalf of younger students who had been accused of wrongdoing and were in conflict with pedagogic authority. The system called into question the most fundamental assumptions of the school hierarchical structure; there was:

> ...an implicit recognition that teachers have the potential to abuse the power relationship which exists between them and students. (ibid:44).

There was a challenge to the assumption that teachers' authority is sacrosanct; a challenge to the dualism of teacher/pupil. Mills emphasizes that a crucial aspect of this

system was that it was not a teacher owned process. It was not a case of teachers empowering students; students developed a sense of autonomy and used it in a mature, focused manner. Mills relates incidents where students give advice to teachers about disciplining students and an episode where a female student challenges the sexism of a male teacher. The importance this study is that it portrays high ability students developing a consciousness which is constructive and counter-hegemonic. The intention is to challenge unfairness and injustice; to establish a more equitable system which they feel part of. Of course student power in this case was limited and existed within the school hierarchy but it was a form of cultural expression that elevated the voice of students to a more democratic arena and created a sense of inclusion. These pupils were academically successful outward conformists but became involved in a project which questioned some of the most basic assumptions of school hierarchy. They were in a position where they had the power/knowledge to resist the classifications of schooling, speaking up in defence of pupils accused of wrongdoing and questioning teacher omnipotence in matters of discipline. A poignant and revealing episode is when the students relate the sense of empowerment that the project gave them:

> I felt extremely equal with everyone around me; it was really a dynamic experience to be among all these really exciting…and interesting people…and they were all going to listen to me. (ibid:47).

The tendency in neo-Marxist resistance theories has been to romanticise forms of resistance which only challenge the frames of the pedagogic process, (Anyon 1981, Willis 1977), and seek ideological/transformative potential within this. Woods (1979) polarises conformity and rebellion as two mutually exclusive traits; Willis (1977) marginalises the conformist ‘ear’oles’ in his study as mere stooges for the rebellious

'lads'. Furlong (1984) makes the crucial point that pupils do not fit into simplistic adaptations. Rather they drift between modes of behaviour, conformity and rebellion. Mills' (1997) study illustrates that given the opportunity outwardly conformist pupils can harness their power/knowledge to produce a qualitatively superior form of resistance than mere challenges against the frames of learning. Giroux (1983:247) argues that it is important to measure resistance not just in terms of overt behaviour of pupils but also "in the nature of their attitudes toward school as a hegemonic institution." Those pupils who reject the ideology of the school but value the power/ knowledge it furnishes them with, which they can then turn back upon the institution to critique its organisation/ classifications would seem to be exhibiting a qualitatively different form of resistance to Willis' lads.

Mills (1997) believes that teachers should encourage pupils to identify and challenge the assumptions of capitalist society; in Bernstein's (1971) terminology to provoke them to challenge social classifications both inside and outside of the school. A 'disruptive pedagogy' would arm pupils with alternative subject positions by "creating an awareness that their own subjectivities are not fixed" (Mills 1997:40). For Mills this is not a process of teachers empowering pupils. The role of the teacher in disruptive pedagogy is to challenge the dualism of teacher/pupil by presenting pupils with the opportunity to question social classifications for themselves. Giroux (1983) argues that it is this symbiotic relationship between teacher and pupil that can harness a new mode of learning. Pupils' cultural expression in itself is too unfocused and impotent to threaten social classifications:

> Subjective intentions alone pose little threat to the concrete and objective structures of domination. (Giroux 1983:200).

However for Sultana the fear is that teachers are becoming more and more withdrawn into a technocratic vision of education which leaves no scope for a critical reflection of pedagogic practice and wider social issues. Sultana (1989:305) argues that:

> ...it is naïve in the extreme to expect teachers to encourage activities which will rock their routinised, 'recipe' knowledge.

Performance management would seem to be a more pressing concern for teachers than social justice in this interpretation. Sultana relates the comments of a teacher who fears that critical forms of pedagogy would exacerbate pupil resistance; teaching pupils about social injustice and their class based cultural heritage would create unrest – "we're going to have a lot of angry young people on our hands" (ibid). Sultana's pessimism does raise the important issue of teacher resistance. A critical form of pedagogy does require the teacher to resist dominant discourses on schooling, particularly the discourse of rationalisation/accountability.

Shamai (1990) argues that teacher resistance has too often been overlooked within theories of resistance. In a study of the ethnic minority Druze population in Israel, Shamai (1990) highlights how teachers as well as pupils can resist the dominant ideology and create a form of critical pedagogy. The minority Arab Druze population is educated by the majority Israeli education system. The teachers in Druze schools have to correspond to and are accountable to the Israeli authorities; they fear for their jobs if they politicize the curriculum and are perceived as anti-Israeli. However the dominant form of cultural expression in Druze schools is pro-Syrian. There is no overt, political, anti-Israeli discourse but through passive resistance and celebrating their own cultural heritage Druze teachers and pupils manage to oppose the Israeli education system; they have developed a "dominant form of disobedient behaviour" (Shamai 1990:462). Using a curriculum and

resources designed by the Israeli education authorities the Druze teachers manage to instil in the pupils a belief and pride in the Druze cultural heritage and an awareness of their political status within Israel. Shamai argues that this process works so well that it is difficult to label it as 'resistance'; it becomes the dominant force:

> ...it is difficult to decide clearly if usual acts of disobedience can be regarded as resistance, or regarded as external expression of cultural domination.
> (Shamai 1990:455)

Although the example of the Druze relates to a specific ethnic and political struggle it does highlight the possibility of teachers and pupils resisting dominant cultural forms to produce a critical pedagogy. It illustrates that non-dominant forms of cultural expression are not merely "the reflex of hegemony and defeat" but rather "a social process that both embodies and reproduces lived antagonistic social relationships." (Giroux 1983:13).

2.2.3 *Schooling as a Ritual Performance* – Peter McLaren (1993)*:*

McLaren (1993) carried out an ethnographic study in a Canadian Catholic middle-school catering for immigrant Portuguese students. Issues of power, inequality and social reproduction are considered from a postmodern as well as a Marxist perspective. The concept of *ritual* is the key point of analysis. McLaren (1993:217) argues that schools are "ritually saturated institutions" – rituals act to shape modes of behaviour within the school; they are "blueprints for thinking and doing" (ibid:218). As such they underpin the power structure of the school and wider capitalist society. By *ritual* McLaren is referring to everyday actions, rules, symbols and beliefs. Examples cited are students asking permission to leave the room, saying prayers, queuing to enter the school. Such actions are akin to the concept of the 'hidden curriculum' (Bowles and Gintis 1976) but McLaren also focuses on the body – how gestures, expressions and the physicality of students can

be influenced and determined by rituals.

The importance of rituals is in the way they shape culture; they are "carriers of cultural codes" (McLaren 1993:3) and as such shape students' perception and understanding of the pedagogic process. McLaren views the classroom as being a symbolic arena "where students and teachers struggle over the interpretation of metaphors, icons and structures of meaning" (ibid:6). Teachers condition pupils into accepting the relevance and sanctity of accepted rituals; rituals become hegemonic and transmit ideological messages. McLaren highlights the acceptance by both students and teachers of the drudgery of lessons; mundane classroom rituals have become internalised to the point of acceptance.

The way students respond to the rituals of the school shapes their educational outcomes. Some accept the order and security which the ritualised system offers through conformity. McLaren argues that such conformity does not benefit the working class Portuguese students as they lack the cultural capital to succeed. Teachers are "unwitting accomplices in cultural and social reproduction" (McLaren 1993:224); through their "middle-class mores" (ibid) they fail to account for class differences in their pedagogic practice and thus inflict symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1977) on the Portuguese students. Rituals serve to constrain the subjectivities of students. They restrict the working class Portuguese students to the basic levels of the school curriculum. McLaren cites examples of teachers expressing low opinions of Portuguese students' ability and potential; the system denigrates the minority Portuguese culture and "fails to permit students to affirm their own class/cultural identities" (McLaren 1993:85).

The concept of pupil resistance is interpreted by McLaren (1993:82) as an attempt

by students to subvert the ritualised functioning of the school – "a type of ceremonial 'destructuring'". McLaren sees pupils who resist school rituals as having created an 'antistructure' – "the crucible of creativity" (ibid:222); an alternative social space where counter-hegemonic rituals are adopted. Within the 'antistructure' students subvert the grammar of classroom discourse. McLaren (1993:83) defines two forms of pupil resistance:

- **Active Resistance** – this involves an "intentional or conscious attempt by students to subvert or sabotage teacher instruction or rules and norms" (ibid).
- **Passive Resistance** – this involves a less conscious form of intent. Students adopt rituals which "unconsciously or tacitly subvert or sabotage normative codes of the dominant school order" (ibid).

The distinction is therefore one of intent; the level at which the resistant actions are consciously adopted. Integral to students' inclination to resist authority is what McLaren (ibid:87) refers to as the students' "interactive states". These are four different forms of behaviour which students adopt and are presented by McLaren as ideal type identities:

- **Streetcorner State –** this is when students are engaged in their own cultural expression. McLaren (ibid:100) describes an "aliveness" and "an abundance of furtive sensual pleasures" (ibid:87). Time is unstructured, speech irregular and physical contact dominates interactions. In their 'streetcorner state' students are most in touch with their own cultural norms – they "bathe in the ambience of working class and distinctively ethnic cultural forms" (ibid:89).
- **Student State –** this is where students give themselves over to the control of pedagogic authority. The dominant discourse is one of hard work and time is

structured and controlled. A key element of the 'student state' is the distinction created between mind and body. The mind takes precedence and the body must be controlled and disciplined. McLaren sees pedagogic authority as the boundary between the students' streetcorner state and their student state.

- **Sanctity State** – this is where the school's Catholic ethos dominates and students feel they are "filled with a reality of something greater than themselves which cannot be explained in rational terms" (ibid:92).
- **Home State –** this is where parents have authority but the students have ready access to their streetcorner state.

For McLaren pupil resistance is an attempt by students to impose their streetcorner state upon the pedagogic process. The rituals of the streetcorner state conflict with those of the student state. The streetcorner state involves a counter-hegemonic mode of thinking and acting; the student state incorporates all of the ritual which McLaren argues control and disadvantage the working class Portuguese.

A major strength of McLaren's (1993) study is the consideration he gives to teacher as well as student identities. Three ideal type teacher identities are described:

- **The Entertainer** – the teacher who can engage the students but does not provoke any wider interest in the curriculum or the students cultural heritage.
- **The Hegemonic Overlord** - the teacher who upholds and defends the rituals of the dominant pedagogic discourse. Hegemonic overlord teachers will exert discipline, demand conformity and transmit the ideology of school authority. As such this identity "serves as a conditional reflex of the culture's consensus ideology" (ibid:16).

- **The Liminal Servant** – lessons will move from being purely indicative to referencing the cultural heritage of the students. The teacher will act as a 'cultural provocateur' and a 'social activist' and "view working class students as members of an oppressed group" (ibid:115). Liminal servant teachers will not make excuses for the deficiencies of students; they will use the myths, metaphors and rhythms that will have meaning for the students. There will be a wider cultural awareness which will be used to "help students crack the prevailing cultural crust and discover alternative meanings" (ibid:117). Liminal servant teachers will engage with students' 'streetcorner state' and allow the 'student state' to dissolve.

These identities are ideal types and teachers will drift between them. McLaren own observations witnessed the liminal servant persona only in a small minority of lessons. The dominant identity was the hegemonic overlord persona (some teachers were more successful than others at adopting this). The consequence of this is that schooling becomes focused upon compliance with rituals which discriminate against working class students. The hegemonic overlord will police the "operational efficacy" (ibid:130) of rituals. The rituals will be sanctified and not vulnerable to falsification. Students will perform the rituals but generally develop little belief of faith in their validity. The rationale of the hegemonic overlord teacher is to rationalise and "prevent the outbreak of random and unpredictable events" (ibid:135).

These teacher identities are crucial in understanding pupil resistance. McLaren (1993:147) calls pupil resistance a "liminal experience" – it tests the boundaries of pedagogic authority by introducing rituals and symbols which are alien to the dominant school culture. Liminal servant teachers can embrace such cultural expression and

incorporate it into lessons. Hegemonic overlord teachers will suppress and contain any such expression. McLaren describes this process of resistance and suppression using powerful battlefield metaphors. For McLaren (ibid:146) the classroom is a "highly contested territory" and

> ... one of the largest sustained guerrilla warfare campaigns since the advent of mass literacy. (ibid).

Students will resist dominant school culture and the hegemonic overlord approach by reference to their streetcorner state; they will seek to "disassemble, dismember and refashion pedagogical symbols" (ibid:153). McLaren references the 'gestures of resistance' visible in the students bodies – clenched fists, pursed lips, crossed arms – all acts of defiance drawn from the physicality of their streetcorner state. A key form of student resistance for McLaren is refusing to work; this creates a "scandal of absence, a silent insurrection" (ibid:159). McLaren describes the obsession of teachers regarding keeping students 'on task' – being busy is more important than being correct or being engaged in a worthwhile task. Being on task means that there is no space for resistance; no vacuum for alternative/subversive rituals to fill. In fact McLaren (ibid:197) describes the whole classroom environment as being "sociofugal" – designed to inhibit social interaction. There is a fear that interaction would engender resistance.

To illustrate how forms of resistance can be qualitatively different McLaren (ibid:162) describes the effects of the behaviour of a 'class clown'. For McLaren such behaviour is a passive form of resistance and as such impacts little on the dominant school discourse. Clowns can act to illustrate the arbitrariness of rules and the inconsistencies and they often contain; they can show that rules "are not handed down from heaven" (ibid). However this is a subtle and understated form of resistance which

teachers shrug off more than take action against – it is impotent and not a direct threat to pedagogic authority.

An interesting metaphor which McLaren uses is in describing resistance as a reaction to the *pain* of being a student. McLaren (1993:166) views resistance from the perspective of the students' bodies. They are confined within the "concrete and formica womb" (ibid) of the school; their pain is in enduring the repetition and boredom of the everyday rituals. The body is thus the receptor of student 'pain' – "relationships of power were grafted onto the medium of living flesh" (ibid:168). Resistance is thus linked to suffering and McLaren even extends this to the analogy of Christ – the Catholic imagery of the school provides a constant reference to suffering. In this sense McLaren (ibid:170) describes resistance as a "crypto-religion" – it has its own rituals, symbols and metaphors of pain.

Part of this 'pain' is inflicted through the process of reification. McLaren (1993:128) sees the institution of the school as a "dehumanized world". Rituals are transformed into sanctified acts. The ritual of 'being on task' is reified into having a much wider social significance. Teachers create the belief that being on task is essential to prevent failure in later life; even when the task at hand is mundane and requires little ability. What results is 'oversanctification' – petty rules and mundane tasks take on a greater importance than they warrant. They become the object of social action and unquestionable. Berger and Luckman (1967:89) describe reification as

> ... the apprehension of the products of human activity as if they were something else than human.... that man is capable of forgetting his own authorship of the human world.

Classroom rituals in this sense take on their own meaning, they become sanctified as something beyond human creation.

A distinctive feature of McLaren's (1993) study is that it was set in a Catholic school. McLaren (1993:137) argues that within the school there were two 'root paradigms' – "culturally induced scripts that exist in teachers' and students' heads". These were 'becoming a good worker' and 'becoming a good Catholic' and McLaren suggests that the two are inextricably linked. The Catholicism of the students meant that they easily accepted the use of symbolic imagery and ritual. McLaren (ibid:155) describes the boredom felt by students at a Mass yet they dutifully carried out the rituals. Teachers frequently linked working hard and performing classroom rituals with being a good Catholic. The reification of religious belief into rituals and symbols was paralleled by the reification of pedagogic practice into rituals and symbols.

The value of McLaren's (1993) study is that it provides clearly drawn teacher as well as pupil identities to describe how resistance operates within the school. The tendency within neo-Marxist approaches to marginalise or demonise teachers is avoided. The persona of the 'liminal servant', a 'cultural provocateur' who engages with pupils' cultural heritage acknowledges the importance of teachers as social actors in the process of pupil resistance. The study also provides a highly original take on how pupil resistance is expressed. Using the metaphors of 'pain', the suffering of the body and the analogy of religious belief focuses on deeper existential expression of resistance.

What is not so apparent in McLaren's study is the forms which resistance can take. The dichotomy of 'passive' and 'active' resistance may be too simply drawn. Also the Portuguese pupils are generally represented as underachieving and victimised. This

leads to an homogeneous portrayal and this lack of diversity begs the question as to how high ability Portuguese pupils differ in their acceptance of routine work to lower ability.

2.2.4 Pupil Resistance Within a Neo-Liberal Framework:

The relevance and transferability of neo-Marxist resistance theory to contemporary schooling needs careful consideration. The 'partial penetrations' of Willis' (1977) 'lads' relate to a particular socio-economic climate and also a particular educational paradigm. Willis' 'lads' had the option of manual labour; contemporary working-class pupils have restricted choices in a more service based economy. Kenway and Kraak (2004:107) comment:

> By and large, working-class boys no longer get working-class jobs and cannot reproduce their fathers' class cultures.

Contemporary working-class pupils are therefore forging identities in the context of very different material conditions to Willis' 'lads'. The contemporary neo-liberal discourse within education also strives to expose and rectify low standards and underachievement – it is no longer possible or acceptable to tolerate and manage the apathy and opposition such as that displayed by Willis' 'lads'. Accountability means that school can no longer be complicit in the underachievement of working-class pupils. To provide a more contemporary analysis of schooling within this neo-liberal discourse and to consider the identities pupils and teachers adopt within it, two more recent ethnographic studies will be examined:

2.2.3.1 *Lads and Ladettes in School* – Carolyn Jackson (2006):

Jackson (2006) examines the micro-processes apparent in the contemporary classroom and how the concept of 'laddishness' impacts upon the identities pupils adopt. In an ethnographic study of two schools in North-West England and also drawing on data

from an ESRC project involving six other schools Jackson argues that pupils develop very subtle and complex strategies to balance the academic and social aspects of their school lives. Unlike Willis' (1977) 'lads' there is no overt rejection of schooling but rather a recognition of the importance of academic success balanced with a desire to win and maintain popularity with their peers.

The concept of 'laddishness' is effectively a more contemporary take on Willis' (1977) concept of 'having a laff'. The difference for Jackson is that laddish behaviour now spans gender, ethnic and social class groups. Jackson (2006:10) is critical of approaches which exclusively link counter-school culture to hegemonic masculinity. The idea that academic work is associated with femininity and thus provokes male counter-school culture is too simplistic for Jackson – female pupils avoid and reject work too. This gives rise to the concept of a 'ladette' – "crude, loud, bold, (hetero) sexually assertive, hedonistic and into alcohol and smoking" (Jackson 2006:11). Although Jackson uses the phrase *Lads and Ladettes* in the title of her book she explains they are used "problematically" (ibid). *Ladette* assumes a 'male-as-norm model' and the concept has been used by the media to somewhat denigrate female youth culture. Jackson's intention is therefore not to perpetuate stereotypical myths regarding gender and youth culture but rather to "engage critically with the 'laddishness' discourse" (ibid:12).

The central question for Jackson is 'what motivates laddishness?' Drawing on goal-theory, self-worth theory and her own empirical data Jackson (2006) argues that pupils develop coping strategies to balance the academic and social aspects of their lives. For Jackson contemporary pupils are gripped by a struggle between two competing discourses – the *uncool to work* discourse and the *academic credentials* discourse. None

of the pupils in Jackson's study rejected academic work completely – they recognised the value of academic credentials. Jackson sees this as being driven by the neo-liberal agenda of accountability – schools constantly remind and cajole pupils regarding the importance of academic success. Contemporary pupils thus exist within "more rigidly structured school environments and curricula" (Jackson 2006:110). Pupil resistance must be considered within this context; unlike Willis' 'lads' contemporary working-class pupils face increasing pressure and scrutiny to succeed academically.

Pupil resistance for Jackson (2006) is explained as a consequence of the tension which exists between the *academic credentials* discourse and the *uncool to work* discourse. Using goal-theory Jackson (2006:26) argues that placing high emphasis on performance invites social comparison – pupils measure their competence in relation to their peers. This can lead to pupils adopting avoidance strategies – they seek ways to avoid assessment and comparison with peers. Jackson (2006:29) argues that "public avoidance of academic work is central to 'laddishness'". Pupil behaviours such as not completing homework, not revising for tests and minimising work completed in lessons can be interpreted as 'laddish' but also strategies for avoiding goals and the associated public scrutiny. In interviews the pupils in Jackson's study related their discomfort and embarrassment at test scores being made public by teachers. The pressure pupils face may thus encourage defensive strategies which reduce attainment – Jackson (2006:60) reports "a palpable fear of academic failure in the accounts of most pupils". Failure in this sense is relative – for a high ability pupil targeted a grade A, a grade B may be considered 'failure'.

Jackson (2006) links the consequences of goal-theory to self-worth theory. It is argued that pupils adopt strategies to avoid 'looking stupid'. The fear of failure, self-worth and public image are "bound to notions of academic competence" (ibid:30). Laddishness is thus linked to the strategies pupils adopt to maintain face in a competitive, goal-oriented academic environment. Jackson (ibid) references examples of procrastination, withdrawal of effort, disruption – these strategies

> … deflect attention away from poor academic performance and onto their behaviour instead. (Jackson 2006:34)

Laddishness creates an excuse for failure and masks a lack of ability; it acts as a "self-worth protection strategy" (ibid:45). However laddishness is not just formed around academic issues; it is also linked to peer approval and social status. Jackson (2006) argues that pupils exhibit a very subtle and complex set of behaviours to gain and maintain social status. The *uncool to work* discourse which is at the heart of laddishness dictates that to be popular pupils "have to demonstrate a relaxed, laid back approach to academic work" (ibid:74). However this is no simplistic rejection of learning akin to Willis' (1977) 'lads'. Jackson reports that those pupils who have already gained peer popularity often consolidate it through academic success. Also although pupils seek to hide academic failure they openly boast about success. Frosh et al (2002) use the phrase 'the middle-way' – pupils perform a delicate balancing act between academic achievement and social status. Jackson (2006:82) reports that a small minority of high ability pupils attempt to "redefine school work as cool" but the majority negotiate the *uncool to work* discourse.

A key behaviour in this process of negotiation is to convey the impression of 'effortless achievement' (ibid:95). Jackson (2006:91) argues that there are three ways

pupils negotiate the *uncool to work* discourse:

- **Self-Handicapping** – pupils disrupt or reject the pedagogic process; they deliberately employ strategies to impair progress. (Like Willis' 'lads')
- **Self-Reported Self-Handicapping –** pupils make excuses for failing when they have in actual fact worked hard; they "claim an impairment to provide an excuse for their performance" (Jackson 2006:93). They save face by claiming to have exerted no effort.
- **Effortless Achievement** – academic achievement is explained away as an occurrence requiring little effort. Jackson (2006:96) describes such pupils as 'closet learners' – able pupils who avoid the stigma of being labelled a 'swot'. This behaviour highlights the subtle balancing act pupils perform –

  > … achievement *per se* is not usually a problem, but working hard to achieve is problematic. (ibid:93).

  The impression of effortless achievement acts to augment success as it is gained within the *uncool to work* discourse. Interestingly Jackson argues that this 'effortless achievement' is displayed more easily by those pupils from higher class groups.

The 'balancing act' which pupils perform between achievement and laddishness requires definite resources and strategies. Jackson's (2006) findings indicate that very subtle strategies may be at play within the classroom as pupils seek to comply with the *uncool to work* discourse. Pupils report hiding their work and effort from peers, messing around in lessons but then catching up at home, creating excuses for stopping in to do homework. The easiest aspect of work to hide is revision – pupils report doing little to gain approval of peers when hours of time have been invested. Jackson (2006) relates the

palpable fear that pupils express at the possibility of losing peer approval. Negotiating the *uncool to work* discourse is a constant task – especially for higher ability pupils.

Resources are also important in negotiating the *uncool to work* discourse. Jackson (2006:114) reports that popular pupils were able to maintain their 'effortless achiever' persona by doing extra work at home on the internet. Female pupils reported that they could maintain a work/social life balance by communicating with friends via social networking sites whilst doing homework. Jackson (2006) sees boys and girls accessing different form of capital/resources to maintain social status. Laddish boys could negotiate the *uncool to work* discourse "if they were heterosexually attractive, stylish, sporty, and sociable" (Jackson 2006:119). Girls likewise used the capital of their appearance to create a persona of 'effortless achievement'. Jackson reports that one such group of girls were described as 'the Barbies' by a teacher:

> Their bodies and their expensive feminine accoutrements are key to enabling them to create the time and space to undertake academic endeavours without rebuke. (ibid:120)

Access to resources and the way it can help pupils negotiate the *uncool to work* discourse has obvious links to Bourdieu's (1977) concept of symbolic capital; pupils are able to use symbolic forms of capital such as style, sociability and taste to create the persona of an 'effortless achiever' who subscribes to the dominant *uncool to work* discourse.

The dominance of the *uncool to work* discourse is therefore discriminatory. The beneficiaries are those pupils who can negotiate it to their advantage. Those who are academically less able rely on defensive strategies to mask their low ability and maintain self-worth. This can result in disruption and a rejection of schooling. The more able can either reject the dominant *uncool to work* discourse and suffer peer rebuke or negotiate

and create the persona of an effortless achiever. Of course not all pupils are successful at negotiating this delicate balance. Forms of capital may make it easier for some pupils above others.

The value of Jackson's (2006) study is that it analyses pupils' responses to schooling within the contemporary neo-liberal discourse and interprets pupil resistance as a complex and subtle array of micro behaviours. Resistance is moved beyond an overt rejection of schooling manifested in disruption and apathy. It portrays pupils as active social agents negotiating academic success with peer/social status. The concepts of laddishness and ladettes are engaged with critically and the crude link between pupil resistance and hegemonic masculinity is exposed. From Jackson's work it would seem apparent that aspects of pupil resistance to authority are linked to the way in which pupils negotiate the dominant *uncool to work* discourse with the *academic credentials* discourse prevalent in contemporary schools. Strategies and resources used to maintain self-worth and to indulge in laddish behaviour through the creation of the 'effortless achiever' persona offer direct explanations for pupil resistance.

From a neo-Marxist perspective Jackson's (2006) study is focused very much at the micro level. The intention is to inform policy and highlight the ways pupils respond to contemporary neo-liberal schooling. Jackson's approach is akin to Merton's (1968) functionalist analysis of responses to cultural goals – the ways individuals respond to the success goals society sets them. Pupil resistance is thus a pathology to be corrected. Jackson (2006:131) advocates long term programmes within schools to "encourage students to work critically and constructively on issues of social justice" – a strategy to 'make learning cool' and encourage pupils to "feel safe to experiment with learning"

(ibid:132). Jackson (2006:123) does recognise that not all aspects of laddishness should be presented as a cause for concern. She cites increased levels of confidence and assertiveness as positive outcomes of laddish behaviour but stops short of developing this into any wider pupil radical agenda. Jackson (2006:119) also touches on the implications of social class within laddishness – it is argued that lower class pupils may lack the economic and symbolic capital to negotiate the *uncool to work* discourse and thus present themselves as peer-approved 'effortless achievers'. This point is not extrapolated to macro issues and how pupils may possess (partial) penetrations (Willis 1977) into capitalist schooling. Likewise the responses of teachers to laddishness/resistance and the culture of expectations within the school are not fully explored. The goals/expectations set by individual schools can vary depending on socio-economic factors; this may affect the way that pupils are able to negotiate the dominant *uncool to work* discourse.

It could also be argued that Jackson (2006) underplays the importance/strength of what she refers to as the *academic credentials* discourse – the neo-liberal agenda of rationalisation and accountability. Jackson portrays the *uncool to work* discourse as being dominant in the minds of pupils. McNeil (1999:*xviii*) argues that the increased pressure of accountability disengages teachers and consequently pupils from the pedagogic process:

> They fall into a ritual of teaching and learning that tends towards minimal standards and minimum effort.

Teachers make a rational decision as to how much knowledge will be made available to pupils. The pressure to achieve targets and satisfy the 'disciplinary gaze' of the measuring observer overrides the will to produce creative, pupil centred learning activities. Knowledge is transformed from being an empowering, desirable asset to being an empty vessel – "its form may have some utility but its substance has been depleted"

(ibid: 13). The effect is a disconnection from reality and a lack of critical awareness from pupils:

> The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is. (Freire 1993:54).

Of course good, engaging teaching and learning take place in all schools. McNeil (1999) is describing a trend towards a form of 'defensive teaching'; an attempt by teachers to control the learning environment to satisfy the 'disciplinary gaze' of the observer. The pressure of accountability felt by teachers is passed on to the pupils. The decision by teachers to restrict what is taught is dictated by the potential for disorder and dissent by pupils. Creative learning involving discussion and pupil centred tasks has a high risk of pupil disorder. Mundane, repetitive tasks facilitate easier classroom control and ease the transmission of fragmented pieces of knowledge that satisfy the 'disciplinary gaze' of standardised testing and league tables.

2.2.3.2 *Corridor Cultures* – Maryann Dickar (2008):

Dickar (2008) offers an alternative insight into pupil resistance by focusing upon the social spaces of the school and how student culture interacts with dominant culture to create a continuum of resistant behaviours. The site of this ethnographic study is a US High School of predominantly Black Caribbean students located in a socially deprived suburb of New York. Dickar argues that space within the school is culturally produced and contested – students engage in a complex struggle between dominant school discourse and their own cultural identity.

Central to Dickar's (2008) analysis is the spatial difference between the schools 'halls' (corridors) and the classroom. The halls are "the nexus of student culture" (ibid:77) where students have a numerical advantage to express their street culture. This

contrasts to the classroom – the formal arena which requires recognition of dominant school discourse. However these social spaces are not mutually exclusive – they inform and influence each other dialectically. Dickar (2008:80) refers to this negotiated arena as 'thirdspace' (Soja 1996) – it is informed by the binary system of school and street culture. Thirdspace thus "responds to binaries without reproducing or negating them" (Dickar 2008:80). The students adapt their local culture to suit the context of the school. The student culture in the school halls is therefore neither a mirror of street culture nor an inversion of classroom culture; it is a negotiated fusion of both.

The significance of this negotiated culture is that it reveals a complex set of responses students have to schooling. For Dickar (2008) student resistance exists on a continuum – students easily switch between disengagement and interest, dominant and street culture. There is little outright rejection of schooling rather students selectively choose forms of capital from the 'dual economy' of school and street culture. Inhabiting their 'thirdspace' students will for example reject some classes as pointless but engage in others. Some reject academic credentials but are keen to learn Black history. Thirdspace thus "includes oppositional elements but is not defined by that opposition alone" (Dickar 2008:105).

Building on the negotiated cultural arena of 'thirdspace' Dickar employs the concepts of the *public transcript* and the *hidden transcript* (Scott 1990). The *public transcript* refers to the dominant school discourse; the *hidden transcript* refers to the cultural expression of subordinate groups. The hidden transcript is a "counter narrative" (Dickar 2008:172) or a form of counter-hegemony. Dickar (2008) stresses that schools and especially classrooms are not sites of complete authoritarian control. Teachers

mediate between enforcing the dominant culture of the public transcript but also must accommodate and reference the students' hidden transcript. Therefore within the classroom "multiple regimes of truth" (ibid:172) operate. Dickar explains that student interviewees expressed a high degree of compliance and association with dominant school discourse. Neo-liberal notions of competitive individualism, meritocracy and personal choice were widely supported by the students. The dominant student reading of academic failure was personal laziness. However Dickar suggests that this inclination to tap into dominant school discourse does not mean that the students have become socialised into dominant ideology – rather they have adopted a 'mask'. This 'mask' allows them to drift between the public and hidden transcript. They are engaged in an active process of negotiation between both transcripts. It is through this negotiation that Dickar sees different forms of student resistance to authority developing.

Employing the ideas of Scott (1985, 1990) Dickar applies the concept of *infrapolitical resistance* to schooling. Infrapolitical resistance is a form of quiet, non-confrontational resistance which usually avoids serious sanctions. It operates under the radar of pedagogic authority and is thus "cloaked in a veil of compliance" (Dickar 2008:168). Dickar sees the perceived lack of threat in this form of resistance as being a powerful tool. To illustrate the effectiveness of infrapolitical resistance Dickar analyses the beginning of lessons; a time she describes as "fateful in establishing teacher authority" (ibid:144). Lateness, defying dress codes, lack of equipment, talking all disrupt the lesson but attract few if any sanctions. Dickar interprets this student action as being a conscious ploy to gain time and space from the dominant school discourse. Such infrapolitical resistance exposes the contradictions of the dominant discourse as teachers

struggle to impose order. Dickar cites the example of the end of lesson time. Students will pack up early, put on coats and remind the teacher of the authority of the bell – the very same bell they ignore as a signifier of lateness to lessons. Such behaviour seeks to "resist the imposition of dominant notions of time" (Dickar 2008:150). It also serves the function of strengthening peer solidarity behind the hidden transcript. Resistance is collective in this way and expressing infrapolitical resistance confers status.

Dickar (2008:155) makes an important connection between infrapolitical resistance against academic work and work in wider capitalist society. The students often 'work to rule' and engage in "foot dragging" (ibid). Dickar gives the examples of students waiting to be asked to open books, completing only the basic work requirement and being dismissive of 'polite commands'. Teacher commands issued as a polite request are often interpreted as "an abdication of power or as a weakness" (ibid:157). Dickar (ibid) also interprets this as student rejection of middle-class speech patterns. This form of resistance is reminiscent of Willis' (1977) 'lads' and their insights into the significance of labour power in capitalist society. However Dickar argues that the resistance is operating at an infrapolitical level – there is no overt rejection of school work by students just an understanding that they have the capacity to disrupt pedagogic practice. Dickar makes the important point that such behaviour is variable – students work to rule in some lessons but in others they value the learning. Resistance is thus a variable activity which has a complex set of causes.

Investigating these causes Dickar echoes many of the ideas of Jackson (2006). Students engage in a delicate process of negotiation and balance between dominant school discourse and street culture. Dickar (2008:158) references a form of infrapolitical

resistance she calls *liminal resistance* – students conform with the dominant school discourse but hide this behind an outward appearance of resistance. Dickar (ibid) cites the example of a student who hands in work secretly, away from the gaze of her peers; refuses to participate in classroom discussions but will express insightful comments when alone with a teacher. Such behaviour "allows students to participate and not participate in class" (ibid). It is in this sense that infrapolitical resistance "tests the limits of power but does not challenge it" (ibid:161). Dickar relates in detail the issue of student language. The students use their own street language ('Ebonics') outside of the classroom but interviewees were divided on whether this was appropriate inside the classroom. Refusing to use Standard English is interpreted by Dickar as a form of infrapolitical resistance – students would use Ebonics to oppose teaching centred around Standard English. This would however seem to be a very political form of cultural expression. Some interviewees were dismissive of Ebonics and felt empowered by their command of Standard English which would help them

> ... develop fluency in the codes of power that they will need to compete in a market often hostile to them. (Dickar 2008:135)

The line that Dickar draws between infrapolitical and more open forms of resistance is thus unclear. For Dickar infrapolitical resistance serves the function of exposing power relations; it is a constant factor which provokes pedagogic authority. Its limitation is that it is not interpreted by Dickar as any serious threat to dominant school discourse. It is described by Dickar (2008:163) using quite passive language and metaphors – "like ultraviolet rays.... sheds light on the underlying contradictions between students and school".

Dickar (2008:167) contrasts infrapolitical resistance with what she terms 'open resistance'. This form of resistance is explained using examples of student humour and 'clowning' in the classroom. Dickar views humour as a powerful tool of resistance – it operates as a direct challenge to pedagogic authority. Students' humour is derived from their own cultural background/metaphors and therefore resistance based on humour often highlights the tension between dominant school discourse and local culture. Building upon the concepts of the public and hidden transcripts (Scott 1990) Dickar (2008:181) describes how "clowns assert the hidden transcript as primary and compelling". Humour acts as a source of solidarity for students; in wider society it operates as "a survival technique of oppressed people" (ibid:183). Dickar relates incidents of students disrupting lessons through humour and teachers feeling impotent to counter a form of cultural expression which they often don't fully understand. The intent of 'clowning' is seen by Dickar as an attempt to reintegrate students' street culture into the classroom – to win back the space from pedagogic authority. Dickar builds upon the ideas of McLaren (1993) who highlights the conflict between students 'streetcorner state' and 'student state'. Dickar interprets this tension as a far more complex affair than students adopting one or the other identity. A 'clown' is may derive humour from the 'streetcorner state' (local culture) but this is not inevitable. Dickar sees 'clowns' as symbolic of the clash between streetcorner and student state – clowning is used to gain space from dominant school discourse and those students who don't participate or condone it can be marginalised (like the 'ear'oles in Willis' 1977 study). As with her analysis of infrapolitical resistance Dickar (2008:186) interprets this more open form of resistance as lacking any wider ideological or transformative power:

> It is an indirect assault on authority that disrupts but does not change the public transcript.

Student resistance for Dickar is therefore interpreted in a somewhat functionalist manner. It functions to inform dominant school discourse how to adapt its model to accommodate students' cultural expression to better serve their educational needs. It acts as a form of anomie (Durkheim 1951) a state of deregulation, a breakdown of social control unleashing unrestrained individualism. Resistance then becomes a condition that can be 'cured'; a symptom of a malfunctioning system. Dickar (2008:196) advocates programmes which engage in students' cultural heritage to provide such a 'cure'.

The value of Dickar's (2008) study is that it highlights the important role which students' cultural identity and heritage play in their responses to schooling. Dickar makes the important observation that students occupy a 'thirdspace' – a negotiated, culturally produced space which is informed by both dominant school culture and student culture. Resistance in this sense operates on a continuum; students rarely overtly reject school but rather drift into resistant identities (Matza 1964). Dickar offers explanations and descriptions of forms of student resistance. The concept of infrapolitical resistance is a useful construct for neo-Marxist resistance theory as it operationalises a non-confrontational, indirect form of resistance which causes much disruption to the pedagogic process. Infrapolitical resistance based upon 'work to rule' principles is of particular relevance to neo-Marxist approaches as it highlights the significance of labour power in the classroom (Rikowski 1997). Dickar's approach to resistance is however an ultimately functionalist one – notions of the radical or transformative aspects of resistance are not considered. This is despite the ethnography being conducted in a site of social deprivation. Dickar provides many examples of students suffering discrimination

and symbolic violence – the school operates a 'scanning' policy to search students' bodies and possessions for weapons. Dickar (2008:50) gives a detailed account of how students considered this dehumanising and culturally biased (they are required to remove culturally symbolic clothes). Dickar (2008:58) suggests that scanning "echoes the many ways poor people are disrespected" and that it "undermines academic pursuits and increases student marginality" (ibid:56). It could be argued that such emotive issues of race and class would possibly provoke a more radical, political form of resistance in the students than Dickar presents.

2.3 Current Challenges Within Marxist Educational Theory:

In recent decades the relevance of Marxist approaches to educational theory have been somewhat marginalised by the dominant neo-liberal discourse and the appeal of postmodernism as a radical alternative. Rikowski (1996, 1997) outlines the 'dissolution and decline' of what he terms 'old Marxist educational theory' and calls for a "scorched earth policy" to rebuild the Marxist agenda. Rikowski (2002, 2005) seeks to reframe Marxist analyses of education through interpreting the modern education system as a highly capitalised commodity driven by profit. Within this system schools contribute to the social production of labour power and thus play an integral role in the maintenance of capitalism. By reframing Marxist educational theory within traditional Marxist notions of labour power and commodification Rikowski seeks to revitalise the Marxist agenda. The emphasis is switched from cultural studies to the material base of society and capitalism's "weakest link" (Rikowski 2002:114) – labour power.

For Rikowski (1996, 1997) 'old' Marxist approaches to education have lost their relevance and applicability in the light of modern educational trends. Rikowski

(1996:426) is critical of a form of 'hyper-academic' Marxism which emerged and adopted a "bunker mentality" under the prevalence of the New Right neo-liberal agenda. This was manifested in a dualism between theory and practice – a vagueness about the revolutionary agenda of Marxism and a lack of any credible suggestions to inform policy. Rikowski (1996) accuses Marxist thinkers such as Giroux (1984) of having severed theory from the struggle of the working class and points to the depressive effect that Marxist approaches such as Bowles and Gintis' (1976) correspondence theory had on educators:

> More contact with teachers and their political struggles might have undercut the depressing determinism and inevitabilism of Schooling in Capitalist America. (Rikowski 1996: 428).

Portraying teachers as ultimately agents of capitalism closes off their potential as agents of social change.

Rikowski (1997) is also critical of the Marxist relative autonomy approach which spawned resistance theory and forms of critical pedagogy. Relative autonomy allows space for resistance – weak economic determinism allows cultural forms to develop which challenge the logic of capitalism. Rikowski (1997:561) argues that such an approach removes Marxism from its foundation of historical materialism; it involves "the dissolution of Marxism through theoretical migration into pluralism and liberalism". Hargreaves (1982) makes a similar point by stating that relative autonomy is prone to become complete autonomy – culture acquires an independent form beyond capitalism and Marxism dissolves into pluralism. Rikowski (1997) argues that resistance theory fails to explain what is being resisted and why; the Marxist goal of social transformation is lost amongst pluralistic descriptions of working class cultural expression. Rikowski is

also critical of the misreading of research findings within resistance theory – in relation to the cultural expression of Willis' (1977) 'lads' Rikowski (1992:427) questions the contention they were "proto-socialists when they were nascent Fascists". Likewise Rikowski (1997) sees forms of critical pedagogy as serving a conservative agenda – developing pupils' critical thought does not necessarily develop a radical agenda.

Johannesson (1992) argues that the distinction between the structuralism of Bowles and Gintis (1976) and the relative autonomy of resistance theory reveals a form of 'dualistic thinking' which undermines Marxist educational theory. There is confusion as to what the objective of Marxist accounts of education is. Accounts of working class resistance/cultural production and methods of critical pedagogy are prone to remove Marxism form its radical/transformative agenda. Rikowski (1997:563) suggests that such approaches present "education as self-realisation within capitalism". A form of "creeping liberalism" (Strike 1989:151) enters Marxist theories of education.

Marxist theories of education have also faced the challenge of postmodernism. Milligan (1992) argues that Marxism has failed to develop an adequate understanding of the subjectivity of social actors – it has become the 'enemy of the individual'. Rikowski (1996) suggests that this is due to labour being under-theorised in relation to capital by Marx. Postmodernism has thus dangled "seductive fish hooks" (Rikowski 1996:430) for radical educators. Usher and Edwards (1994) describe a form of postmodern, radical education embracing cultural pluralism – individuals shaping their own education to meet their personal needs.

For Rikowski (1996, 1997) Marxist accounts of education must address these issues and challenges by rebuilding itself around Marx's original ideas concerning labour

power. Rather than focusing attention on the school as a capitalist institution or system Rikowski advocates an analysis of the role schools play in the wider social production of labour:

> Processes and practices within schools only attain significance in relation to various forms of the social production of labour power. (Rikowski 1997:568)

In this sense the process of schooling is a process of the capitalisation of humanity through the social production of labour power. Citing Marx's original writings on labour power Rikowski (2002, 2009) points to the uniqueness of labour power as a commodity – it is not an external object but rather an aspect of a person. It is "under the sway of their potentially hostile wills" (Rikowski 2009). Capital cannot have complete dominance over labour power (this would amount to slavery) and therefore labour power represents an 'enigma' or "nightmare for capital" (ibid) - it is far harder to control and manipulate than conventional commodities. Labour power only becomes capital when it is transformed into labour within the production process to produce surplus value. Individuals may sell their labour power but there is no guarantee that this will create surplus value – the capitalist doesn't pay for labour but rather the capacity to labour. Therefore the money a capitalist spends on labour power through wages is 'variable capital'; its productivity is by no means assured.

Rikowski (2002) explains that once workers enter the labour process their labour power is transformed from a commodity with the potential for creating value into a 'social force'. The 'power' of labour power is therefore activated by the production process. Rikowski (2002:125) describes labour power as 'coming alive' when it is consumed by capital. This 'coming alive' is also the 'tragedy of labour' (ibid) – the labour process induces a sense of alienation and loss of self. The significance of this

process for the education system is that institutions like schools play a role in ensuring that capitalism has a ready and willing labour force.

Rikowski (2002, 2005) argues that the development of capitalism has been accompanied by the capitalisation of institutions of social reproduction. Schools are thus transformed into organisations whose objective is the production of surplus value. This can be witnessed in the neo-liberal marketisation of schools. Capital is everywhere and becomes "a vast, global oppressive social force" (Rikowski 2002:126). However capital also exists within the person in the form of labour power and Rikowski views this form of capital as the fragile and exposed underbelly of capitalism. Labour power has freedom within capitalism – the worker is free to sell it to the highest bidder and outside of the production process the worker is freed from the means of production. For Rikowski (2002, 2005) capitalism is vulnerable to this freedom. Institutions of education are in a position to be able to subvert the social production of labour power. Education and training are key elements in the production of labour power:

> ... attributes of the person are being developed, enhanced and formed, which then figure as labour power (Rikowski 2002:132).

Rikowski (2002) highlights two aspects of this process – the *capacity* and the *willingness* to labour effectively. These two attributes are essential to the social production of labour power and the efficacy with which schools provide them is a constant point of political contention. In the UK the current neo-liberal agenda can be traced back to Prime Minister James Callaghan's 1976 speech at Ruskin College calling for a 'Great Debate' on education. Callaghan argued that education was failing to meet the needs of industry. The government Green Paper which followed Callaghan's speech suggested that the role of education should be to

> ...contribute as much as possible to improving industrial performance and thereby increasing the national wealth. (Finn 1987:106).

Rikowski (2009) points to the pressure in capitalist society to increase the quality of labour power. Concerns regarding the skills and attitudes of school leavers (Lambert 2006, BBC 2006) suggest that schools may not be producing labour power of the desired quality. However Rikowski (2009) highlights the trend in education towards serving the needs of industry. Schools are "crafted... into areas of commodity production, value creation and profit" (ibid). This has occurred through direct initiatives like business sponsorship of academies and increased vocational qualifications (Edexcel 2004) but also through the culture of targets and accountability – learning is measured against standardised targets like the production of a commodity. For Rikowski (2002, 2005) this is a global phenomenon as capitalism brings educational institutions under the rule of capital:

> ... subordinating educational and training institutions to the rule of capital through energizing them as sites of labour power enhancement. (Rikowski 2002:133).

However Rikowski's (2002, 2005) key point is that teachers/trainers may have an alternative outlook and have the capacity to subvert the social production of labour power. Rikowski (2002) cites examples of radical teaching which focus on social justice, equality and solidarity; he calls for "a politics of human resistance" (Rikowski 2009). In this sense the social production of labour power is never complete – it has no logical end point as the process is subject to constant iterations and modifications. It can be enhanced or deteriorated – for example unemployment is a structural factor which can impact upon the motivation and willingness of young people to become workers. Rikowski (2002) argues that human agency has rendered the social production of labour power relatively

weak. He cites leftist and religious values within schools which counter capitalist values. The problem for capitalism is that

> ... education and training have the potential for opening, developing and increasing an awareness of ourselves as labour power, as human capital. (Rikowski 2002: 135).

For Rikowski the school is thus a contradictory site which produces labour power but also contains the seeds of its resistance. It can both produce alienating social relations of production and uncover the dehumanising effects of this process.

Rikowski's call for a radical form of teaching which embraces counter-hegemonic cultural expression may seem akin to cultural Marxist accounts or standard views of critical pedagogy. However the difference is that it is rooted in the concept of labour power and thus the material base of society; Rikowski realigns a Marxist approach to education with historical materialism. Willis (1977) viewed 'the lads' in his study as having 'partial penetrations' into the workings of capitalism; their cultural expression had the potential to resist dominant forms. Rikowski views this as insufficient – working class pupils would need to gain an awareness of the significance of labour power within capitalism and their own freedom and agency to expose the fragility of capitalism's reliance on labour power. Radical education in this sense is not about developing the self in a pluralist agenda but needs to operate at the level of class groups – a more traditional form of Marxist class consciousness. Resistance for Rikowski is therefore rooted in economic factors; the potential of labour power to oppose capitalism. The transformative agenda of Marxism is given a central role.

Rikowski's (2002, 2005) contention that education has become a global commodity controlled by global capitalism is debatable. Hatcher (2005) argues that

governments maintain control of schools and despite neo-liberal policies of marketisation the profit motive does not completely control educational policy and practice. If Rikowski has exaggerated the commodification of education then this may impact upon the significance he places upon labour power. However under Rikowski's analysis pupil resistance develops a more radical transformative agenda. It contains the potential to impact upon the social production of labour power - the 'weak link' (Rikowski 2002) of capitalism. This potentiality is not developed in Rikowski's work as his emphasis is more on radical forms of pedagogy opposing the production of labour power. Rikowski's overall thesis invites a new Marxist interpretation of the agency of pupils and teachers – an analysis of the potential impact their resistant actions can have on the social production of labour power.

Chapter 3 - Methodology and Research Method:

The aim of this chapter is to outline the research method adopted and its methodological foundation. The aim is also to provide a rationale and a critical discussion of the suitability of the chosen method. The chapter is structured in two sections:

- A discussion of methodological issues – the ontology and epistemology of an ethnographic method, the methodological implications of adopting a critical method and the implications of practitioner research and researching children.
- A discussion of the research method, its rationale and the practical issues involved in its application.

The proposed research method is a critical ethnography. The choice of a research method requires a definition and a rationale; an explanation regarding the characteristics of the method, why it was chosen above other methods and what the researcher expects the method to achieve. Pole at al (1999) state that there should be an integration of problems, theories and methods in research. Research should not be a random gathering of data collection techniques but "a careful selection of methods on the basis of a particular epistemology appropriate to the object of study" (ibid:41). Therefore an analysis of the methodological issues underpinning critical ethnography and a discussion of the methods used in this thesis will be outlined.

3.1 Methodology:

As critical ethnography has conventional ethnography as its methodological basis a definition and rationale of using such an approach is required.

3.1.1 Ethnography: A Definition and Rationale:

Ethnography as a research method uses an approach which tries to uncover the

meaning of social action. Theoretically the roots of ethnography are in the traditions of symbolic interactionism and phenomenology; the focus is on the importance of symbolic action – "to place human actors and their interpretive and negotiating capacities at the centre of analysis" (Anderson 1989:251). This is akin to Weber's (1978) concept of *Verstehen* - an approach which seeks an empathic understanding of social actors and the meanings they attach to their actions. The method has no list of exclusive and definitive characteristics but according to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) ethnography involves the following:

- Investigating localised, discrete settings.
- Interpreting the meanings of human behaviour in these settings.
- Exploring rather than testing social phenomena.
- Working with unstructured data rather than closed categories.

Pole and Morrison (2003:3) add to this:

- The use of different research methods which may combine qualitative and quantitative approaches.
- Through detailed description of data and analysis concepts and theories will be identified which are grounded in the collected data.
- Rigorous and extensive research of the complexity of the location overrides the need to generalise beyond this setting.

Ethnography seeks to retrieve meanings from people's subjective cultural lives. Spradley (1979:10) defines ethnography as "a culture-studying culture" – it involves theory, techniques and "hundreds of cultural descriptions". The aim is to

> ...build a systematic understanding of all human cultures from the perspective of those who have learned them. (ibid).

An ethnographic approach is therefore summarily a method which places a particular emphasis on in-depth inquiry of a small number of cases to interpret human behaviour, with the emphasis on detailed description of data and analysis to develop concepts and theories. Brewer (2000:3) summarises 'ethnography' thus:

> …not one particular method of data collection but a style of research that is distinguished by its objectives, which are to understand the social meanings and activities of people in a given 'field' or setting, and its approach , which involves close association with and often participation in this setting.

Within education ethnography has become a popular research tool. The school as a social site encompasses the interaction of an often diverse range of social actors – issues of class, gender, ethnicity, age, inequality, social reproduction are all played out in the contemporary school. In the context of this thesis an ethnographic method has been chosen as it is seen as the method most likely to gain an understanding of pupil and teacher identities within a school – "the superiority of ethnography is based precisely on the grounds that it is able to get closer to social reality than other methods" (Hammersley 1992:44). Pertinent to this is the need to view school pupils and teachers as active social agents and therefore to employ a method which seeks to explore the meaning of the culture they construct. First hand observation and contact with these social actors in their natural setting is required.

3.1.2 Ontology and Epistemology:

Any research method carries with it certain theoretical assumptions regarding the way social reality can be investigated. The theoretical basis of a research project impacts directly upon research design and ultimately underpins the validity claims presented in research conclusions. The ontological and epistemological assumptions of this thesis will thus be outlined and analysed.

Ontology is concerned with the status of reality; what exists or can be said to exist. The key ontological question is whether a chosen research method has the ability to reflect the 'truth' about social reality. Ethnography attempts to approach this ‘truth’ by offering “explanation, clarification and demystification” (Beck 1979:122) and "researchers' descriptions of the ways actors socially construct reality." (Gitlin et al 2002:207). However 'truth' is a relative concept - "there are multiple, non-contradictory, true descriptions of any phenomena." (Hammersley 1992:155). How can ethnographers be certain that their descriptions and interpretations of social reality are valid and authentic and not just a reflection of their own opinions?

3.1.2.1 Naturalism v. a Naturalistic Method:

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) warn that concerns about producing valid and authentic representations of social reality should not push the ethnographer into adopting a ‘naturalistic research method’. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that ethnographic studies must be conducted in their natural settings; there should be no artificial experimental design which removes people from their natural environments. Naturalism in this sense has been described as

> ...the philosophical view that strives to remain true to the nature of the phenomenon under study. (Blumer 1969:5).

This aspect of naturalism is not akin to a ‘naturalistic research method’. Like positivism, a naturalistic research method seeks to study social phenomena in a way which attempts to distance the researcher from the researched. The approach is that “as far as possible, the social world, should be studied in its ‘natural’ state, undisturbed by the researcher” (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:7). The implication is that the researcher becomes a distant, detached enquirer seeking out an objective interpretation of reality rather than

becoming immersed in the culture. The weakness of such an approach is fourfold:

- It assumes that social reality can be researched in a quasi-positivist manner

> …where concern is more with enumeration, generalization and notions of external, objective realities of the phenomena, rather than its significance and meaning to those involved in its creation. (Pole and Morrison 2003:6).

- It is debatable whether any research setting can be naturalistic. For example an observation of a school lesson would need to examine the multiple contextual variations before a claim of a naturalistic method could be made; time of day, week, year, prior events, absentees are just some of the factors that may create an atypical lesson. A naturalistic research method therefore may obscure the importance of context.
- Participation by the ethnographer does not guarantee direct access to the experiences of the participants. Participant observation is a device for simulating that experience but there is no certainty that the researcher has witnessed a true representation of a social milieu.
- It fails to acknowledge that the very presence of a researcher affects the research process and its product; both are

> …constructed from and reflect both the broader sociohistorical context of researchers and the disciplinary culture to which they belong. (Davies 2008: 9).

  There is no such thing as an 'invisible' researcher who is able to portray a setting in a purely naturalistic way.

The naturalism or 'being there' (Geertz 1988) of ethnography is therefore not about seeking out an objective reality which exists independent of the researcher. 'Being there' is an essential component of ethnography but this must be accompanied by a high degree

of reflexivity.

3.1.2.2 Naturalism With Reflexivity:

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) argue that instead of seeking to minimise or explain away the effect of the researcher, that research should rather openly acknowledge and embrace it. Ethnographers should openly accept the role they inevitably play in the generation of data and the role that their identity has on the description, analysis and presentation of data. Ethnography places the researcher in a social setting not as an invisible entity but as a human actor. Ball (2002:45) argues that ethnography should acknowledge that the researcher is an instrument and not hide away in third person accounts; they should avoid the tendency to "except ourselves from the analysis we apply to others". In many ways the ethnographer is "the research instrument par excellence" (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:17).

> …how people respond to the presence of the researcher may be as informative as how they react to other situations. (ibid:16).

The implication of this is that reactivity from the research process may change the climate of the research site. However Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:15) argue that this reflexive approach should not undermine the researcher's commitment to realism. It may undermine 'naïve realism', which assumes all people define the world in the same way and "which assumes knowledge must be based on some absolutely secure foundation" (ibid), but the fact that research data and findings are constructed through a research process does not make them less real. Of course this does not mean that the researcher should manipulate or manufacture situations. It means that a researcher in a natural setting needs to adopt a degree of self-awareness regarding the impact their presence has on the site.

3.1.2.3 A Constructivist Epistemology:

Accepting that all the social actors (researcher and participants) involved in an ethnographic study will interact to create their own social reality is a constructivist approach. Crotty (1998: 42) defines this perspective as the view that

> *... all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world.* (Original italics).

There is no meaning or truth that can be described as objective; rather it is the social actors themselves who create reality and truth – "meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting" (ibid:43). Social constructionism suggests that there is no single, objective social reality; rather people construct their own multiple and changing realities. In the context of this thesis it is believed that the social actors within a school create their own realities and how these realities are described and interpreted will depend on one's own position relative to the phenomenon. Thus pupil resistance to authority is a phenomenon which may be interpreted differently by different social actors such as pupils, teachers, parents, politicians, school inspectors and of course researchers. Each of these social actors will create their own social reality. Blakie (2000:116) states that the implication of such an approach is that

> …there is no independent or neutral way of establishing the truth of any of them: each social reality may be real to its inhabitants

Therefore ontologically this thesis takes a relativist stance. There is no suggestion that interpretation through research will uncover an ultimate truth. Talburt (2004) stresses the importance of being explicit about the purpose of interpretation in qualitative inquiry. 'Interpretive closure', the idea that interpretation can give a definitive representation of

social reality, is a misnomer. Rather the objective is the production of knowledge through discourse and reflection. Ethnography in this sense is never a mere description of social reality; it is the dialogical creation of new meaning derived from a particular social context. Research thus becomes "a form of conversation...potential meanings are added to the deliberations of a community of discourse." (Talburt 2004:86). Ethnographic inquiry must therefore accept the existence of multiple truths and the polysemic nature of interpretation. Beck (1979:122) states that while social science cannot reveal the ultimate truth, it can help us interpret and make sense of the world; it offers "explanation, clarification and demystification of the social forms which man has created". The aim is not to discover a single immutable truth but rather "the search for information which will take us further towards a truth" (Pole and Morrison 2003:129).

3.1.2.4 Relativism:

Adopting a constructivist epistemology and acknowledging truth and social reality as relativist concepts can lay research open to criticism. The choices made throughout the research process are undeniably linked to the ethnographer's own background, cultural beliefs and values. It could therefore be argued that the findings of ethnography reflect the subjective opinions of the researcher. If truth is a relative concept then what gives any precedence to a truth presented by an ethnographer? Without external validation such truth is open to charges of subjectivity and relativism. Pole and Morrison (2003:130) suggest that

> Such charges intend to invalidate ethnography as a product by asserting that it is little more than conjecture, anecdote or a story.

To overcome this the ethnographic process must involve a rigorous research method; it must present a transparent, reflexive and firm approach to data collection, interpretation

and analysis. To counter accusations of relativism it is necessary to acknowledge the role the ethnographer plays in the research process and through a reflexive approach be transparent about this.

3.1.3 Critical Ethnography - Definition and rationale:

Thomas (1993:4) gives a simple definition of critical ethnography; "Critical ethnography is conventional ethnography with a political purpose". Critical ethnography effectively links conventional ethnography to social structures and forms of power. Harvey (1990:11) states that the aim is "to get beneath the surface of oppressive structural relationships". Critical ethnography recognises the individual as part of a wider social structure and seeks a form of "consciousness raising... bringing the shape and roots of inequality out from behind the backs of actors" (Koth 2002:382). Thomas (1993:2) explains that critical ethnographers seek to scrutinise "otherwise hidden agendas, power centres, and assumptions that inhibit, repress and constrain". Through raising consciousness the aim of critical research is social emancipation; to highlight and address forms of injustice and inequality. The aim is also to challenge hegemonic positions within social science (Harding 1987, Lather 1990). Thomas (1993:8) bemoans the "intellectual leash" which can domesticate social scientists leading to a form of "benign ignorance" which blunts critical consciousness.

Anderson (1989) states that critical ethnography as a research tool grew out of the dissatisfaction with over deterministic structural accounts of society in which real human actors seldom appeared but also out of a dissatisfaction with purely micro-level cultural accounts of society. The emergence of critical ethnography followed on the heels of the 'new sociology of education' (Young 1971). This 'new' approach focused on the social

construction of knowledge within the school curriculum and looked critically at how knowledge can become a tool of oppression within the education system. The superiority of certain forms of knowledge was being called into question and this made the arena of the classroom a focus of critical enquiry; interpretive methods with a political rationale were adopted (Keddie 1971, Hine 1975, Whitty 1977). Anderson (1989:255) states that a 'cross-fertilisation' of phenomenology and Marxism developed. The interpretive focus on human agency within ethnography appealed to neo-Marxists "who were trapped in the theoretical cul-de-sac of over determinism" (ibid:251). An ethnographic approach was an antidote to structuralism; the rationale was to employ naturalistic research methods to locate social actors within the political economy of Marxism.

Jordan and Yeomans (1995) argue that in the wake of the 'new sociology of education' the attraction of ethnography for Marxists was twofold:

- It would enable an exploration of the social relations of contemporary capitalism. Within education it could reveal how the social actors within schools experience their own social reality.
- It would provide a first hand, close-up analysis of exploitation and oppression. This unique perspective would create "a privileged standpoint in respect of constructing emancipatory practices" (ibid:390).

Critical ethnography studies the processes of domestication and social entrapment which make people content with their situation. Ideological domination takes hold when oppressed groups come to see their situation as natural or inevitable. However critical ethnography is more than 'complaint' - It is "…more than simply looking at culture with a jaundiced eye" (Thomas 1993: 47). The 'critical' element of critical ethnography is not

a wish to devalue, undermine or embarrass the behaviour of social actors. There is a recognition that individual power/influence is mediated through social structures and institutional practice. In the context of this thesis it is not my intention to indulge in what Abraham (1995) calls 'school bashing' or 'teacher bashing'. In my twelve years as a teacher I have never encountered a school that deliberately neglected the interests of pupils or any teacher who was not dedicated to their professional values. This critical ethnography is thus not an attempt to attack or undermine the dedication and professionalism of teachers. The aim is to highlight the deficiencies in the system that create underachievement and social reproduction. Abraham states (1995:*xi*) "... teachers are as much victims and products of that system as they are upholders of it". Critical ethnography recognises the individual as being affected by structural factors. Much of social life is outside of the control or agency of individual actors and "is embedded in social conditions beyond the consciousness of the actors involved" (Candy 1989:7).

Critical ethnography also has an emancipatory aim. Cohen et al (2003:138) state that ethnography as a naturalistic form of inquiry seeks to "create as vivid a reconstruction as possible of the culture or groups being studied". The key word here is 'reconstruction'; a static reproduction of social reality. This is akin to Habermas' (1972) 'practical' form of knowledge production; it observes and reproduces. Critical ethnography moves the research process beyond the 'practical' interest of knowledge production and onto the 'emancipatory'. Thomas (1993:4) defines emancipation within critical ethnography as

> …the process of separation from constraining modes of thinking or acting that limit perceptions of and actions towards realizing alternative possibilities.

Emancipatory interests seek to expose inequitable power relations and introduce social justice to "free consciousness from its dependence on hypostatized powers" (Habermas 1972:313).

According to Thomas (1993) the focus of critical ethnography must be on the constant tension that exists between control and resistance in society; hegemony and counter-hegemony. Through focusing on seemingly mundane behaviours, rituals, rules and artefacts critical ethnography can expose systems of control and "mechanisms that impose one set of preferred meanings or behaviours over others" (ibid: 9). The objective is to explore alternative meanings and question existing social conditions.

A critical ethnographic method has been chosen for its ability to look beyond the veneer of contemporary schooling which emphasises targets and accountability and to look into the underlying social interactions. The approach is about "digging below mundane surface appearances" (Thomas 1993:6) and looking into what Lefebvre (1971:145) describes as the "terrorism of everyday life". The everyday interactions of the social actors within a school occur within a hierarchy of power. Critical ethnography is a means to look into the dynamics of these interactions; to look at the

> ...hidden and abstract forms of subtle intimidation and domination on which social existence is built. (Thomas 1993:7)

Although critical ethnography employs many of the methods of conventional ethnography, the rationale, purpose and political/ideological intent behind critical ethnography set it apart. Critical ethnography rests on different epistemological assumptions and raises particular issues regarding values, ideology and reflexivity.

3.1.4 Developing a Critical Epistemology:

Critical ethnography builds upon the practical, hermeneutic interests of ethnography by introducing a political, emancipatory context. Carspecken (1996:8) suggests that critical researchers seek to move beyond traditional ideas about knowledge and reality; they find "the epistemology of mainstream inquiry... seriously and damagingly flawed". Critical ethnography thus brings an 'agenda' into ethnography and must therefore address the implications of adopting an openly political and ideological approach.

3.1.4.1 Positionality:

Malinowski (1922) states that research inevitably begins with 'foreshadowed problems'; a set of underlying issues which the research topic produces. The 'foreshadowed problems' arising from this thesis are issues which are unavoidably political in nature: pupils resisting school authority, low cultural expectations, social reproduction, increasing rationalisation and accountability in education. Madison (2005:8) argues that researchers must make their ideological stance clear and contextualise their positionality – make it "accessible, transparent and vulnerable to judgement and evaluation". Positionality should be open to scrutiny in the same way that methodology is. This thesis adopts a critical stance which employs the ideology of Marxism. There is a positionality; a Marxist belief that capitalist society creates class relations which damage the expectations and aspirations of working class pupils and that the social actors within the school have the potential to resist this.

The significance of positionality is that it provides the ethnographer with metaphors to interpret social reality (Thomas 1993). For example viewing pupil

resistance to authority as a pathology which requires correction is one interpretation; one metaphor which provides a set of images. Interpreting pupil resistance as a meaningful response to schooling is a different metaphor providing a different set of images. Such metaphors "provide icons and mapping techniques for interpreting and speaking about the social terrain" (Thomas 1993:20). Critical metaphors Thomas (1993) argues will direct the researcher's attention towards issues of power and oppression. The implication of this on the research process will be discussed.

3.1.4.2 Research Values:

The positionality of this or any thesis has implications regarding the issue of value-orientation within research. Adopting a theoretical position can invite accusations of bias and seeking out data which fits a preconceived model. The researcher must ensure that objectivity, transparency are reflexivity are maintained. These issues are grounded in the debate as to whether social research can indeed operate in a value-free manner.

Whether social reality can be represented by a value-free researcher has been a point of contention in social science. Gouldner (1971) argues that all sociologists either consciously or subconsciously commit themselves to 'domain assumptions' – basic assumptions made about the nature of society which direct their inquiry. Gouldner (1975:27) argues that the whole concept of value-free research is 'dishonest':

> The only choice is between an expression of one's values, as open and honest as it can be...and a vain ritual of moral neutrality.

Lather (1986:186) argues that there has been an "epistemological break" in research methods; a postpositivist acceptance that research is openly ideological:

> ...research which is value based is neither more nor less ideological than mainstream positivist research.

However critical research with an ideological stance can attract accusations of having the potential to distort representations of social reality. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:17) argue that…

> When we are engaged in political or practical action, the truth of what we say is not always our principal concern.

In this sense choosing an appropriate research method is not akin to 'choosing the proper screwdriver'; research tools can have an inherent ideological value system attached. The concern is that the search for 'truth' will be affected by the researcher's value choice; objectivity will be lost through ideological posturing. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) use the phrase 'a sociology of sociology'; an understanding that truth claims have their foundations in the cultural conditioning of those making them. The researcher must appreciate that truth claims are built upon personal background. The basis of this could be class, race, gender, age, academic training. The researcher brings this 'personal baggage' along to the research site which can influence interpretation and the inference of theory.

Another key concern regarding value orientated research is the postmodern fear that ideologically driven research will result in metanarratives being imposed as instruments of oppression (Tyler 1997). This objection strikes at the very heart of critical research. If critical research seeks social emancipation then the accusation that it is actually doing the opposite and being oppressive is a major point of contention.

The postmodern position of Tyler (1997) is that the relationship between researcher, subject and reader exist within a hierarchy of power. The image of the intellectual researcher displaying "interpretive omniscience" (Lather 1991:133) disenfranchises the participants and the readers of research. Omniscient researchers

presenting realist interpretations is essentially an ideology of power. Hammersley (2006) makes a similar point stating that taking an 'holistic' approach as opposed to a micro-ethnographic approach can involve a degree of extrapolation – the researcher brings theories and concepts into a research site to which they may have no meaning or relevance. In the context of this study the locale of the research is an area of relative social deprivation. The temptation from a research persepective is to apply macro theory to explain the social issues; the postmodern note of caution is to be aware of imposing theory on a social site too readily.

The issue of contention between postmodern and critical research approaches is essentially one of how meanings are interpreted in the context of social oppression. Postmodernists (Tyler 1997) argue that any attempt to link these meanings to meta-narratives and wider social structures are oppressive. It imposes meta-narratives onto people's lives subjecting them to control. Critical researchers argue that the very same meta-narratives (e.g. Marxism, feminism) can be employed to emancipate people. For the critical researcher interpretation is necessary to highlight oppression.

Spradley (1979) warns against adopting a form of ethnocentrism in the research process. For Spradley research should first and foremost involve discovering how people define their world. Imposing theories onto a culture could be viewed as reminiscent of ethnocentric early imperialist anthropological ethnographic studies. Relevant to this thesis Spradley (1979:11) cites the example of cultural deprivation theory – "merely a way of saying that people are deprived of 'my culture'". The fear is that theory imposes linguistic and cultural interpretations on people to whom they have no relevance.

It is important to add that these issues should not just be associated with critical

research. Because of its political/emancipatory agenda critical research would seem to require a very high degree of justification regarding values and positionality. Research which adopts a *laissez-faire* approach would not seem to require the same level of scrutiny despite its underlying positionality that the status-quo is acceptable.

The above issues however indicate that it is important to examine how critical research can maintain its objectivity and counter accusations of political posturing, theory imposition and ethnocentrism. Consideration of these issues will be examined.

3.1.4.3 Values – Objectivity, Democracy and Reflexivity:

To explain the role of research values within critical research three key points will be discussed – how critical research can maintain objectivity; how democratising the research process can guard against researcher value-judgements; the importance of reflexivity within the research. The aim is to illustrate how critical research involving research values can maintain objectivity and integrity.

1. Objectivity, Value Neutrality and Politics:

Weber (1946) argued for a 'value-neutral' approach to research. This is not to suggest that research should be value-free but that the research process could be objective. Topics should be approached neutrally without any imposition of interpretations swayed by an agenda. Weber recognised that values would influence the choice of topic – 'value relevance' would sway the researcher's choice but 'value judgements' should not enter the research process. Bringing the value judgements of politics into research is potentially a compromise on objectivity. For Weber (1947) there are multiple solutions to political problems – depending on different value judgements. This is not to say that social science should be divorced from politics. Politics can be

exposed to scientific criticism through empirical methods. Social science could through the objectivity of empirical investigation inform political values. Although Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:18) suggest that research should not be politically oriented they are not suggesting that researchers should abandon their political convictions. The issue is one of ensuring that political convictions do not impinge upon and distort the research process. Their position is

> ... as researchers their primary goal must always be to produce knowledge, and... they should try to minimize any distortion of their findings by political convictions or practical interests. (ibid).

However empirical data and values are intertwined. Weber's concept of objectivity is not as simple as a value-free researcher producing empirical data to inform values:

> These evaluative ideas are for their part empirically discoverable... but their validity cannot be deduced from empirical data as such. (Weber *On Methodology* from Pichler 1998:189).

Pichler (1998) explains that Weber's concept of objectivity refers to the past. Past events can no longer change so they can be scrutinised by the social scientist in an objective way. Also events of the past have less impact on the researcher's value orientations so objectivity is easier. Pichler (1998:190) argues that Weber's position was that social science should not be about chasing new view points and new points of analysis but rather that:

> ...knowledge of the *cultural significance* of *concrete historical events and patterns* is exclusively and solely the final end. (Weber *On Methodology* from Pichler 1998:190 original italics).

Pichler (ibid) concludes that "Social science, as long as it remains historical science, can be objective". However critical research is far from historical enquiry; its focus is the present and the future.

Concerns regarding critical researchers being too eager to apply macro theory to research sites (Tyler 1997, Hammersley 2006) question the compatibility of value-objectivity and politics. However the cultural sites of ethnographic research undeniably exist within social structures which are debated on political grounds. Willis and Trondman (2002) warn against the 'postmodern fallacy' of taking the individual out of the social structure. Jordan and Yeomans (1995:396) state that:

> ... without a broader, historical perspective of the construction of social relations and culture, the ethnographic gaze will amount to no more than a glance.

Ethnography must recognise the existence and connection between individual, culture and structure. There is no simplistic pattern of connection between these three concepts. Willis and Trondman (2002) advocate the 'centrality of culture'; recognition that culture is autonomous because of its unpredictability in relation to structure. Culture can be creative, diverse, resistant, uplifting, confrontational, cathartic and therefore warrants autonomy from structure. This move away from deterministic Marxist analyses of culture are tempered by Willis and Trondman - they argue that culture cannot be free floating - it "cannot disconnect from its moorings" (2002:397). Culture has autonomy but still remains connected to the structure. Althusser (1969) argued institutions have 'relative autonomy' from structures but portrayed people as being 'support agents' for structures. Culturalists put the emphasis on human agency. Willis and Trondman (2002:397) state that the best ethnography:

> ...shows the autonomy of culture as an expression/form within larger processes of social production and reproduction.

This position still leaves the critical researcher open to accusations of value laden judgements. Carspecken (1996) seeks to adapt the issue of objectivity and Weberian

value-neutrality to critical inquiry. He argues that although critical research may begin with a value orientation, objectivity is still an integral part of the research process. Carspecken (1996:6) refutes the suggestion that critical research necessarily carries with it an ideological value system which can affect findings. It is based upon 'critical epistemology' and not a set of value orientations:

> Critical epistemology does not guarantee the finding of 'facts' that match absolutely what one may want to find.

Carspecken (1996:5) is critical of what he calls "the fusion of facts and values". Researchers may have a 'value orientation' - a philosophical/political agenda that may determine subjects and sites of investigation. However it does not follow that such values will drive and determine research findings. Having an agenda is not the same as imposing that agenda on every aspect of the research process.

An important distinction to be made in this respect is made by Eisner (2002) who distinguishes between 'ontological objectivity' and 'procedural objectivity'. Ontological objectivity strives to see the 'truth' and reality of phenomena - "we see things as they are" (Eisner 2002:50). Procedural objectivity involves using methods that eliminate personal judgement. Carspecken's (1996) position is that critical research maintains procedural objectivity; the mechanics of the research are not affected by value judgements. Whether 'procedural objectivity' can operate without the influence of values is however debatable.

Carspecken (1996) also argues that many values can themselves be evaluated. For example in the context of this thesis I would imagine that most people would agree that access to higher education and high status jobs should not be determined by background and culture. The issue is a political one and research on the issue is subject to debate and

scrutiny. A research process which is transparent, employing clear and rigorous procedures to collect, analyse and present data will present an argument that is open to scrutiny.

2. Democracy:

Linked to the issue of objectivity/neutrality is the role which research participants play in the research process. Accusations of subjective value judgements and political manoeuvering can be tempered by involving participants in the research process. Freire (1993) explains that any form of critical inquiry must enter into dialogue with the social actors. It must trust and "enter into communion with the people" (Freire 1993:43). Freire says we must guard against the belief that those with particular, specialised knowledge have the status to direct and determine the research agenda:

> ...because of their background they believe that they must be the executors of the transformation. (ibid).

Likewise McLaren (1993:267) views the objective of critical research as one of empowerment:

> ...the goal has been to provide communities of resistance with the capacity for assuming more semantic authority in making their own decisions.

McLaren is critical of the "epistemic murk" (ibid: 266) of postmodernism and encourages critical ethnographers to become synchronised with the subjects of the study to empower their cultural habits. Part of this process is recognising that social actors actively create their own culture and that research should provide a platform for this to be expressed. Carspecken (1996:189) argues that the subject's own cultural insights and language should be employed in this process:

> Pit their universalizing claims with your own and let the two engage in dialogue. Invite those you study to participate in your specialized forms of analysis.

Carspecken call this process a 'dialogical method' – the research process involves a constant dialogue between researcher and participants. This can happen through research design, data collection and analysis.

An interesting take on the power differentials within research is offered by Lather (1986) who adapts the emancipatory objectives of Freirian critical pedagogy (Freire 1993) to research methods. Lather argues that the research process should seek to **democratise** knowledge and power; the aim is to reconceptualise the role of the researcher; the researcher/participant dualism is deconstructed and the "cult of expertise" (Lather 1986:199) is avoided. To reconceptualise the role of the researcher Lather argues that:

> The researched become as important as the researcher in formulating the problem, discussing solutions and interpreting findings. (ibid)

The aim is encourage active participation in the research process to guard against the researcher's values/interpretations taking precedence.

3. Reflexivity:

A further guard against researcher values affecting research procedure and interpretations is the adoption of a reflexive method. Being explicit about values and how these have been shaped presents a degree of honesty. Marcus (1988) uses the term *confessional reflexivity* – an acute self-awareness of ones own background and biography. Likewise Foley (2002:476) uses the term *theoretical reflexivity* - the researcher "consciously situates her representational practices within the disciplines of past knowledge constructions." The researcher must appreciate that truth claims are built upon personal background. For these reasons a researcher autobiography is presented in

this thesis; an outline of the personal factors which may have shaped the "foreshadowed problems" (Malinowski 1922) of the thesis. A reflexive research method which is explicit about the role the researcher plays in the design, collection and interpretation of data will provide a high degree of transparency/auditability to guard against accusations of value-judgements. Reflexivity is a key aspect of each step of the research process and will be referenced in context below regarding the method, within the ethnographic text and within the analysis.

3.1.4.4 A Critical Epistemology:

Epistemologically it has been accepted that truth claims are relative and that ethnography may not uncover *the* truth but *a* truth. Critical ethnography with its emphasis on social emancipation is ideologically driven and therefore its truth claims are inevitably shaped by these values. However this is true for all research – value-free research is a misnomer. Research which does not openly express a positionality is rather expressing a form of dishonesty (Gouldner 1975). It implicitly aligns itself with the status quo without justifying this position.

Adopting an ideological standpoint should not impinge upon the ability of research to produce valid findings. Through employing a rigorous, transparent, dialogical and reflexive research agenda which holds data collection, analysis and presentation open to scrutiny, critical research can counter accusations of political manoeuvering. The approach of this thesis is to:

- Present a transparent positionality.
- Strive for a transparent, objective and reflexive research process which is open to scrutiny.

- Strive to adopt a democratic, dialogical research agenda by involving participants in a rigorous and accountable process of data collection and analysis.
- Present an argument which is open to debate and scrutiny through providing a transparent account of how the logical inferences are grounded in the data.

Critical research must acknowledge that research participants are active social agents producing cultural forms and thus employ an inclusive, democratic research agenda. As this thesis involves the study of the culture of children there is a desire to involve them in the research process. The implications and logistics of this approach will be discussed.

3.1.5 Researching the Child:

Researching children's lives raises a number of methodological issues. There are obvious ethical issues which are addressed below but the way that a researcher perceives the concept of 'childhood' will impact upon the research process. Within this thesis there is a desire to involve pupils in the research process; to view them as active social agents who are capable of contributing to research rather than becoming "objects of the sociological gaze" (Harden et al 2000). In theoretical terms this approach is rooted in the 'new' sociology of childhood which takes a social constructionist approach to explaining childhood (Aries 1962, James and Prout 1997). This approach argues that there is no universal account of childhood and that societies construct their own meanings of what childhood involves and how children should be perceived. Childhood is therefore "neither a natural nor universal feature of human groups" (Sandbaek 1999:192) and children are active in constructing their own lives and identities.

The new sociology of childhood acts to counter the perceived mistreatment/ undervaluation of children in society in general but also within sociological

interpretation. King (2007:196) explains

> What a society expects of children, the way that they are perceived, what is seen as good or bad for them and what they are competent or incompetent to perform depends upon the particular concept of childhood that society has constructed.

Childhood in this sense is imagined in relation to the concept of adulthood; children are perceived as in a stage of development towards adulthood (Jenks 1982). In research terms Harden et al (2000) argue that this 'developmental' paradigm has been influential in marginalising children in the research process; age and inexperience are seen as barriers to access. Pole et al (1999) in fact argue that age acts as a form of capital in the research process. The social hierarchies, funding mechanisms and accepted practices of the research community make child centred forms of research problematic – "age acts as a structural factor to limit agency" (Pole et al 1999:52). Pole et al (1999) warn against over-emphasising the agency of children and highlight the need to recognise the constraints limiting the degree to which people can construct their own world. Children may have agency but the extent and influence of this is open to question – "it would be naïve to assume that children simply have the same agency as adults" (ibid:44). Although the new sociology of childhood advocates children being perceived as active social agents it is unclear how this can transfer to research methodology. The key issue is whether research can embrace the theory of the new sociology of childhood and produce a methodology which involves rather than marginalises the child.

If research is to move away from the developmental model of childhood and produce a more child-inclusive methodology it must emphasise and embrace the skills that children can bring to the research process. Harden et al (1999) examine methodologies which move away from viewing children as 'lesser beings' towards

viewing them as equals. This approach is essentially about methods rather than methodology; it involves employing research methods which build rapport with the child and facilitate a degree of child participation. For example James et al (1998:190) advocate using 'task centred' methods rather than 'talk centred' methods. This may involve drawing, taking photographs, completing sentences. However this approach seems to assume that children have different competencies than adults. Age is again relevant as the participants in this thesis are high ability 14 years old who may feel patronised by obvious child-centred activities. This highlights the danger of viewing children as an homogeneous group in research terms. Methods need to be appropriate to the age, ability and creativity of the particular participants.

Mendell (1991) advocates an extreme researcher/child relationship where the researcher suspends all adult characteristics but size. As a teacher/researcher this extreme would seem impractical and unprofessional. Swain (2006) reports that he felt unable to adopt a relaxed, friendly approach with the pupils he researched; he feared losing their respect and attention and resorted to a formal teacher role setting boundaries on behaviour. The danger with this approach is that the language, context and boundaries of discussions all become teacher-centred and controlled; the child becomes the 'other', the 'project', the undeveloped adult in need of constant guidance. Alderson and Goodey (1996) make a pertinent point in this respect:

> It is only more complicated to speak to children if one assumes in them a certain degree of taxonomic remoteness from ourselves.

By constantly viewing the child as the 'other' in need of adult guidance a great deal of the richness of children's perceptions, opinions and critical comments may be lost from the research process. There is therefore a balance to be struck between elitism and 'going

native'; between favouring 'high status' informants (adults/teachers) and becoming consumed by the dangers of 'over rapport'. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:89) advocate the ethnographer taking a more marginal position "intellectually poised between familiarity and strangeness". This position necessitates an almost schizophrenic accommodation in two worlds; the active participant developing rapport and the marginal researcher. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:90) warn against any sense of comfort or feeling 'at home' and advocate an 'intellectual distance' – "it is in the space created by this distance that the analytic work of the ethnographer gets done".

Rapport with the child is also dependent on the identity/biography of the researcher. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:65) state that participants "will often be more concerned with what kind of person the researcher is than the research itself". A researcher's gender, class, ethnicity, age, accent, dialect, religion are all factors which can affect rapport with children – in positive and negative ways. A strength of this thesis is that I as a teacher/researcher have developed an extremely positive rapport with the pupil participants over a long time. Of course my role is that of a teacher and my impressions of good rapport may be mistaken but my relationship with these pupils is always engaging and positive. This is an essential component of attempting a more child-centred research agenda; what Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:70) call "the value of pure sociability".

What also needs to be avoided, especially in critical research, is the perception that participants are victims. This thesis focuses on a school in an area of relative deprivation with educational underachievement and low participation in higher education. Although their participation is voluntary and has parental and school approval choosing

them as subjects worthy of research has involved a value judgement on my part. There is an underlying assumption that these pupils may become victims of an inequitable education system or structural oppression. I would temper this by pointing out that these pupils are not typical of those traditionally selected for critical ethnographic studies of schooling (Willis 1977, Dickar 2008). They are high ability, high achievers and not obvious 'victims' but the assumption remains on my part that cultural expectations may hinder them in terms of university access and future careers. Putting these children under that 'sociological gaze' is an act which must be tempered by a reflexive research agenda. Alanen (1988:60) points out that

> …it is methodologically wrong to victimize children in research, no matter how much they appear as victims in their various real life situations.

Therefore the desire to involve children in the research process in a role which moves towards seeing them as 'equals' is problematic from the outset. The role of the researcher as adult/academic/teacher creates immediate hierarchies of power. Harden et al (1999) state that "the structure of research generally militates against complete equality".

Different conceptualizations of childhood therefore will impact upon the research process. Within the school children are subject to adult surveillance and the danger is that school based research will mirror this relationship. This may be compounded in school based research as children face the hierarchical structure of the institution which is premised on the developmental model of childhood. However the aim of this thesis is to involve pupils in the methods of the research process wherever possible.

3.1.6. The Teacher/Researcher Role

The requirements of a reflexive approach are heightened in this thesis due to the researcher being part of the culture being studied. The social actors will perceive me first

and foremost as a teacher/colleague and not as a researcher. Hammersley (2002b:219) argues that the familiarity or 'insider knowledge' that a teacher/researcher possesses bring no "overwhelming advantages" – there are advantages but these are tempered by countervailing disadvantages. Drawing on the advantages and disadvantages highlighted by Hammersley (2002b) the issues arising from the teacher/research role taken in this thesis will be discussed:

3.1.6.1 Long term experience of the setting:

The deeper understanding that a teacher/research will have of the setting needs to be balanced against the danger of over familiarity:

> ... understanding often requires seeing a phenomenon in its wider context, and this may be particularly difficult for those closely involved in it. (ibid:218).

A degree of self-deception may creep into the research process as the teacher/researcher is closer to the issues and pressures than an outsider would be. In the context of this thesis I am very close to the issues of pupil behaviour, underachievement and aspirations – my job/livelihood depends on me engaging with these issues. Familiarity with the setting has led me to develop strong opinions on these issues. My own objectivity rests on the ability to maintain a distance between research and practice. I am researching other teachers' practice (although not ignoring my own) and pupils' reaction to it. Observing the lessons of other teachers and their diverse practice means that I am experiencing the unfamiliar; I am removed from the isolated setting of my own classroom which has shaped my own views on teaching. Observing a diverse range of lessons across many subjects with many teachers should expose me to the unfamiliar and maintain a degree of distance between my professional views and the research process.

3.1.6.2 Existing relationships:

Having strong existing relationships with the social actors of the setting has the potential to benefit the research process. Tricoglus (2001) writes as a teacher/researcher who undertook critical research and reports that this role helped smooth problems of access, acceptance and reactivity. Gitlin et al (2002:202) argue that the teacher as a researcher will avoid the separation from the participants that plagues much of ethnography; the teacher/researcher role will avoid the "subject-object dualism".

The teacher/researcher's relationship with pupils can pose problems for the research process. An obvious concern is the unequal power relations between researcher and participants. Validity may be affected by participants feeling that the everyday institutional rules of the school pressurise them to conform and be pupils rather than active research participants.

Potential problems in this respect are:

- Pupils may be reluctant to contradict their teacher.
- Pupils may equate acquiescence with good behaviour.
- Pupils may fear reprisals from school sanctions if they express controversial opinions.
- Pupils may fear reprisals from peers if they reveal certain information.

There are two approaches needed to address these issues:

- The teacher/researcher must establish a strong bond of trust with the pupil/participant; empower them to view themselves as not just the subjects of a research project but also the instruments. Interviews with pupils need to involve them developing a degree of ownership in the process. Carspecken (1996) suggests that the research process should involve the language and metaphors of

the participants; they should feel a sense of ownership.

- The thick description of ethnography can originate from many sources. Gans' (1968) sees the ethnographer adopting many different roles - total participant, semi-involved or a total observer when the situation dictates. Data need not develop from the formal social interactions between teacher and pupil with the power relations this involves. It can be developed from observing pupils interacting with their peers in lessons, from conversations they initiate with each other during interviews, from the informal everyday interactions of school life.

A teacher researching other teachers has the advantage of being able to empathise and have a high degree of awareness of the issues surrounding the role. Regarding lesson observations access was granted to me quite freely – the teachers did not seem to feel that they were being judged in any way. This I feel was due to my status (or lack of it) in the school. As an ordinary classroom teacher my colleagues did not seem to feel threatened by my presence. If my status had been that of a senior member of staff then these research relationships may have been different.

3.1.6.3 A Restricted/Limited Role:

The teacher's role in the setting may give a distorted view of the research agenda. My role as a classroom teacher does create a restricted view of the school. My opinions are formed through the perspective of the subjects I teach and the issues surrounding those. For example being a Maths teacher attracts the extra pressure of accountability – since 2007 GCSE league tables are based upon the percentage of pupils gaining 5 A* - C grades *including* English and Maths. The pressure and also resources put into achieving this may not be representative of other subject areas. My role has also involved teaching a

lot of sixth form students and being involved in their university applications. Again this has raised my awareness of student's aspirations regarding access to higher education.

To overcome these issues it was necessary to gather data from a broad range of teachers during the interview process. Senior staff, middle-managers, classroom teachers (across a range of subjects) and non-teaching staff (pastoral and support) were interviewed. Gathering this data and the data from lesson observations expanded my perception of the role of a teacher in the school. It reoriented the restricted view that my own relatively isolated role had given me.

Issues of methodology necessarily inform and shape research method. The research method of this thesis will now be outlined through consideration of the methodological issues discussed above.

3.2 Research Method:

The process of ethnography is not conducive to a pre-planned, tightly structured approach. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:20) argue that the ethnographic process

> …cannot be predetermined, all problems anticipated and ready made strategies made available for dealing with them.

This is not to suggest that research design is irrelevant but to indicate that it must account for the necessarily flexible approach of ethnography. Agar (1980:9) describes the process of ethnography as being "dialectic, not linear"; the ethnographic investigator will not have a strictly mapped route but will progress in a more iterative manner. Research design is also a necessarily reflexive process; the role and impact of the researcher must be accounted for within the chosen methods.

The central research aims are threefold:

- To investigate the ways in which high ability pupils resist authority within school.
- To critically assess pedagogic practice and the roles teachers adopt in relation to pupil resistance.
- To assess the potential for high ability working class pupils to target their resistance beyond the localised setting of the school onto the inequalities and injustices of wider society.

A critical ethnographic approach is seen as the most appropriate method in highlighting and investigating the following central themes of the thesis:

- What provokes pupil resistance to authority and how pupils express their frustrations and anger within the hierarchy of school power.
- The inadequacy of current pedagogic practice in engaging with pupils' cultural expression and resistance to authority.
- The inequality and injustice which this inadequate practice can perpetrate on working class pupils.
- The effect that the current neo-liberal managerialist discourse has on the social relations within the school.

It is my contention that a conventional ethnographic method would not sufficiently engage with the underlying issues of power, social inequality and inadequate educational practice which are the foundation of this thesis.

The school is also located within an area of relative social deprivation: it suffers from issues of low pay and high levels of youth unemployment; standards of achievement in education in this area are well below the national average; participation in post-16

education and access to higher education are well below the national average. (To substantiate these three issues an overview of the area in which this study is being conducted is presented in *appendix 1*. This data highlights the impact of wider socio-economic structural factors for this thesis). A further rationale of the critical ethnographic approach is therefore to inform practice/policy – to highlight possible causes of these social issues and provoke debate regarding pedagogic practice/educational policy.

These concerns are based on my own experience as a teacher in working class schools and are also informed by the literature review conducted as part of this thesis. I have witnessed underachievement, low expectations and an inability within schools to engage with pupil's cultural expression. Too often this expression is interpreted as deviant and damaging and met with school sanctions. The emancipatory aim of this critical study is to highlight a form of pedagogic practice which can engage with pupils' resistance and cultural expression to raise expectations and achievement.

Carspecken (1996) offers a structured method for the design of critical ethnography; a five stage process Carspecken claims gives critical ethnographic inquiry a more scientific foundation. The design of this method will draw upon this structure. Carspecken's model has been chosen as it is seen as providing a logical and progressive framework to undertake a critical ethnographic study. The model advocates a democratic, dialogical and reflexive research agenda and gives consideration to how structural factors can be incorporated into research analysis.

3.2.1 Sample:

The research process involved sampling pupils, staff and lessons. The approach used in each case will be examined.

3.2.1.1 Pupils:

The focus of this study is a group of nine high ability Year 9 pupils. The logic of choosing this group was:

- Their history of high academic achievement distinguishes them from the more typical subjects of research into pupil resistance to authority (Willis 1977, McLaren 1993, Dickar 2008).
- Their intelligence and ability may engender a more constructive form of resistance; the conjecture is that such pupils may be more likely to resist the social classifications rather than the framing of schooling.
- Year 9 pupils incur the highest percentage of school detentions (*see appendix 6)*. This age group would seem to conflict with pedagogic authority more than others.

In this sense the sample is a form of 'purposive sampling' (Cohen et al 2003:103); the pupils were chosen as their traits satisfy the needs of the research. I asked for volunteers from my top set Maths class to participate in the research. Fifteen pupils volunteered and we decided that the fairest method to choose ten people would be to pick them at random. All ten chose were female but this was by coincidence rather than by design. One pupil chosen was subsequently a long term absentee so the research is focused on the remaining nine.

3.2.1.2 Staff:

Sixteen members of staff were interviewed (see *appendix 2* for *Staff Interview Calendar*).This is approximately 25% of all staff. There were two separate reasons behind the choice of teaching staff selected for interviews:

- They had taught the sample of pupils and had thus been observed in the research process.
- They represented a specific role within the school – a range of staff were chosen to represent senior management, middle management, classroom teachers, pastoral staff and support staff. The sample contained staff who had worked at the school for over 30 years and newly qualified teachers. The staff were chosen on a convenience basis.

Only one person asked declined to be interviewed.

3.2.1.3 Lessons:

Forty three lessons were observed, (this does not include my own lessons the nine pupils attended; see *appendix 3* for *Lesson Observation Calendar*). This covered six different subject areas – English, Science, Spanish, RE, Design Technology and Geography. Each pupil was observed on between 12 and 16 occasions. Due to my own teaching duties I was unable to observe other subjects. The nine pupils were never all in the same class for a lesson so the process involved negotiating with different teachers to observe different combinations of the pupils. Wherever possible three observations of each lesson were conducted and at different times of the day. This was to strive for reliability/dependability – to check that the observation data was consistent. One teacher did express concern upon my request to observe for a second time and I respected his concerns and issued no further requests. For this lesson only a single observation was conducted. All other lessons were observed three times.

3.2.2 Access:

The issue of gaining access to a research site raises both practical and ethical issue. Ethical issues will be discussed below but in a practical sense schools are 'private' settings "where boundaries are clearly marked and not easily penetrated" (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:49); access is thus controlled by gatekeepers. Burgess (1993:48) defines gatekeepers as:

> Those individuals within an organisation that have the power to grant or withhold access to people or situations for the purpose of research.

My position as a teacher at the research setting meant that I had a familiarity with the people and the situations. However this did not guarantee access to the sites of interest – classrooms. Access to observe in classrooms was dependent upon the will of the gatekeeper teachers. Access to interviewees was dependent on the will of pupils and staff to give up their free time. Delamont (2004:225) offers three guidelines regarding access:

- **Record the process –** discussions and negotiations to gain access may reveal important features of the site and its social actors.
- **Record failed attempts** – the reasons behind forbidden or restricted access may be very informative.
- **Harder access may ultimately be more rewarding –** the more discussions and negotiations needed may often indicate a rich source of potential data.

Regarding lesson observations access was granted more freely than I anticipated. Only one teacher declined my request to observe and as Delamont (2004) suggests this incident is related in the text (ethically) as it was deemed relevant to the context of the research. Access was a process of constant negotiation and some teachers did seek to rearrange times. Significant instances of this are related in the ethnographic text.

Access to interviewees was very straightforward. All pupils willingly attended at a conveniently arranged time. Of the seventeen staff I approached to request an interview only one declined. Of course access is about more than consent. The issues of accessing the culture of the informants is discussed below.

3.2.3 Pre-fieldwork:

The aim of pre-fieldwork is twofold:

- To provide a fuller understanding of the context and social actors involved in the research.
- To allow a smooth transition into the field of study.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:29) use the phrase "casing the joint" to illustrate the necessity of the researcher becoming familiar with the setting. To give a social context to the research data on the socio-economic make up of the local area was gathered (see *appendix 1*). Data on the pupils' abilities and achievements was gathered from the school database (SIMS – School Management Information System). Pupils' timetables and the names of their teachers were also gathered from SIMS to allow me to plan a timetable for lesson observations.

As I was already very familiar with the personalities of the pupils I did not feel that any process of familiarisation was necessary. Willis (1977) worked in a youth centre adjoining the research setting for six months prior to his ethnography. I have taught the pupils who are the focus of this study for four lessons a week for the past three years. I speak to them regularly in the school corridors, dining areas and yard. I have met all their parents at parents' evenings and school social events. I have taught the elder siblings of five of them. Aside from their parents and close family it is doubtful whether another

adult is as familiar with the personalities, abilities and idiosyncrasies of these nine young people as myself.

3.2.4 Classroom Observations:

Carspecken (1996) recommends that observations should be extensive before the interview process begins; data from observations should thus inform and shape interviews. Fifteen classroom observations were conducted before the interview process began. Observations of lessons were conducted to gather data on the following (informed by Morrison 1993:80):

- **The Physical Setting:** the organisation of the social space; desk arrangements, seating plans, decoration, displays and general appearance. The physical environment of the classroom can impact upon teaching and learning; for example Science teachers often bemoaned the difficulty of teaching in a science lab.
- **The Human Setting:** characteristics such as academic ability, gender and age were noted. When given the option pupils generally sit in gender specific friendship groups. In most observed lessons a seating plan had purposefully created mixed gender pairs and groups. Imposing a mixed gender environment affects pupil interaction and changes the dynamic of the lesson. Also relevant is teacher age, gender, experience and length of service at the school. All of these factors can affect the way teachers are perceived by and subsequently interact with pupils.
- **The Interactional Setting:** within the classroom interactions can be formal and informal – each creates a different set of cultural norms. The formal interactions of the teacher addressing the class are qualitatively different from the one-on-one

informal teacher-pupil or pupil-pupil interactions. Language, body-language, tone/volume of voice and levels of sociability can all change as the social actors switch between formal and informal interactions. Interactions can also be verbal and non-verbal. Pupils often express low levels of engagement in lessons through non-verbal actions such as sighing, yawning, fidgeting or slouching. Frequency and tone of personal interactions between pupils and teachers were also noted.

- **The Programme Setting:** resources, pedagogic styles, forms of assessment.

Gold (1958) presents a spectrum of researcher roles in observation; from complete participant to complete observer. My role in the observation process was generally one of the complete observer. I was very conscious of the possibility of disrupting the lesson by becoming a distraction if I attempted to interact with the pupils. I therefore took up a marginal role (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:88) sitting at the back/side of the room. In some lessons on occasions I was able to speak with the pupils; this was possible when lessons involved pupils working in groups or doing practical activities. I thus became took on more of a observer-as-participant role (Gold 1958). Only one teacher offered me a participatory role in the lesson and on this one occasion I became more participant than observer.

There was an ever present danger of reactivity during observations as I feared:

- Pupils would play up to my presence
- Teachers would temper their reactions to pupil behaviour or carry out extra planning to deliver a better lesson.

Examples and discussions about this are included in the ethnographic text. My presence in lessons was easily accepted by most pupils. Having another teacher in the room is an

unremarkable occurrence; observations and support teachers are a common occurrence in schools.

Data from lessons observations took the form of written notes. Carspecken (1996) recommends a form of 'priority observation'. This involves focusing on an individual for a short time noting what they say and do, their speech acts, body movements, posture and how they interact with others. This technique proved very useful in gathering data about pupil identities. The page would contain headings of pupils' names and under these I would write thick descriptive notes gathered from the priority observations, switching between pupils every five minutes or so (see *appendix 4* for an example). Teacher behaviour would also be noted in the same way. Under a 'general' heading observations about teaching methods, the framing of learning and other relevant incidents not related to the pupils I was observing were noted.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:146) refer to this detail as the "concreteness" of the data; the sacrifice they advise, is that such detail restricts the scope of the data. The balance between concreteness and scope in my observations was in favour of the former. The focus on pupil and teacher identities in the classroom took precedence over the wider scope of the lesson. Observations are undoubtedly subjective and the accompanying fieldnotes selective. The myriad of events, interactions and their contexts cannot be captured by a single observer. However any quotes from lessons that are included in the ethnographic text are verbatim. Significant incidents which happened in lessons are reported in a dispassionate manner with my own "descriptive glosses" (ibid) kept to a minimum.

Lee (1993) distinguishes between physical access and social access. Gaining physical access into a classroom will not automatically confer access to the culture of its inhabitants. The weakness of the complete-observer role I took was that it rendered me an almost complete outsider in the classroom. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:87) explain the weakness as a "... failure to understand the orientation of the participants". I had no control over this as I was very conscious of not wanting to disrupt lessons in any way by attempting to interact with the pupils. The role of the lesson observations in the research was therefore to collect data which would inform and provoke discussion in interviews. The issues of reactivity and my very marginal role in observing meant that triangulation from pupil and teacher interviews was necessary for this data.

3.2.5 Pupil Group Interviews:

Eleven group interviews were conducted with pupils (see *appendix 5* for *Pupil Interview Calendar*). Each of the nine pupils were interviewed between three and five times. Interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and transcribed within two days. The aim of the pupil interviews was to investigate pupils' opinions and reflections on:

- Their own approaches and reactions to teaching, learning and pedagogic authority.
- Teacher identities.
- Incidents highlighted as notable during classroom observations.

The aim was also to make sense of pupil culture through engaging the pupils in discussions involving their own native language.

The rationale for conducting group interviews was:

- The pupils may expand and develop each others thoughts and thus provide a wider range of ideas. (Lewis 1992).
- The pupils would feel less intimidated and be more likely to open up.
- The professional/ethical issues that may have arisen from a male teacher being alone with female pupils in one-to-one interviews.

Cohen et al (2003:267) describe the interview as being "not exclusively either subjective or objective, it is intersubjective". The interview is therefore more than mere data collection – "its human embeddedness is inescapable" (ibid). The interview process, although embedded in human interaction, is nevertheless often conducted in a manufactured setting with a pre-conceived agenda. However Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:108) suggest that the distinct, non-naturalistic setting of interviews can be "a resource rather than a problem". There is a positive advantage in taking people out of their natural setting; people are seen in new circumstances and surroundings allowing comparisons and contrasts with their 'natural' persona.

In a practical sense my concerns were:

- The teacher-pupil hierarchy would prevail and the sessions would become like a formal lesson. The fear was that pupils would tell me what they thought a teacher would want to hear (Bourdieu 1977). Spradley (1979:45) makes the point that "interviews are influenced by the identity of both parties"; the personalities and background of each party will impact upon the process.
- Mandell (1991) states that in school based research it is the children who are the ultimate gatekeepers. Although an interview can be arranged it is ultimately the child who decides whether to allow access to their culture. There was no

guarantee that the pupils would want to discuss and grant me access to their world.

- If I made the interviews too informal then pupils would adopt an 'anything goes' attitude. (This is fact did occur with the first interview as pupils sat on desks and seemed to interpret my questions as an opportunity to relate any random anecdotes about their school lives – the process was too unstructured).
- The group nature of the interviews would cause a degree of reactivity between the pupils. I feared they would see it as a competition for attention or an opportunity to impress one another or myself. I also feared that the more gregarious characters would dominate at the expense of the more reserved.

The interview approach adopted in this study was informed by Spradley (1979) - *The Ethnographic Interview.* Spradley's ideas are pertinent to school based research as the techniques involve an embedded awareness of the need for reflexivity in the interview process. Spradley depicts the interviewer as a 'learner'; the ethnographer must go through the same form of enculturation that the 'natives' once did – learning language, rituals, customs. The aim is to develop understanding through gaining an insight into the cultural norms of the social actors:

> Any explanation of behaviour which excludes what the actors themselves know, how they define their actions, remains a partial explanation that distorts the human situation. (Spradley 1979:13).

For Spradley language is the key element. The role of the ethnographer is that of a translator; to translate the meanings of one culture into a form that is meaningful to another. The difficulty with this thesis is that an adult/teacher is seeking to interpret meaning in a child/pupil culture. An advantage is that I am no stranger to this culture as

my job locates me in the centre of it and I also am very familiar with pupils' language and rituals. However uncovering the *meaning* behind pupils' language and rituals involves more than just 'being there'. Also Spradley (1979:50) points out that familiarity with the culture can cause problems in interviews – as the interviewer in this thesis was a familiar figure to the informants, consideration had to be given to the danger of their answers being framed by their assumptions regarding my own prior cultural knowledge. What follows is an outline of the interview method adopted with the pupils. This was by no means a pre-conceived, linear plan; the process developed dialectically as I learnt which techniques yielded useful data.

3.2.5.1 Interview Technique:

Pupil interviews were seen as an opportunity to involve the pupils in the research process; to incorporate the ideas of the 'new' sociology of childhood and invest the pupils with a degree of ownership. Rather than viewing the child as an incomplete adult (Harden et al 1999) not yet competent to participate in adult activities the aim was to involve them in the planning, agenda, format and analysis of interviews.

Setting and Dynamics:

The pupils chose the setting of the interviews. This was a classroom opposite their dining area (each year group has a separate area). The pupils also chose lunchtime as the most convenient time. Pupils aren't allowed to leave the school premises at lunchtime and they often drift into classrooms. Therefore this location and time were convenient and familiar; the pupils weren't being removed into an alien research environment. I thought that giving pupils the choice to set the location and time of the interviews was essential. Spradley (1979:51) makes the rather patronising statement "Children usually

make good informants and they have adequate free time". Starting from a position where pupils were consulted and empowered to arrange the logistical aspects of the interviews immediately gave them a sense of ownership I felt. All pupils faithfully kept appointed times or consulted me to rearrange.

Changing the make up of the groups helped to give each interview a different dynamic with a different mix of personalities. As the interview process developed I found that splitting the sample of nine pupils into smaller discussion groups yielded the best data. I would observe a series of lessons and then invite a group of two to six pupils to discuss them. The smaller groups were more manageable and allowed the quieter pupils to be more expressive.

Agenda:

All ethnographic interviews necessarily contain a degree of structure; Pole and Morrison (2003:30) suggest that the 'unstructured' interview is a misnomer – "ethnographic interviews are structured in accordance with a systematic research design". I would attend the interviews with a set of topics for discussion informed by my lesson observations. However this agenda was very informal and flexible. On many occasions I would just mention a lesson and the pupils would talk freely express their thoughts and feelings about that lesson. The discussion would evolve with very little need for prompting or direction by myself. Pupils would also often ask each other questions or indulge in personal conversations/disputes which would yield significant data.

Spradley (1979:58) suggests that ethnographic interviews often share many similarities with informal conversations. The difference is that the interviewer introduces 'ethnographic elements' into the process. One of these is the need to provide a continuous

level of explanation to keep informants familiar and comfortable with the process. Pupils would rarely deviate from the point but part of the 'ethnographic explanation' (ibid) was giving direction in encouraging pupils to be comfortable in expressing opposing views. Carspecken (1993:90) advises "Actively encourage them to question your own perception". This is part of Carspecken's 'dialogical method' - to foster debate and free expression. This was done through what Spradley (1979) calls 'explicit purpose' – the pupils were reminded during each interview that they were free to express themselves in any way and that the interviews were not part of the school curriculum.

Ethnographic Questions:

The difficulty for an adult phrasing questions for children is that the questions are drawn from the adult/researcher's culture and answers are drawn from the child's culture. It may be difficult to ascertain whether the child has interpreted the question in the way the adult intended. Questions therefore need to be informed by the child's culture and not purely rely on the phraseology and grammar of the adult/teacher/researcher. Spradley (1979:91) explains that the aim is "to elicit a large sample of utterances in the informants' native language". Many interviews began with a simple sensory question "How did you feel in that lesson?" and the pupils would describe their emotions, frustrations and perceptions. For example pupils could talk in articulate detail about feeling bored in lessons. Hypothetical questions also proved useful in getting pupils to be expressive in their own language. For example "If you felt that your progress was being disrupted by others what would you do?" The aim was to encourage pupils to feel comfortable speaking in their own native language.

Focusing on the pupils' native language was necessary to gain access to the concepts and categories with which they explain their own culture. However this does not suggest that they are unable to understand adult language. I did not change the language I use or speak in a 'child-friendly' manner. The pupils are very high ability and very capable of conversing with adults on any level.

Member Checks:

An essential element of giving pupils ownership of the research process was to feed back to them my own impressions of what I thought the data was telling me. The interview programme developed in three stages:

- **First Stage** – general discussions about observed lessons and feelings about school.
- **Second Stage** – continuing discussions about lessons and school but also feedback to pupils about my opinions on the data.
- **Third Stage** – pupils whose identities I thought were similar and were thus going to be described together in the ethnographic text, were invited to discuss these identities with me. For example two pupils, Lindsey and Toni, had similar identities I felt so I invited just those two pupils to discuss how I had interpreted the data and how I planned to represent them in the text.

Pupil interviews therefore played a key role in analysis. Feeding back incidents and how the pupils had commented on them in previous interviews enabled them to confirm or reassess their initial thoughts.

3.2.6 Staff Interviews:

The rationale of staff interviews was to triangulate the data collected during lesson observations and to gather opinions on pupil identities, attitudes towards the wider area and culture, teaching strategies and education in general. (I use the word 'staff' rather than 'teachers' to indicate that some of the interviewees held non-teaching positions). The interviews were of two distinctive types:

3.2.6.1 Informal Discussions:

These would happen spontaneously at the end of observed lessons and were essentially a continuation of the observation. Staff would often be very candid during this time as they sought to explain, justify and rationalise what had just occurred in the lesson; their opinions on pupils, work load and pedagogic practice would flow freely.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:120) suggest that too much can be made of the distinction between solicited and unsolicited accounts. The unsolicited discussions I had with teachers at the end of lessons were primarily initiated by them; they wanted to explain and justify. This data often flowed from teachers who were still reacting to the emotions of the lesson. These encounters were sometimes uncomfortable as teachers sought to justify and rationalise poor lessons/practice to me as a colleague. The social context in which this data was collected is therefore highly relevant – "all accounts must be examined as social phenomena occurring in and shaped by particular contexts" (ibid). The data from these informal discussions has been interpreted in the context of the often stressful and pressurised environment of the classroom. On some occasions teachers would often be vulnerable and defensive in the knowledge that they had been observed as struggling to cope by a colleague.

3.2.6.2 Formal Interviews:

These were arranged at the informants' convenience and conducted in familiar and comfortable locations – teachers' own classrooms or offices. They were recorded using a digital voice recorder and transcribed within two days. Each of the sixteen staff were interviewed once. This process was iterative as the opinions of one staff member would be expanded upon and raised for discussion with others. In this sense it was possible to build up a body of opinions from a wide range of staff. On one occasion an incident which I felt was significant happened outside of the classroom and I arranged a short interview with the teacher concerned to discuss this. Although the general methodology underpinning the interviews was similar to that for the pupils, interviewing staff gave rise to a different set of issues.

My concerns were:

- Teachers would interpret questions on their pedagogic practice as being judgmental and intrusive. To overcome this I often phrased questions to refer to my own practice. For example rather than asking a teacher to comment on why pupils said their lesson was unengaging I would ask – "*I don't do 'fun' stuff because I'm thinking 'I've got to get this stuff across'. Do you feel that in Science*?" (Interview with Mr. Jordan). This was particularly important for young or inexperienced teachers as I did not want them to feel that I was passing judgement on their competence.
- A situation of 'over rapport' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:88) would develop; friendship and familiarity would impinge upon the need to be investigative and provocative. In reality the interviews often touched on sensitive issues which staff

spoke passionately about. For example the issue of parents and the social area of the school produced passionate opinions. I had an intense discussion with the Assistant Headteacher over the merits of academic targets.

- Staff would be reluctant to talk critically about the school on record. Although all interviewees were informed that interviews were confidential I did feel that younger/newly appointed staff were fearful of being totally candid. Although my status is equal to theirs in the school hierarchy there is a pressure to conform to accepted practice. Conversely more experienced staff often resorted to complaint. They saw an interview as an opportunity to vent their frustrations. In both cases the interview data needs to be interpreted in context. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:98) advice that interview accounts should be treated "as part of the world they describe, and thus shaped by the contexts in which they occur".

3.2.7 Data Analysis:

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:158) advise that analysis is not a distinct stage; it is rather an activity which links into all stages of the ethnographic process. It is a necessarily iterative process – "there should be movement back and forth between ideas and data" (ibid:159). This principle is a characteristic of *grounded theory* (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The aim is to ensure that the generation of concepts and theory are drawn from the data rather than a process of speculation. This process requires a high degree of sensitivity towards the data. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:166) warn that grounded theory is not about simplifying the data and reducing its complexity via a form of content analysis. The thick descriptive data of ethnography cannot be interpreted through superficial inferences.

Drawing upon the ideas of grounded theory and the 'reconstructive analysis' of Carspecken (1996) the process of data analysis in this thesis is premised of the following ideas:

- The concepts and theories are grounded in the depth of empirical data. Davies (2008:239) suggests that the relationship between the data and theoretical inferences needs to be made explicit. This will involve the data being of sufficient quality and depth to make the theoretical inferences clear. Glaser (1978) suggests that analysis must involve the constant comparison of data to find out similarities and differences; a rigorous process of classifying and establishing patterns. Carspecken (1993:118) states "One must use evidence from many interactions to be in a position to reconstruct implicit theories".
- Concepts and theories have been generated from the ethnographic process and not from the researcher's preconceived opinions. This is not to suggest that researchers enter the field with an empty mind. This thesis draws on Marxist ideas but within the ethnographic process these ideas are not hypotheses that are being tested. Pole and Morrison (2003:79) point out that the word 'dictate' is relevant in this context – preconceived ideas should not dictate the process of analysis. This thesis draws on Marxist ideas but they have in no way dictated data analysis.
- Analysis is a necessarily reflexive process:

  > ... reflexivity requires any effort to describe or represent experience to consider how that process of description was achieved. (Freshwater and Rolfe 2001:529).

  The constructivist epistemology of this thesis requires that truth claims need to be predicated upon an explanation of who is constructing the claims and how. Davies

> (2008:243) suggest there need to be "intellectual pathways" (ibid:243) which illustrate how the researcher has developed theories and conclusions. By showing the route of the theoretical claim, the train of thought and logic that led the researcher to it, the inference is clear and open to scrutiny. This is as opposed to merely presenting conclusions with supporting evidence.

Davies (2008:234) suggests that the first stage of analysis should involve developing 'categories' – "low level theoretical concepts for classifying and thinking about the data". The source of these categories need not be grounded in the data. Davies (2008) suggests that ethnographers may have categories in mind before the enter the field of study or they may draw them from their theoretical orientation. The key point is to ensure that these initial categories "do not take the form of prejudgements, forcing interpretation into their mould" (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:163). For this thesis broad categories such as 'conformist pupils' or 'disciplinarian teachers' were apparent before the research process began. The task of analysis was not to use data to test the existence of such categories but rather to use them as headings to arrange data. Categories are therefore used as resources rather than hypotheses.

The data collected was in the form of lesson observation notes and transcripts from interviews. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:168) state that analysis must be centred around social action – "what people are doing and why". Data from lesson observations was therefore central to the process of analysis. Analysis was drawn form incidents observed in lessons. This inevitably involved a high degree of selectivity - taking snapshots of dialogue or short-lived incidents and extracting them from the overall context. Carspecken (1996:147) recommends a two-tier process to coding data; low-level

and high-level. For example the category *pupil responses to teacher authority* had the following low-level codes:

a) Complies
b) Challenges
c) Laughs
d) Pulls a face
e) Questions.....

These are all responses that exist in the objective realm – they can be observed by anyone and can rely on the primary record for verification. Higher level coding is more abstract; for the same category high-level codes were:

a) Tries to prove teacher wrong
b) Personal attack on teacher's appearance/competence
c) Complies with sarcastic tone
d) Challenges teacher's intelligence/subject knowledge....

These higher level codes build upon the low-level codes and exist more in the subjective realm – they are assertions about the actors' feelings and intentions. Carspecken (1996) recommends that these higher level codes cannot be based upon data from the primary record alone; they need to be discussed in interviews to gain "privileged access" to the actors' subjective realm. Mayall (1994) argues that it is during the analysis stage that the power differential between children and adults is most apparent for research involving children. This was the rationale of conducting pupil interviews in three stages (see *appendix 5*); pupils were given the opportunity to comment upon my theories and categories and the identities I was ascribing to them. A dialogue was opened up to discuss alternative meanings and interpretations. In the second and third stages of interviews for example I discussed the pupils' attitudes and behaviour towards teachers based on the higher level codes to elicit the meaning behind their observed actions. Incidents and comments relating to this were read, re-read, cross referenced, patterns established and

sub-categories formed. This was fed back to the pupils for their opinions and input. Through this process the intention and the target of this form of resistance emerged.

The interview transcripts were read repeatedly and notes made in the margins; these notes highlighted broad categories. For example teachers' comments about the area and how it impacted on the school were colour-coded and compared. By reading and re-reading these comments sub-categories emerged – teachers' attitudes towards parents, their opinions on pupils' aspirations, references to their own background. The commonality and differences within each sub-category led to a dominant and a minority teacher opinion emerging. The opinions surrounding the sub-categories could then be fed back into the data collection process. For example some teachers spoke about the low expectations of parents; I was then able to ask those teachers who dealt directly with parents (Head of Year, Assistant Headteacher) if low expectations were the norm based on their daily contacts (they were not).

Carspecken (1996:96) describes this process as creating a "meaning field" – collecting a range of possible interpretations. Spradley (1979:186) refers to such opinions as 'cognitive principles' – "something that people believe and accept as true and valid... a common assumption". If these recur across many informants then this would suggest a "cultural theme" (ibid) exists, i.e. an ethos, a core value. An example of a recurring cognitive principle amongst the pupils was the belief that lessons should be more 'fun' and engaging. This belief was repeated again and again by pupils across many interviews; it was also expressed in lessons by pupils. This cultural theme was then analysed further through pupil interview discussions – how could teachers achieve more fun, why aren't lessons fun, what stops teachers making them fun? This analysis of a cultural theme then

produced more cognitive beliefs – teachers are disinterested, teachers are stressed.

Within the ethnographic text narrative extracts from lessons are presented. These incidents may or may not be representative of the lessons they were drawn from so analysis is never purely based on such incidents. These incidents informed the interview discussions and I always tried to get pupils and teachers opinions of any incident deemed to be a significant contributor to a point of analysis. For example an incident involving a pupil being removed from a lesson for bad behaviour was significant in developing a theory about her identity. This incident is described but it is also followed by the opinions of the pupil, the teacher and the Head of Year. Analysis is informed by observation and the opinions of the main players involved – a context is given to the speech and actions of the actors.

Extracting and developing these themes from the data is tempered by issues of validity. The validity of the interview process needs to be assessed by regarding the range of responses given and the role it played in triangulating the data from lesson observations. Rather than regarding interviews as capable of producing objective facts through limiting bias, their use is seen as giving the researcher access to how people make sense of their world. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:120) recommend that interviews should be used as a method of revealing the "perspectives and discursive practices of those who produce them". They must be interpreted in the social context they were conducted in, with the effects of the social actors involved accounted for. Pupil and teacher responses and opinions from interviews are interpreted as arising from their lives outside of the interview process. Harden et al (1999) make the important point that children may relate stories in different ways to different people but these will be based

upon

> …their own knowledge and experience regardless of whether they are accurate representations of any past event.

Hammersley (1992:70) advises ethnographers to judge their claims using the criteria of *plausibility* and *credibility*. A claim is plausible if it is believable in the context of existing knowledge. If it is not then the credibility of the claim comes into play:

> ... is it of a kind that we could reasonably expect to be correct given what we know about the circumstances in which the research was carried out. (ibid).

An example of this arose concerning pupil identities. Two teachers suggested that conformist pupils were 'manipulative'. This did not seem plausible to me and the credibility of this claim also seemed doubtful. This led to the need for wider investigation and evidence. Lincoln and Guba (1985:219) recommend methods of good practice to achieve credibility:

- **Prolonged engagement and persistent observation**.
- **Triangulation** - using different research methods to cross check the validity of data.
- **Negative case analysis** - like Popper's (1959) concept of 'falsification'; good research will embrace the contradictory and not ignore it. Of course negative cases do not necessarily indicate weak theory; they may reflect the diversity of cultural themes in the setting.
- **Member checks** - participants should have the opportunity to review the reconstructions/theories of the researcher or even suggest their own.

In this instance I checked the 'manipulation' suggestion with a range of teachers and found a dominant alternative view. I also checked the interview transcripts with the original two teachers and reflected that my descriptions of the conformist pupils may

have led the teachers into using the term ‘manipulative’. This is a form of ‘strip analysis’ (Agar 1986:36) – taking small samples or ‘strips’ of data and checking their consistency with the cultural theme under question. If the strips have a good ‘fit’ to the cultural theme then a degree of validation has been provided.

Lather (1986: 207) calls for critical forms of inquiry to adopt “empirical accountability”. The aim is “to protect our research and theory construction from our enthusiasms” (ibid: 190). Lather argues that critical research needs to be sensitive about the construct validity of concepts and theories being used. Framing the lives of people in the phraseology of social science can be alienating and counter-productive. This issue arose over the identities I has ascribed to pupils and teachers. The analysis includes typologies of pupil and teacher identities based on the concepts and theories developed from the data. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:174) urge caution during such an exercise; it is not “purely logical or conceptual... there must be constant recourse to the material one is analysing”. Producing such ‘definitive concepts’ (ibid) must involve an investigation of alternatives. Lather (1986: 190) stresses the need for “ceaseless confrontation with the experiences of people in their daily lives” Constructing concepts and theories needs to be grounded in the language and metaphors of participants. An example from the analysis is the category ‘passive resistance’. The ethnographic text explains that this form of behaviour was suggested and explained by two pupils, not myself. Alternative explanations were explored and presented and empirical evidence sought to justify its existence. Its inclusion in the typology is predicated on the depth of explanation the two pupils provided for its existence; after alternatives were explored.

Another example is referring to disciplinarian teachers as ‘hegemonic overlords’ (McLaren 1993); this is a social scientific construct. The pupils used the term ‘stresshead’ and teachers often used the term ‘disciplinarian’. Spradley (1979) advocated the precedence of such native language terms. Although I recognise the importance of these terms in the analysis and presentation of data I still felt that social scientific concepts were relevant and important. There may be a fair degree of congruence between these three terms mentioned above but they are not interchangeable. For this reason the analysis used social scientific and native language terms side by side; each would inform the other. For example conformist pupils would use the phrase ‘naughty people’ to describe ‘confrontational’ pupils. Through discussions it was obvious that these terms were analogous in many ways but they were not congruent and could not be used inter-changeably. The process of analysis therefore required a reflexive approach whereby the participants’ native language terms and metaphors informed and interacted with my own. There is no suggestion that one was superior to another just that the variety of terms were often too meaningful to amalgamate into a single descriptive term. Analysis is also grounded in reflexivity. The impact that I may have had on the data informing the analysis is discussed as the process of analysis develops.

3.2.8 Describing System Relations:

Carspecken (1996:206) argues that what gives critical research its “critical bite” is moving the process of analysis onto a wider social platform. The first stage of this is to discover relations between cultural sites; to explain cultural production “in terms that go beyond the culture of a specific group” (ibid:189). The pupils who are the focus of this study are subject to cultural influences not of their own making – parental, teacher and

media cultural influences being examples. Carspecken (1996) advocates the analysis of as many cultural contributions as possible. This thesis has sought to look at the relations between pupils', teachers' and parents' culture; the aim is to look into how and why the routines of one site/group co-ordinate with others. This links the culture of the pupils to wider cultural, political and economic factors through the following two processes:

1. Cultural Isomorphisms Between Sites:

This seeks to establish how one cultural site can influence another by examining the origins of cultural themes. For example one cultural theme which emerged was the tendency of young people to want to remain in the area for employment and higher education. To look at the origins of this theme it is necessary to look into the influence of other cultural sites – the family/parents' and teachers' expectations. If pupils' expectations are being formed in these other cultural sites this gives a wider understanding of the pupils' culture. It introduces issues of social class, cultural capital and economic factors. For example in the cultural sites of teachers' staffrooms are there expectations which support pupils' reluctance to leave the area? Carspecken (1996) explains that the values between the cultural sites need not be identical but rather 'isomorphic' – there is a high degree of similarity.

2. Cultural Commodities:

The process of investigating pupil and teacher identities needs to look at the wider cultural influences which help to form those identities. Pupils' culture is informed by popular culture – music, fashion, language, media (mobile phone technology especially). Therefore culture which is produced in sites far away from the site of study can impact upon the actors' identities. Carspecken (1996:200) explains that such factors act as "a

resource (and a constraint) in the construction of identity". A pupil in this study wore badges on her school blazers depicting skulls and rock bands to express her identity. Another pupil would conflict with teachers because of her language and inappropriate comments – in both cases forms of cultural expression originating in sites away from the school and parents. Teachers likewise are influenced by the language and metaphors of educational policy. During interviews teachers were well versed in the language of OFSTED, targets, assessment techniques – these are forms of cultural expression which originate in sites away from the school. They are constructed by academics, civil servants, government ministers yet filter down into the cultural arena of the school. Therefore examining the influence of wider cultural sites, and how cultural sites are interconnected moves analysis onto a broader plane. Carspecken (1996) calls for the same processes of rigour and validity checks to apply to this stage as all previous analysis.

3.2.9 Using System Relations to Explain Findings:

The final stage of analysis involves the use a macro-level social theory. The aim is to find a 'fit' between ones own analysis and the analysis of social theory:

> ...you must build abstractions off of your empirical data to the point where a fit can be recognised. (Carspecken 1996:203)

This thesis seeks to 'fit' the empirical data into the logic of Marxism. Carspecken (1996) recommends examining the following:

1. <u>Cultural and Environmental Conditions:</u>

By asking the question 'Why is this environment the way it is?' issues which are economic and political in nature will arise. For example within the cultural site of a school classroom issue of power, authority, expectations and resistance will emerge.

Carspecken (1996:203) argues that power is the key point of analysis:

> The amount of economic and political power your group has will emerge as an explanatory factor.

Issues of power within the social site invite a broader analysis of how power relations are structured in wider society.

2. The Concept of Interests:

By looking at the needs and desires of those in the site of study wider macro issues will also emerge. The degree of access which the actors have to economic and political resources will impact upon their identities. For example the desire to access higher level of education, higher status jobs are relevant to this thesis. Methods which the education system uses to achieve this are equally relevant – compensatory education, OFSTED procedures, the culture of targets/accountability. All of these are designed to meet the desire/need to raise achievement. Carspecken (1996:205) argues that such interests are important as they "reflect the position of a group economically, politically and culturally within society". Pupil and teacher identities are therefore linked to these wider macro issues.

3.2.10 Representation:

Ethnography is a product as well as a process and ethnographers face options as to how a finished text will be presented. Given the socially constructed nature of the text and the researcher's reflexive involvement the product cannot be viewed as a straightforward representation of social reality. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:196) use Max Weber's notion of an *ideal type* to illustrate the role of the ethnographic product:

> It does not, and is not intended to, correspond in every detail to all observed cases. It is intended to capture key features of a social phenomenon.

The reflexive researcher will appreciate the socially constructed nature of the product but Davies (2008:265) makes the important point that reflexivity is not the purpose of research, rather "it is the means through which knowledge of a social reality outside ourselves can be approached". Adopting an 'ultra-reflexive' approach to ethnographic representation approaches a postmodern position – the idea that traditional ethnographic texts are 'fictions' or naïve representations - "something made or fashioned" (Clifford 1986:6). Postmodern texts are thus characterised by polyvocality, self-consciousness and textual experimentation; a move away from narrative realism.

The ethnographer therefore has choices to make regarding the textualisation and the degree of reflexivity of the product. These decisions are not specific to the ethnographic product, they are intrinsic to all research stages; however their visibility is most apparent in the product. This thesis will adopt a narrative approach. Pole and Morrison (2003:142) state that the dominance of the narrative form is

> ... due to its accessibility as a medium and its capacity to convey rich and detailed accounts of social action, which are at the heart of ethnography.

For this thesis the narrative form is seen as the best way to present the interactions and opinions of the social actors – classroom incidents and pupil and teacher comments and opinions. In this sense an 'intertextual' (Atkinson 1992:18) approach is taken – the text is centred around references to fieldnotes, interview transcripts and school documentation. Representing the voices of the social actors through extracts of dialogue is problematic: "The 'original' voices of individuals... and the intention behind these voices can never be recovered." (Denzin 1995:14). Text is limited in the way it can convey emotion, intention and meaning. To compensate for this the narrative requires a depth of insight, explanation and evidence to illustrate meaning behind the text. Geertz (1988:4) argues that the

ethnographic product can establish the validity of the research through the variety and depth of the narrative; to demonstrate:

> ...their having actually penetrated.... another form of life, of having, one way or another, truly 'been there'.

Geertz (1988) also raises the 'signature dilemma' – how the author is to be represented in the text. Reflexive research necessarily acknowledges the researcher's presence in the field and effect on the product. Abraham (1995:*xii*) advocates a form of 'constrained reflexivity' which "avoids continual reference to self-motivation". The approach taken in this thesis is to acknowledge in the ethnographic text those occasions when I felt my presence had directly affected the data but to expand on the issue more fully during the analysis.

The ethnographic text will therefore take the form of a narrative with constrained reflexivity in the knowledge that the socially constructed nature of the text and the researcher's reflexive involvement will not produce a straightforward representation of reality. More detailed analysis will be presented as separate from the text; this will present a more reflexive approach to the data.

3.3 Ethical Issues:

Researching children raises certain issues regarding child protection. The researcher needs to be aware of these issues but this awareness has to be balanced and tempered against treating the child as a 'protected species' within research. Morrow and Richards (1995) argue that the children should not constitute a 'separate species' for ethical consideration. They suggest that within the ethical considerations of research children can be presented as vulnerable and incompetent. The pupils who are the focus of this study are intelligent, articulate and very able to debate on an adult level. Aside from

issues of child protection I did not want to treat them as if in need of any vastly different ethical considerations than adults.

3.3.1 Informed Consent:

Permission to conduct the research was obtained from Durham University Ethics Committee and the Headteacher of the school. I discussed the basic nature of the research with the Headteacher and he gave consent without asking for further detail. My position at the school and the professional trust this involves facilitated this consent. The pupils who volunteered to take part were given a full explanation of what would be involved – being observed in lessons and the requirement to attend interviews. They were advised that they were free to drop out of the research at any time and that attending interviews was purely voluntary. For all nine pupils involved written permission was gained from parents.

Consent to observe lessons was obtained from individual teachers. Each teacher was given an explanation of the issues I was focusing on and which pupils were involved before the first observation. For subsequent observations I negotiated access with the teacher at least a day before the observation took place; this was to give each teacher the opportunity to withdraw from the research process if they felt in any way uncomfortable. Kimmel (1988) argues that a certain degree of deception is inevitable in most research. As this study involved observing pupil/teacher interactions regarding pupils' behaviour and resistance to authority I felt that making this aim explicit to both parties might cause them to change their behaviour in lessons. Therefore the direction and focus of observations was not made explicit to pupils or teachers before the start of each lesson.

Each member of staff who was interviewed was given a verbal outline of the issues I was interested in before they consented. I also asked their permission to record the interview and advised them that the completed research text would contain anonymised extracts from interviews. On the advice of the British Sociological Association's (BSA) (BSA 2009) ethics guidelines staff were advised that the data does not enjoy legal privilege and could be subpoenaed by a court. At the end of each interview staff were asked if they were happy with the nature and content. Each member of staff was offered the opportunity to read through the resulting transcript.

All pupil interviews began with me requesting the pupils' permission to record and advising them that that the completed text would contain anonymised extracts from interviews. Each time an interview was arranged with pupils they were told that it was voluntary and that they should not feel any pressure to attend. Transcripts of all interviews were made freely available for pupils to read and at the end of each interview pupils were asked if they were happy with the nature and content of the discussion.

3.3.2 Privacy:

A feature of ethnography is that it makes public things which are said in private. Although pupils and staff were made aware that their comments would be very likely to be reproduced in the text Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:212) make the important point that "What is public and what is private is rarely clear cut". To protect privacy and identity all names have been anonymised in the text and this was made clear to pupils and teachers from the outset. However describing and analysing the words and actions of others is an invasion of privacy. In school based research Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:212) make the very pertinent point that there is sometimes an "assumption that

children's private lives are open to scrutiny in a way that those of adults are not". My position as a teacher gave me access to very personal and private data held by the school regarding pupils. Strike (1990) suggests that privacy concerns people's right to control information which is personal to them. My job gives me access to the school's computer database which hold personal, academic and pastoral information. I used this to access information regarding academic targets, school reports, pupil timetables, post codes, free-school meal status, religion and school detentions. Using this source of data raised two ethical dilemmas:

- The data was being used for research purposes; this is not its intended use.
- I was taking the accuracy of the data at face value.

To overcome these issues I asked the Headteacher for permission to include the data in my research. This permission was granted. Also any data used was shown to the pupils to verify its accuracy. All data that appears in the text has thus been vetted by the pupils. The pupils' permission was sought before any school based data was included as part of the text.

Personal information on pupils was also given to me by staff. Pastoral staff especially are in positions of trust and hold a lot of very personal and often very sensitive information about pupils. On a few occasions information was given to me by staff which I considered to be too sensitive to use. In one incident a member of staff related an incident which I considered highly sensitive and confidential to that pupil – I felt that I should not have been told. The information was relevant to the study and would have provided a deeper insight into the pupil's identity but I felt it would have been unethical to include it in the text. Anyone familiar with the school would have been able to identify

the pupil and this would have been an unacceptable betrayal of trust and privacy.

The issue of the privacy of information gathered from staff was particularly pertinent in one case. A teacher had sent me a note (see *appendix* 8) and made comments to me in the corridor and in both cases I felt that the information was highly relevant to the research. This information was communicated to me in a private manner and it was obviously not the teacher's intention for it to be made public. To include this information in the text it was necessary to seek consent from the teacher concerned. The teacher was assured about the anonymity of the information and I also offered the opportunity to the teacher to read how I had represented the incident in the text. Consent was given to include the information.

The public/private status of data gathered in interviews raises many ethical issues. Although all informants were advised that their comments were likely to be used in the text of the research people are prone to forget the interview context of the conversation and may speak in a way they may later regret. As the research was conducted at my place of work professional responsibilities took precedence over research objectives. As a teacher I am legally bound by legislation such as the Child Protection Act 2004. Information given to me by pupils in interviews is therefore not confidential and I would be obliged to pass on information which related to a child being at risk to the appropriate authorities. No extreme cases of this occurred but on two occasions I did stop pupils from talking and advised them that what they were telling me was inappropriate for the discussion and that I could not guarantee confidentiality. One of these incidents related to dinking alcohol and the other concerned a pupil discussing her older boyfriend.

During interviews pupils and staff often made comments which were offensive or degrading to another person. Pupils frequently spoke about teachers in disparaging terms and I felt that this was acceptable if they were giving a reasoned argument and the point they were making related to the professional conduct of teachers. Throughout the research process I did not want to treat pupils as 'incomplete adults' unable to speak their minds and bound by the pupil/teacher hierarchy. I believe that pupils have the right to express their honest opinions about teachers. The ethical consideration is that research necessarily amplifies those opinions and presents them to a wider audience. In one instance two of the pupils expressed very strong opinions about one teacher in particular. I felt that these opinions were so passionately expressed that they represented an important aspect of these pupils' identities and their attitudes towards schooling. For this reason their comments were related in some detail in the text. The teacher's identity was anonymised but the parties involved and close acquaintances would be able to recognise the actors' identities from the text. The issue was further complicated by the teacher declining my requests to observe lessons and conduct an interview. I justify the inclusion of these comments in the text based on the principle that they all relate to pupils' comments about pedagogic practice and not personal identity. Any pupils' comments which purely targeted teachers' personalities/appearance were deemed inappropriate for inclusion in the text.

A further concern was that relating negative comments spoken about individuals may impact upon relationships. Publicising pupils' expressions of dislike of and frustration at teachers had the potential to worsen already fraught relationships. I would suggest however that the ethnographic text relates such incidents dispassionately – they are

reported in context and given a balanced appraisal with the comments of all the social actors involved whenever possible. I do not consider there to be any extreme incidents which could cause any concern; the incidents reported are in my experience quite typical of everyday interactions within a school. The concept of *harm* is of course relative and subjective. Although I consider there to be no impact upon the competency, status and standing of the social actors involved there remains the potential for embarrassment and discomfort at being represented within a text. Strike (1990) raises the issue of *humaneness* – a consideration of the feelings of those being represented. I would argue that the interview process was conducted in a very sensitive manner and that teachers responded through being candid about their feelings and concerns towards their jobs. Instances related in the text of teachers struggling to cope or falling short of their own standards were freely discussed with them. For example a Spanish teacher initiated and welcomed discussion regarding the difficulties of class management – the teacher wanted the issue to highlighted. In this sense the instances of teacher failings are presented not as judgements on individuals but rather examples of wider school failings of which teachers bear the impact.

Reynolds (1982) discusses a *utilitarian* approach to research ethics – weighing the costs and benefits for the participants. Not all participants will have their interests weighted evenly. The weighting in this thesis undoubtedly favoured the pupils. Overall their cultural expression received more attention and consideration than that of teachers. However I would suggest that the voice of teachers is given far more consideration in this thesis than in other ethnographies of schooling (Willis 1977, McLaren 1993, Jackson 2006). Teachers are not represented as a means to expose the inadequacies of schooling;

their own frustrations and opinions are give ample consideration.

Passages describing weak lessons where little work was being done or incidents of arguments between pupils and teachers are related. Once again teachers' identities are anonymised in these instances. All teachers were given pseudonyms but for those incidents deemed controversial the teacher is just described as 'teacher' rather than their pseudonym. This was to prevent any reader from gleaning the teacher's identity by connecting the name with other parts of the text. Describing what I considered to be poor practice by teachers is justified on the following grounds:

- The teachers consented to being observed and were advised that the observations were for research purposes.
- I give what I consider to be a fair and honest account of my observations.
- Descriptions of lessons are always followed by the teacher's opinion gleaned form interviews.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:215) advise that the researcher should not justify the inclusion of controversial data on the grounds that it is true; the consideration should rather be about "what implications it carries, or what implications it may carry". It is very unlikely that the descriptions of teachers' or pupils' behaviour in the classroom would in any way carry negative implications. Teacher competency/professionalism is subject to frequent formal assessment; my own observations could not in any way override these.

How the research process acted upon my relationships with the participants raises particular ethical issues. West (1999) argues that the very act of research may serve to reinforce inequalities. Regarding the pupils I did often feel that they became "objects of the sociological gaze" (Harden et al 2000) as I wrote about their personalities and

experiences. I do however believe they enjoyed the attention and opportunity to express their opinions. Months after the research process ended Sophie shouted to me in the corridor '*Sir if you're doing any more of that sociology stuff let me know*'. There were incidents with the pupils where I had to compromise the research agenda to ensure sensitivity towards their interests. The pupils were uncomfortable with my requests to interview their parents and despite the very useful data this would have yielded I felt that respecting their misgivings was the correct course of action. The pupils' religious beliefs and practices was also an area I wanted to explore more deeply but again they seemed very uncomfortable discussing this issue. Pushing the pupils to comply with my interests would have been a misuse of my authority to serve the research agenda. It would have reinforced the teacher/pupil dualism and disempowered the pupils.

3.3.3 Ecological Awareness:

An ethical ecological approach will consider the impact which the research process and product has upon the environment of the site. The very act of doing research changes the environment; observing lessons and conducting interviews is not my normal mode of behaviour. Essential in this respect is the need to remain loyal to the naturalistic foundation of ethnography. The research process should not manufacture false situations or expose participants to contrived situations to engineer research findings. Pole and Morrison (2003:6) argue that ethnographic methods should

> …not seek to create artificial situations or require those at the focus of the research to change their behaviour in any significant way.

It could be argued that a thesis which adopts a critical, Marxist agenda is viewing participants as a 'project' to be socialised into a particular way of thinking; agency is being compromised for ideological purposes. Spradley (1979) warns against an

ethnocentric form of ethnography which seeks to impose ideology and meaning. I would however argue that my own views on education/social justice acted to provoke debate in interviews and that pupils and teachers actively contested and questioned my own perceptions. This issue was further complicated by my dual role as teacher/researcher. I believe that an essential aspect of my role as a teacher is to provoke pupils into considering alternative points of view and counter-hegemonic thought. However I accept that a research agenda should not seek to manufacture situations which encourage social actors to alter their behaviour thus affecting the ecological state of the site. It was in this sense that I worked hard at ensuring that the observed pupils did not change their behaviour in lessons for my benefit. In some cases they did seem to look at me seeking recognition/approval for their behaviour; my reaction was always to avoid eye contact and act dispassionately. Likewise during interviews I consciously avoided any comments which the pupils may have construed as approving of their disruptive/resistant behaviour.

Despite these contentions it is my view that research should seek to *change* as well as *record* social reality. Although the research *process* sought to maintain the ecological state of the site; the aim of the research *product* is to change the practice within the site.

3.4 Researcher Autobiography:

My connection to the site of study requires special consideration; I enter the field with a very familiar and personal connection. Having grown up in the region and attended a similar school myself I feel that I have developed strong opinions regarding the roles schools can play in cultural and social reproduction. For purposes of transparency and reflexivity I feel it would therefore be appropriate to briefly relate my

own experiences of education.

My own experience of schooling was in state schools in the North East of England; the most relevant phase of this was the time spent at a large secondary comprehensive school from 1980 to 1987. This era bridged the gap between the dismantling of the social democratic, welfarist ideology of the 1960's and 70's, which Arnot (1991:449) states had "exhausted its political repertoire"; and the implementation of the neo-conservative/liberal agenda in the late 1980's. Schooling in this era existed between two paradigms; comprehensive schools had failed to deliver the meritocratic ideal and sat in a state of limbo awaiting the impact of the 1988 Education Reform Act. This situation highlights the contradiction between social democracy and capitalism; capitalist schooling could not perform the meritocratic function of personal development and the promotion of social equality. Arnot (ibid) argues that schooling then becomes trapped into performing a "stabilising function for the economic and political order" – thwarting children's development and legitimising social inequality.

My experience of being a pupil in a working class comprehensive in this era was a strange mixture of apathy, inertia, despondency and indifference. There were no apparent inspections, league tables, targets, performance management or accountability. I am sure they existed in some form but their impact seemed meaningless to the pedagogic process. Of course I remember some dedicated teachers and some engaging teaching but overall expectations were desperately low. Even as a top set pupil I experienced very little motivation from teachers to engage in learning or use education to expand my horizons. I had always had an interest in music but my class spent the entire two years of compulsory music lessons copying from a book about great composers. My lasting

memories of A level classes are of teachers dictating notes; as pupils we were under the impression that we were being educated. Despite this lack of engagement in learning my school memories are all happy ones; the camaraderie, the fashion, the excitement of adolescence. Like 'the lads' in Willis' (1977) study we were producers of a very active culture; a working class celebration of pop music, fashion, underage drinking, football, graffiti and machismo. There was no sense of defeatism or a belief that the system was letting us down. The difference between our situation and 'the lads' in Willis' (1977) study was that in 1985 the full effects of Thatcherite economic policy was hitting working class Britain.

If 'the lads' in Willis' (1977) study valued manual labour and saw their futures as being shaped by such jobs, we stared out into a non-existent jobs market. In 1985 having passed 6 'O' levels I stayed on at school to study 'A' levels. This decision was partly out of a fondness for school and partly because of no alternatives being available. I witnessed many of my contemporaries take the alternative route of signing on the dole; a situation which was far from temporary for many of them.

Pimlott (1985:350) in a study of employment levels in the North East quotes the official government unemployment figure for the area in 1985 as 17.9%; the figure for Sunderland was 21.6% (the national average was 13.3%). Pimlott (1985:352) argues that for school leavers in 1985 unemployment had become a "normal state"; in Gateshead Pimlott (ibid) states that for 90% of school leavers "the immediate experience after school was being out of work". Unemployment in this sense becomes hegemonic; it is viewed as a natural and accepted occurrence which people endure.

My own experience of unemployment occurred after further education. I had

completed A levels in 1987 and naively thought that a job would be easy to come by. Higher education had not been presented to me as a viable option. The school sixth form consisted of 22 students; a post-16 staying on rate of approximately 10%. Pupils were not 'expected' to apply to university; only exceptionally gifted students were encouraged down this path. Progressing onto higher education was the exception rather than the rule. Experiencing the harsh reality of unemployment as an 18 year old was a lesson that I shared with many of my school contemporaries. A generation of able bodied, intelligent, academically qualified young people were consigned to becoming a surplus army of labour.

Unlike many of my contemporaries I was fortunate enough to have an escape; I had qualifications which gave me access to higher education. In 1989 I travelled away from the North East to begin a degree in Sociology in London. My experiences of unemployment, social deprivation and Thatcherite economics galvanized me to study the sociology of the situation. The ideas of Marxist and leftist thinkers gave a context and response to my cultural heritage and experiences.

My experiences as a teacher have been in schools in areas of social deprivation causing me to compare contemporary schooling with my own experiences as a pupil. I see higher expectations from government and school management but the spectre of differential achievement based on social class remains. To witness low expectations and low class consciousness amongst a new generations of North East pupils provokes the sense of injustice and anger I felt as a pupil/school leaver. This is the context which shapes this thesis; this is the subjectivity which forms my philosophy of education. It sits as a form of 'confessional reflexivity' (Marcus 1998) for what follows.

Chapter 4 - The Ethnography:

The ethnography is centred around the lives of nine high ability Year 9 pupils in the summer term in a comprehensive school. The text relates incidents from observations of lessons and comments from the pupils and staff which were gathered through interviews. The ethnography is presented in four parts. The first provides background information on the school, pupils and locale. The second focuses on the pupils' behaviour in lessons, how they express resistance to authority and their feelings and opinions about schooling in general. The third focuses on the wider cultural expectations prevalent at the school. The final part focuses on pedagogic practice and the identities which teachers adopt in the classroom.

Key to transcripts:

.....	Pause
(.....)	Material edited out
_____	Transcription from different interview/discussion follows
[ ]	Background information
(I 5)	Interview 5 - Pupil interview reference number (see *appendix 5*)

4.1 The School:

The site of this study is an 11-19, voluntary aided, Catholic, mixed comprehensive school. There are 899 pupils on roll, with 160 in the Sixth Form. The school is atypical of comprehensive schools due to its Catholic ethos but also the nature of the catchment area. Being the only Catholic school in a ten mile radius means that pupils from a wide variety of communities attend. Some pupils live in sizeable towns

(population 30 -50,000), others live in isolated villages. There are very few pupils from ethnic minorities (less than 1%). 62% of the pupils are Catholic.

Exam results have risen steadily at the school over the past ten years. In 2009 48% of pupils gained five or more A* - C GCSE's including English and Maths; this compares to a national average of 49.8% (see *appendix 1* for further data). In 2009 a new government measure of school performance, the *Progress Measure,* was used. This shows the percentage of pupils making the expected levels of progress during their time at a school. Figures for this school show that 66% of pupils made the expected progress in English, and 46% in Maths. In the academic year 2008/09 the school had 7.1% absence; this compares to a national average figure of 7.3%. The school is ranked 19 out of 37 within the local authority. In 2009 there were 17.9% of pupils at the school registered as having special educational needs; this compares to a national figure of 17.8%. (All data BBC 2010).

The school operates a centralised discipline system called the 'Climate for Learning'. There is a three stage, progressive system of sanctions for classroom behaviour – verbal warning, a lunchtime detention and then removal from the lesson. Being removed from the lesson is colloquially known as being 'CALMED' (an acronym for *creating an alternative learning model*). Being CALMED results in an after-school hour long detention. Any pupil receiving a lunchtime detention is escorted to the detention room by their teacher at the start of lunchtime. The detention room holds around eighty pupils and is located in a disused annex of the school. Pupils sit in silence for 25 minutes writing out the Climate for Learning rules. The discipline system also uses an 'inclusion base' (known colloquially as 'the Base'). Pupils who have committed

serious offences, have indulged in continuous disruption or are returning from exclusion are taught there in isolation. The rationale is to avoid excluding pupils by educating them on-site.

The school day (9.00 a.m. to 3.15 p.m.) is organised into six 50 minute lessons. Lunchtime is 40 minutes during which the pupils are not allowed to leave the school premises. Pupils in Years 7 – 11 are required to wear a uniform. This consists of a black blazer and trousers/skirt (the vast majority of girls wear trousers), white shirt and green school tie. Formal black shoes must be worn; sports shoes are not permitted. Staff are constantly reminded by senior management to enforce uniform policy; lunchtime detentions can be issued for non-compliance. However the enforcement is lax. Pupils' ties are rarely fastened correctly, shirts hang out of trousers and a sizeable minority wear sports shoes.

The school is organised pastorally into year groups. Teachers work as tutors for a group of up to 30 pupils; there are 6 tutor groups per year group and a Head of Year is responsible for the overall pastoral care of the pupils. The school also employs three Pastoral Managers – a non-teaching role designed to provide extra pastoral support for pupils. A school Chaplain also works with staff and pupils to provide spiritual guidance and advise. A school Mass is held every Thursday lunchtime; a Priest from a local church conducts the Mass.

The Catholic ethos of the school is also apparent through the use of symbols and religious iconography. Within every classroom there is a crucifix, laminated posters of The Lord's Prayer and the school's mission statement:

> *We, the staff and Governors believe that the school's mission is to witness to Christ and to celebrate each individual's relationship with one another through working together.*

Visitors to the school are greeted in reception by a framed picture of Pope Benedict XVI surrounded by candles.

Architecturally the school was built in 1970 and is typical of the modernist, functional public institution. Denzer (2008) explains that this involved "the elimination of ornament so that the building plainly expressed its purpose". The principle is that the building is designed from the inside out; the function of the building dictates its form. The exterior of the building displays a functional minimalism expressing the purpose of the gravity and stoicism of learning. There are no outward symbols of childhood that reflect the age of most of the occupants. The architecture is stark and linear; an arrangement of cuboids surrounded by a spiked metallic fence. A green splash of trees and foliage provide an intermittent organic cover for the regimental straight lines and right angles of the buildings. Inside the classrooms vary in their aesthetic appeal. Some have recently been refurbished and boast carpets and new furniture; others are worn and threadbare. The school is due to be completely rebuilt in 2010 to rectify these problems. Technology is very apparent in the modern school; classrooms are fitted with interactive white boards with internet access. All staff are issued with a laptop for use at work and home.

4.2 The Locale:

The school is described by OFSTED as being "in the suburbs of an industrial town with above average levels of deprivation"; it is located in Easington District amongst the former mining villages of the North East of England. The school is one of

three comprehensives in a town with a population of around 30,000. Easington District has historically suffered from high levels of deprivation, academic underachievement and unemployment. Data regarding education, employment and status are presented in greater detail in *appendix 1*. The decline in manufacturing industry, especially coal-mining in the 1980's, continues to impact upon the economic well being of the area. A crude measure of the socio-economic make up of a school catchment area is the percentage of pupils claiming free school meals (FSM). Nationally in January 2009 13% of all secondary school pupils were eligible for FSM (2009a); at the school in this study in May 2009 15% of pupils claimed FSM.

4.3 Pupil Profiles:

All of the pupils are 14 years old, female and of white ethnic origin. All names have been changed:

Jennifer:

Academic: Key Stage 3 general target **7c** – top 7% of year group.
GCSE targets – grade A for all 7 subjects.

Ambitions: Attend Sixth Form and university to become a Geography teacher.

School Sanctions: Has never incurred school detentions.

Family Background: Father employed as a Supervisor at Nissan Car Plant. Mother employed as a Road Safety Trainer. 5 older siblings have attended the school and gone onto higher education.

Attendance: 98.6%

Lorna:

Academic: Key Stage 3 general target **6b** – top 24% of year group.
GCSE targets – 6 at grade B and one grade C.

Ambitions: Attend Sixth Form and university and become a primary school teacher.

School Sanctions: Has never incurred school detentions.

Family Background: Father employed by a Housing Association. Mother employed as a Medical Secretary. Elder sibling in further education.

Attendance: 99.3%

Ashleigh:

Academic: Key Stage 3 general target **7b** – top 1% of year group. One of only 8 pupils included in the school's Year 9 *Gifted and Talented Register*.
GCSE targets – 6 at grade A* and one grade A.

Ambitions: College and university. Barrister, orthodontist or fashion designer.

School Sanctions: Has never incurred school detentions.

Family Background: Mother works as a shop assistant.

Attendance: 95.8%

Sarah:

Academic: Key Stage 3 general target **7c** – top 7% of year group. One of only 8 pupils included in the school's Year 9 *Gifted and Talented Register*.
GCSE targets – 6 at grade A* and one grade A.

Ambitions: Attend Sixth Form and university. Occupation unspecified.

School Sanctions: Has never incurred school detentions.

Family Background: Father employed by a Painter and Decorator. Mother employed as a Shop Assistant. Elder sibling in further education.

Attendance: 100%

Vicky:
Academic: Key Stage 3 general target **6a** top 19% of year group.
GCSE targets – 6 at grade B and one grade A.

Ambitions: Attend Sixth Form and university to study Travel and Tourism. Work abroad in the future.

School Sanctions: Has never incurred school detentions.

Family Background: Father employed as a Care Home Manager. Elder siblings in full time employment.

Attendance: 98.6%

Lindsey:
Academic: Key Stage 3 general target **7c** – top 7% of year group.
GCSE targets – 7 at grade C.

Ambitions: Attend college. Join the police force.

School Sanctions: In Year 9 12 lunchtime detentions and CALMED 6 times

Family Background: Not provided.

Attendance: 96.5%

Toni:
Academic: Key Stage 3 general target **6c** – top 8% of year group.
GCSE targets – 7 at grade A.

Ambitions: Attend college. Join RAF or work as in Cabin Crew.

School Sanctions: In Year 9 14 lunchtime detentions and CALMED 4 times.

Family Background: Not provided.

Attendance: 91%

Sophie:
Academic: Key Stage 3 general target **7b** – top 1% of year group. One of only 8 pupils included in the school's Year 9 *Gifted and Talented Register*.
GCSE targets – 7 at grade A*.

Ambitions: Attend college. Work as a lawyer.

School Sanctions: In Year 9 28 lunchtime detentions and CALMED 9 times.

Family Background: Father employed by a local Bearings Company. Mother employed part-time as an Administrator. Elder siblings in further education.

Attendance: 91.7%

Abbi:
Academic: Key Stage 3 general target **7b** – top 1% of year group. One of only 8 pupils included in the school's Year 9 *Gifted and Talented Register*.
GCSE targets – 6 at grade A, one grade A*.

Ambitions: Attend Sixth Form and university. Work in child-care or join the police force.

School Sanctions: In Year 9 12 lunchtime detentions and CALMED 6 times.

Family Background: Father employed as a Lorry Driver.

Attendance: 82.6%

4.4 Pupil Identities:

Through lesson observations it became apparent that different pupils interacted with pedagogic authority in different ways and displayed different forms of resistance to authority. When conflicts developed within the classroom different pupils responded in different ways; these ranged from passive acceptance to outright confrontation. In this respect the nine observed pupils have been grouped by their similarity of behaviour in their reactions to pedagogic authority. This is not to suggest that they exclusively displayed that mode of behaviour but rather that it was their dominant identity.

4.4.1 Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh:

> *…what you do is behave yourself in Year 7 and then the teachers, they love you forever.* (Jennifer)

In interviews teachers were full of praise for these three pupils – the adjectives 'lovely', 'perfect', 'engaging' were regularly used. All three are always immaculately dressed, unfailingly polite and have never moved beyond the first warning stage of the school's discipline system. Their high ability, work ethic and conformist nature endeared them to teachers.

In lessons Jennifer would immediately become engaged in the learning process. Observing her in a Science lesson she gave the teacher her full attention from the start. The teacher tested the pupils with questions based on their prior learning and after each question Jennifer would raise her hand waiting to be asked. When called upon she would give the correct answer and be praised. As the class worked on an exercise from a textbook Jennifer would frequently raise her hand and call out '*Miss*!' to get the teacher's attention. In the ensuing one-on-one conversations she would ask what seemed to me very high level subject related questions – '*But what's glucose Miss? That's part of photosynthesis isn't it?'* She was subsequently the only pupil in the class to be able to recite and explain the chemical equation for photosynthesis. In another Science lesson with a different teacher Jennifer was the first to volunteer to read from the textbook. This lesson was about tectonic plates and once again whilst the class were involved in a set exercise she raised her hand to engage the teacher in a one-on-one discussion – *'Sir, do all tectonic plates make waves?', 'Do we get earthquakes?'* In this lesson the pupils had been set a task to plan for the eventuality of an earthquake. Jennifer commanded the teacher's attention by repeatedly shouting '*Sir! Sir! Read ours'*. When the teacher

responded to her calls she engaged him in discussion for three minutes acting as spokesperson for her group. The teacher was suitably impressed and complemented her – *'You make a lot of interesting points there; I'm impressed'.*

A key feature of Jennifer's classroom identity was her willingness and ability to command the teacher's attention. In all of her 12 lesson's I observed she raised her hand, the teacher responded and she engaged the teacher in a one-on-one conversation. In each of her lessons she was committed to learning but also sought the teacher's attention and approval. Her English teacher commented:

Ms. Gould: *She is very engaging and when you get to know her she's not backward in coming forward.... but unlike other bright kids who just get on with it she wants attention, she wants attention quite a lot; she has to make sure that she's doing the right thing.*

Jennifer's ability to engage and impress her teachers was a display of the forms of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1977) she possessed. Her smart appearance, polite demeanour and social skills allowed her to command teachers' attention and approval. Having taught Jennifer's elder siblings and met her parents I can confirm that these abilities are very much a family trait.

Lorna and Ashleigh adopt the same conformist and engaged identities in the classroom. Observing them in lessons my fieldnotes repeat the same pattern – *engaged in task, raises hand to answer question, head down working.* Even in lessons where disruption and noise dominate these pupils remain engaged and focused on work. In one Spanish lesson the teacher struggled to maintain order; the lesson was very noisy and most pupils were off task. Amidst the noise the pupils seemed unclear what was required of them by the teacher. However Lorna sat quietly and worked from a textbook; I

marvelled at her ability to sit and work amongst the chaos. At one point in the lesson the teacher stood at the front of the class:

Teacher: *I'm waiting for quiet.* [Counts down in Spanish from 5 to 1 – pupils don't respond].

Pupil 1: *Tell them to be quiet Miss.*

Teacher: *They won't.*

Pupil 1: *BE QUIET!*

Teacher: *I'm getting tired – I expect better from you*.

Pupil 2: [shouts out – unintelligible to me]

Teacher: *I would expect you not to speak to me like a piece of garbage; you should be ashamed of yourselves.*

Observing a colleague struggling in such circumstances is difficult but remarkably Lorna and other pupils on her desk worked through this commotion. I asked Lorna about this lesson:

SF: *How do you feel when there's noise and messing around and you're trying to work?*

Lorna: *It doesn't really bother me... at all.*

SF: *Can you work like that; can you learn when it's like that?*

Lorna: *I like it better like that really*.

SF: *What, when there's noise?*

Lorna: *Yeah... when everyone's sat in silence you feel as though you can't say anything; it's just like... dead.* **(I 6)**

In another interview:

SF: *Do you think it holds you back having naughty people in the class?*

Jennifer: *You can't have a laugh when everyone in the class is proper serious about stuff. You need some naughty ones. Like in our Maths class. How pants would that be if no-one could have a laugh? If you wouldn't let Abbi say stupid stuff?* **(I 10)**

Ashleigh seemed able to put the disruption in this lesson into context:

SF: *Most people when they were asked questions could answer in Spanish – so you must have been learning something.*

Ashleigh: *Oh la! Yeah, but we learnt in Years 7 and 8. This year we've just failed coz we've done nothing compared to what we did in the past two years.*

SF: *But what's the difference now?*

Ashleigh: *Well…Year 9. It's your last year of freedom in a way coz like next year you've proper gotta stick in.* **(I 4)**

These high ability, conformist pupils seemed to be able to tolerate and filter out the disruption caused by their peers. I observed Lorna in three Design Technology lessons; each was noisy, disruptive and little learning appeared to be taking place. Lorna sat in the front row of seats with two friends; other pupils were scattered around the workshop benches. In all of these three lessons only Lorna and her two friends showed any engagement. The teacher struggled to speak over the noise and pupils openly ate, drank from cans and applied make up. I asked Lorna about these lessons:

SF: *The lessons I watched in DT, were they typical lessons?*

Lorna: *Yes.*

SF: *Do people do much work in those lessons?*

Lorna: *No. If you went through people's folders they would be basically empty.*

SF: *Why is that?*

Lorna: *They just sit and do their make up. It's Ms. XXXX, she can't control us at all and everyone just sits and does their make up. When she says 'Put it away' they ignore her.*

SF: *How do you feel? Are you not sitting there thinking 'I'm not learning anything?'*

Lorna: *No coz I'm not taking it anyway.... so I know I don't need it.* **(I 6)**

Across all observations these noisy and disruptive lessons were in the minority and Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh were confident about their academic progression:

SF: *Do you learn, do you make progress in lessons?*

Lorna: *Oh yes. It's only in DT that I'm not gonna do well and I don't care coz I'm not doing it next year.*

Ashleigh: *I'm not doing Spanish so I don't care.*

SF: *But what if there was an important lesson, say next year in your GCSE's and there was a lot of messing about and you weren't learning?*

Lorna: *I'd tell Ms. Gould* [Head of Year].

Ashleigh: *I'd go mad; I'd get my mam up.* **(I 6)**

Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh all displayed high levels of engagement in lessons; they were able to filter out the noise and disruption of their peers and remain focused upon their own academic progression. Their ability to learn in these circumstances reflected an ability to access an *invisible pedagogy* (Bernstein 1977). In lessons where the framing was very weak, they were able to pick up on the implicit learning objectives of the lesson and complete their work. It seemed that these pupils had internalised the necessary *recognition* and *realisation rules* (Moore 2004) to be able to decode what was required of them; even when that requirement was confused and disrupted by others.

In many ways Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh mirrored the values of the conformist 'ear'oles' in Willis' (1977) study with an investment in the formal structure of the school. However despite their conformity and the glowing praise they received from staff these pupils very often displayed their own disruptive behaviour. Observing Jennifer in an RE lesson my fieldnotes read:

> *Grabs friend's pen; pulls it out of her hand. Laughing loudly. Friend pulls her* [Jennifer's] *hairband out. Both laugh loudly. Off task as she rearranges hair.*

Likewise in a Geography lesson Lorna was working with a male pupil and became very disruptive. They began hitting each other with their rulers and defacing each other's work; this was accompanied by shrieks of laughter. The teacher rebuked them with a gentle '*settle down*'; the disruption didn't attract any sanction from the teacher. Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh would repeatedly chat, drift off task and indulge in high-spirited pranks yet never receive a warning. In a Science lesson Ashleigh's class were watching a DVD and interest had began to wane. Ashleigh and Toni were sat together and were becoming increasingly loud. I observed Ashleigh initiating all of the chat and trying to hide Toni's blazer under the table:

Teacher: *Toni! Shut up please*.

Toni: *It's not me talking.*

Teacher: *That's a warning.*

I asked Ashleigh about this incident:

Ashleigh: *Yeah, Toni was getting wrong and it wasn't even her talking it was me* [laughs]

SF: *Why does that happen?*

Ashleigh: *Coz he's a freak. If I talk she gets the blame for it; did you notice?*

SF: *But why do you not get warnings?*

Ashleigh: *I don't get caught. I sit with my head behind her so he can't see me talking.* **(I 6)**

In a discussion with Jennifer and Abbi (a more confrontational pupil), the issue of teacher inconsistency came up:

Abbi: ... i*f I do something I get a warning straight away....*

Jennifer: *But if I done something I wouldn't get a warning.*

SF: *You two are similar intelligence, similar personalities but you* [Abbi] *get into a lot of trouble and you* [Jennifer] *don't.*

Abbi: *Exactly!*

Jennifer*: The thing is the amount of times I talk to Lauren in Science and everyone and I just don't get wrong for it.*

SF: *Why is that?*

Abbi: *I don't think you have ever had a warning in there are you're always talking*.

Jennifer: [laughs]

Abbi: *If I talk once it's like 'Abbi shut up'*

SF: *But why is that?*

Jennifer: *I don't know I just never get wrong. Even though I talk all the time I just don't get wrong. I think its coz I was good through Year 7 so the teachers like me*. **(I 2)**

Reflecting on my own lessons I had moved Jennifer and Lorna who sat together because they were continually turning around and talking to the pupils behind them. This had caused a lot of disruption in lessons but not once had I issued a warning. The only sanctions I had issued were mild rebukes which were met with demure, repentant looks. I could not imagine punishing these pupils further as their conformity, engaging personalities and intelligence seemed too precious to sully with school sanctions.

There seemed to be a suggestion that beneath their conformist exterior so praised and lauded by teachers these pupils had a disruptive tendency that was operating beneath the radar of pedagogic authority. This was reminiscent of Dickar's (2008) concept of *infrapolitical resistance* – avoiding direct confrontation and not attracting sanctions. However other pupils were punished for similar actions. This inconsistency seemed to be predicated upon the different levels of symbolic capital the pupils possessed. An ability to adopt the dispositions of the dominant school habitus seemed to provide an unofficial

form of immunity from school sanctions. The pupils seemed to recognise that there were blatant inconsistencies in the way teachers applied the school sanctions. I discussed this issue with Mr. Collins, a teacher renowned for tough discipline:

SF: *... are you consistent... when you hand out detentions?*

Mr. Collins: *Am I fuck! Sometimes you're marking homework and you'll think 'That cunt, he's on detention coz he never does it' but then you'll say 'Aw she's nice, I won't put her on detention' – the kids don't know and some kids do have the halo effect. I mean they're good kids so they should be rewarded – I don't care, I'm human, it's gonna happen. I think some kids are aware of the halo they've got.*

I discussed the same issue with Ms. Henderson, the Year 9 Pastoral Manager:

Ms. Henderson: *Well there's definitely the case of kids getting a reputation if they come through from Year 7 with a reputation. Probably with Jennifer although a teacher might see her talking a bit they know she's basically a good kid so she wouldn't get picked up on it whereas somebody else might get jumped on straight away.*

SF: *I see the ones who do get detentions and I think 'What's the difference? ... they're doing the same things'.*

Ms. Henderson: *With Jennifer she's immaculately dressed, her work is excellent.... she's always polite so she will probably get away with some talk in a lesson whereas somebody else would get the detention straight away. I wouldn't say it was deliberate but in general she can probably get away with more.*

This 'halo effect' or adaptation and compliance to the dominant school habitus raised another possibility. There was a suggestion that these outwardly conformist pupils may possess a form of self-awareness; an awareness of the effect their personalities have on teachers. I arranged an interview with Jennifer and Lorna to discuss this issue.

SF: *Do you think your personality benefits you? Do you think teachers treat you differently?*

Jennifer: *What you do right..... first year, Year 7, you're good as gold, all the way through; they don't care after that. As long as you're good in the first few weeks they're fine with you, they won't shout at you or anything. It's true.*

SF: *Is it that simple?*

Jennifer: *Yeah, it really is. My mam doesn't know that I do it on purpose but I do it on purpose. My mam thinks I'm just good all the time. I am, but I talk. I talk all the time but I don't get wrong.*

Lorna: *But when I talk I don't get caught or warned.*

Jennifer: *I get caught but I don't get wrong coz they're like... I think they're scared to tell the good people off, because they're scared in case they upset them.*

SF: *'Scared'?*

Jennifer: *We're the ones who work in lessons so we get treated better. You get chosen to go on trips, like we got chosen to go to Liverpool.* **(I 10)**

In a different interview:

SF: *How do you think teachers feel about you?*

Ashleigh: *They love us!* [Laughs]

Jennifer: *They think we're great. We do what they want us to do.*

SF: *And are they right about you? What about underneath....*

Jennifer: *.... we're a bit more rebellious.*

Lorna: *We know the ins and outs of everything.*

Jennifer: *If you're good you get to see what the teachers do and stuff and once you've done that the teachers let you do whatever you want really.* **(I 6)**

In the interviews Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh all created a distinction between themselves and those pupils who conflicted with pedagogic authority. They would use the term 'good kids' to refer to themselves and 'naughty people' for the others. This distinction seemed to be based upon the way the 'naughty people' argued and conflicted with the teacher. Lorna even suggested that this distinction had a physical manifestation in the classroom:

Lorna: *I think every single class is split into two halves; one for good people and one for naughty people. In our seating plan in Spanish we've got rows now and there's a gap down the middle and all the good people are on one side.* **(I 10)**

Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh were all observed being 'naughty' in the sense that they caused disruption in lessons. The distinction seemed to be that they would never contest the teachers' authority; they would indulge in classroom disruption but unlike their more showy counterparts they would not resist authority. I asked them about their reluctance to argue back:

SF: *Do you ever want to argue.....*

Jennifer: *Like sometimes when the teacher is proper doing your head in you just want to shout at them but you know you shouldn't. I'm fine in school but when I'm at home I get proper annoyed; I shout at people all the time but I don't do it at school.*

SF: *So you sometimes want to but you don't; what stops you?*

Jennifer: *You're more likely to go on trips if you're good. If you think of the naughty people and what they get, it's like 'naughty', so: detention, CALMED, Base, after school detention and all that. Think of a good person; you think trips, rewards and all that.*

SF: *Do you think that arguing back might be justified in some cases?*

Lorna: *Yes and no because... it depends. Like you'll get your point across and the teacher will listen but also no because some people will like... get too annoyed.*

Jennifer: *You have to be careful. Once you've got a warning it's easy to get a detention. Once before right I had a green fingernail and I goes 'Miss I've got a green fingernail it's hurting what do I do?' and she goes 'Warning' and I goes 'Why have I got a warning?' and she goes 'Do you want a detention?' and I goes 'No' and she goes 'Shut up then'. If you say anything back you get a detention.*

Lorna: *If you argue you know it'll end up against you... it'll go back to being your fault.*

Jennifer: *Teachers always believe teachers over pupils.* **(I 6)**

In a different interview with Lorna, when Jennifer and Ashleigh (her closest friends) were not present, I asked her again about arguing with teachers:

SF: *Do you ever argue back?*

Lorna: *I want to argue back sometimes but I know it will get me in trouble so I have to resist myself. I can get proper annoyed so easily with a teacher though. I need to go to anger management classes. I get so annoyed really easily.*

SF: *Do you show it or just inside?*

Lorna: *I don't know, but sometimes... the other day I got a warning for something and I was just sat there and proper like just dug my nails in my hands and I had my finger bleeding.*

SF: *Did you say anything?*

Lorna: *No.* **(I 3)**

Despite this reluctance to argue back and resist the teachers' authority Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh all expressed certain degrees of anger and critical views about their teachers and their teaching methods. Jennifer was highly critical of a Science lesson which involved watching a video about comets:

SF: *So how did you feel in that lesson?*

Jennifer: *I couldn't deal with it. It was doing my head in.... I was sick.*

SF: *So what's going through your mind?*

Jennifer: *I was thinking 'We should be doing something fun'. I thought he was gonna let us go on the computers today; like going to find the differences between a comet and an asteroid.* **(I 2)**

In a different interview Jennifer and Lorna berated teachers for the lack of engagement they felt in lessons:

SF: *In lessons with the work are you sometimes thinking....*

Jennifer: *.....This is crap, there's no point in doing it.*

SF: *But are you thinking 'It's been taught in the wrong way' or...*

Jennifer: *They could teach it in a more fun way.... you think 'If I was the teacher I would be doing it like this'.*

Lorna: *What teachers should be thinking is 'If I was a pupil would I enjoy…'*

Jennifer: *They should put themselves in our shoes... like me, I want to be a Geography teacher and I'm not gonna be thinking 'What would I enjoy' I'd be thinking 'What would the children enjoy' and like how would I plan these lessons to make them fun for them,*

not for me.

SF: *But teachers say it's the time they need to plan....*

Lorna: *But what are the weekends for? Why do we get homework and they don't?*

Jennifer: *It doesn't take much to plan... they get frees don't they? They can plan the lessons in those frees. I do dancing after school; you don't see teachers doing dancing you? You see them sitting around. They should be planning their lessons at home or during dinner and break.* **(I 6)**

Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh were distinctive in the sample of pupils in that they were never observed or seemed inclined to resist authority. They would often indulge in disruptive behaviour but the outcomes of this were – '*we don't get caught*', and/or other less conformist pupils would be blamed, or they would accept the teacher's rebuke without argument. One factor behind their reluctance to challenge or resist authority would seem to be a self-awareness that their conformist identities afford them status and privilege from teachers. Beneath their outward conformity they possess critical views regarding teachers and pedagogic practice; however these views seem latent and are never expressed in the form of resistance to authority. The high ability of these pupils means that they are able to participate in set tasks and satisfy and impress their teachers; they are very competent at accessing the invisible pedagogy (Bernstein 1977) of lessons. Their conformity would seem not to be passive and accepting. Using Woods (1979) typology of pupil adaptations they would seem to be expressing a form of 'compliance' for instrumental reasons – their high ability focuses them on academic success. However their conformity would seem to be more complex than this; it would seem at least partially conditional on the status and privilege which their identities elicit from teachers. An aspect of their conformity is thus a self-awareness that it affords them privilege.

4.4.2 Sarah and Vicky:

> *When I stick my hand in the air it's like I'm invisible; not there.*
> (Vicky)

As with Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh teachers were full of praise for Sarah and Vicky:

Mr. Jordan: *Sarah? She's great. She's bright and on the button; she puts the effort in and gets the work done... I can say to her 'There's the book, there's the worksheet, get on with it' and I know she'll do it and she'll put the effort in.*

Although Sarah and Vicky shared the same outwardly conformist nature and strong work ethic with the previous three pupils the difference was their quiet and reserved personalities. Whereas Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh would command teachers' attention Sarah and Vicky would rarely interact with teachers or even their peers in lessons. My fieldnotes from lesson observation of these two pupils are sparse. Observing Vicky over three Spanish lessons my comments were restricted to – *head down working; rests head on hands; reads textbook.* Observing Sarah in an English lesson she sat at a desk alone in the middle of the room. She did not speak, raise her hand to answer a question or interact with anyone in any way. The pupils were writing coursework stories about the *Titanic* and the teacher circulated the room from pupil to pupil helping and answering questions. Sarah did not ask for any assistance throughout this 50 minute lesson and the teacher would briefly look down at Sarah's work as she passed her desk but did not ask if she required help or guidance. I asked Sarah about this lesson:

SF: *In English with Ms. XXXX, do you ask her for help, does she come and help you?*

Sarah: *She never does really but then her lessons are OK because she does come around the class and help us but because there are so many of us she's stretched.*

SF: *But do you ever get her attention, if you're stuck or something?*

Sarah: *Sometimes but she's gotta help everyone and by the time.... it's not worth it sometimes.*

SF: *So how do you feel about the other kids in there – the ones who seem to get all the attention?*

Sarah: *I want to kill them.... or lock them in a dark cupboard with no air.* **(I 7)**

This last comment was said with a dry, sardonic wit. Sarah's personality is characterised by her quiet, reserved nature but also by her insightful, deadpan humour. Her school blazer is littered with badges depicting the names of rock bands and skull and cross bones. Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh were able to combine their high ability with high levels of symbolic capital enabling them to elicit favour by conforming to the dominant school habitus. Sarah although praised by teachers for her academic compliance did not display the social dispositions of the school habitus to any great degree. She was outwardly polite when spoken to but her appearance and unwillingness/reluctance to initiate discussions with teachers often left her marginalised in lessons. Reflecting on my own interactions with her over the past three years it took a while to build up an understanding of her personality and humour. In one-one-one interactions she would peer over her glasses at me and speak in a quiet monotone voice with a deadpan expression. She would make an observation or relate an anecdote, wait for my reaction and then her face would develop into a wry smile. Sarah is one of only eight pupils in Year 9 on the school's *Gifted and Talented Register* – pupils highlighted for teachers as being of exceptional intelligence.

In the initial group interviews the louder more forceful pupils would dominate leaving Sarah and Vicky marginalised. Sarah in particular would begin to make a critical comment but get cut short:

SF: *Do you like Science lesson? How do you feel in those lessons?*

Jennifer: *Ms. XXXX is nice; you can at least have fun in her lesson.*

Sarah: *I wouldn't describe her as nice; she's a cow.*

Jennifer: *Woah! She's a cow is she Sarah?* [Laughs loudly]. **(I 2)**

It was obvious that Sarah had critical opinions but I feared these were being lost as I would have to quieten the other pupils in order to hear them. For this reason I arranged two interviews with just Sarah, Vicky and myself present. In these sessions it was clear that they had a critical view of their teachers' methods. I asked them how they felt in lessons:

Sarah: *Some teachers just take advantage of you and give you anything coz they can't be bothered to plan anything else and they know that people like us will do it. That's when you get annoyed but you still do it coz there's nothing else to do.*

SF: *You feel they take you for granted?*

Sarah: *Yes coz all the naughty people in our class, she* [Science teacher] *sees to them more than us so she'll just give us work and then just kind of leave us alone while she goes off for the whole of the lesson with them.*

Vicky: *Like as if you were invisible.*

Sarah: *Yeah, and then she shouts at us for not doing our work but she hasn't even been over to help us.*

SF: *Is that because you're quiet? She might think you're happy.*

Sarah: *Probably... but it's just unfair... it's the way we are, we can't change that. If we were loud she wouldn't like it... I still blame it on her.* **(I 7)**

These comments made me reassess what I had observed in lessons and the compliments teachers had bestowed on Sarah and Vicky. When I had observed these pupils sitting quietly, heads down and working I had assumed they were happily engaged in the lesson. They were however telling me that they felt 'invisible' and frustrated at the lack of attention they felt their conformity and hard work merited. In future lesson observations I began to focus on the attention teachers gave Sarah and Vicky. In an English lesson

Vicky sat alone at a desk in the front row of the class. At the start of the lesson the teacher asked questions about what constitutes 'culture'. Some pupils shouted out answers, the teacher asked others who had raised their hands. Vicky raised her hand for three successive questions but was not chosen to speak. This was a very interactive lesson with the teacher inviting pupils to interpret and comment on a poem they had read. Vicky did not speak or offer any opinion and was not invited to contribute. On two occasions she turned around and spoke to the two pupils behind her but other than this she did not interact with anyone. I asked Vicky about this lesson:

SF: *At the start you put your hand up, you seemed to have ideas you wanted to say.*

Vicky: *When I stick my hand in the air it's like I'm invisible; not there.*

SF: *But if there was something you really wanted to say would you ever shout out like other kids do?*

Vicky: *It depends. I'd either spend half the lesson with my hand up waiting 'til he comes over or I'd just sit and do something different.*

SF: *Would it be better if.....*

Vicky: *..... It would be better if they actually noticed that we were in the room.* **(I 7)**

Asking Sarah about another of her lessons I'd observed I was curious as to why she didn't do more to get the teacher's attention when she required it:

SF: *So why don't you shout and say 'Come here! I'm here as well'?*

Sarah: *I don't know... I'd get on their nerves. If we did shout she* [English teacher] *wouldn't shout at the naughty people for shouting but she'd shout at us because we're supposed to be well behaved and we're supposed to be quiet... if we weren't like that, like she expects us to be, we'd just get more wrong.* **(I 7)**

This same issue had arisen in another interview:

Sarah: *...what is the point though? Coz like teachers are supposed to make the lessons fun and engaging but they just don't and if you're not gonna at least try with the lesson... Ms. XXXX only engages with half the class coz she just leaves us to get on with our work*

and she won't come over to talk to us coz we're at the back. **(I 11)**

These conversations made me reflect on my own practice and consider how the time I spend interacting with pupils can be dominated by those who command my attention. I was keen to ask teachers how aware they were of how they allocate time between pupils.

Mr. Collins: *Oh you mean the cardboard cut-outs? They just sit there and get on with their work and you're right they don't get any attention. I think there's not enough time to give them attention. I think if I had a class full of cardboard cut-outs it would be different. But you're always gonna direct your attention at those kids you're gonna need to settle down.*

_____

Ms. Turner: *Sarah... she isn't someone who would want to push forward her point of view... In a discussion she'd just probably sit there and think 'that's a load of rubbish' but not say. I think it comes down to knowing your class because some kids would crumple if you picked on them because they just don't want to speak... I think you shouldn't be trying to make them feel uncomfortable.*

Vicky's Science teacher commented on her persona in lessons:

Mr. Storey: *Very quiet, just quiet... gets on, listens, does what she needs to do. She is one of them who disappears; they're in that gang of kids who never really talk too much but they get on and do everything. There's always that group in every class isn't there – they say nothing but do it and you never seem to spend that much time with them.*

Likewise Vicky's Spanish teacher was aware that the time she spent with pupils was not allocated fairly:

Ms. Lopez: *It's easy done because you're just so concentrated on getting the others working and you know they are gonna get on with it. It is a bit unfair because people like Vicky always do work and I think it's always that group that gets missed out.*

It was not just in lessons that Sarah and Vicky felt hard done by:

SF: *Jennifer was saying that Lorna and her always get asked to go on trips....*

Sarah: *Yeah they always do and it's really shocking; we never do. They get asked to go on all the DT trips and everything coz... I dunno, they're quite loud but not as loud as the really naughty ones but not as quiet as us and they get everything – it's really unfair.*

Vicky: *It's like when the naughty kids in the Base get to go quad biking. So technically teachers in this school reward kids for being badly behaved.*

SF: *Have you ever said that to anybody?*

Vicky: *Who? You'd say it to any teacher but they wouldn't do anything – what could they do? You don't want to take it any further just in case nobody listens to you coz you're only a child – you feel really small.* **(I 11)**

These conversations made me feel guilty and angry that there were pupils who felt so alienated and marginalised at school. Furthermore these were the pupils who conformed and did everything that teachers were asking of them in lessons. I was reminded of McLaren's (1993) metaphor of the 'pain' of being a student; how resistance was often provoked by alienation. Despite feeling marginalised in lessons they were very able to access the learning objectives. The lack of attention from teachers did not prevent them from making progress – they seemed to possess the *recognition* and *realisation rules* (Moore 2004) to decode what was required of them.

These issues came up in interviews I conducted with the pastoral staff responsible for Year 9. Ms. Gould is a very experienced Head of Year and was aware of Sarah's misgivings about school:

Ms. Gould: *She's a very difficult one that. She volunteers to come to after school Drama and sometimes she just sits there at the back and she'll have her mobile phone out and she doesn't join in at all; sometimes she'll sit there and she's crying. She's a very, very deep one that... a very emotional girl.*

SF: *But do kids like Sarah command much of you time, I mean in your pastoral role?*

Ms. Gould: *I would say not... most of my time is taken up with behaviour issues.*

Ms. Henderson, the Year 9 Pastoral Manager, deals with the day-to-day issues/problems that pupils have. This is a non-teaching role in the school and thus the pupils perceive her as less of a figure of pedagogic authority than they would a teacher. I was curious whether she had ever encountered either Sarah or Vicky in a pastoral context. Ms. Henderson told me that there had only been one issue; a worrying incident with Sarah. I

feel that it would not be ethical or appropriate to relate the details of this incident here but Ms. Henderson interpreted the incident as a cry for attention:

Ms. Henderson: *I really don't think there was any serious problem behind it and her mam seemed to sort it out and it stopped... but I do think that was something that possibly ties in with attention. She possibly thought 'Well I don't get any notice taken of me in lessons so I'll bring some attention to myself' ... maybe she thought 'this is something that'll get people talking about me'.*

The significance of these issues regarding the alienation that Sarah and Vicky seemed to feel towards school is that they provide a foundation for explaining the form of resistance to authority that these pupils adopt. Like Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh both Sarah and Vicky were observed indulging in some classroom disruption but never received warnings or detentions. They were both seemed to revel in their illicit misdemeanours:

SF: *So why don't you ever get warnings and detentions?*

Vicky: *It's because we don't get caught*. [Both laugh].

Sarah: *Yeah we do all the stuff and don't get caught.*

SF: *Why don't you get caught?*

Sarah: *We're more cleverer than them* [other pupils]; *we're better at hiding it.*

SF: *So what kind of things do you do?*

Vicky: *Like when Ms. Lopez says 'Don't talk' me and Sam were talking and another person got caught and they were going off it coz we never got the warning and I'm like – 'Well learn not to get caught then!'*

Sarah: *Playing on phones in lessons, playing on games. I do that a lot in Science*.

SF: *What are the teachers doing?*

Sarah: *Well they don't expect it of us. They're probably just looking down checking our work.* **(I 7)**

As with Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh there would seem to be a certain degree of

awareness with Sarah and Vicky that teachers perceive them as good, conformist pupils and that they could benefit from this. (Sarah's blazer is covered with badges – strictly against school uniform policy yet she informed me she never gets asked to remove them). The difference however is that whereas Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh would never resist the teacher's authority, Sarah and Vicky displayed a potentially very particular form of resistance which they explained to me in interviews:

SF: *You've told me a lot about what makes you angry and frustrated but what's your reaction to all of that?*

Sarah: *Well it's pointless arguing back so I just annoy them.*

SF: *Who the teachers? But I've never seen you get into any confrontations in lessons.*

Sarah: *Not arguments... that would just lower us to the level of the pupils who are bad and teachers would take a grudge on us forever and just treat us like some kind of...*

Vicky: …*shit on their shoes.*

SF: *I don't understand... what do you mean 'annoy them?'*

Sarah: *It's about ignoring people; it gets them agitated and they go in a mood so then you go in a mood with them and then they don't know why you're in a mood coz you won't talk to them to tell them what's wrong... .so it's just like... silence.*

SF: *What... you deliberately ignore the teacher?*

Vicky: *Yeah, I blank them. Half the time I might as well be invisible so see how they like it.*

SF: *And does it work?*

Sarah: *It usually just gets everyone confused; but it's fun.* **(I 7)**

In lesson observations I had never interpreted these pupils' quietness and lack of participation as anything other than a combination of their reserved personalities and the teachers' lack of time/awareness to involve them. However Sarah and Vicky seemed to be telling me that this was partly their choice – they were to some extent choosing to

withdraw from involvement in lessons by 'blanking' (ignoring) the teacher. I was interested in how conscious or deliberate this approach was:

SF: *You say you 'blank' teachers? What are you thinking when you do that?*

Sarah: *I don't suppose you really think about it when it's happening, you just want to do something that gets their attention, that at least gets a response from them. But then afterwards, when you think about it and it's got a good response, then you want to do it again, to wind them up even more.*

SF: *What do you mean – 'a good response'?*

Sarah: *You get their attention…they actually speak to you.*

SF: *Because you've 'blanked' them?*

Sarah: *Yeah, it annoys them and confuses them so they think they have to do something.*

(I 7)

In a later interview I pursued this with Sarah:

SF: *You said you sometimes refuse to interact with teachers; what's in your mind when you're doing that?*

Sarah: *I like winding them up.*

SF: *But what effect does it have?*

Sarah: *It kind of gets back at the teacher but it gives you more satisfaction coz you know that you've done something that winds them up without them actually knowing that they've been wound up. It's good.*

SF: *So you're aware when you're doing it?*

Sarah: *Yeah, it's fun.*

SF: *When other kids get frustrated at teachers they just seem to shout or argue....*

Sarah: *We have an intelligent way of winding them up without them knowing... so they get angry and frustrated and blame it on all the bad children... so nothing really happens to us.* **(I 11)**

This behaviour had certain parallels to Dickar's (2008) observations of *infrapolitical*

resistance. Strategies to frustrate and confuse the pedagogic process which avoid sanctions. The validity of the claims by Sarah that this from of resistance was a conscious approach were hard to prove. In the context of an interview it is easy to make claims with a sense of bravado. I considered whether they were trying to impress me with stories of deviant behaviour. In subsequent lessons observations I focused on how Sarah and Vicky interacted with teachers. The majority of the time they would withdraw from playing any active role in lessons. There were also occasions when teachers' offers of guidance were short shrift:

Mr. Jordan: [Stands directly in front of Sarah's desk] *Are we happy? Number 7 on the tectonic plates section.....*

Sarah: [Makes no eye contact, sits impassively]

Mr. Jordan: *Are we getting on?.....*

Sarah: [Doesn't respond]

Mr. Jordan: .....*good*..... [Moves onto another pupil].

Such interactions were common with Sarah and Vicky but measuring the effect is difficult. The suggestion that this would somehow frustrate teachers and provoke a reaction was not witnessed through lesson observations. I therefore asked teachers about how they perceived the quiet, hard working pupils in their classes. The answers were consistent – they were 'good kids' whose withdrawal from lesson participation was due to their reserved personalities or boredom at not being stretched enough in mixed ability groups:

SF: *Sarah doesn't say much in your lesson....*

Ms. Wood: *She's just quiet, a good little worker but quiet.*

SF: *Have you ever wondered what's going on in her mind?*

Ms. Wood: [Laughs] ..... *I'm no psychologist but I think sometimes she's bored. There's a range of ability in there and to challenge the brighter ones all the time.... it's difficult.*

SF: *Have you ever felt you're being ignored on purpose?*

Ms. Wood: [Laughs] *No, no..... some kids just don't say much....what can you do?*

An aspect of Sarah and Vicky's behaviour that puzzled me was why they didn't use their intelligence to question teachers about those issues that seem to frustrate them.

SF: *Have you ever tried to put your point across to a teacher in an intelligent way about something you felt strongly about?*

Sarah: *Yeah, in Art on Tuesday the teacher started giving out stickers to all the people who are usually naughty who had been good that day. I said 'What are you doing that for? That is so unfair coz we are always good and we never get anything'. She went 'Shut Up!' The people who are always good get nothing – you'll have something that's really worthwhile saying and they'll just say 'You're talking stupid; get on with your work' so why bother?* **(I 11)**

The identities which Sarah and Vicky seemed to adopt were complex and multi-faceted. Like Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh their high intelligence and work ethic were forms of capital which endeared them to teachers and they seemed to possess the same self-awareness that this could benefit them. They would also indulge in low level disruption in lessons and revel in their ability to avoid school sanctions. However their compliance seemed tempered by an acute sense of unfairness – in lessons they were diligently doing all the work that teachers required yet receiving none of the recognition or attention that the 'naughty ones' attracted. Neither were they getting the attention of the more vocal and gregarious pupils (Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh). In this sense they were not as socially capable of accessing the dominant school habitus – they lacked the symbolic capital to engage and impress teachers. The intriguing aspect of Sarah and Vicky's identities was their reaction to this. In one sense Sarah was fatalistic about the future; I asked her whether she thought her approach to school would afford her more

success than that employed by other pupils:

Sarah: *Probably not coz all the loud ones have social skills whereas we just tend to sit quietly in a corner.... if we had a job where we had to work with those people I don't think we'd cope very well coz we're social misfits.* **(I 11)**

Despite their reluctance to challenge authority through confrontation and their fatalistic outlook these pupils did suggest that they used more subtle forms of resistance. Sarah and Vicky suggested that 'blanking' or ignoring the teacher to provoke a reaction was a conscious reaction to the frustration they often felt. They explained that their intention was to command the teacher's attention; they sought recognition rather than retribution. Although gathering empirical evidence of this approach was difficult it was an intriguing concept. It suggests a very passive form of resistance in which the target is unaware of the perpetrator's intention. 'Passive' is used in this context to denote a lack of any visible confrontation and not in the sense used by McLaren (1993) who used the term to denote unconscious or tacit behaviour. This passive form of resistance seemed to be Sarah and Vicky's only reaction to the frustration they expressed. No arguments, confrontations or desire for revenge just a withdrawal from classroom interaction. A conversation between Jennifer and Sarah in an interview seems relevant in this respect. Jennifer was talking of her dislike for a teacher:

Jennifer: *Like the Ten Commandments that we got taught in RE – 'Treat others like you want to be treate*d'. *He doesn't wanna be nice to us so we're not gonna be nice to him.*

Sarah: *It also says 'turn the other cheek'.* **(I 2)**

4.4.3 Lindsey and Toni:

> *In lessons if I don't have a laugh I'll make it funny; I have to, it's like a reaction in me.* (Lindsey).

A common feature of the previously discussed pupils was their conformity and lack of direct conflict with pedagogic authority. Lindsey and Toni by contrast do encounter the school's sanction system but in a sporadic rather than a regular way. Lindsey received 12 lunchtime detentions for classroom disruption and Toni 14 throughout Year 9; the worst offenders in the year group can accumulate nearer 50 (see *appendix 6*). Across the year Lindsey was CALMED from 6 lessons and Toni 4.

A key feature of Lindsey and Toni's characters is their desire to have fun. In lessons they are excitable and full of energy but also engaged in the set work. Sitting together in their English class they listened dutifully as the teacher explained the lesson objective. Lindsey then spun her body around to address Toni and the two girls sitting behind them:

Lindsey: *Just imagine right if you were made of sweets! You would be just like eating your lips or chomping on your arm!*

All four pupils convulsed with laughter and received a mild rebuke from the teacher. Toni constantly talked and giggled whilst the register was being taken:

Mr. Stewart: *Someone's talking through this – please don't.*

Toni: *Sorry!*

Despite their high spirits they were immediately engaged in the lesson. Toni raised her hand to answer the teacher's questions and he praised her - *'Brilliant!'* Likewise Lindsey offers to read a poem for the teacher and they are both on task when work is set; they discuss and compare answers diligently. Both sat working for eight minutes and then

Lindsey let out an exaggerated sigh and loudly exclaimed '*Jesus amen!'* the teacher looked at her but did not react. She then began singing – *'Hallelujah, hallelujah....'* This was received with fits of laughter by Toni. I was sat two desks behind them in this lesson and they frequently spoke to me. A faint alarm sound was audible:

Toni: [Addressing me] *Sir is that your phone?*

Lindsey: *It can't be he hasn't got any friends*. [Both laugh loudly].

Late Toni turned around to ask me a question:

Toni: *Sir have I got pen on my face?*

SF: *Just what was on last week.* [They again both laugh loudly]

Toni: *You cheeky monkey!*

From these observations it was clear to see how their high spirits made them liable to receive warnings and detentions. I did feel that they were reacting to my presence and that this was contributing to their high spirits. The fact they would indulge in high spirits with two teachers in the room did suggest to me that having 'fun' in lessons was an integral aspect of their identities. However both worked well and were praised by the teacher. I asked them about this lesson:

SF: *You seemed to work well in that lesson.*

Toni: *It's because I like that teacher and I like English as well.*

Lindsey: *I get along with him better than other teachers.*

SF: *How would you describe that lesson?*

Lindsey: *It was cool. He usually does decent work, not boring stuff.*

SF: *He never raised his voice, he never had to....*

Lindsey: *Exactly...because we enjoy it. He never shouts at us.* **(I 4)**

Lindsey and Toni are also in the same Spanish class but are not allowed to sit together. Seating plans were integral to all lessons and seemed to be a universal practice for teachers. On entering classrooms pupils dutifully sat down in their allotted seat; I witnessed very few incidents of pupils objecting to a seating plan even when there was obvious displeasure at their given seat. In an observed Spanish lesson Lindsey and Toni showed all of their high spirits but very little of the work ethic shown in English. Lindsey was off task for all of this lesson. She laughed loudly, banged her book on the desk and paid no attention to instructions. Toni was a little more engaged (she has opted to study Spanish at GCSE) but did little work. For six minutes of the lesson she repeatedly threw her pen high into the air and caught it. The lesson involved describing celebrities in Spanish. One of the celebrities was *Lady GaGa* a pop star who sings a song called *Poker Face*. Toni was in high spirits:

Toni: *How do you make Lady GaGa angry? – Poke her face!*

She repeated this joke six times to different pupils; each time she shrieked with laughter. She then began singing *'Don't let the rain come down on me....'* In this lesson the teacher struggled to keep order and Toni was one of the main perpetrators of the disruption. I did not feel that Lindsey and Toni had in any way reacted to my presence in this lesson. They didn't acknowledge me as I entered and they didn't look at me at any time. I asked them about this lesson:

SF: *How would you describe that lesson?*

Lindsey: *Crap.*

Toni: *In Spanish we don't listen; she just gives us the same work.*

Lindsey: *The lessons are just too dull. If you took the people out who have a laugh.... that lesson would be absolutely crap.*

Toni: *We used to sing Spanish songs but we were too naughty so we aren't allowed.* **(I 4)**

I had chatted to the teacher at the end of this lesson and she seemed very demoralised:

Teacher: *That was a poor lesson...we don't like each other, I have no rapport with this class. I know I need to be tougher but I am too tired on Mondays.*

Such lessons were common. There was no real outright conflict just a continuous feeling of disengagement and frustration from pupils. The pedagogic process had been reduced to rituals (McLaren 1993); some pupils complied and others disengaged themselves from the requirements. The lesson objectives were vague and the tasks ill explained. Lindsey and Toni in particular had been very noisy and disruptive in this class, making life very difficult for the teacher. The teacher's comment regarding *'no rapport'* seemed symptomatic of the way ritualised tasks erode the organic relationships of the school. When I later interviewed the teacher her opinion of Toni was nevertheless extremely positive:

Teacher: *I love her, I absolutely love her! She is one of my favourite pupils ever because .... she's got a crazy side but she's so genuine and she's such a good person and she will never hurt anyone and I think she's never been less than polite and nice to me. She can be naughty and noisy but... she is my ideal pupil. She can be naughty and loud but she's nice; she's perfect.*

When I reflected on the lesson I'd observed it was true that Toni had been 'naughty and noisy' but there was no malice in her behaviour; the intention seemed to be to have fun. Lindsey and Toni's engaging and sociable personalities endeared them to teachers in many ways. They possessed the cultural capital to interact with and impress teachers with their intelligence and wit. Linguistically Lindsey and Toni communicated in a manner much more akin to Bernstein's (1975) *restricted code* than the other pupils. Their language in lessons was quick, full of colloquialisms and often at odds with the requirements of the teacher. Interestingly Bernstein's (1975) observation that strong

framing and classifications benefit such pupils seemed to hold true in this case. Whenever the framing of lessons was weakened Lindsey and Toni would abandon the learning objective and often partake in the subsequent disruption. Unlike Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh they seemed unable or unwilling to access the more invisible form of pedagogy that ensued.

In the following Spanish lesson three days later Lindsey and Toni's behaviour was completely different. Toni was immediately engaged on the task, asking the teacher questions and helping other pupils with their work:

Toni: *Miss what does 'bigote' mean? Is it moustache? (....)How do I say 'piercing' in Spanish? (.....) Miss can I split the page so I can compare the English and Spanish?*

She completed the set task and then turned around to help two pupils behind her. She explained the task to them and corrected their work. The pattern that emerged from observing Lindsey and Toni was that they would combine and balance work with high spirits in those lessons where they felt engaged and the teacher accommodated their humour, but let their high spirits dominate if they felt the lesson was dull or their humour was being curtailed by the teacher. I raised this issue with them:

SF: *In most lessons you work well but in others.....*

Toni: *It depends on the teacher. Mr. XXXX just stresses me out. I keep on getting moved and I can't not talk to people, I'm just naturally loud. I don't go in and want to mess around but if I'm moved it makes me worse.*

SF: *So what's the difference in the lessons you do well in?*

Toni: *You get on with the teacher. We work good for you, you have a laugh with us. Mr. Stewart – I'm great in that lesson coz you can have a laugh with him.*

Lindsey: *Some lessons are just too boring and plain. You do the same stuff over and over again and you're like 'Oh my God what the hell!'. If I don't have a laugh I'll make it funny, I have to, it's like a reaction in me.* **(I 8)**

These comments seemed to indicate a break down in communication between the pupils and teacher in some lessons. The high spirits of Lindsey and Toni were often expressed in a manner which was deemed inappropriate by teachers. The expectations of some teachers, predicated upon the dominant school habitus, was at odds with Lindsey and Toni's manner of cultural expression. School habitus seemed to be represent a curtailment of fun for Lindsey and Toni and consequently they would resist its power.

A prime example of this arose during pupil interviews, when it became clear that in two particular subject areas Lindsey and Toni's relationship with their teacher was very strained. They had told me that their behaviour in these lessons was very poor; there was no satisfaction or boasting attached to this rather a deep sense of anger and disdain for the teacher. Lindsey and Toni's comments about these teachers were very personal and vitriolic and the depth of their anger surprised me. The two teachers are popular and experienced members of staff so I was curious as to why the relationships seemed so strained. I arranged an interview with Lindsey and Toni to focus on this issue:

SF: *Why are things different... bad in that lesson?*

Lindsey: *Because I hate her, I hate her. She doesn't even let you do anything. You're not allowed to burp, you're not allowed to do anything.* **(I 8)**

Lindsey used the phrase *'I hate her'* eight times in this thirty minute interview. She would screw up her eyes and spit out these words in anger. This was very reminiscent of McLaren's (1993) study of how the body's physical gestures denote resistance.

SF: *But I've watched you in lots of lessons. What's different here?*

Lindsey: *She CALMED me coz, I don't mean to be racist here, but there was this Black person on this video and it was on about AIDS so I started singing 'Do They Know It's Christmas' – I got CALMED for that!*

Toni: *Did you actually get CALMED? She was gonna CALM me before coz I leaned on a table. (...) We were laughing once and she thought we were laughing about people dying.*

Lindsey: *She was saying 'Lindsey you're being very cheeky this lesson' and I'm like 'I'm always like this'....I drew a piece of poo on my work and I got wrong for it and everyone else's work got put on the wall but not mine... the lesson was about sewage and I was like 'Why can't I draw poo, it's related isn't it?' I drew a fly on the poo because I was doing about malaria.* **(I 8)**

These anecdotes are accompanied by howls of laughter.

Toni: *When I got CALMED she was like 'Toni you're out' and she smiled.*

Lindsey: *I know. That's her way of being funny; she'll think she's superior. We were on about volcanoes and I started shaking my table and I find that very funny and I make myself laugh and I find other people's jokes funny but she just like 'Shut up please'; she's got no humour.* **(I 8)**

I asked Lindsey whether she considered the effects of the situation on her education:

SF: *What would you do if it was an important lesson, in Year 11, and you had the same situation?*

Lindsey: *I'd probably calm down a bit but I'd probably ask to change teacher and I'd probably work really hard. I'm gonna draw an even bigger poo on my piece of paper today.* **(I 8)**

The common factor in these incidents seemed to be that the pupils had interpreted them

as 'fun' whereas the teacher had interpreted them as disruption and punished the pupils.

SF: *When you do these things are you not disrupting the lesson?*

Lindsey: *I used to do my work as well..... you can mess on and do work.... but she just has no humour.*

Toni: *She's too serious. I asked her a question remember?* [Both laugh loudly] *I said to her 'Miss you know when the man went down the chute?' and she was ignoring me so I said it again but I was talking quick so it came out 'Miss you know when the man went down the shite?'* [both laugh] *and she was like 'Toni that's a detention' and I was like 'But I didn't mean to!'*

SF: *So if a teacher is funny it makes a difference?*

Lindsey: *Yeah, like canny teachers who are funny and like to have a laugh; they're the same as us. If they're funny I'll do work as well .... I do work in Mr. Stewart's class even*

though I sometimes get sick of it.

Toni: *Yeah, your lessons are canny funny; you'll randomly say something funny and I'll think 'It's canny funny this lesson' but you get Ms. XXXX and she'll say 'I want you to do this, this and this and learn about AIDS' and you're like 'Oh my God!'*

SF: *So do you go into Ms. XXXX's lessons thinking 'I want to work and have fun'.....*

Lindsey: *If you said 'Oh Miss, I want to have fun this lesson' she'll be like 'I'll take that as an insult'. Before I said to her 'I don't want to take this subject next year' and she kicked off – she made me write a letter of apology.* **(I 8)**

In one of my own lessons Toni had insisted that she must do her work sitting on the floor. She found this highly amusing and sat, Buddha-like, working for the duration of the lesson. I thought it better to accommodate rather than clash with her quest for humour.

The anecdotes and comments of Lindsey and Toni may have contained a degree of boastfulness and bravado for my benefit but they do indicate the sense of frustration the pupils felt at having their fun censored. Using the ideas of McLaren (1993) Lindsey and Toni seemed to be bringing their 'streetcorner state' into the classroom. They were subverting the rituals that this teacher had sanctified; their confrontation seemed to be predicated upon cultural differences. Lindsey's use of the phrase "… *they're the same as us*" (from above) to describe good teachers seemed particularly relevant. Poor teachers in her eyes were being cast as 'the other' with different character traits to herself.

Lindsey and Toni's comments also indicated the depth of anger that pupils can develop towards a teacher. No other pupils spoke in such extreme terms to me about a teacher and Lindsey and Toni focused their anger upon this one teacher in particular. During interviews they used the most insulting and personal language to attack this teacher; so extreme that I feel it would be inappropriate to recount it here. I considered whether they were trying to impress me with their rebellion but they had spoken about

many of their teachers in this and other interviews and never been so extreme. This seemed to be a very personal and real clash with one teacher. To get a wider picture of this situation I approached the teacher in question to request permission to observe lessons. This is a very experienced (middle-management status) and popular teacher and we chatted about Lindsey and Toni. The teacher was in good humour and admitted she found the class difficult; Lindsey in particular. She said she was happy for me to observe and I arranged this for a lesson the following afternoon. However the following morning the teacher sent me a note via a pupil (see *appendix 8)* declining my request to observe; the concern was that my presence *'could make* [her] *relationship with some members of the group worse'*. I could well understand her concern and felt it highlighted the tension teachers often encounter in their roles. The following morning as I passed this teacher in the corridor she gave me a further insight:

Teacher: *I bottled out. I hate Lindsey. I thought the whole thing might implode.*

Although this comment must be taken in context – one teacher's throwaway remark passing another in the corridor, I feel it was significant. It illustrated the way that teachers do often talk to each other about pupils in a disparaging way and also the fear of being observed and the impact it might have. The incident made me reflect on my own identity and how other teachers perceived me. Every other teacher had been very responsive and accommodating to my requests to observe. This had surprised me as I had expected more suspicion and anxiety. To try and gauge how other teachers perceived me and the effect I was thus having on their classroom practice during observations I asked three teachers the question:

SF: *When I asked to observe your lessons what did you think – honestly?*

Ms. Wood: [Laughs] *I don't mind anyone observing me, I've got nothing to hide. Sometimes my lessons are good, other times they're crap. I'd imagine everyone's the same.*

_____

Mr. Storey: *I couldn't care less really, it makes no difference to me. I wouldn't want my head of department in all the time mind.*

_____

Ms. Lopez: *I don't mind helping you out. I've got nothing to hide* [laughs]. *I trust you not to tell tales.*

Of course these answers must be put in the context of colleagues being put on the spot and they were unlikely to make comments about my personality and how they perceive me. However they do illustrate the 'I've got nothing to hide' approach that teachers seemed to adopt when I requested permission. Teachers overall seemed quite comfortable with my presence.

As I was keen to gain a fuller insight into Lindsey and Toni's behaviour in this lesson I asked the teacher if she would agree to be interviewed. Once again she agreed but later cancelled. This was done in good humour and again I could understand how being questioned about a difficult situation is not appealing. We joked about my requests:

SF: *Think of it as therapy... a chance to talk about things.*

Teacher: [Laughs] *No, no.... some things are not good to reflect on.*

The other lesson that Lindsey and Toni said they had issues with was Design Technology. I had arranged an observation for this lesson but the morning before this was due the teacher stopped me in the corridor:

Teacher: *I think Lindsey and Toni are out today, on an Art trip..... so is there any point coming in today?*

SF: *Oh right, is that today?*

Teacher: *Yeah... come in next week when we're in the workshop, that'll be better.*

I knew that Lindsey and Toni were in school and that the Art trip was not until the following week. I sensed that the teacher would rather I didn't observe in his classroom and that he felt more comfortable if I were to observe a practical lesson in the workshop.

Once again Lindsey was in high spirits in this lesson (Toni was absent). The pupils were designing a key ring on computers. Lindsey couldn't get her computer to work, she shouted *'This lesson's pathetic'* and threw the mouse down on the table. She then jumped up, shouted *'Wood!'* and ran out of the room. Once again I felt that Lindsey was reacting to my presence. She would frequently look over to where I was sitting; I avoided eye contact. Lindsey made no attempt to do any work throughout the lesson. Once the teacher's attention was elsewhere Lindsey would access the internet; she sat with three other female pupils looking at a prom dress website. Whenever the teacher walked past she would minimise the web page to hide it. She banged her hand onto the computer keyboard and shouted *'I swear to God this is the worst lesson ever!'* To try to minimise any effect I may have been having on her behaviour I moved to the very back of the workshop, faced sideways towards the wall and feigned a deep interest in my notes.

The atmosphere and the frames of learning were very relaxed in the room until an incident occurred. The teacher caught a female pupil using a mobile phone and asked her to hand it to him (phones are banned in school and confiscated). Lindsey became involved:

Lindsey: *Say you haven't got it.... she hasn't even got a phone Sir, what're you on about?*

Teacher: *You keep out of it. Hand it over.....* [puts out his hand]

Lindsey: *High five Sir!* [Tries to slap his open palm]

Teacher: [Not amused] *Excuse me!*

The pupil refused to submit the phone and the teacher took her out into the corridor. They returned after a few minutes and the teacher began imposing discipline:

Teacher: [Shouting] *What have I told you about drinking in here?* [The pupil had been visibly drinking from the can all lesson]..... *any messing about on these computers and you'll be out, is that clear?*

The atmosphere in the room became tense and Lindsey's behaviour worsened.

Lindsey: *This is pathetic!*

The teacher had gone to the opposite side of the room to Lindsey and had his back to her helping a pupil. Lindsey was out of her seat and she kicked a chair which was holding the door open; the door banged shut.

Teacher: *Woah....what's going on?*

Lindsey: *I'm closing the door... it's freezing.*

The teacher shook his head and returned to helping the pupil; Lindsey laughed loudly and sat down. She spent the remaining ten minutes of the lesson telling stories to her friends and laughing loudly. When the bell rang at the end of the lesson the teacher wouldn't allow the pupils to leave until they were quiet and orderly. This seemed to annoy Lindsey; twice she exclaimed *'I swear down!'* in frustration. This frustration seemed to boil over and she kicked a chair. It fell over with a loud crash and the teacher lost his temper –'*What is going on! Pick it up!'* Lindsey and the teacher stared at each other and she then picked up the chair. The class were dismissed and Lindsey left the room shrieking with laughter. Once again Lindsey's way of expressing resistance was very physical in nature; an expression of the 'streetcorner state' (McLaren 1993).I later asked

Lindsey about this lesson:

SF: *You seemed to clash with the teacher in that lesson....*

Lindsey: *Did you see the chair? That was mint.... the look on his face. He's a weirdo.*

SF: *Why did you do that? Was there any need for that?*

Lindsey: *I cannot stand him. You have to say everything his way. You have to say 'Yes Sir' on the register and if you don't then you get marked absent but I'm like 'You can see me, is thou blind or something?' I have to get back at him. He said to me the other day 'Your bottom lip is touching your nose Lindsey' and I goes 'Is thou blind? It's clearly not'. How dare he say stuff like that!*

SF: *But why does the conflict happen?*

Lindsey: *I start arguments. It's like last week when I got a detention for singing. A detention for just singing! I can't stand him so I refused to work; he had my work in his hand and he says 'Lindsey what work are you doing? How can you be doing work when it's in my hand' and I'm like 'Exactly I can't do anything. I'm not gonna get up and get it – you bring it to me'.*

SF: *Is it worth picking an argument for things like that?*

Lindsey: *If they're wrong I'll argue with them; if they're right I'll shut up. Last week he gave me detention for talking to Chloe. I was in the wrong so I never said nowt back.... but I still laughed at him.* **(I 8)**

I was concerned that Lindsey may have reacted to my presence in this lesson. I asked the

teacher whether her behaviour was atypical:

Teacher: *That's what you get with Lindsey. She's been like that all year. She's not a bad kid she just likes an argument.*

I discussed Lindsey and Toni's behaviour with Ms. Henderson the Pastoral Manager:

Ms. Henderson: *....they've both had a few detentions but neither of them have had anything that anyone's flagged up to me or complained. With Lindsey..... yesterday she was asking me about her trip money 'Can I go? Can I go? I need my money back if I can't'... She must've asked me that six times yesterday. I think she gets into trouble for pushing too far. (.....) I think with those two they get away with it in some lessons but not others. I think that's where it's not so consistent with kids like that... with the middle of the ground ones it's not so much bad behaviour, they react to inconsistency; they don't know what's acceptable between lessons.*

It seemed that Lindsey and Toni were conflicting with teachers but not on a level which attracted any serious school sanctions. Dickar's (2008) concept of *infrapolitical resistance* is again relevant in this case but the form of resistance Lindsey and Toni displayed was often overt and very intensely focused upon individual staff members. In the two subject areas they had highlighted as being a problem their behaviour seemed more than just classroom disruption; it had evolved into a conflict with individual teachers. The cause of this seemed to be partly a sense of frustration at unengaging lessons but the key factor seemed to be a dislike of teachers who did not accommodate or tried to inhibit their sense of fun. Of all the observed pupils Lindsey and Toni seemed the least able to comply or relate to the dominant school habitus. Their language (colloquial, risqué and inappropriate) conflicted with the formal/elaborated codes (Bernstein 1975) of most teachers. Lindsey and Toni's resistant behaviour seemed to stem from this culture clash – they displayed a reluctance to accept the dominant school habitus if it curtailed their humour. Teachers who failed to accommodate their humour seemed to provoke their wrath. They had tried to justify their conflict with one teacher by listing countless anecdotes on how she had failed to see humour in their actions. The treatment given to and the disdain shown for this teacher were extreme. Lindsey and Toni's resistance also seemed to stem from their inability/unwillingness to interpret invisible forms of pedagogy (Bernstein 1977). Whenever the framing of the pedagogic process weakened they would resort to disruptive behaviour; they seemed to lack or refuse to access the *recognition* and *realisation rules* (Moore 2004) to engage in learning.

4.4.4 Sophie and Abbi:

> *It's good when people make smart comments; it's like you're not back chatting, you're putting it in a smart way.* (Abbi).

Sophie and Abbi struck me as the two pupils with the most intelligence in the sample. Academically they are two of only eight pupils in the year group whose overall Key Stage 3 targets are 7b (level 7 is considered 'beyond expectation' DCSF 2009b). Sophie frequently encounters the school sanction system; in Year 9 she received 28 lunchtime detentions for classroom disruption and was CALMED from lessons 9 times. Abbi's behaviour was described by Head of Year Ms. Gould as having *'improved greatly since Year 8'*. Nevertheless she received 12 lunchtime detentions for classroom disruption and was CALMED from 6 lessons.

Of the nine pupils being discussed here Sophie speaks in the strongest North East dialect. She will often use swear words in lessons and respond to teachers' questions with *'Aye man'* instead of the required *'Yes Sir/Miss'*. In my own lessons she often makes inappropriate comments. At the start of one of my lessons there was a web page on the interactive white board from the previous lesson showing a picture of an old woman; Sophie shouted '*Sir, is that your shag-bag?'* Teachers have brought this habit to the attention of the Pastoral Manager:

Ms. Henderson: *Staff have complained about her comments; she'll say 'Oh Miss you wear that a lot' or 'Miss have you've got that on again?'.... just sort of little comments but if you question her about it she'll say 'Oh I'm only joking' but you try to say to her 'That's not the point; you can't talk to people like that'.... she knows where to just say things to people to wind them up, things that will really hit home.*

The first lesson I observed in the research process was Sophie's Spanish class. From the outset it was obvious she was reacting to my presence. I was sat at the back of the room and Sophie turned around and shouted *'Watch me Stevie'*. The teacher noticed

she was not listening and asked her to move seat – *'Please Miss, no Miss I'll be good'*; she pleaded in vain. She paid no attention to the teacher giving instructions and received a warning – *'I only looked around!'* For the first fifteen minutes of the lesson Sophie indulged in low level disruption – talking and making sarcastic comments. Whenever another pupil was rebuked by the teacher Sophie would give an exaggerated shake of her head and a sardonic *'tut, tut!'* After this initial disruption she became engaged in the lesson and answered questions in fluent Spanish; few other pupils in this high ability class could match her command of the language. Throughout the lesson Sophie kept looking over at me. At one point she shouted *'Having fun Sir, enjoying the show?'* I tried to feign boredom and disinterest by looking out of the window and avoiding eye contact. At the end of the lesson the pupils got out of their seats and awaited the bell. Sophie shouted *'The bell's gone Miss* [it hadn't], *see you later Miss'* and she walked out of the room. She left me with a parting comment – *'Adios Stevie'*. After the lesson I apologised to the teacher as I felt my presence had caused Sophie to disrupt the lesson. The teacher advised me that Sophie's behaviour was quite typical and encouraged me to keep observing the lessons – *'I'd like to know what you think'*.

The following Spanish lesson was dominated by Sophie. In this lesson she did not acknowledge my presence at all and seemed disinterested in me. At the start the teacher took the register which was visible on the interactive white-board. The register showed that Sophie had been marked absent in the previous lesson – *'I'm gonna go mad; I was in that lesson!'* Her anger dominated the room and the teacher struggled to calm her. Once again Sophie paid no attention to the task at hand; she sat talking and drawing on her book. The teacher was asking pupils to describe pictures of celebrities on the board.

Noticing Sophie was not paying attention the teacher asked her a question. Sophie spun around – *'Eh? What Miss?'* The teacher stood silent and did not repeat the question. Sophie looked at the board and gave an answer in fluent Spanish. The teacher asked her to correct a mistake regarding gender and she quickly did; she then went back to drawing on her book. This ability to drift between disruption, disengagement and high level participation in lessons was remarkable to watch and is a skill specific to very high ability pupils. In my own lessons I often feel Sophie has not been learning because of her lack of attention; then she will ask a very high level question which few other pupils would be capable of.

As the Spanish lesson progressed Sophie's behaviour began to attract sanctions. The teacher was speaking to the class and had her arm inside of her cardigan. Sophie shouted *'Miss it looks like you've only got one arm!'* The pupils laughed and Sophie received a warning. She then began to distribute crisps to other pupils when the teacher's back was turned. The teacher noticed the commotion this was causing and another pupil was blamed; he was asked to move seat. The teacher raised her voice in annoyance and the class fell quiet. In this tense atmosphere with the teacher glaring at the silent class Sophie stood up. She took the blazer of the boy who had been blamed for her disruption over to him in his new seat.

Ms. Lopez: [Annoyed] *Thank you Sophie*.

Sophie: *You're welcome Miss* [sarcastic tone].

When the teacher's back was turned Sophie tried to move into the seat vacated by the punished boy so she could be close to her friends. She was issued with a lunchtime detention and reacted angrily:

Sophie: *What for? What was that for?*

Ms. Lopez: *You have not been good.*

Sophie: [Angry] *What? What was my warning for?..... you can't even remember.*

Ms. Lopez: *Talking.....*

Sophie: *No it wasn't! Did I get a warning for moving seat?*

Ms. Lopez: *No for messing about.*

Sophie: *No it wasn't. You can't give me a detention when you don't even know what for... this is shocking!*

This encounter established a pattern with Sophie. She would disrupt lessons but then become very angry if sanctions were applied. Any perceived injustice would provoke a direct challenge to the teacher's authority. I interviewed the teacher about this encounter:

SF: *Sophie seemed to think she was hard done by.....*

Ms. Lopez: *I think she's playing for everybody else...she loves it, loves the attention. She pushes things as far as they can go. I think she finds me an easy target.*

SF: *Do you think brighter pupils like Sophie resist your authority in a different way to the less able ones?*

Ms. Lopez: *They are more damaging and because they're clever they hurt more because they know how to say things; they know how far they can go... they know the weakest point of the teacher. Sophie she uses the justice system – 'This is not fair, why are you doing this to me, you haven't done this'.... but she's not right most of the time.*

I asked Sophie about these Spanish lessons:

SF: *You moved seat when her back was turned, why did you do that?*

Sophie: *Well I'm sitting there away from my friends with no-one to talk to.*

SF: *When you got warnings you seemed to get upset.*

Sophie: *Well if I argue my point she sometimes cancels it. Sometimes when I've got a detention on the board and she goes out of the room I just wipe it off and she forgets. She really doesn't have a clue.* **(I 3)**

Of all the pupils Sophie was the most difficult to interview. The other pupils would freely talk and answers any question but Sophie was guarded and after each of my questions she would look me in the eye and consider her response. I felt as if I was interviewing a politician. However her answers and comments were very matter of fact and dispassionate. I never got the impression she was embellishing the truth or expressing any form of bravado for my benefit.

Sophie's conflict with teachers was often predicated upon behaviour which they had deemed inappropriate. This behaviour was not based upon the quest for 'fun' or high spirits (like Lindsey and Toni) but a deeper lack of agreement between Sophie and her teachers regarding how opinions should be expressed. Sophie did not possess the cultural capital of the more conformist pupils (Jennifer and Lorna) to engage teachers socially. Her interactions with adults seemed fraught with misunderstandings and anger. Although of very high intelligence Sophie was dismissive of the dominant school habitus and the formal/elaborated linguistic codes (Bernstein 1975) of teachers.

Observing Sophie in an English lesson she was engaged from the start. She was very focused as the teacher asked the pupils about their understanding of imagery:

Sophie: *It's like what you sense.... you can use metaphors and that.*

Mr. Stewart: *That's excellent.*

The lesson was about analysing a poem; Sophie volunteered to read a few of the lines. The poem was quite abstract and when the last line had been read Sophie commented:

Sophie: *Sir these poems just ramble on about nowt!*

Mr. Stewart: [Annoyed] *Don't make random comments to me; keep it to yourself.*

After this rebuke Sophie's body language immediately changed. She sat up straighter in

her chair and looked intently at the teacher. The teacher was asking questions about the poem and for the next few minutes Sophie dominated the discussion:

Mr. Stewart: *What about the shape of the poem on the page?*

Sophie: *Heart shaped... he doesn't finish that sentence so why start a new verse?*

Mr. Stewart: *What's he saying though?*

Sophie: *Why can't he just write a story?*

Mr. Stewart: *Stop making an argument, we're doing poetry.*

Sophie: *He's saying nowt, it could mean anything!*

Mr. Stewart: *I don't want an argument, I don't want you to challenge me.*

This encounter lasted for four minutes. The initial rebuke seemed to have provoked Sophie into challenging the teacher. I felt that she was making a valid point about the poem being too abstract but had been rebuked for the way she had expressed these views. I asked the teacher about this encounter:

SF: *Sophie didn't seem to like the poem.....*

Mr. Stewart: *When they come out with statements like that I don't mind but then they've gotta justify it. If she makes a sweeping statement like that it's bread and butter to me because then you say 'Come on then, tell me why you've reached that opinion'. She's a very feisty character though isn't she? She is very opinionated and I think she needs that outlet... sometimes I just let her voice her opinions and then I don't really take them on board.*

SF: *She seemed to enjoy challenging you.*

Mr. Stewart: *I think she thrives on it.... I think that actually pushes her forward, it's on her level. She likes that little mental challenge – 'Come on then, throw it back' and then 'What can I throw back at you'.*

SF: *Some teachers might interpret that as insolence.*

Mr. Stewart: *Yeah, she is challenging. She challenges me all the time and I just smile at her... she's quite a pleasant character actually; I do like her.*

I asked Sophie about this incident but she didn't seem to place much significance on it:

SF: *You didn't seem to like the poem in English.*

Sophie: *Well it didn't make no sense; he just snaps back coz he likes poems.*

SF: *How does it make you feel when a teacher snaps at you?*

Sophie: *What are they shouting at me for when I haven't even done nowt.*

SF: *But you challenged him..... you kept making your point.*

Sophie: *I dunno.... stuff like that doesn't bother me. It takes a lot to get me proper annoyed with a teacher.* **(I 3)**

I thought this incident was significant in that it showed Sophie's ability to think critically and challenge opinion but she had not been allowed to fully explain and express her point. The way she had presented her argument ('*These poems just ramble on about nowt*') seemed to have provoked annoyance from the teacher. The conflict in this sense seemed based upon language/self-expression. Sophie's inability or unwillingness to express herself in the formal language/elaborated codes (Bernstein 1975) of the teacher had provoked conflict and resistance. It is important to stress that this is not to suggest any deficiency in Sophie's language skills – she was able to use her high intelligence to question and critique the poem and the teacher. Bernstein (1975) stresses the cultural not cognitive basis of language codes – Sophie expressed herself in a manner inappropriate to formal classroom language.

I had intended to observe Sophie in her Science class but when I spoke to the teacher I was informed that Sophie was no longer in that class; she had been moved down from the top set into the bottom set of three. The teacher explained – *'Too much of that'* (he opened and closed his hand to mimic a talking mouth). Sophie's new teacher was a young, newly qualified teacher who had only been at the school six months. I was a little

reluctant to impose on an inexperienced teacher but I felt that a high ability pupil like Sophie being moved into a bottom set was a significant occurrence in the context of this thesis.

Observing Sophie in this Science class she once again dominated from the outset. She showed no interest in my presence and never made eye contact throughout. Before the lesson began she swung back on her stool and fired comments at the teacher – *'Sir have you found your board rubber yet? I took it', 'Sir you like those trousers don't you; you wear them every day'*. The lesson was about fossils and the age of the Earth. The teacher addressed the class:

Mr. Francis: *I want you to describe igneous rocks....*

Sophie: *Sir what's ' igneous'?* [Teacher ignores her]

Mr. Francis: .....*and metamorphic*.....

Sophie: *Sir what's 'metamorphic'?* [Teacher ignores her – she slams her pen down on the table].

At every opportunity Sophie challenged the teacher – *'Sir you shouldn't be teaching us about evolution, you should be teaching us about God'*. As another pupil reads to the class – *'Sir I can't hear her, she's mumbling'*. When Sophie reads to the class and other pupils talk – *'Sir I got wrong for that, they should... you're not being consistent'*. All of these comments are accompanied with a wry smile. Although inappropriate and designed to disrupt the lesson Sophie's comments displayed a quick wit and cutting edge. As the class gets noisy the teacher intervenes:

Mr. Francis: *Listen!*

Sophie: *Sir we are trying to listen.... you stop shouting at us!*

The teacher tries to illustrate the layered nature of rock by using the analogy of a pizza

with toppings stacked on top of each other. Fifteen minutes later in the lesson:

Mr. Francis: *What would you expect to find on the top layer of the rock?*

Sophie: *Tomato puree.* [Class laugh]

Mr. Francis: *That's a warning.*

Sophie argued that this was unfair and claimed she had given the answer in all innocence. When the pupils were set work Sophie sat for ten minutes with her books closed. The teacher eventually noticed this and stood behind her and advised her to begin:

Mr. Francis: *Sophie do question one.*

Sophie: [Reluctantly opens books and draws an exaggerated figure 'one' banging her pen down to place a full stop next to it]

Mr. Francis: [Reads the question out] *Which fossil would be first?*

Sophie: *I dunno.... I'm not a geologist.*

Sophie then briefly wrote in her book and closed it again as the teacher walked away. She then rested her head on the desk (she later told me she had felt ill). The teacher approached her again:

Mr. Francis: *Sophie get on with it.... draw the table.*

Sophie: [Angry] *What table... what!*

Mr. Francis: *Go and stand outside.*

The teacher spoke to Sophie outside of the room and she returned still annoyed:

Sophie: *Have you been in my bag?.... I feel sick!*

Mr. Francis: *Sophie if you're not gonna contribute to the lesson shut up!*

Sophie: *Sir everyone else is talking!*

Mr. Francis: *That's it, that's an after-school detention.*

Sophie: *What! I haven't even had a proper warning or detention! NO CHANCE!*

There was still a few minutes remaining before the end of the lesson but Sophie stood up and walked out in anger. As the pupils left at the end of the lesson Sophie returned to confront Mr. Francis and I.

Sophie: [Angrily to Mr. Francis] *Have I got an after school? I did nothing!*

Mr. Francis: *Well me and Mr. Fortune would think otherwise.*

Sophie: [To me] *Sir you saw... did you write it down? I did nothing!*

I felt very uncomfortable in the middle of this dispute. The teacher had not used the school sanctions the correct way but Sophie had been disruptive in the lesson. I could only muster a weak – *'I can't get involved'*. Directly following this lesson I was on break duty in the Year 9 dining area. The Head of Year Ms. Gould approached me and asked me about the incident. Evidently Sophie had gone straight to her to appeal her innocence.

At lunchtime on the same day I had arranged an interview with other pupils but Sophie turned up keen to discuss what had happened in Science:

SF: *So why do you think it happened?*

Sophie: *I had my head on the desk coz I felt sick and he said 'That's a detention' and I said 'What for' and he says 'Get out!'....*

SF: *You think he didn't use the system properly?*

Sophie: *Yeah, he didn't give me a warning and if you feel sick and put your head on the desk you shouldn't get a detention.*

SF: *But what about your behaviour... overall?*

Sophie: *But if he wanted to he could give me warnings and he doesn't. If I got warnings I'd stop.* **(I 5)**

This was a common factor in incidents involving Sophie – any perceived misuse of the school sanctions or perceived injustice would provoke her anger. She held a strong bond towards the school rules and their appropriate use. I considered her account of the

incident to be plausible but she was clearly underplaying her poor behaviour. I asked her about the *'tomato puree'* comment:

Sophie: *I actually thought that was what he was on about though. I thought he was on about how a pizza is made. I was actually being serious. I got wrong for nowt!* **(I 5)**

I was also keen to discuss how she felt about being moved into a low set.

Sophie: *I have to do the same tests as they do and my target's above theirs and I can only get.... the most I can get in there is a 6c and my target is a 7a.*

SF: *Do you think that affects your behaviour?*

Sophie: *Aye, definitely. I'd work loads better if I was moved back up.* **(I 5)**

I later found out that Sophie had been put into the Applied Science GCSE group for Year 10. This course is for the lesser able pupils and anyone wishing to study sciences at A level must study the higher status Additional Science GCSE. Moving pupils down the setting system based on their behaviour rather than ability is a common occurrence. I discussed this with the teacher of the top set which Sophie had been moved out of:

Teacher: *She was moved down because she was a pain. Ms. XXXX also taught that class and she didn't like her because of her attitude so she was dropped down two sets.*

SF: *She's very bright though... how did you feel about doing that?*

Teacher: *I think it was entirely justified this time although it was a personal thing with the other teacher. That's one of the advantages of setting; you have that little bit of flexibility. If you get lumbered with a bad group you can mix it around within the department.*

SF: *How did you find Sophie when you taught her?*

Teacher: *Confrontational.... she would be definitely one who'd never back off. It was always 'Why? Why? Why?'. It was probably trivial things but when she was getting into trouble they were escalating; just something small but escalating up. It gets past the point of whatever the argument was about and it becomes defiance – she'd say I was wrong in the first place; she'd argued as if she was right.*

The worrying aspect of this was that an extremely able pupil was being disadvantaged academically based upon teacher perceptions of her personality/behaviour. Sophie's academic future seemed to be being decided on her inability to conform to the dominant school habitus and not any form of academic inability.

When I interviewed Ms. Gould the Head of Year I discovered that the after-school detention Sophie had received in the Science lesson had been cancelled:

Ms. Gould: *I went to see the teacher and asked him 'Did it warrant an after-school?' and he said probably not but she had been a pain.... we negotiated and we decided to suspend it on the condition that she would have to apologise to him – which she did. Sometimes kids dig a hole and jump into it and can't get out, they sometimes need a hand to get out; a little ladder or something.*

I later discussed the detention incident with Mr. Francis:

SF: *I was told that the detention got cancelled. How did you feel about that?*

Mr. Francis: *Yeah, she got a lunchtime which was a compromise.... she apologised in about the nicest way she can. I mean I'm happy to go along but I think it's her getting away with it quite a bit.*

SF: *Does that undermine your authority?*

Mr. Francis: [Pause]..... *I suppose it does. It doesn't help.... when it happens again she'll think 'I'll go and complain'.*

I asked Sophie about the cancelled detention:

SF: *How did you feel when it got cancelled?*

Sophie: *I dunno.....*

SF: *But you seemed upset at the time, then it was cancelled.*

Sophie: *Well I'd done nothing wrong.*

SF: *You won.... you got what you wanted.*

Sophie: *Well sort of..... but I'd done nothing wrong.* **(I 9)**

There was no boasting or victory salute from Sophie. She seemed surprised to be asked about this and seemed to find the issue unimportant. She seemed more concerned about what she perceived to be fair – *'I'd done nothing wrong'*. This conversation also suggested to me that I was witnessing Sophie's true character in lessons – apart from my first observation of her she never once expressed any bravado or boastfulness at her behaviour. She never gloried in the effects of her behaviour; her persona was always dispassionate and indifferent when she interacted with me. The cancelling of the detention seemed significant in another way. Although Sophie lacked the cultural capital of social skills that other pupils used to engage with and charm teachers, she did possess a very formidable ability to stand up for what she considered right. Her ability to confront and question teachers more than compensated for her inability to charm them. I discussed this issue with Mr. Francis:

SF: *Do you think the way she expresses herself, verbally, makes a difference?*

Mr. Francis: *Yeah she's very aggressive . She's not impolite in what she says, it's just aggression. She has a coarse way of saying things I suppose... it's always in a street manner, she doesn't express herself in a genteel manner.*

SF: *Do you think her actions might sometimes be misinterpreted because of the way she speaks?*

Mr. Francis: *I think it's almost a cry wolf situation because she does it so often. I try to give her a clean slate when she walks in but if she's noisy and I'm asking her to be quiet she'll feel hard done by; she'll pick up on that and have sort of a vendetta attitude. She's the kind of person you wonder what she's gonna turn out like when she's older. She'd be a scary person to have in charge or in power; you wouldn't want to be working for her.*

SF: *Do you find her intimidating?*

Mr. Francis: *Yeah, she definitely intimidating and she intimidates the other members of the class..... not bullying but she asserts herself over them, sort of mental means to do it.*

Reflecting on my own practice I realise that I have often backed away from conflicts with Sophie. Collecting in pupils' homework I will challenge them if they have not completed the work. With Sophie I often leave it until the end of the lesson – I know the issue may escalate with her and don't want an argument in front of the class; she can be a formidable opponent. I raised the issue of how Sophie's intelligence links to her behaviour:

Mr. Francis: *It's harder to argue with her coz she's obviously bright and manipulative. The less intelligent kids couldn't argue the way she does. Any slight thing on the board, I mean it could be a little slip of the writing and she'll pick it up. With the others you can sort of brush it off but she goes on with it and she'll take it as far as she can which obviously doesn't make her very appealing to a teacher. I know it's not fair but I think 'Well, if she's gonna be like that'..... I mean I'm not gonna give her anything back. I'm not gonna give her that little bit of extra help you might give to one of the nicer kids.*

SF: *Some teachers have said she seeks attention.....*

Mr. Francis: *It's not struck me as purely trying to get attention. It sound an odd thing to say but it's like a short-sightedness on her part. She's obviously bright and picks things up straight away but she's quite closed-minded in that she won't let herself be taught. I don't particularly worry about her taking stuff in because I know she probably does. I don't know if there's a certain amount of arrogance.*

This teacher seemed to recognise that Sophie's resistance and confrontation was very different from the usual classroom disruption or recalcitrant behaviour. This was a more intimidating form of resistance from a very intelligent mind. The difference to other accounts of resistant behaviour (Willis 1977, Jackson 2006, Dickar 2008) is that this pupil is a high achiever and combines this intelligence with a very critical view of school; some teachers (myself included) seemed to find this intimidating and at times extremely difficult to deal with. I asked Mr. Francis about Sophie being moved into his class:

Mr. Francis: *Well she won't achieve what she should achieve.... it's frustrating. You see some kids who aren't so bright and they're trying their hardest and they see someone like her who achieves way more by hardly even trying; it must be a bit demoralising for them. But she didn't get her target level because this set don't do the higher paper. She*

probably would've got her target if she stayed in top set.

SF: *Did you have any say in her getting moved down?*

Mr. Francis: *No, you just have to deal with it and in a way it's not helping her being in this class coz she's not around people who are gonna push her so she reacts. It's totally frustrating and I start thinking 'Am I doing something wrong? Are my lessons rubbish, boring? Is that why she's the way she is?' I find it quite a difficult thing to deal with.*

Sophie's identity seemed very complex and multi-faceted. She is an extremely able pupil who achieves highly (in my Maths class she had sat a GCSE module a year early and gained a grade A outperforming most of the pupils in the year above). She would however cause a great deal of classroom disruption and this would often escalate into challenging the teacher's authority through confrontation. In interviews Sophie was not very forthcoming in explaining her behaviour. Questions would often be given a short – *'I dunno'* . The only times she became animated in interviews was when she was recounting tales of perceived injustices she had suffered at the hands of teachers. I had observed her confronting teachers by arguing aggressively in Science, Spanish, Geography and DT lessons. I had observed her being CALMED from a Geography lesson for persistent arguing; she was again incredulous that her behaviour had attracted any sanction:

Sophie: *I said 'Miss what number's the page?' and she goes 'I've said it 3 times' and I said 'Miss just what's the page number?' and she started shouting at me saying 'You either miss it out or you find the page' and I goes 'Well how can I find the page if I don't know the number and she goes 'Right get out' and then Miss Gould came in and she never even knew what had happened and she started shouting and me and I says 'Miss I only said that...' and she started proper shouting when she didn't have a clue and she's like 'Get inside!' so I went in and I sat down and said 'Well what's the page number' and she told me. How pathetic's that?* **(I 3)**

There were however lessons where Sophie was engaged and her intelligence shone through (English and RE). In RE lessons in particular the teacher engaged with her

critical comments. In a lesson about the existence of God Sophie posed some challenging questions:

Sophie: *Miss all that God stuff, it's rubbish. (.....) Oh Miss how can that be right coz someone wrote a book 2,000 years ago and you would just believe it?*

I discussed Sophie's behaviour in RE with her teacher:

Ms. Turner: *I could say 'Alright Sophie, shut up, coz the way you say it could be construed as being cheeky or insolent' but I don't. We had a sensible discussion and she said 'Aye, aye I see your point like' and I don't know whether she believed it or not but she could accept those types of arguments whereas some of the less able ones would more or less accept what you tell them. I like them to question me.*

SF: *She seems very engaged in your lesson.*

Ms. Turner: *I don't find Sophie disruptive in any way. One day we had this discussion about the big bang and in the end Sophie was saying 'Aye.... I see your point' coz sometimes I think brighter kids need more intelligent reasons coz the Bible was written thousands of years ago – I think sometimes if you teach the brighter ones at a simple level you'll get more resistance; they can see through the arguments.*

This teacher who was engaging with and nurturing Sophie's critical nature seemed to be reaping the rewards in the classroom.

Discussing Sophie with Head of Year Ms. Gould revealed the complex and contrasting identities which she seems capable of adopting:

Ms. Gould: *The issue with her is that she's more intelligent than your average naughty kid. She's like a shop steward. I've had her mum in recently because Sophie was accused of bullying some pupils, she had excessive detentions, she was using foul language in lessons.*

These incidents contrasted with another side of Sophie:

Ms. Gould: *She's a completely different character in school to what she is at home. She has a very stable home life and her mum's upset by her behaviour; she's ringing every Friday to keep up to speed. An incident happened where one of the girls had spat onto someone's pizza in a Food Technology lesson. Sophie found this horrible; she was the one who came to me and she was the one who persuaded this girl to confess. I think that's her nature – if she's sees something wrong she has to do something to put it right.*

At the start of the research process I asked the pupils what their ambitions were; Sophie said she wanted to be a lawyer. From my observations I couldn't help thinking that if I were ever in need of an advocate she would be a fine choice.

Abbi, although similar in intelligence and personality displayed a very different form of resistance to Sophie. Whereas Sophie's resistance was characterised by conflict and confrontation Abbi's was conducted in a very clam and rational manner. This was illustrated in a Science lesson. Most of this lesson was taken up with the pupils watching a video about comets. The video was a documentary with academics being interviewed; the pupils found it dry and difficult to follow. As their interest waned the pupils whispered and chatted and the teacher patrolled the room with a pen and paper rebuking anyone talking or not sitting up straight; names of those issued with warnings and detentions were written down. When the video finished the teacher informed pupils who had incurred a detention; Abbi was one of these. She had talked during the video (*'I thought this was about dinosaurs?')* and had noisily slapped her hands on her thighs. Some pupils became angry that detentions had been issued and the teacher reacted by imposing discipline:

Teacher: [Raised voice] *I expect silence when we're watching the video, I expect people to sit up straight in their seats, I expect people to pay attention.....*

Abbi: [Calm and collected] *Well expect the least from those people you think most of – that way you won't be disappointed.*

The class were silent and the teacher and Abbi stared at one another. Some pupils giggled as if they were not sure how to interpret the incident. Abbi had not argued or confronted the teacher or raised her voice; she had just seemingly offered advice. The situation seemed unusual and paradoxical – a 14 year old pupil offering sage advice to a middle-

aged teacher. The teacher threatened Abbi with being CALMED from the lesson. She sat impassively and did not respond. I asked Abbi about this incident:

SF: *What were you thinking when you made that comment?*

Abbi: *I wanted to annoy him in a way that he didn't realise. I knew it would annoy him when he was in the middle of saying something for the fact that he doesn't like me.... I wasn't actually doing anything for him to give me a detention; I was only making my point.* **(I 2)**

In an interview two days later I asked the teacher about this incident but he said he couldn't recall it – *'I didn't hear that'*. During interviews it became apparent that Abbi had developed a dislike for this teacher:

Abbi: *When we first got him we were alright then he started being cocky with us so we took an instant dislike to him. If I get a grudge on a teacher I hold it for the rest of my life.*

SF: *But what caused that?*

Abbi: *He thinks he's mint. The other day he kept me back at the end of the lesson and he said 'I'm not gonna be talked to by a little girl of your age who thinks she's something' and I goes 'Well I'm not gonna stand here and be talked to by an old man who thinks he's something just coz you've got a Science degree'. That's all he talks about – his Science degree. If you say something it's like 'Come back when you've got a Science degree'. Then he's trying to learn us about stars today right and he was like 'They are not actually pointy' and that's what I've learnt all lesson – stars aren't pointy! And I was saying something and he said 'Come back when you've got a Science degree' and I goes 'So I need a Science degree to say that stars aren't pointy?'* **(I 9)**

Observing Abbi in lessons she would drift between a very high level of engagement and learning, disruption and moments of disengagement. She would never raise her voice to argue with a teacher but she would frequently challenge the teacher using her intelligence. Whereas confrontational pupils like Lindsey, Toni and Sophie would argue and resist authority using their 'streetcorner state' (McLaren 1993) language, Abbi was able to confront teachers using their own formal language/elaborated codes (Bernstein 1975). She was able to drift between the public language/restricted codes used by pupils

into the elaborated codes of the pedagogic discourse quite easily. Her language and communication skills were a very powerful form of cultural capital.

In another Science lesson with a different teacher Abbi's disruptive behaviour had attracted a lunchtime detention:

Teacher: *But what is silicone? Remember when we did about silicone?*

Abbi: *Silicone? Silly cat?* [Laughs and sings – *'Silly cat, smelly cat'*]

Teacher: *You've had your warning that's a detention.*

Abbi: *Whatever.* [Sits impassively].

Later in the lesson Abbi brought up the issue of periodic tables. The periodic tables for pupils' exercise books had been ordered months ago but hadn't arrived. This apparently had been a moot point with pupils for a while:

Abbi: *Miss I could tell you about silicone if I had the periodic table.*

Teacher: *It's on order.*

Abbi: *Well you should have pre-ordered them.* [Class laugh] *I can't learn about the elements if I haven't got a periodic table. When are they coming?*

Teacher: *They're on order.*

Abbi: *Someone needs to chase that up. It's affecting my education.*

These sardonic comments were delivered in a calm and rational way; there was no shouting or arguing. In one class I had observed Abbi being CALMED form the lesson. The class were noisy and Abbi was in high spirits. She had attracted the teacher's attention twice for laughing loudly. She then talked as the teacher was addressing the class:

Teacher: *Abbi that's a detention.*

Abbi: [Calmly] *I haven't had a warning yet. If you expect pupils to follow the Climate*

for Learning then you should as well.

Teacher: *This is not a discussion..... I'm not arguing.*

Abbi: *Neither am I.*

A few minutes later another pupil was talking and the teacher issued a warning and wrote his name on the board (the required procedure).

Abbi: *See, now you're doing it right.*

Teacher: *I won't be spoken to like that; you're out.*

Abbi: *My God!*

Abbi was removed from the lesson. She sat impassively until the teacher arrived to take her. I discussed this incident with Abbi:

Abbi: *They don't use the system properly. I get warnings but I shut up once I've got my warning coz I hate detentions. That's the whole point of warnings isn't it? They're supposed to give you a chance.*

SF: *But you were being.... a pain.*

Abbi: *So she should warn me.*

SF: *You argued back.....*

Abbi: *I didn't argue back; I told her to use the system properly.*

SF: *So why do you think you got CALMED?*

Abbi: *People are messing about right, she's getting stressed, so she picks on me coz I'm trying to help her, telling her what she should be doing. She's trying to save face.*

SF: *What... you were trying to 'help' her?*

Abbi: [Laughs] *Well..... I was putting her right. I was trying to annoy her but I did nothing that should've got a detention.* **(I 5)**

Abbi seemed to have a canny knack of trying to phrase her comments to teachers so that they could not be interpreted as insolent or disruptive. By expressing herself using the

formal language and demeanour of the dominant school habitus teachers often seemed to find her comments hard to counter. In two of the above incidents she had admitted that her aim was to annoy the teachers but in a manner they *'wouldn't realise'*. These incidents also seemed to occur after the teacher had issued Abbi with warnings or detentions; she would resist the teacher's authority as a reaction to these sanctions – whether justified or perceived as unfair. Each time this resistance was expressed in a calm, rational manner. In a Spanish lesson Abbi had received a warning for talking. The whole class were misbehaving and as this was the lesson before lunchtime the teacher said that the class would be kept back ten minutes:

Abbi: *Miss I can't stop back, I've got a lunchtime detention today, it'll get doubled. I'm not gonna be late just because everyone else is being an idiot.*

Teacher: *Everybody is stopping back.*

Abbi: *This is ridiculous; she hasn't got a clue. What's the point in stopping back.... we never do any work in this lesson anyway. Miss.... why don't you teach us, most lessons we do nothing? My education's suffering.*

Teacher: [Annoyed] *Everybody works in my lesson.*

Abbi: [Flicks through her exercise books and holds up an empty page] *There Miss, we did nothing then. I want to learn the work you didn't teach us on the 3rd of April; I only wrote the title down and did nothing.*

These were very cutting remarks but delivered with a mock sincerity that the teacher seemed to find hard to counter. I asked Abbi about this incident:

SF: *What we you trying to achieve there?*

Abbi: *I like to annoy people I don't like* [Laughs]. *They stress me and then I have to think – 'Calm down' and then I try to make my point. I'll say 'Miss can you at least let me explain?' and then I can say loads of stuff. Teachers think they have to listen if you say it in a sensible way; it's their job isn't it?* **(I 9)**

I asked the teacher about this:

Teacher: *Abbi is by far the cleverest. She's fighting her own battles with the world – 'That's not fair, why are you doing this?' but she makes it clear it's not a personal attack .... she's fighting her territory but she makes it clear. She's not offensive, it's not a personal attack on you but she knows how to say it and sometimes she wins and I say 'Ok you're right Abbi, that was unfair, you are absolutely right – you win'. She's wise because she knows how to do it. If she realises she has nothing to win and it's a lost battle she retreats and it's 'OK'. Perhaps she's a bit annoyed but she retreats and it's fine.*

Although both Sophie and Abbi would confront teachers' authority Abbi would not escalate conflicts in the way that Sophie seemed to. Abbi did often display this tendency to 'retreat' with her pride intact:

Abbi: *Mr. XXXX was insisting that he'd showed us that video twice, you know that comet video and I was like 'No you showed us it once' and he was like 'Twice' and I said 'No, once' and he was like 'Are you calling me wrong I've got so many of these qualifications' and I was like 'I'm not saying anything about your qualifications, I'm saying that I know we didn't watch a 40 min video twice in a 50 min lesson' and then he was like 'Get out!'. And then he gave me a choice outside he said 'You can either get CALMED or say I'm right and go back in' so I said 'Right, we watched a 40 min video twice in a 50 min lesson' and walked back in.*

Some of the other pupils had also commented on the way Abbi had confronted teachers. In an interview with Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh, the more conformist pupils, we discussed the different ways pupils confront teachers:

SF: *Do the bright ones do it differently?*

Lorna: *Sophie messes about and she's bright.*

SF: *But she gets good marks, she succeeds.*

Lorna: *They do it more like.... on the sly kind of.*

Jennifer: *They do it in a more mature way. Some do it like little children but they'll say it to the teacher's face.*

SF: *What do you mean by 'a more mature way'?*

Jennifer: *Like Abbi; she argues back in a sensible way.*

Lorna: *She gets in what she wants to say.*

Jennifer: *She stays in a calm mood but others just proper kick off... she can do it calmly without getting annoyed.*

Lorna: *She says it in a normal voice, a calm voice.*

Jennifer: *You weren't there the other week but Mr. XXXX had a video on the day before and we couldn't remember anything off it and Abbi was going 'Well how are we supposed to remember something off yesterday, how are we meant to remember – we don't have a photographic memory' and he was like 'I'm not going to put it on' and she was like 'Well if you won't put it on then I can't do my work' and she got sent out but in the end and he.... took the point in the end.* **(I 6)**

A key feature of Abbi's behaviour was her frustration at what she perceived to be poor teaching. When learning objectives were unclear Abbi's response was unlike the other pupils – Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh would read the invisible pedagogy and work, Lindsey and Toni would be unable/unwilling to read the invisible pedagogy and disrupt. Abbi however would often try to hold the teacher to account; try to highlight the deficiencies in the lesson and ask the teacher to explain. I observed her doing this regularly in Spanish and Science lessons. In Science:

Abbi: *Sir you need to tell us which questions....* [to another pupil] *he hasn't got a clue.*

Teacher: *Three and four.... the green section.*

Abbi: *What... the comets? We've done this. We've been doing this for weeks. We spend ages on one thing. You need to teach us something else if we've done it. I'm doing the next section instead.*

In these instances Abbi would often set her own agenda and confront the teacher with comments which questioned their professionalism/competence. The manner in which she delivered such comments made them difficult to counter. Her calm, rational approach meant that any attempt by the teacher to discipline her seemed heavy handed, inappropriate and an act of frustration.

A further significant incident concerning Abbi was observed outside of the classroom environment. On this occasion I had been observing a Science lesson and as I left the room I saw Abbi with two of her friends, one of whom was crying and visibly upset. I asked Abbi what the problem was and she informed me that her friend had been CALMED from her Science lesson and was very afraid of what her parents' reaction would be when they found out. Abbi explained that the girl's parents had issued her with a final warning about her behaviour in school with serious consequences if she continued to incur sanctions. Mrs. Gould the Head of Year had described Abbi as a *"very, very loyal girl"* in relation to her friends. This quality became very apparent as Abbi believed from her friend's account of the incident that an injustice had occurred. The teacher in question who had CALMED the pupil was in the adjacent classroom alone and Abbi seemed determined to confront her about the incident. I warned Abbi against getting herself into trouble by provoking confrontation but she was determined to question the teacher on behalf of her friend. Abbi entered the room to speak to the teacher and as this incident occurred in a public arena I was not in a position to make notes regarding the conversation; I am therefore unable to offer a verbatim account. However I did witness the ensuing conversation during which Abbi very articulately pleaded for clemency and acted as an advocate in her friend's interest. Abbi pointed out that her friend had consciously worked hard at improving her behaviour and that punishment in this instance would be an unjust consequence for that positive effort. The discussion was conducted in a calm and rational manner and the teacher was responsive to Abbi's concerns and the manner in which they were expressed.

Ethically I was concerned that this data had been collected via a form of eavesdropping. I therefore approached the teacher involved the following day and asked her permission to include the incident in my research and also requested a short, recorded interview to discuss what had happened; she consented to both requests. I asked her to give her account of the incident:

Teacher: *Lucy was in the wrong.... she had ample warning and you get to that stage when the warnings run out and she was CALMED.*

SF: *And what did Abbi say to you?*

Teacher: [Laughs] *She's their barrack room lawyer isn't she? She's sticking up for her friend which is a good thing I suppose... she said that Lucy's parents would over react and that it wouldn't be fair. You don't want to get kids into trouble at home but sometimes they need that. I gave them the benefit of the doubt because you think of the long term.... Lucy has improved and I don't want to reverse that.*

SF: *You cancelled the detention?*

Teacher: *I changed it to a lunchtime on the condition that she is perfect from now on.*

SF: *And what part did Abbi play in that?*

Teacher: [Laughs] *I've never taught her myself but she seems an intelligent kid. I think if kids make their point then you've gotta listen and take it on board and look at the circumstances. If a kid makes a relevant point then why not.... its not backing down or inconsistency its just looking at the bigger picture.*

I also asked Abbi for her take on the incident:

SF: *How did you feel before you spoke to Ms. XXXX?*

Abbi: *Well it annoys me for the fact that Lucy has been good and then she'd get wrong off her Dad for one bad thing.*

SF: *Is it easy confronting teachers like that?*

Abbi: *Easy?.... It's like they sometimes forget that its not just giving out detentions and that people can get really wrong... at home I mean. There's another side of the story.*

SF: *How did you feel when you were listened to and the detention got cancelled?*

Abbi: *It was the right thing to do and I always do when its unfair... make my point and then see what happens.*

SF: *How do you think the teachers feel about it?*

Abbi: *What?... About me?* [Laughs] *If you say it properly they'll listen... and if they don't then they can't expect us to respect them... that when I get into bother when they don't listen and everything has to be done just their way.* **(I 9)**

I felt that this incident demonstrated a very particular and sophisticated form of pupil resistance which involved dialogue and advocacy as opposed to petulance and confrontation. Abbi possessed the symbolic forms of capital to enable her to question and contest the equity and consequences of a teacher's actions. Her intelligence and advocacy skills provoked the teacher into considering alternative options; Abbi's intentions were *constructive* rather than *destructive.* Her resistance was articulated in the form of a rational discussion of the issue. This would seem to be a qualitatively different form of resistance to those pupil actions which seek to attack the framing of the pedagogic process or the persona of the teacher – "horizontal violence" (Freire 1993).

Throughout the research process different forms of pupils' resistance to authority had been observed and discussed:

- Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh displayed a high degree of conformity predicated on a self-awareness of the positive image they held in the eyes of teachers. They commanded a great deal of teachers' positive attention, caused disruption in lessons but were rarely punished. These pupils were never observed resisting authority.

- Sarah and Vicky expressed anger and frustration at the lack of attention they felt their conformity and work ethic received. These pupils also indulged in low level disruption and reported that they partook in a very passive form of resistance to express their frustration – ignoring or 'blanking' the teacher and withdrawing from full participation in lessons.
- Lindsey and Toni expressed a very confrontational form of resistance targeted against specific teachers. In many lessons they would conform but those teachers who seemed to inhibit or fail to accommodate their sense of fun would be challenged and confronted.
- Sophie and Abbi could express very confrontational forms of resistance but were also capable of more constructive forms of resistance. Sophie would make inappropriate or critical comments in lessons (sometimes with positive intentions) and this would cause conflict with teachers. The sense of injustice she felt at being punished for these conflicts would exacerbate her resistance. Abbi would also make critical comments in lessons and challenge the teacher's authority; often as a reaction to being given a punishment perceived as unjustified. Unlike Sophie Abbi would conduct her confrontation in a clam and rational way and try to question the competence and legitimacy of the teacher's actions. Both Sophie and Abbi were capable of articulating their grievances in a manner which was constructive – they could question the equity of teacher actions and point to alternative courses of action.

These pupil identities and expressions of resistance exist within a framework of pupils' wider cultural values. They exist within the cultural context of how pupils perceive

education and what expectations and aspirations pupils attach to the process of schooling. If pupils/parents' cultural attitudes towards education differ form those of the school then greater conflict and resistance would seem inevitable. The way that the cultural expectations of pupils, parents and teachers interact will now be examined.

4.5 Cultural Expectations:

> ... *it's not that they* [parents] *don't have high expectations; it's just their high expectations are different from what a school teacher or someone else would think are high expectations.* (Ms. Turner).

An important factor when considering issues of class and social reproduction is the expectations which the social actors of the school hold. Ethnographies of schooling in working class areas have frequently highlighted a tendency by teachers to be fatalistic and pessimistic regarding pupils' future roles (Willis 1977, McLaren 1993, Dickar 2008). In these cases there is very little class consciousness within the working class school. The current trend in education of rising achievement and participation in higher education indicates that fatalistic/pessimistic attitudes cannot be universal. Cultural expectations must therefore be considered in the light of the increasing success of working class schools. An interesting point of analysis is whether increased achievement has provoked any sense of class consciousness, a sociological imagination (Mills 1959) which causes the social actors within working class schools to be more acutely aware of issues of inequality and social reproduction. Alternatively rising expectations and achievement may have engendered a belief in meritocracy and competitive individualism.

The nine pupils were each asked to briefly describe their future ambitions. *Table 1* below is a summary:

Table 1 – Pupils' Future Expectations:

Pupil:	Education:	Employment:
Jennifer	Sixth form and university	Geography teacher.
Lorna	College and university.	Primary school teacher.
Ashleigh	College and university.	Barrister or orthodontist.
Sarah	College then university.	Get a job.
Vicky	College to do Travel and Tourism.	Get a job.
Lindsey	College after leaving school.	Cabin crew or RAF.
Toni	Go to college.	Policewoman.
Sophie	College.	Lawyer.
Abbi	College then university.	Nursery teacher or police.

Each of them indicated a future involving further/higher education and for those who specified a future career their choice was for a professional/higher status job. Government statistics suggest that the number of people gaining higher level qualifications and carrying out higher status jobs in the locale of the school is well below the national average (see a*ppendix 1*). I was interested in exploring whether pupils felt teachers had high expectations of them and whether they felt destined for high status roles.

I discussed expectations within the school with Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh (the more conformist pupils). Again they referenced their own status in the eyes of teachers as compared to the 'naughty ones':

SF: *Do you think the school has high expectations of you, as able students?*

Lorna: *Yeah.*

Jennifer: *They expect the good pupils to get further in life than the naughty ones.*

SF: *How do they do that? What do they say?*

Jennifer: *You can tell that's what they think. They think that coz they can't even listen in school they'll never be able to listen. Teachers concentrate on the good pupils; not the naughty ones who disrupt.* **(I 10)**

On occasions during lesson observations Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh would command and get a great deal of the teacher's attention. In a Science lesson I had observed Jennifer asking for extra help on a topic. The teacher sat with her for eight minutes (16% of the lesson) revising the topic. The teacher had referred to this himself:

Mr. Jordan: *I've had a few 'do's' with Jennifer – in the best sense, in as much as she's said 'Look, this has gone way over my head, I need some extra help' and I've sort of sat across the bench and I've talked to her about things and she'll try and learn and she will ask until she gets her head around what the concept is. But some of the others just can't be bothered; I find that frustrating.*

Reflecting on my own lessons Jennifer and Lorna often call me over to their desk and command my attention to re-cap what I have just taught the class or to mark their work. However during observations there were many occasions where these pupils were marginalised by the attention the teacher had to give to misbehaving pupils. This is a very negative form of attention and the attention given to Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh took the form of the teacher helping them with their work.

Sarah and Vicky who had said they felt 'invisible' in lessons were critical of general levels of expectation:

Sarah: *Most teachers don't push you. Your tutor does when you have the meeting* [These meetings happen four times a year to assess pupils progress]. *They tell you what you're doing well on and what you must improve on but most teachers just kind of give you the work that everyone else is doing and you complete it faster than anyone else and they say*

'Wait 'til everyone else has done it' and they won't give you anything else to help you... just kinda leave you. **(I 7)**

The pupils had talked a lot about boredom and lack of engagement in lessons. Sitting in lessons during observations I had experienced how difficult it is to focus on what the teacher is saying. I raised this with Sophie and Abbi:

SF: *In lessons... it's hard to get into it.... it's hard to sit and follow the lesson.*

Sophie: *I know – the only lesson I can do that in is probably History.*

Abbi: *I don't mind Biology stuff in Science.*

Sophie: *Aye coz it's got something to do with you... your body and that.*

Abbi: *But something like Chemistry... oh my God; I actually just feel like getting a knife and sitting there and slitting my throat.* **(I 4)**

I discussed with teachers whether they felt that high ability pupils were being sufficiently stretched in lessons. None of them expressed any concern that these pupils were being held back:

SF: *Do you think the high ability ones, the A* students, does the school cater for them enough?*

Mr. Rose: *[pause] At the end of the day if they get the target then yes. I do think that in terms of what you need to do for those kids to get that level of success I don't think as a teacher you need to do that much. It's a little bit of guidance but those kids if they're well motivated, if they're interested...*

SF: *Do we take them for granted?*

Mr. Rose: *No I think we appreciate having them in our lessons. I always enjoy having bright kids.*

Ms. Henderson, the (non-teaching) Pastoral Manager who mentors high ability pupils in Year 9 was the only member of staff to express a concern:

SF: *Do you ever get any of the bright ones commenting that they're not being stretched in lessons?*

Ms. Henderson: *They don't... I feel that happens, I think they aren't... they don't really come... I've never had anyone come and really say it but its starting to come out. I'm doing the Aimhigher mentoring now so when I'm talking to them about grades and university it is starting to come out when I'm talking to them.*

At the time of the research an *Aimhigher* residential trip had been arranged to Liverpool Hope University. *Aimhigher* is a government body created in 1994 with the rationale of "making everyone aware of the benefits higher education can bring, whatever their background" (Directgov 2009). The school liaises with the regional *Aimhigher* office to arrange university visits, summer schools and pupil mentoring. The focus is on high ability pupils living in socially deprived areas where participation in higher education has traditionally been low. Ten pupils had been chose to go on the Liverpool trip (a three day residential visit); only Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh from the pupils who are the focus of this study had been chosen. The academic targets of Sophie and Abbi are higher than Jennifer and Lorna's yet they were not invited on the trip. There are 31 other pupils in Year 9 whose academic targets are higher than Lorna's. The school's *Aimhigher C*oordinator is Ms. Henderson, the Pastoral Manager; I discussed the scheme with her:

SF: *So what kind of things does it involve?*

Ms. Henderson: *We've basically got a cohort of forty that we're mentoring in Year 9* [includes all of the nine pupils who are the focus of this study]..... *just to meet with them regularly, check how they're doing, show them how to look at courses, prospectuses, what information they need. There's visits in Years 9 and 10 to universities.*

SF: *How often do you see them?*

Ms. Henderson*: We meet up with them and... to be honest it's a big time restriction. We've been asked to do Aimhigher and we're fitting it in with our role; nothing else has been taken off our role so it's not getting as much emphasis as it could do coz it's just time. There's nobody been employed to do Aimhigher we're just doing it on... with our role. But I think it's really important because that's what's coming through all the time – the bright kids because they're not traditionally coming from families I think who would push them down the university route or talk to them about it at home. I'm sure the teachers recognise how well they're doing but there is that group, that top group, they*

can get along fine themselves they are doing well and we seem to spend so much time on the lower end, on behaviour.... bad behaviour and there's a big difference on how much time the brighter kids get.

SF: *Is there any funding for the Aimhigher? Is there any money coming into school?*

Ms. Henderson: [Laughs] *The school got £7,000 to employ somebody for the Aimhigher..... but they didn't. They just put the job onto mine and Julie's* [Year 10/11 Pastoral Manager] *role*.

SF: *But not the money?*

Ms. Henderson: [Laughs] *But not the money, no.... so where the money is I don't know.*

This member of staff was responsible for running the entire *Aimhigher* project for Year 9 pupils and mentoring forty pupils on top of her role as Pastoral manager; all without receiving the allocated money. This important job of mentoring and raising the awareness of pupils regarding higher education seemed to have been given low priority by the school. I asked Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh about the residential trip.

SF: *So why did you go on the Aimhigher trip?*

Ashleigh: *Oh.... I don't know.... no I do! It was to.... what?*

Lorna: [Whispers to Ashleigh] *Experience university.*

Ashleigh: *Oh yeah, to experience university; to see if you want to go to university.*

SF: *And why were you picked to go?*

Ashleigh: *Coz we're in the Aimhigher group.... I dunno.*

SF: *What's the 'Aimhigher group'?*

Ashleigh: [To me] *Do you know what it is or do you not?*

SF: *No.*

Ashleigh: [Laughs] *I don't even know what it is. I think it's just that we can 'aim higher'; that we can get better levels than what we're getting at the moment and to think about careers and university.* **(I 6)**

Jennifer and Lorna were clearer on the rationale of *Aimhigher:*

Lorna: *To give you an understanding of university and what you can do at university...*

Jennifer: *... and the different types of courses you can take...*

Lorna: *...yeah and they think we're capable of going to university and seeing if we're interested in going. Like just giving us a taste of what university will be like.* **(I 6)**

The pupils had certainly enjoyed the trip and we discussed the educational merits:

Ashleigh: *It was a very good experience.*

SF: *How?*

Ashleigh: *It was fun (....) we did English, Science, Criminology, Computer Games and Art. (....)*

SF: *Do you think it worked?*

Jennifer: *Yeah coz it showed you it wasn't just one university... other ones do different things and other ones are better for certain things.*

SF: *Did you learn much about different types of universities and courses?*

Ashleigh: *They never told us; they want us to go there.*

Lorna: *They never told us about Oxford or Cambridge.*

Ashleigh: *They were like 'Come to our university'; that's what they were doing.* **(I 6)**

I have taken pupils away on these university visits and in one sense they are recruitment drives for individual universities. Of course this is understandable but despite the good intentions of the *Aimhigher* project it did not seem that these high ability pupils were being made fully aware of their options. Logistical factors also seemed to be creating limitations for the project:

SF: *Should they not be telling you as the most able students about the best universities?*

Jennifer: *Yeah but at Castle View* [neighbouring school] *my cousin Connor could have come to Liverpool but he's waiting until next year coz they've got the chance of a trip to Oxford.*

Lorna: *But that won't be open to us.*

SF: *Why not?*

Lorna: *Because we've already been to one university. You're only allowed on one trip.*

Ashleigh: *We couldn't go on the art trip today coz we went to Liverpool last week, how unfair is that? It's for your GCSE's as well.*

Jennifer: *But the thing is they're educational trips.* **(I 6)**

I asked the *Aimhigher* Coordinator about some of the logistical issues:

SF: *So why do they go to Liverpool?*

Ms. Henderson: *The Aimhigher people organise all that and Liverpool have done this for a long time.*

SF: *It's a good experience for them but is it a bit of a recruitment drive for the university? Why aren't the most able kids sent to higher status universities?*

Ms. Henderson: *The university.... they're not doing it out of the goodness of their hearts are they? They'll be doing it for recruitment at the end of the day but I think just for them to see somewhere is better than nothing.*

The pupils had obviously gotten a lot out of their visit and the *Aimhigher* Coordinator was admirably dedicated to the values of the project despite the lack of finance and logistical issues. However the issue of creating very high expectations in the minds of these very high ability young people seemed uncertain. In the light of the trip I had discussed expectations with the pupils:

SF: *Do you think your expectations have been increased?*

Ashleigh: *Yeah, I made new friends too.*

SF: *They think that not enough people go to university in this area.*

Ashleigh: *Really? Is that why we went?*

Jennifer: *I'm going to Sunderland University.*

SF: *Why have you chosen that one?*

Jennifer: *The thing is right have you not heard of the credit crunch? How's a university student meant... I mean they'll be able to pay for accommodation and that but they won't be able to cope with being really far away from their families.* **(I 6)**

The pupils seemed to have very little awareness of the status of universities and the role which education can play in social reproduction.

The issue of very high ability, high achieving students being inclined to remain in the local area for higher education is an interesting point of analysis. There is no suggestion that this is necessarily a bad thing but the evidence suggests that many high ability young people don't look beyond the local area for higher education destinations or indeed employment. Data showing the destinations of the 157 students who attended the school's Sixth Form in the past two years was analysed:

77 (49%) of these students were in further or higher education:

Table 2: Higher Education Destinations of School's Sixth Form Leavers 2007 and 2008:

DESTINATIONS: (ranked by most popular)	**No. OF STUDENTS:**	**No. OF MILES FROM SCHOOL:**
Sunderland University	36	12
Northumbria University	10	22
Local FE college	11	0
Teesside University	7	17
Newcastle University	5	22
York University	3	63
Leeds Metropolitan University	2	80
Durham University	1	11
Staffordshire University	1	174
Preston University	1	129
Total:	**77**	

Table 2 shows that for the top five most popular institutions (91% of all students) the average distance of the institution form the school was 12 miles.

Those students not continuing in education had the following destinations:

Table 3: Destinations of School's Sixth Form Leavers 2007 and 2008 Not Continuing in Education:

DESTINATION:	No. OF STUDENTS:
Local Apprenticeship	22
Employed in local area	13
Employed outside of local area (all in armed services)	6
Gap year	3
Seeking employment (As of October 2008)	18
Destination unknown	18
Total:	**80**

Tables 2 and *3* together show that of the 136 students whose destination was known, 51% of them were attending local universities (within a 22 mile radius) and 39% of them were employed in the local area. Only 10% of the students had moved out on the North East of England area.

I spoke to teachers about the aspirations of sixth form students. Mr. Rose, a teacher who has taught at the school for 34 years commented:

Mr. Rose: *I think with some of the kids I've worked with in Sixth Form they've had the notion yes of going onto university or some kind of college course but what has surprised me with many of the kids is the reluctance to travel very far and the desire to remain within, to me, a fairly limited environment. So you get kids who, no harm to Sunderland University, but with some who would've been able to get into.... a much better university if you like, they would settle for Sunderland coz it's on the doorstep and there was a reluctance, perhaps a fear, to extend themselves beyond that. That's one of the things I've noticed with our kids – they don't seem to want to.... well, get very far.*

Ms. Gould echoed these views:

Ms. Gould: *(...) I've never heard conversations like 'I can't wait to get away from this area' or 'I'm gonna go down to London and make my fortune'. It just doesn't seem to be in their vocabulary. It's taken for granted that this is their culture and this is where they are going to stay.*

Sarah and Vicky had commented about factors affecting their further education:

SF: *Do you think you have high expectations of yourself?*

Sarah: *No. I know I want to go to university and college and everything but in subjects*

where I don't get taught very well I think well there's no point if everything I'm gonna go into is gonna be like horrible people trying to get the teacher's attention – if that's what colleges are like then there's not gonna be much point in aiming any higher than what you've already got.

SF: *You think it would be the same at university?*

Sarah: *Not university coz you've gotta pay to get in there and it's just people who want to be there but in some colleges... I know you can get kicked out of college but if you've been brought up where's there's been naughty kids who always get the teacher's attention you think it's gonna be like that all the time.* **(I 7)**

They also held a negative perception of the locale:

SF: *In this area do you think there's high expectations?*

Sarah: *Not really coz we're in like the North East and it's supposed to be the poorest part of the country so like people think they are lower than everyone else.*

Vicky: *People down South probably have high expectations coz half of them are probably posh – where Queenie lives.* **(I 7)**

With Ms.Wood, a Science teacher, I discussed the level of awareness that students have

regarding education and future employment:

SF: *As a Science teacher, do you think that the kids tap into the fact that Science can lead to a high status job?*

Ms. Wood: *No I don't think they do. I don't think many of the kids at the moment are thinking about status; they don't think about status which they probably would in other schools but I don't think they do here. (...) If you ask the kids they don't really know where they're gonna go... they might say 'Oh well I might go and do these A levels' but they're not really thinking about long term future I don't think.*

SF: *When you teach sixth form do you think they are clued up about university?*

Ms. Wood: *No, I don't think they are.... I don't think they're as clued up as they should be, even to what course they want to do and where it's going to lead. I had someone a couple of years ago wanting to go into Medicine and had no idea about how competitive it was and all the things that you need to do extra-curricula to go and do Medicine – they decided in Year 13 they wanted to do Medicine. You're like 'It 'aint gonna happen unless you do x amount of stuff; there's a limited amount of places and you need 3 A's and to be this all round person' - they have no concept of that I don't think.*

In interviews I asked teachers about the effect they thought the local area had on expectations and ambitions. Two of the teachers were not from the local area and both used the term 'parochial':

Mr. Jordan: *If this is a socially deprived area and I guess it is with all the villages around, the expectations are probably low. There may be one or two who break the mould but generally speaking I wouldn't think so. I've found since I moved up here that the North East seems a very parochial area. I said to a person I used to work with at the factory 'I went to such and such a place the other week' and he said 'Well, that's like out on the coast', I said 'Yeah, about half an hour on the coast' and he was surprised that I'd travel that far but people don't seem to up here. I'll say to people 'You live in such and such a village do you know such and such a place; have you been to Durham' – 'No I've never been to Durham' or 'Have you ever been to Sunderland' – 'No' and I'm thinking these are only half an hour away in the car, if that.*

The same teacher however highlighted that wider ambitions do exist in the minds of pupils:

SF: *Do you think the brighter ones have high expectations in terms of their futures?*

Mr. Jordan: *Subconsciously yeah, they probably have. Whether that's realised.....*

SF: *Do you think they understand the path to progress?*

Mr. Jordan: *Oh yeah I think they understand it, whether they could actually talk about it... from what their expectations are... I was talking to one of my Year 11's when she came in to do revision. She said 'I fancy doing this and doing that'; she wanted to do childcare. 'Perhaps if I do that and go abroad and perhaps set up a nursery or a child centre somewhere'. So I said 'If that's what you want to do then get your qualifications and go out and do it; don't just think about it go and physically do it'. So you know they have these ideas but whether or not they've got the bottle or not to put them into practice I don't know.*

The other teacher from outside the area was Ms. Lopez, a Spaniard. She was able to provide an insight into the pupils' wider cultural outlook:

Ms. Lopez: *Some of them have been abroad but they go to resorts... but they don't know any other culture at all. How many children from minorities do we have here? We have 5 at the most; so that's really unusual.*

SF: *Does that affect languages?*

Ms. Lopez: *Languages and how they perceive other cultures. They ask me things that I'm surprised about. They have no idea about what's outside this North East area, they don't. Some children have never been to Newcastle, they've never been... so perhaps they've been to Benidorm but they've never been to Newcastle or London which surprises me. They don't know anything about outside. On the other hand they... that makes them very naïve; I don't think they are very street wise so I've never felt threatened in the school. That's good as well but on the other hand they are quite parochial; I've found the school very parochial as well. The way the school works and the staffing... we are a bit parochial, I suppose it has to be like that.*

Ms. Lopez had bemoaned the lack of interest in learning languages and she linked this to the social class make up of the area:

SF: *With languages is it a national thing – an English thing? We don't learn languages?*

Ms. Lopez: *No I think it's a class thing, middle class learn languages, middle class travel, and middle class find this useful.... that's the reason. (....)*

SF: *What do you mean by 'class'?*

Ms. Lopez: *They don't see the need for it – why do you need it? You're not going to travel; if you do go to Spain you don't need the language. I don't think they do it on purpose; they don't see the need for it – we don't need a language coz everyone speaks English – which is true.*

Interestingly teachers who were from the local area agreed that expectations and ambitions were not high but suggested parents were the root cause. Mr. Collins acts as the school's Careers Coordinator and arranges work experience placements for pupils:

SF: *Do you think the area makes a difference?*

Mr. Collins: *Oh yeah. East Durham kids, of course. It's the parents. East Durham kids you think they're isolated. You ask them – I refer to work experience – you give them a job in Denton* [neighbouring town 2 miles away] *and you'll get their parents on the phone. (....) There's loads of kids who haven't even been out of this area. We're taking them to South Shields tomorrow and some of them haven't even seen the sea. I remember years ago taking Year 10 and 11 kids to the Lake District and I was going up and down the bus talking to them and none of them had even been out of this town. They just don't leave this area. When I first started doing work experience the phone would never stop. I had one parent – I found a place – this is a 15 year old kid and he had to get a bus, one bus, and the parent complained that I'd got him a job where he had to get a bus. 'Get a bus!' she actually said - 'The ambulance is gonna be at my door if you send my lad... not your door, my door, I'm the one who's gonna be worrying' – It's a fucking bus! This is*

typical of East Durham. A lot of people born in East Durham stay in East Durham and they don't go out of the area.

However this same teacher suggested that high ability pupils do hold high ambitions:

SF: *Do you think the kids here have high expectations? You've done careers – do you think kids are aware of high status jobs and their futures?*

Mr. Collins: *I dunno whether they do or not. I can't say either way. If I was to guess I would say no. Obviously the intelligent ones do but the thick ones, even the middle of the road ones don't. You talk to them and try to get them ready for work experience... they always come back saying 'I wanna be this and I didn't realise you had to have this qualification'. I think the vast majority aren't aware what to do. (....)*

SF*: Do the bright kids want... are they ambitious? They get the qualifications but do they...*

Mr. Collins: *I think they are, yeah. The ones I talk to are. My last Maths top set, the ones who've just left it was like 'What do you want to be?' – 'Oh I want to be an engineer, I wanna be a doctor'. They all had high ambitions; they all wanna go to university.*

Assistant Head teacher Mr. Bell also linked expectations and ambitions to parental

influence:

SF: *Do you think the kids have got high expectations in terms of high status jobs and university?*

Mr. Bell: *No. I think that is still something that East Durham... they're better but they're still.... it's the aspirations of the parents reflected in the kids. When I first came here there were a couple of girls I taught who were the same age as my daughter and I used to talk a lot about my daughter. I said to one of them 'You must be going to university' and she said 'No, people like me don't go to university'; well I went off it. When her mother came in she got a right earful from me and that lass is at Sunderland University now and there's little things to me why I teach – that's one of the reasons I teach.*

Mr. Bell also conducts an annual parental survey for the school:

Mr. Bell: *It lacks the parental push in our kids (...) It is very sad though when you do the parental survey – it asks 'Do your kids want to go to university?' and there's a high percentage say 'yes', but they say 'yes' coz they think they are supposed to say yes. If the question was 'What do you do to get your child into university?' that would be a whole different percentage and I think that's the difference. They can all say it's the right thing to go to university but how many of them make sure that the kids have a lap top for instance? That's the sort of thing where a kid would need a lap top, to work effectively and do research and so forth whereas they're quite happy to buy them the latest mobile*

phone coz that's what the kids want.... and do they take them to extend their knowledge? That starts way down in Year 7 when they're doing something like castles; my nephew was doing castles so we took him to Bamburgh Castle for the day for a tour. Would our parents do that - all of our parents? I would suggest that 90% of parents would do that in a school in the leafy suburbs, in a top class school – there's the aspiration; the kids' learning is extended.

The suggestion that finance is not a great issue (parents being able to buy expensive mobile phones) was also raised by Ms. Gould:

Ms. Gould: *... the parents, when you're talking about deprived backgrounds and things, if some kids are in trouble their parents will punish them by removing the PC from their rooms or TV's from their rooms. So you tell me – deprived?*

The general feeling amongst teachers was that they were working against a culture of low expectations. Mr. Davies, a teacher who was born, raised and attended school in the catchment area again pointed to parental influence:

SF: *Do you think the bright ones have high expectations?*

Mr. Davies: *Yes and no. It does have a lot to do with the background they're coming from, what they're like at home. Whether they are encouraged in education or not. A lot of households just think the kids go to school and that's it, something to do and others want to do well.*

SF: *You live in the area; do you think in this area there are high expectations?*

Mr. Davies: *Generally not. Everywhere there are some households where yes there is, but generally there is not that much. (…) They don't see that much in these poverty areas, (…) they come out of school with good GCSE's – what good does it do them? They don't.... they're looking for a quick fix, they're not.... there's a lack of seeing that years of work in university, apprenticeships, whatever it happens to be will pay off; they want it now and that's discouraging them. Generally expectations can be low.... but obviously there's exceptions.*

Mr. Davies also related an incident which had happened when he worked at the neighbouring school he had attended as a pupil:

Mr. Davies: *...a kid actually said 'You must be the only one who ever went to this school who's got a university degree' and I'd say 'No I'm not, my cousin came here and she's a mechanical engineer. I know someone else who's doing this, I know someone who's a brigade leader at a fire station' and they didn't see that.*

Mr. Stewart, an English teacher, made an interesting observation about the pupils' perception of his subject area:

Mr. Wood: *I think that basically I'm teaching English as a foreign language. It's Standard English that they're looking for and where's that spoken? I think it's in Kent – it's the only place in England where Standard English is their natural dialect. So in effect these kids are at a disadvantage from the beginning coz I'm teaching them not a new language but... a different way of speaking or writing. It is a constant battle that they don't see.... they feel a little bit hard done by sometimes – 'But that's the way I talk, that's me, my identity and you're asking me to write in a different way'.*

It seemed apparent that staff felt that the general aspirations of pupils were not high. The exception was Ms. Turner, a teacher who had been raised in the area and who also had a unique perspective – her daughter attends the school.

Ms. Turner: *You see I don't think they have low expectations, that annoys me. I think... obviously everywhere you go you'll get people who have low expectations but on the whole parents around here don't have low expectations of their children – they want their children to do well but they might not necessarily have 'teacher brains'. They're not looking at targets. Some of them would say 'As long as you get what you need to do, what you want to do that's fine'. So they might not be saying 'We want our kids to get A*'s and sit in every night doing homework – work ,work, work' but they'll say 'If you need a B or C to get onto this course then that'll do'. I think that would probably be me, speaking as a parent as well.*

This teacher/parent felt strongly that the issue was not 'low expectations' but rather 'different expectations to teachers'.

Ms. Turner: *My mam and dad would say 'Do your best with whatever you do' but they wouldn't always agree with what school said. Sometimes my dad would be like 'We're in charge here – not the school' he'd say 'You don't have to do that homework if you've got too much, I'll decide how much homework you do'. So I don't think it's about having low expectations it's about having a different view; some people don't understand that. So if you've got a parent phoning up saying 'Actually my child is not doing 6 pieces of homework tonight' someone might say – 'Low expectations, this is what we're up against' when actually it's not... it's just something else.*

The important point being made was that parents' expectations were more focused upon supporting their children in their choices rather than pushing them into academia or high status jobs:

Ms. Turner: ... *it's not that they don't have high expectations it's just their high expectations are different from what a school teacher or someone else would think are high expectations. I would say I have high expectations of my children and that's just to be happy. (...) They're not pushy parents that's the difference, they'll support the kids in what they want to do. Some parents are pushy and see university as the only way to achieve any kind success whereas other think you can measure success in other ways. I would say you can measure success in other ways.*

An interesting aspect of this interview with Ms. Turner was the issue of how politics and religion may combine in the area to impact upon expectations. Ms. Wood told me about her own family background and her father; a miner and a staunch socialist:

Ms. Turner: *He couldn't vote Conservative even though a lot of the Conservative values are his – like family values and stuff like that coz he's strictly Catholic my dad as well. (...) But my dad yeah he was political but he was religious. He would always say, he always went along the lines and I do as well 'It doesn't matter what people think of you it's what God thinks of you' you know – if you think it's alright with God then it's alright.*

This interview raised the intriguing question as to whether the Catholicism of the pupils and the school in someway acted to counter the academic credentials discourse and the culture of targets/accountability. I had asked all interviewees whether they considered the Catholic ethos important. The pupils seemed very uncomfortable discussing this and did not offer any clear opinions. Despite this they often made passing references to religion; for example Jennifer made reference to the Ten Commandments when commenting upon the inadequacies of a teacher **(I 2)**. Regarding staff their responses were consistent – they felt that the Catholic ethos did make a different but were unsure how. The following is a typical example:

Ms. Henderson: *There's maybe something underlying..... it's probably underlying.... it's there without being.... not that it would ever come up as an issue but I think it's probably an underlying expectation which is there without them* [the pupils] *really realising it.*

The Headteacher informed me that less than half the staff are Catholic. During interviews I did not enquire into personal religious beliefs unless the matter arose in conversation.

To attempt to dig deeper into the issue of the Catholic ethos I interviewed the school Chaplain. The Chaplain (referred to by all staff and pupils as Alison) provides spiritual and pastoral support for everyone connected to the school. She also felt that religious faith impacted in subtle, underlying ways:

Alison: *.... you can't put your finger on it, it's invisible, it's deep and it's rooted in Christ and I think that it comes out when you come into the front door of the school and you're met... I suppose with that whole generosity of spirit. That's not to say it doesn't exist in other schools of non-denominations as well but I think it's more prominent here.*

Alison also revealed aspects of pupils' faith and religious practice that I was not aware and had not experienced:

Alison: *It's quite interesting when we advertise for confirmations and the amount of kids who came here and desperately want to get confirmed. Denton recently had confirmations and we advertised in assemblies if anyone wanted to do that and it was surprising how many of them came and wanted to hear more. (.....) With the Year 7's at the moment, they were so excited to come and pray for 5 minutes – we got them some booklets printed and they've really cherished them.... I'll say 'Maybe next term I'll have some rosaries ready in the chapel for you' and they'll say 'Oh no I've got one that my gran gave me' which is really nice.*

In terms of pupil behaviour it seemed that Alison also informally played the role of a counsellor, offering guidance to pupils who had conflicted with pedagogic authority:

Alison: *... it's hopefully to be some sort of presence... hopefully, the ones who've been sent out of lessons and I can engage in a conversation with. Now you don't know why that child has worked themselves in a lesson and it might be something deep rooted, it might be something which is upsetting them at home. They might not necessarily be bad and maybe or hopefully if I come along by accident at the right time just to show them that somebody cares.*

Alison also related a story in which a pupil labelled as a troublemaker by the wider school had excelled on a trip she had organised to a synagogue.

Alison: *He went to the synagogue and was quite happy to stand out there and hold the scrolls and had a lovely nature about him; you could just tell he had pride there and everything. Anyway I came back and I mentioned it to Ms. Gould and Ms. Henderson and said 'What a wonderful boy' and they were absolutely horrified, they said 'Do you realise who he is?' and I said 'I don't but he was a model student and represented the*

school wonderfully' and it transpired that he was the one who was always out of lessons in the Base.

From my conversations with Alison there seemed to be a possibility that the Catholic ethos may act to smooth and assuage conflict within the school. In the context of this thesis there may be a suggestion that religion can act to counter pupil resistance to authority; it may act in a cathartic manner to defuse tension. I asked Alison about social deprivation and the surrounding area and how religion considered those issues:

Alison: ... *I came from South Shields. Sometimes we had buy shoes, get beds for kids to sleep in; horrendous conditions. But when you saw them in the playground when they socialised there was no differentiation between the kids; they all accepted one another and I think that's a huge thing about faith – respect and acceptance of the person. It's not so much about material things. I know what you're saying about the deprived areas but I think where faith is concerned we all need to discover who we are and I think that goes back to once we start discovering who we are we know who God is because he's in each one of us.*

The interview with Alison raised important questions regarding how religion can function to assuage conflict. Alison was offering a very alternative viewpoint to my own; the foundation of my approach concerned social class, hers concerned faith in God. I confess I felt a little uncomfortable discussing religion with a devout Christian and also confess that I felt her approach offered little more than a fatalistic acceptance of social inequality. Her answer to pupil resistance, underachievement and social reproduction was to maintain a strong faith in God.

McLaren's (1993) study in a Catholic school drew a clear connection between the rituals involved in religious faith and those of the classroom; Catholicism was instrumental in encouraging compliance with pedagogic authority. In all of the 43 lessons I observed I never witnessed a teacher referring to any aspect of Catholicism. There were no religious rituals observed or reference to Catholic symbols. Even in RE lessons pupils

were encouraged to question religion and faith rather than accept it.

I felt that the interview with Alison had served to raise more issues than provide solutions. As I was leaving Alison's office she handed me a 51 page Papal encyclical on faith in God she had printed for me advising me it would help my research by clarifying some of the issues. I thanked her but must confess that this document was filed away and is not referenced elsewhere in this thesis.

Ms. Turner's candid account of her own family background which had raised the issue of religion also raised many interesting points regarding parents' attitudes and expectations. In my own experience working at the school I have never met a parent who was not fully supportive of the school's policies. Assistant Head Teacher Mr. Bell is responsible for behaviour issues and meets the parents of pupils who have conflicted with school rules on a daily basis:

SF: *So when you meet parents are they supportive?*

Mr. Bell: *Very few don't come on board. (...) Sometimes you have to explain to parents about the systems and that coz the kids never tell them; they'll tell them the opposite but when they find out and you show them rules and stuff they're usually very good the parents.*

Ms. Gould the Head of Year 9 likewise:

Ms. Gould: *The parents who've come up for interviews about bad behaviour have always left with a smile on their faces and a handshake. The parents are very, very good – so it's the kids – maybe the apple doesn't fall far from the tree eh?*

Ms. Henderson, the Pastoral Manager:

Ms. Henderson: *Very, very rare when a parent wouldn't be supportive. Normally if they come in you'd get a couple parents who sound very supportive on the phone but when you talk to the kids and you think 'They're gonna be grounded and this is gonna be taken off them and that's gonna be taken off them' and then when you talk to them it hasn't been followed through at home but generally parents are very supportive.*

Overall, expectations from pupils were high. All of the pupils who are the focus of this study expressed future ambitions in higher education and higher status jobs. Pupils did report high levels of boredom and disengagement in lessons and examples of teachers not stretching them sufficiently. Important initiatives such as the *Aimhigher* project which seek to raise and develop pupils' awareness of higher education have engaged and provoked pupils' interest but remain under-funded and a low priority within the school. Throughout the research process the pupils expressed very few sentiments or opinions which would indicate any sense of class consciousness. Only Sarah and Vicky expressed any awareness of how background/location may impact upon future life chances. Overall the pupils expressed a faith in competitive individualism and meritocracy.

From discussion with teachers it was apparent that they believed the local area was a significant factor affecting the ambitions and life chances of pupils. Unlike teacher attitudes in the ethnographies of Willis (1977) and McLaren (1993) the teachers in this study did not express the opinion that pupils were incapable or somehow deficient. Instead they expressed a frustration that the pupils' abilities and potential were not being realised. They believed they were working against a culture of low expectations. Many teachers had made dismissive and often disparaging comments about the outlook of parents. They also bemoaned pupils' lack of awareness and understanding regarding what is necessary to access higher education and high status roles. Again there was no sense of class consciousness attached to this. Teachers were frustrated at what they regarded as obstacles to the smooth functioning of meritocracy. The cultural expectations of parents were being denigrated as they did not match the meritocratic ideals of teachers. These 'obstacles' to meritocracy were not simplistic notions of an inferior culture prone to

material and cultural deprivation. Rather they seemed more akin to Bourdieu' (1984:471) notion of "a sense of one's place" – a contentment with what is known, or as Harker (1990) suggests a sense of 'security' with what is familiar. This does not of course mean that the culture of the area is somehow lacking or inferior to that espoused by teachers; it suggests that the cultural values are in some ways different. The comments of Ms. Turner suggest that parents may negotiate the academic credentials discourse of the school with their own sense of what is appropriate for their children.

From a Marxist perspective the situation could be described as one of 'false class consciousness'. Pupils and teachers invest their faith in meritocracy and competitive individualism; parents and wider cultural values often negotiate this with a belief in personal contentment and security. However as the data in *appendix 1* suggests this situation has traditionally resulted in social inequality and reproduction. The potential for the social actors of the school to develop a deeper class consciousness would seem to be grounded in the resistant identities of pupils and teachers. What then becomes important is the way that teachers engage with the resistant pupil identities outlined above. Whether the identities which teachers adopt have the potential to harness and direct pupils' critical and resistant expression will now be examined.

4.6 Teacher Identities:

> *It's about having the X-factor; it's about having the va va voom to carry it off. Some teachers have it, some don't, and some learn it.* (Mr. Collins)

Whilst observing and interviewing the pupils it became apparent that their disruption and resistance were expressed against particular teachers. For example Toni conflicted badly with two of her teachers but another teacher described her as *'perfect'*. Conflicts and resistance to authority seemed to centre around these personality clashes. Like a chemical reaction the components needed to be present; pupils' cultural expression conflicting with pedagogic authority to create flash points. The following represents a summary of observed teacher identities divided into those which imposed strong framing of learning and those which weakened the frames.

4.6.1 Strong Framing:

Strict, disciplinarian teachers were referred to by pupils as 'stressheads'. No observed teacher adopted this identity throughout a lesson; it was an identity teachers periodically adopted to deal with disruption and resistance to their authority. Some teachers adopted this role much more successfully than others. I interviewed Mr. Collins, a teacher renowned for strict discipline, to discuss this:

Mr. Collins: *The very first time I get a class, I jump down their throats. So you bring them in and you're looking for something to jump on... because a kid needs to come in and see somebody do something and the teacher jump on it straight away. It has to be something small coz the kids are gonna go 'If he can jump on me for that, there's no way I'm gonna mess about'. It's my reputation as well. I used to bounce kids off the walls, I dunno how I wasn't sacked umpteen times. I used to literally hit them , shake them, grab them by the scruff of the neck, bounce them off the walls and allsorts. How I wasn't arrested…I should be in prison, I dunno how I got away with it. I got a few parents complaining but it was swept under the carpet.*

Ms. Wood, a teacher whose lessons I'd observed as being very structured with strong framing commented:

Ms. Wood*: I think they like format don't they, they like to know that they're gonna get this, then they're gonna do this and then they're gonna get that... kids I think like structure and I think that does help. I always do my register at the beginning and I expect them to be quiet. Even the more troublesome groups are actually quiet during the register coz that's something I expect and have done from day one. I think we forget that they're kids sometimes and they need boundaries and they need structure.*

Mr. Rose, the teacher responsible for running the school's behaviour unit commented on this disciplinarian identity:

Mr. Rose: *A lot of kids will be happy to have that degree of order because it's imposed on them in a very regimental, sergeant major fashion. There's kids who are happy with that because they know where they stand. The Mr. Collins scenario – bawl and shout and say all types of inappropriate things to them. That to me... you're admitting defeat coz if you shout, the kids shout back and as a result you achieve absolutely nothing.*

McLaren (1993) saw this 'hegemonic overlord' identity as being the reflex of the dominant school discourse. Pupils are coerced into adopting rituals which stifle critical expression and ultimately disadvantage working class pupils. From my observations and interviews with pupils it was obvious that this 'bawling and shouting' approach was not sufficient. It worked for some teachers but pupils had expressed a deep dislike for other teachers who had tried to impose strong framing and had often disrupted these lessons the most. Observing some teachers struggling to defend the frames of learning raised the question as to why some teachers could easily impose strong framing yet others couldn't. I asked the pupils about this:

SF: *Some teachers are quite strict but pupils like them.*

Lorna: *Yeah, like Ms. Ward, she's strict.*

SF: *So what's the difference?*

Lorna: *A lot of people like it coz she makes the lessons fun and she's like strict but she*

teaches us, whereas Ms. XXXX she's strict but she doesn't teach us nothing. She's just like 'Oh copy out this' and she'll put something on the board to copy out whereas Ms. Ward she'll put a DVD on and we all have to make notes and she'll make us write them in full sentences and that. **(I 10)**

I asked Mr. Collins why his approach to discipline worked whereas others who tried that approach failed:

Mr. Collins: *Remember XXXX* [ex-member of staff]; *he didn't like kids and they resented that. I think the kids have got to know that you like them. If they sense that you don't like them it doesn't matter what you do. It has to be real as well, you can't put those sort of things on. I bring humour in just to help myself... but it might be that I brought humour in coz I got bored and then found that it did help with the discipline.*

The pupils highlighted this likeability factor; they appreciated those teachers who could build a relationship with them rather than be strict and impersonal:

Jennifer: *Ms. XXXX is always horrible to some people coz she was walking past the other day and people were calling her a beached whale and everything; they were being proper horrible to her. It is quite funny; she does take it quite personally.*

SF: *But why does that happen to some teachers and not others?*

Lorna: *Because it depends the way teachers act with you. Mr. Lamb, if he walked past everyone would say 'Hi Sir' or just not say anything whereas if some teachers walked past they would call them. It's the way that they act... how strict they are.*

Jennifer: *It isn't just that it's the way they teach, it's the way they interact with the class. Like some teachers proper get involved with the class and others just stand back and watch them.* **(I 6)**

I had also observed that those lessons which were well structured and the pupils were fully aware of what the teacher expected of them were some of the most successful lessons.

Teachers who tried and struggled to adopt the role of the disciplinarian would end up defending the frames of learning rather than imposing them. This situation happened in a Geography lesson. When I had approached this teacher to request permission to observe she had admitted that she found the class difficult. At the start of the lesson the

teacher called for quiet but struggled to achieve this – *'You're not listening!'* The teacher had written the requirements of the lesson on the board and as she read them there were constant interruptions. She constantly rebuked pupils – *'Excuse me!', 'That's a warning!'* The start of lessons seemed crucial for those teachers seeking to impose strong framing. In many lessons teachers would use the first few seconds to check pupils' uniforms. Teachers sought to establish order, silence and the pupils' full attention. Observed techniques included a Spanish teacher counting down from five to one in Spanish and a DT teaching standing glaring at the pupils repeating *'I'm waiting!'* Teacher's who failed at this first attempt to impose strong framing spent the remainder of the lesson defending the frames.

In the Geography lesson the work was fragmented into set time frames. The teacher circled the room keeping the pupils on task – *'Get on with it! You've got another 3 minutes.'* Pupils drifted between work and chatting and beneath the disciplinary gaze of the teacher cans of pop were opened, MP3 player earphones were secreted into ears and mobile phone hidden in laps. Throughout the lesson there was a switch between strong and weak framing. The teacher constantly defended the frames; sometimes succeeding in imposing discipline, sometimes failing. The lesson was about planning a trip to the Antarctic. Whenever pupils asked the teacher questions which weren't directly related to the task in hand they were given short shrift:

Pupil: *Miss if you had to pick three people from this class to take to the Antarctic who would it be?*

Teacher: *Can we keep going please..... another two minutes.*

On another occasion:

Pupil: *Miss could you eat a husky..... if you were starving?*

Teacher: *Have you finished part b?*

At the end I chatted with the teacher and she gave me her unsolicited opinion on the lesson:

Teacher: *That went well, we do more than colouring in in Geography! They get a bit noisy but that's the best Sophie's been for me – she did bot all last lesson. They finished that in one lesson*.

I'd observed a Spanish lesson where the teacher also sought to defend the frames of learning. In this lesson, despite the teacher's valiant efforts to maintain a learning environment, the framing had broken down. As with the Geography lesson this teacher struggled to keep the pupils' attention as she addressed the class. The work was fragmented into tasks with a set time frame but many pupils drifted from their work and the noise level rose. The teacher moved from pupil to pupil to chivvy them into remaining on task. Twice the noise reached an unacceptable level and she raised her voice to address the class – *'Excuse me! Is that necessary?'*. The third time the volume of noise increased the teacher went to the front of the class:

Teacher: *Excuse me!* [Noise falls a little]..... *I'm waiting*. [She counts down in Spanish 5-to-1, the pupils don't respond].

The teacher stood in front of the class waiting for quiet but the pupils didn't respond. After around twenty seconds a pupil tried to intervene:

Pupil 1: [Addressing the class] *Shut up! Quiet!*

Teacher: *I'm getting tired; I expect better from you.*

The teacher then wrote a large figure '2' on the board. This was to signify that she would be keeping the class back two minutes.

Pupil 2: [Laughing] *Miss that wasn't two minutes! It was more like 30 seconds*.

The teacher stood impassively at the front of the class waiting in vain for the pupils' attention. Some of the pupils looked around at me to gauge my reaction. I felt uncomfortable and embarrassed to be watching a colleague struggling in this way but powerless to intervene. I looked down at my notes and avoided eye contact with the pupils. The teacher retreated form her position at the front of the class and in the remaining ten minutes of the lesson pupils were left to their own devices.

This was the first and only lesson I'd observed where the frames of learning had broken down. The pupils had succeeded in disrupting the framing so much that the learning process had collapsed. I interviewed this teacher later:

Teacher: *I don't mind if they talk in my lesson but my requirement is that when me move on to something new they must listen to me, but they don't... they ignore me. I think they enjoy it..... because there are no big consequences. They try to push the boundaries and sometimes I ignore it.... it's easier.*

SF: *You didn't seem to use the school sanctions....*

Teacher: *I know..... you can sometimes relax it a bit for your own convenience; sometimes I ignore it. But some of them they calculate what they are going to say, they know what to say and I find it quite hurtful* [this is said with a genuine sense of hurt].

An issue with this teacher was her nationality; with English not being her native language this had an effect on her ability to impose discipline:

Teacher: *I'm pretty sure that if I was in Spain teaching in my own language 95% of things wouldn't happen... I'd be in control more. Sometimes they win because I'm not quick enough for the argument. My language in those situations is not good and people like Sophie... she knows that well. They'll think 'She's losing it, she's not speaking properly' and they'll think 'Let's go in for the kill'. With all of the colloquial expressions they use I can't follow them.*

I asked the pupils about this lesson:

SF: *But in your class everything seemed to break down...*

Toni: *It starts off good and then it just like....* [flops arms down]

SF: *Why is that? Is it the teacher, the personality? If it was a different teacher it would be different?*

Ashleigh: *Yes!*

Toni: *Yeah if it was a stricter teacher...*

Ashleigh: *If she even tried to... she doesn't even try though.*

Toni: *People just laugh at her.*

Ashleigh: *She just expects you to listen and if you don't she just like throws a wobbler and she's like AAAARRRGHH! Then she sits down and says 'We're doing nothing!' That's not on is it? (...) She over-reacts doesn't she?* **(I 4)**

I had observed the pupils being disruptive yet they put the blame for the lesson breaking down at the door of the teacher – a 'stricter teacher' would solve the problem.

An interesting corollary of this incident was that I observed the next lesson this teacher had with this class and the difference was immediate. The teacher lined the pupils up outside of the room and arranged them into a seating plan. The pupils accepted this without complaint. The teacher was much more assertive – *'Everybody looking at the board and listening!'* - the pupils respond. The pupils were engaged in their work (which was the same task as the previous lesson) and the contrast between the two lessons was stark. Although many factors affect pupils behaviour one factor which made this second lesson run smoother than the first was the teacher's determination to impose strong framing – the seating plan, the clear and unequivocal instructions. Pupil resistance and teacher authority seemed to act dialectically in this sense; each would provoke the other and the frames of learning would strengthen or weaken accordingly.

Throughout the interviews the pupils referred to 'good' teachers'. Sophie who conflicted with many of her teachers was full of praise for her History teacher:

Sophie: *Ms. Ward is a good teacher. She always jam packs her lessons but I reckon it's good coz it's never boring. I like it how she puts DVD's on for us instead of just textbooks all the time. They're proper history DVD's and we have to make notes. I learn in her lesson. She's strict but she uses the Climate for Learning right; if other teachers used it like that I wouldn't be bothered.* **(I 5)**

For the pupils a 'good' teacher seemed to denote someone who could combine fair discipline with interesting, engaging learning. I observed many lessons of this type. I observed an English teacher teach a class containing some of the most notorious offenders against the school's discipline system. Although warnings were issued for chatting and pupils drifting off task there was no real attempt by any pupil to disrupt the frames of learning. No-one spoke as a pupil read an extract from their coursework and once the pupils had been set a task they worked diligently; the only sound was the buzz of an overhead projector. As they worked the teacher helped and interacted with the pupils.

Although I observed a lot of effective learning in lessons where there were strong frames of learning I was interested in discovering whether learning could be equally effective in lessons where the teacher had weakened the framing.

4.6.2 Weak Framing:

There were two sets of lessons in two different subject areas where the frames of learning were very weak, little learning was taking place and the teacher showed no inclination to defend or re-impose the framing.

In the first case I observed a set of three lessons where the regular teacher was on sick leave and a long term supply teacher (at the school for the previous 6 months) had been taking the class. The first observation was of a lesson following morning break; the pupils wandered in eating baguettes and drinking from cans. They sat around work

benches in friendship groups and continued eating. The class chatted noisily and as the teacher attempted to explain the objective of the lesson Sophie shouted *'Shut up Miss'*. The teacher had written the lesson instructions on the board and after attempting to explain for less than 30 seconds she advised the pupils *'Everything you need is on the board'*. There was no further attempt to address the class. The pupils sat and chatted making no attempt to work. There was no disruption as the pupils seemed happy to sit and chat. Only three girls in the front row of seats made any attempt to work; they asked the teacher questions and she helped them. Around one bench female pupils held a mirror up for each other as they applied make-up. Because the framing had been relaxed so much I was able to mingle and chat with the pupils. They told me this was a '*typical lesson'*. At the end of the lesson I went over to chat to Sophie. I asked her what she had done in the lesson and she showed me a letter 'S' that she had coloured in and laughed.

The subsequent two lessons followed the same pattern. At the time of my second observation the department was being inspected by the LEA. Again the work had been written on the board and apart from the three girls in the front row the pupils made no attempt to start it. The atmosphere in the class was relaxed as the pupils just sat and chatted. One pupil played with the handle of the vice attached to the workbench. It slammed noisily as he tightened the vice. Another pupil shouted *'Pack it in!'* . This was the only instance of someone trying to impose order in the lesson. The LEA inspector did not enter the room and I later discovered that the department had been assessed as 'good'.

I interviewed this teacher to gain her insight into the lessons:

SF: *The lessons I watched..... how do you think they were?*

Teacher: *Fine. I think they've settled down a bit. At the beginning when I took over this class they said to me 'We make teachers cry and they leave'. They have this thing 'How for can we go'.*

SF: *You seemed very relaxed with them....*

Teacher: *Sometimes you have to win them over a bit. I think with them if you're too strict then they just go totally against you but if you have a bit of rapport.... it's just a case of winning them over.*

SF: *As a supply teacher are you conscious of pupils' targets and things like that?*

Teacher: *It depends how long you're here. I'm conscientious and I want to do my best. If you've been here six months you feel like a proper teacher even though you're looking in from the outside.*

SF: *Having not been here that long, do you think the kids are pushed here? The high ability ones like Sophie?*

Teacher: *It depends on the class. Some of them aren't bothered at all about what they get. Sophie's target is quite high but because a lot of them are not bothered in that group they don't care, she's followed that.*

In the other set of observations where the frames of the lesson were weak this was due to DVD's being the sole source of teaching and learning. I observed three (non-consecutive) lessons and in two of these the teacher put on a DVD of a Hollywood film that had a tenuous relationship to the syllabus. The first lesson was entirely taken up watching *Dante's Peak* – a film about an erupting volcano. I was unable to observe the following lesson so in an interview I asked the pupils if they had discussed the meaning of the film:

SF: *What was it like.....watching the film?*

Ashleigh: *It was good.... Dante's Peak.*

SF: *Was that a learning lesson? Did you discuss what it meant?*

Ashleigh: [Laughs] *Nooo! I learnt nowt apart from when the granny got burnt with acid.*

SF: *Do you learn much in that lesson?*

Lorna: *Not with that teacher but with our other teacher we do. He just puts videos on. Our other teacher teaches us in two days what we should learn in four.* **(I 6)**

When I arrived to observe another lesson for this class a week later they were watching another film *The Island* – a Hollywood film about a man who is cloned. The only introduction given by the teacher was *'We'll watch the end of this'*. I sat right at the back of the room and once the film started the teacher came over and stood beside me for the duration; every time I wrote in my notebook he peered down to look. He explained the rationale of watching the film (I didn't ask) – '*It links into genetics. It brings out the ideas of cloning and the ethics of that. They like discussing those sort of things.'* The film ended with fifteen minutes of the lesson remaining. I awaited the discussion but the teacher advised the pupils – *'It's pointless getting your workbooks out now; you can sit quietly for ten minutes'*.

I was keen to see a third lesson for this class as I considered that I may have just coincidentally caught two relaxed lessons. The following week the pupils were given a task to do from a textbook. The teacher spent two minutes addressing the class outlining the lesson objective then wrote the page and exercise number on the board. The pupils were left to get on with the task and the teacher approached me and started a conversation about his classroom windows. After nearly ten minutes I feared that my presence was distracting the teacher from teaching the class; I made an excuse that I needed to ask one of the pupils a question to escape. The teacher went back to his desk. When some pupils informed him they had finished the exercise he gave them another; their work was not looked at or marked during the lesson. At the sound of the bell the pupils did not await dismissal; books were placed on the front desk and they filed out.

Reflecting on these lessons it seemed that whenever the teacher relaxed the frames of learning and compromised on discipline and the work ethic then a state of inertia would take over. The pupils would sit and chat and there were very few behaviour problems. With pedagogic authority absent or impotent, the pupils adopted a very passive identity. With this in mind I interviewed Ms. Burns, one of the school's Cover Supervisors. This is a non-teaching role designed to cover for teacher absence. The unique aspect of this role is that it involves supervising a class but with no expectation that they will be taught. I was curious to discuss the Cover Supervisor's attitude towards the frames of learning and also their interactions with the pupils.

Ms. Burns: *I do think that the kids sometimes behave really a bit better for us because we're not pushing work down their throats... you know we're not teaching. I always say to them 'as long as you do a little bit, do something to show that you've done something while the teacher's been off'. So they think of us more as... not friends, but they don't see us as teachers, do you know what I mean? So you can get a really close relationship with a child that's really naughty for a teacher but because you're closer to that child you don't get that.*

SF: *What do you think would happen if you went in and said 'Right you're gonna finish this work' and were very strict?*

Ms. Burns: *I think if I went in different ..... if I do shout and say 'Right that's enough, come on' they just go 'Tut; what's the matter with you today?' or 'Are you in a mood?' A lot of the teachers say to me 'As long as you keep their bums on the seats, as long as you get a little bit out of them' coz a lot of them don't leave work that is gonna be in their books.*

SF: *So how do you think the kids perceive you?*

Ms. Burns: *A lot of them used to call me 'auntie'* [Laughs]. *I think they know you're a friend and they don't go too far... you've still gotta have the boundary in the middle of it ..... they all call me Burnsy which SLT don't like, but a lot of them do but they wouldn't say certain things, they know how far to go.*

SF: *I've been observing Sophie in lessons; do you know Sophie?*

Ms. Burns: *She's one of my favourites.*

SF: *She seems to get into a lot of bother..... arguing with teachers....*

Ms. Burns: *With me it doesn't get that far... but you see I don't have to teach them... it's normally 'Open a book, page one hundred and something and do questions one to ten' so I don't have to be on their backs. I know that she's really bad in Geography... the way she speaks to that teacher... absolutely terrible. She shouts at her, calls her.*

SF: *I suppose in your role you see a different side to her.*

Ms. Burns: *Yeah. The other day she came to see me, her and two others. They needed £5 for Becky Mason to go on a trip and Sophie said 'Burnsy have you got a fiver?' and I was like 'A fiver!' – 'We need a fiver to make this money up' . So I gave her a fiver and said 'I want it back tomorrow' and they all gave me a cuddle because if I hadn't given them it she wouldn't have been able to go. Sure enough the next day Sophie gave the £5 was back to me and thanked me.*

Ms. Burns would seem to represent the adult who can interact with the pupils outside of the requirements of pedagogic authority. Without the requirement to teach the pupils the frames of learning in the lessons she covered were relaxed and she experienced few behaviour problems. She seemed to have developed a friendly, trusting role with the pupils. This seemed further evidence that weak framing did not necessarily lead to behaviour problems. Of course adopting weak frames of learning whilst not teaching pupils is not an acceptable situation. The state of academic inertia that seemed to have enveloped the classes of the teachers who had adopted weak framing is unacceptable. The interesting point however is whether weak frames could be combined with effective teaching.

There were two sets of lessons I observed where the frames of learning were weak but the pupils were engaged and focused on learning. The first happened in an English lesson. The pupils had been set the task of writing a poem with the first line '*The time will come when with elation.....'*. The teacher engaged the pupils talking about possible themes for their poems. Pupils were encouraged to share their thoughts with the class:

Pupil: *Sir what about death? If you think about dying happy then that'll mean you've had a good life.*

Mr. Stewart: *That's interesting. What about meeting someone who'll change your life? Your future husband or wife?*

The teacher went on to explain the 'six degree of separation' principle; the pupils listened intently. I had watched these same pupils in many lessons and had seen them conflict with teachers and school sanctions but here they were fully engaged. The teacher invited me to also write a poem, the only time I had been invited to participate in a lesson. The desks were arranged for the pupils to work in groups; I joined Sophie, Lindsey, Toni and two other pupils. It was wonderful to see the pupils being creative. As we composed our poems there was no need for pedagogic authority. No pupil attempted to disrupt the frames of learning; they were all quietly engaged on the task. As the bell sounded at the end Toni commented – *'I was enjoying myself there'*.

I interviewed the teacher about his approach:

SF: *In your lessons they seemed very focused but they were relaxed as well.*

Mr. Stewart: *If I thought about it a lot of my lessons are like that. We get a lot of stuff done and there's no messing. But I also like to jump into lessons where they're creative.*

SF: *The kids were very complimentary about your lessons; you seem to have a knack of engaging them.*

Mr: Stewart: *They are experts at the observation of teachers; they do 6 observations of teaching styles every day and they're not thick. They know about assessment and how to judge people and in their own little way they make their own minds up about what's satisfactory or outstanding. I bet you if they had to write a criteria about what is an outstanding lesson it would be a hell of a lot different to what OFSTED have.*

SF: *What about kids like Sophie – does it work with her?*

Mr. Stewart: *She rarely gets warnings with me. Some teachers argue back with her and put her down... not put her down but try to shut her up. I'll say 'Well come on then lets engage in what you're thinking and I'll show you how wrong you are.... take you out of you comfort zone a little bit'.*

Relaxed frames also combined with engaged learning in a set of observed RE lessons. The subject matter involved causation and the existence of God. At the start of the first lesson the teacher was very relaxed with the pupils despite a quite noisy atmosphere. She made no attempt to establish silence but immediately got the pupils' attention by showing a picture of the Queen:

Ms. Turner: *What would you say if I said the Queen didn't exist?*

Pupil 1: *I'd say you were on drugs.* [Class laugh].

Ms. Turner: *But how do you know she exists? Have you seen her?*

Pupil 2: *You're making me think she doesn't.*

The teacher engaged the class in a discussion about causation; she informed them that some Christians believe that the complexity of the eye suggests a divine creator. The pupils were keen to counter this:

Abbi: *But Miss what about blind people? If they're made in God's image have they gone wrong? Are they like a draft copy, like when you do coursework?*

Ms. Turner: [Laughs] *That's harsh on disabled people.....*

Abbi: *What about Adam and Eve? If they were the only people there at the start but they had kids..... were they not brother and sister? Then, how can coloured people exist?*

Ms. Turner: *All men can be traced back to one man. They can't do the same thing with women but there must have been closely related people having kids.*

Abbi: *Did God want people to be gay? When did the first gay people come out?*

This discussion lasted around half an hour. The pupils and teacher debated deep existential questions in good humour but the teacher never once had to impose discipline. Even when the pupils strayed into what could have been construed as inappropriate territory the teachers engaged with them in good humour:

Pupil: *Miss do you think there's gonna be another Virgin Mary? Hannah didn't come on last month so she thinks she's the Virgin Mary.*

Ms. Turner: [Laughs] *I don't think I wanna hear this.*

After the discussion the pupils had to summarise the points for and against the existence of God. They were all engaged in the task and the teacher moved around the room still debating the issues with the pupils. Abbi in particular had played a key role in this lesson. Her intelligence and humour shone in the debate. I interviewed the teacher about this:

Ms. Turner: *I don't find her cheeky. Some of the questions she asked yesterday were very bright questions that would only come from a very bright kid. But it's the type of question Abbi would ask... along those lines. She deserves an answer because they were bright questions.*

SF: *Some of their questions were.... provocative. You took time to answer them, even when they seemed to want to shock or get a reaction.*

Ms. Turner: *I like them to be able to say what they think. I don't want them to come in here and think 'Well, this is an RE class so we've gotta pretend we believe in God' or 'We'll not say that we don't believe in God in case she's offended or she gives us a detention or something' coz I think the only way that you can get through to them is for them to tell you what they think so you can discuss it with them. I wouldn't want someone sitting in my class thinking 'What a load of rubbish she's on about, what rubbish' but not having the confidence to say it to me. I'd say 'If you want to say that you disagree, tell me why' coz if you don't it's hard to get through to them.*

SF: *Do you think kids who are seen as having behaviour issues respond to that kind of teaching?*

Ms. Turner: *Oh yeah. I mean some kids are fantastic..... Niall Ord. A lot of people say he's disruptive and he can be if you ask him to sit and write but when it comes to discussion he's absolutely fantastic, absolutely brilliant points to say. Sometimes I have to stop him so it doesn't become the Niall show.*

I had observed Lindsey and Toni in an RE lesson which was again about the existence of God. They were in very high spirits laughing loudly and shouting out but they were engaged in the lesson. To illustrate the concept of causation Ms. Turner had shown a video clip of a car advert – car parts were arranged to each impact and knock

over the next in a domino effect. Lindsey and Toni sat at the back of the class and after the video clip they excitedly removed Bibles from a shelf and set them up like dominoes.

Ms. Turner: *What're you doing Toni?* [Calm and unconcerned]

Toni: *We're doing causation, we're doing dominoes.* [Laughing]

[Another pupil jumps up and pushes the first Bible – they all fall in sequence]

Lindsey: *Jack! Get off! Tell him Miss!*

Ms. Turner: *Well who was the 'cause' there?*

Toni: *Jack – the idiot!*

This teacher had accommodated the high spirits of Lindsey and Toni and even incorporated them into the lesson. I asked this teacher about this incident:

SF: *Some teachers might have interpreted that as disruption or going too far....*

Ms. Turner: *Well I asked them what they were doing and I though 'Fair enough' coz that's part of what we're doing. I thought 'I see your point; if you're getting what we're doing and understanding causation – that's fine'.*

In the lessons I had observed there seemed to be a spectrum of different practice – from lessons where pupils' self-expression was stifled by strong framing, to those where pupils were actively encouraged to speak their minds. In interviews pupils had repeatedly stated that they wished lessons were more 'fun' and interactive:

Ashleigh: *....every lesson what do we do? Either something off a tape or something out of a book. Boring!* **(I 4)**

Lorna: *Teachers should have fun things planned instead of just match this up and match that. That's all we do now, matching things up or just write.*

SF: *So what would make it more interesting?*

Sophie: *Just don't do the same thing all the time. You used to do good lessons, fun things, but you don't anymore. After the GCSE we're doing bingo Sir! Right?* **(I 3)**

During my observations I often felt a sense of boredom and disengagement myself.

Observing one Science lesson my interest had waned as the teacher addressed the silent class about tectonic plates. I looked around the room and Jennifer, sitting a few seats away, caught my eye:

Jennifer: [Whispering] *Sir, what're we doing in Maths?*

SF: *I can't remember.....*

Teacher: [reacting to chatter] *Excuse me!*

The teacher looked over in our direction and I apologised – *'Sorry Sir'*. I had been rebuked for disrupting a lesson. The significance of the incident, apart from my own lack of professionalism, was that I discovered how easy it was to become disengaged and cause a distraction.

The key issue seemed to be whether teachers could adopt the identity of a 'cultural provocateur' (McLaren 1993) and engage pupils in a discourse which involved learning but also embraced their cultural values. Such an identity would interpret pupils' resistance to authority a form of cultural expression that could be harnessed rather than suppressed.

4.6.3 The 'Cultural Provocateur':

> *… you know their targets but you don't know their personality or their culture?* (Mr Stewart)

In interviews with pupils I asked whether they ever found teachers inspiring or whether teachers ever spoke to them about wider, cultural issues. Each time the pupils seemed to interpret my question as asking whether lessons were fun:

SF: *But do teachers ever talk to you about your ambitions about what you want to do in the future; do they ever inspire you to achieve highly?*

Ashleigh: *No!* [everyone laughs]

SF: *In lessons is it always just the subject do they never go off the point?*

Ashleigh: *Oh yeah English; my English class.*

Toni: *We play poker.*

SF: *But in lessons is it all just the subject?*

Toni: *Yeah.*

Ashleigh: *But one... English. We watch DVD's. We watch 'House of Fine Daggers' you know the Chinese thing.*

Lindsey: *Oh it's good that.*

Ashleigh: *Its hellish.... have you seen it?* **(I 4)**

Pupils' perception of a 'good' teacher was one who could exert fair discipline and teach them in a relatively engaging way. During observations I had encountered many lessons which the pupils and I considered to be good. However only in the RE lessons referenced above did I encounter any example of a teacher engaging with pupils' wider cultural values. I asked teachers about their methods of engaging pupils and whether they placed any importance on referencing pupils' cultural values. Some teachers interpreted this as becoming an 'entertainer' in the classroom:

SF: *As a teacher do you ever deviate from teaching Geography and talk about wider cultural things?*

Mr. Rose: *... we were talking about the slave trade – talking about slaves who had diarrhoea and they'd have corks stuck up their backsides and gory stuff about being hung drawn and quartered, waving their intestines about. It's the entertainment of the lesson; we're all actors and actresses, some do it better than others and it's trying to create a climate in which kids are getting some pleasure and enjoyment.*

SF: *Do you ever move from being entertaining to talking about things which are relevant to their own culture – to raise their ambitions and expectations – I don't see much of that in lessons.*

Mr. Rose: *I don't think there's a great deal of opportunity to get onto that and I think again you go back to this notion of the pressure we're all under in terms of delivery of the*

curriculum.

As I perceived Geography to be a subject ripe with cultural and critical issues I pressed this teacher on the point:

SF: *Do you not think there are opportunities (...) when you're using data – instead of drawing graphs about rainfall you could teach them about GCSE results in different areas, access to universities, things which raise their cultural consciousness?*

Mr. Rose: *That's sounds like a pretty difficult ask.*

SF: *But if you're doing data handling why can't you use data which is culturally relevant to them?*

Mr. Rose: *Do you think it would make any difference? I don't know... unless they are exceptionally clever and they can see...*

SF: *But Geography is quite a critical subject...*

Mr. Rose: *...and it's become much more conceptually based in terms of the kids looking to put their own spin on things... which I find not particularly endearing because I think the kids find it very, very difficult to express opinions about certain things which they don't really have the depth of knowledge of. (....) One of the things in Geography is yes you do try to get the kids to have an opinion but I think its difficult for them, for their opinion to be anything other than... cutting across the surface.*

SF: *But topics like crime, data on crime, social inequality. A lot of resources seem very bland, value neutral.*

Mr. Rose: *We've tried it with elements of Geography lower down the school. (...) Doing the Geography of crime, as we have done, kids will buy into this idea.... they know places they can't go without being filled in, they know places drug dealers hang out, they know where the fag houses are and stuff of that order. But I think it's very limited in terms of how far you can go with it. At a particular moment in time they enjoy it... there's a certain relevance.*

I reminded this teacher of a student we had both taught – a student who had gained straight A's at A level but had dropped out of an elite university because she felt she didn't fit in:

Mr. Rose: *I think Danielle was such a individual, feisty character. She was excellent to have in the group because she challenged so much. (...) As a teacher she made you fully aware that you had to go in there with all your guns loaded otherwise she could give you*

a rough ride. I think she was great.

SF: *Do you think too many teachers interpret that as a bad thing?*

Mr. Rose: *I think if they do they are frightened of their own practice. I think they're.... if you cannot accept the fact that there are pupils who can stretch you... surely that's what we want. We want pupils who will challenge what we are saying. Through that you have got discussion... you need to have a depth of knowledge to make sure what you're saying are not just value judgements (...) If Danielle said 'That's rubbish' she'd need to articulate why it's rubbish. If that happens it galvanises other kids who would think 'Yeah, maybe we have got something to say here'.*

In interviews with teachers there was a consensus that pupils needed to be encouraged to think critically and question the information they were given but whenever we discussed methods of achieving this teachers would be less sure:

SF: *... should we not be teaching them to be more critical?*

Mr. Collins: *No! You can teach them to question things about Maths – as long as you've got an answer, but teaching them to question authority – no. Why should they question authority?*

SF: *Should we not be teaching them to question what they see?*

Mr. Collins: *As a Maths teacher? That's a parent's job. Teacher's are made to do more and more stuff. I mean should we now be teaching them dress sense – what's next? We have to teach them to be good people, how to cross the road – bullshit. We're an academic institute – we should be teaching them Maths, English, Science and all the rest. We shouldn't be teaching them citizenship and careers – that's a parent's job.*

Other teachers could reference examples where they had sought to engage and provoke pupils on a wider cultural basis:

SF: *So in lessons do you ever deviate from teaching science and speak to them about wider things, cultural things, expectations?*

Ms. Wood: *Yeah I do I talk sometimes because.... I've only been a teacher for 5 years, I worked in industry and I'll often talk to the kids about my wider experience and we'll talk about things. I think Science lends itself to that; a lot of the kids say 'Oh why do we have to learn this' and you can talk about things on the news and how that impacts on them and I often do talk about life experiences to bring other stuff in to grasp their interest.*

The two teachers whom I had observed relaxing the frames of learning and engaging the

pupils in work were asked about their practice:

SF: *But what do you think it is that engages them?*

Mr. Stewart: *It's looking beyond the boundaries.... I'm not gonna name names but there's some people in the English department who just read for the whole lesson to the class – is that a lesson? English is a very historical subject so I try and incorporate identity in it, try to make them feel..... if they make comments about immigrants or something I'll stop the lesson and try and point out what the British have done around the world so before we start calling other people we need to look at ourselves. I often have a discussion with them about the Boer War and how we invented the idea of concentration camps.*

SF: *So it's a cultural thing?*

Mr. Stewart: *Definitely. For instance... Mark Jones got CALMED the other day. He got a question right in Science and when he got it right he did a WWF* [wrestling] *celebration and he got CALMED for making a sexual gesture. So he got a question right, he celebrated it and then he was punished. I thought 'How can you do that?' So that's school discipline - a teacher not understanding popular culture? They can't read that Mark Jones is not that kind of character? So knowledge of your kids, knowledge of the people you teach; you know their targets but you don't know their personality or their culture?*

Ms. Turner, the RE teacher who had engaged the pupils in high level discussions about causation and creation, also referenced an example of local culture impacting with the set curriculum:

Ms. Turner: *I had this clip about the miners' strike and it was about forgiveness and we showed them it and it had a picture of Mrs. Thatcher on and the Year 7 kids they went 'Oh I hate her!' and I went 'Do you know her?' and they went 'Aye, Mrs Thatcher I hate her!' and actually I had some brilliant discussions with these Year 7 kids because loads of them knew about the miners' strike and they were telling me all these tales about how they hate Mrs Thatcher. In the end we were talking about forgiveness coz it was showing people going back to work and stuff, I asked 'Would we forgive?' coz it was about healing communities and they went they would forgive those who went back to work coz they might've been on the breadline but they wouldn't forgive her, never in a million years would they forgive her, never forgive her coz someone's nan and granddad got divorced coz of her coz the granddad lost his job. Somebody knows people who've killed themselves coz they've lost their job and I was really, really shocked that these kids even knew her.*

This would seem to be an example of pupils' cultural heritage playing a key role in a lesson and provoking discussion, interest and analysis. Although I had observed very few examples of this happening and pupils had not related any experiences of it, it would seem that some lessons did contain an element of engaging with pupils' cultural values and heritage. This ability to engage the pupils on such a level that the frames of learning automatically relaxed would seem to be an identity that teachers should aspire to. A point of interest was what factors might be preventing or dissuading more teachers from adopting this role.

4.6.3.1 Restrictions Affecting the Cultural Provocateur Role:

> *.... any teacher worth their salt will still look at the idea of the fact that its not just numbers there in front of you but its people and I think that that has got to be held onto: value the people.* (Mr. Rose)

In comparing pupil and teacher interviews one of the main differences of opinion was regarding the concept of 'fun' in lessons. Pupils' interpretation of 'fun' was as a plea to teachers to make lessons more engaging; teachers' seemed to interpret 'fun' as a desire amongst pupils to breakdown the learning process. Reflecting on my own practice I often fear that relaxing the frames of learning may lead to a loss of control – I fear that weak frames will send an 'anything goes' message to the pupils. Whenever I asked teachers about the concept of 'fun' they interpreted it as a threat:

Mr. Jordan: *Well, their definition of fun and my definition of fun are clearly different; they would be, I'm a lot older and I'm the teacher. But I don't know what they think is 'fun'. A group this big on my own I rarely do practicals with them because it's a big group to handle on your own with chemicals and equipment and what have you, but also I don't feel as if I can trust them. (...) I would love to do more practical work with them but I haven't got that kind of confidence with them yet. I think that if I could do more with them that would help. I don't have that with them at the moment.*

This was a common feeling amongst teachers – engaging activities were compromised

because of the need to maintain control; sufficient 'trust' did not exist.

Ms. Barnes: *One of the student teachers did a lesson on mechanisms and different motions but the kids got a bit loud and over the top so we had to stop it which was a shame because they were enjoying it but they went a bit too far – they don't know when to stop sometimes. That could be because they're not used to it as well.*

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Ms. Lopez: *I think sometimes you have to give them projects, enjoyable projects so they can enjoy in their own time. But I try to make it fun otherwise... how can you teach languages otherwise? But on the other hand it can wind them up..... that's why there is so much noise and it's difficult to keep it down. Sometimes they rebel – 'That's not fun it's boring' and I think 'Well sorry, some tasks there's no way to make them attractive.'*

Time and logistical factors were also cited by teachers:

Ms. Wood: *... I would like to make my lessons more fun, I must admit I think it's a timing implication that to do the things you know are gonna be fun takes more time to prepare. So it depends... I've been teaching on a Monday for instance 6 periods a day and I'm absolutely shattered... the last thing on my mind sometimes is fun. I can imagine that's what the kids want but you've the other scenario – you can have fun with the kids but then you lose it a bit as well. So no I probably don't think as much about fun... it isn't high on... it probably should be.*

The relevance of these comments is that teachers seemed to be reluctant to move away from strong frames of learning. There was a suspicion that relaxing the framing is not conducive to a strong work ethic. The two lessons I had observed where a great deal of learning and pupil engagement were apparent but the framing was weak also involved a certain degree of skill on the part of the teacher. The skill to put ownership of the lesson in the hands of pupils, the skill to provoke pupils interest and the skill to trust pupils to act maturely within relaxed frames of learning.

Another factor which seemed to restrict teachers' potential to engage pupils more fully was the pressure of accountability. The pressure for teachers to ensure that pupils achieve their targets was a constant issue in interviews:

SF: *Do you feel constrained by targets and levels?*

Ms. Wood: *Very much so, very much so. (...) ... I think we're beaten over the head with it aren't we? If someone comes in to observe your lesson for your performance management and you're like 'I've gotta tick all these boxes' and that really gets my... it's unfair sometimes that you've gotta tick all these boxes to make sure you've met all this criteria and its about.... I get upset because its not as much about the kids as it should be sometimes.*

One teacher spoke of the pressure she felt from school senior management:

SF: *When you're teaching do you think about targets?*

Ms. Lopez: *All the time, all the time... and more than targets, it's also GCSE intake. I mean that's our... I mean I'm deflated now. We've been trying hard to take as many, to attract as many children as possible at GCSE and it's not been very successful – only 19 doing Spanish and 4 doing French. It is not very good, but I don't know what else to do. Then we are attacked by the inspectors - 'Ok you are not attracting pupils so they are not trusting you, you are not a good enough teacher, you are not making the lesson enjoyable'; from senior management too – 'They are not trusting you, they are not enjoying the subject' so its all the same... and they point at us, we're not good enough and you feel diminished, (...) it is my job to attract them to the subject. Are you blaming me because I have not been successful?*

Pupils are well versed in the language of targets and academic levels. School senior management conduct a regular survey exercise. They randomly remove pupils from a lesson and quiz them on their subject targets and that current lesson objective. Four times a year at the school teachers are required to assess pupils and provide an academic grade and a progress code. Progress codes use the digits 0 – 9 to represent pupils' performance:

0 – There are unspecified concerns.
1 – Concern about effort.
2 – Concern about behaviour.
3 – Concern about effort and behaviour.
4 – Concern about homework.
5 – Concern about effort and homework.
6 – Concern about behaviour and homework.
7 – Concern about effort, behaviour and homework.
8 – On target; no concerns.
9 – Achieved target.

This process is concerning in two respects:

Firstly the codes lack construct validity – how much homework needs to be missed for a pupil to be given a homework concern? How is effort measured? When do pupils 'achieve' a target; how many pieces of work must they complete at this level? Representing pupil's performance with a single digit also amplifies any negativity; for example a pupil with a homework concern may be working hard in class and achieving targets but the system focuses on the negative. These issues render the codes at best a vague and general measure of pupil performance. The subjective interpretations of the codes lead to inconsistencies and a lack of validity. Senior staff frequently bemoan the inconsistencies they find in the coding. For example teachers who give pupils an academic grade below their target and then given a '9' (achieved target) progress code incur the displeasure of senior staff. This is put down to teacher incompetence and not the inherent lack of construct validity and consistency in the system. The system relies on summative assessment being accurate. Quite often pupils will work well at their target level all year, but then fall below on a summative assessment test. The inherent construct validity flaws in the system are not open to question.

Of more concern is the effect of objectifying and reifying pupils into numbers. Pupils are given a print out of data, a 'pupil review sheet'; a grid of numbers purporting to represent the past three months of their school lives (see *appendix 7* for example).The sheets resemble a profit and loss account; targets met, exceeded or missed. Like a business analyst the observer can measure value-added and exert their disciplinary gaze over the data. Of course the objects in question are not commodities; they are children.

I asked teachers about the effect that targets and coding had on their relationships with pupils:

Ms. Turner: *... sometimes in RE you feel a bit constricted; we're pushed for time. (...) There's some really good discussions that you could have but you know it's not gonna answer an exam question so you have to stop it. I know what's gonna be on the exam – type of thing – so sometimes we limit things to what's on the exam. Other interesting stuff – kids might want to know it and discuss it but we're pushed for time, it's frustrating.*

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Ms. Lopez: *It is difficult when you want the work done. You have to keep pushing them and you can't be nice all the time, you have to – 'Come on!'. I snap a lot... but that's me, I snap back at people, that's my personality.*

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Mr. Stewart: *... one girl said to me 'What's the point, I'm set up to fail; my target's a 7c, that means everything is gonna have to be an A* and I can't get A*'s therefore I'm already a failure coz of my target'. Why not let the kids choose their targets or have some input? They know their own ability; they should be able to tell if something's too high or too low.*

The danger if too much emphasis is placed upon targets and levels is that the real, organic relationships of the school could be eroded. In pupil interviews reference was made to the pressure teachers sometimes put upon pupils to achieve target levels:

Lindsey: *Miss XXXX says....*

Ashleigh: *'Your target's a 7B, you should be getting there; that's a 5' like every 5 minutes.*

Lindsey: *She goes 'Lindsey what's your target?' I goes 'I dunno'; she said 'Do you think that is your target' and I says 'I dunno my target' and she says 'Do you think it is' and how am I meant to know coz I dunno what my target is?*

SF: *Is that a bad thing....*

Lindsey: *Yeah.*

Ashleigh: *It puts more pressure on you. It's like having someone watch over you telling you you're doing it wrong or right.* **(I 4)**

Reflecting on my own practice I had a recent conversation with a pupil concerning end of year progress reports:

Pupil: *Sir you gave me a '1'! Why did I get a '1'?* [A code of 1 indicates lack of effort].

SF: *Well, in class you don't always stay on task and complete work.* [As I say this I reflect and realize that this may be harsh; this is a good pupil who generally works well but is prone to drift].

Pupil: *But I always work in your lesson!*

SF: *But you didn't get a 'C' in your GCSE module. You need to focus all of the time.*

Reflecting on this conversation depresses me. I used a numerical code to accuse and judge a pupil who is essentially a fine young person. My intention in recording the code as '1' (lack of effort in class) was really an exercise in self-preservation. If this pupil does not get a grade C Maths GCSE then I fear that I may be confronted by the disciplinary gaze of the measurer. The system has caused me to reify and objectify this pupil as a concern. The lack of construct validity in the codes means that I can't record my true judgment – 'this pupil generally works well but sometimes lacks effort'. The pupil feels disillusioned and harshly judged and I feel guilty. The rationalised system of measuring has aggravated all parties.

One teacher who defended the system of targets and codes was Mr. Bell, the Assistant Headteacher.

Mr. Bell: *But it's great to know if a kid is getting a D and is targeted a D then they're doing well whereas in the old days they were told they were lazy, do extra work, do more lines. So I really think the targeting... it's the accountability coz the kids are made accountable – 'What's your grade? What are you on now? What do you want to get?' (...) They've got ownership and they know what is expected of them and I think that is so much better than what it was. It gives them a positive fillip coz nothing succeeds like success and by knowing they're hitting their target and it's an acceptable target it's great.*

Interestingly this was the teacher who talked most about developing organic relationships with pupils. Mr. Bell felt that targets raised teachers' awareness of pupils' progress and thus created the opportunity for recognition and praise.

Mr. Bell: ... *it's saying to the kid 'actually they are interested in me; not him, him and a group, it's me they're having a go at because it's me they want to do well'. When you personalise it like that the kid's got to feel a little bit of improved self-esteem or self-worth because somebody is actually focusing on them. (...). I always remember a girl called Jane Murray, an absolutely gorgeous kid, she worked her socks off and for half a year I didn't know that kid existed and I felt so annoyed with myself (...) she was working to please me and the first time I realised 'Bloody hell she's way over her grades' and you can just see when kids just work nice for you and the day I brought her out and I just spent time talking with her about her family as well. I thought 'I'm gonna find out about her, I don't know this kid' and she went... you could see her, she walked back and she recognised me and I was shocked at myself for missing that one but how many other people miss it in classes and the relationship thing – the relationship without a doubt sorts your behaviour out.*

The idea that teachers should build a real, organic relationship with their pupils should of course be universally accepted. However teachers and pupils had commented that within the classroom these relationships can be affected by the pressure of accountability. The distinction between classroom and non-classroom relationships was made by one teacher:

Ms. Wood: ... *I've got a class – totally different relationship to them outside the class than I have inside the classroom. They're a strange bunch coz they can be a pain in the backside in the classroom but they're the first kids to say hello to me on a morning – 'Hello Miss how you doing, alright?' and I'm thinking 'You were a little git yesterday'.*

Teachers' potential to engage pupils in culturally relevant learning, a form of learning which removes the need for strong frames within the classroom, needs to overcome the pressures of accountability. The real, organic relationships which were observed many times during the ethnographic process can be eroded by the managerialist culture present in contemporary schools.

A variety of teacher identities were observed throughout the research process. Using McLaren's (1993) typology 'hegemonic overlord' teachers were observed delivering successful lessons where a great deal of learning was taking place. However some teachers who adopted this identity struggled to impose the frames and often resorted to a defensive style of teaching. The persona of the liminal servant/cultural provocateur teacher is central to this thesis. On some occasions teachers were observed or related to me examples of engaging the pupils using subject matter which was culturally relevant and provoked interest. On these occasions there seemed to be little need for strong framing and pupils adopted a degree of ownership of the lesson. Restrictions to teachers adopting the 'cultural provocateur' role seemed to be concerns about discipline through relaxing the frames and the pressures of accountability.

Chapter 5 - Analysis:

The aim of this chapter is to provide an analysis of the ethnographic data. Firstly the forms and targets of pupil resistance will be examined. The aim is to provide a definition of resistance, a framework of how resistance is expressed and what pupils target in this process. Secondly pedagogic practice and the identities which teachers adopt will be examined. The aim is to critically assess and provide a framework of how teachers respond to pupil resistance. Thirdly the data will be analysed in terms of wider structural factors. The relevance and significance of the data in terms of neo-Marxist resistance theory and current debates regarding the capitalisation of schooling will be examined. The aim is to inform and develop resistance theory using data gathered within the current neo-liberal discourse of education. Analysis is also a necessarily reflexive process and therefore I will also attempt to account for the effect my own identity has on the process.

5.1 The Forms and Targets of Pupil Resistance:

5.1.1 Disruption:

An initial and important distinction needs to be made between the concepts of *disruption* and *resistance*. All pupils were observed indulging in behaviour which disrupted lessons – talking, drifting off task, high spirits, inappropriate humour. Even those pupils with conformist identities (Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh) indulged in forms of petulant behaviour. Pupils described such behaviour as ‘messing about’. Teachers used the phrase ‘low level disruption’. Dickar (2008) uses the phrase *infrapolitical resistance* – resistance which generally remains below the radar of pedagogic authority which attracts no great sanction. Such behaviour targets the framing of the pedagogic process –

the structure, pace, rituals, discipline system. The primary intention is not to oppose the will of the teacher; Lindsey's comment *"If I don't have a laugh I'll make it funny, I have to, it's like a reaction in me"* **(I 8)** illustrates this. *Disruption* can thus be defined as:

Pupil behaviour which targets the framing of the pedagogic process but does not directly or intentionally contest the will of the teacher.

Such behaviour was witnessed in *all* lesson observations. By means of an example Toni was witnessed talking when her teacher was taking a register. She was disrupting the framing of the pedagogic process, was reprimanded and apologised. There was no intention to resist the will of the teacher. Disruption in this sense is quite often unintentional; it develops from boredom, high spirits or an inability to access invisible forms of pedagogy (Bernstein 1975). The school detention data (see *appendix 6*) shows that 43% of all detentions issued are for 'classroom disruption'. Lesson observations revealed that the vast majority of these are for pupil actions which target the framing of the pedagogic process – talking, lack of attention, distracting others.

Disruption was most prevalent when pupils were unsure of the objectives of the lesson. In a Spanish lesson pupils were observed asking each other the page and exercise number of the work they had been set – they were willing to work but lack of direction led to confusion, boredom and ultimately disruptive behaviour. Their disruption was not targeted against the will of the teacher but was rather a means to fill the time and space created by the lack of an explicit learning objective. The more extreme forms of disruption observed were in this sense a consequence of weak pedagogic practice. Teacher's unable or unwilling to correct disruptive behaviour were observed taking one of three responses:

- **Accommodating disruption**: the teacher channelled pupils' behaviour into the objective of the lesson. Ms. Turner channelled the high spirits of Toni and Lindsey into her RE lesson; shouting out, lining up Bibles to push over was all taken in good humour and accommodated.
- **Surrendering to disruption:** the teacher surrenders the framing of the lesson to the pupils; little or no attempt is made to reassert discipline and a state of academic inertia ensues. This situation was observed in Sophie's DT lessons – the teacher accepted pupils eating, talking, applying make-up.
- **Provoking resistance:** the teacher seeks to reassert the framing by confronting disruption but lacks the skill/pedagogic authority to succeed. Disruption then escalates into resistance as pupils' respond by opposing the will of the teacher. This situation was common with Sophie – teachers responded to her disruption by imposing school sanctions in a way which provoked a sense of injustice. Toni and Lindsey were scathing of a teacher who they felt was curtailing their freedom of expression; their high spirits/disruption escalated into resistance. Resistance such as this will be examined further below.

5.1.2 Conformity:

If disruption was ubiquitous resistance was not. Resistance was a very particular form of behaviour in which pupils actively opposed the will of the teacher. The three most conformist pupils (Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh) were never observed and never related any incident where they had actively opposed the will of a teacher. Their conformity was not however *acquiescence* – there was no passive surrendering of the will. Their conformity was predicated upon the realisation that it would confer benefits.

Woods (1979) uses the term 'compliance for instrumental reasons' – academic success. These pupils managed to maintain popularity with their peers with academic conformity/ success. Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh seemed acutely aware of the wider benefits that their behaviour would confer – school trips, prizes, inclusion in clubs/activities. Teachers also commented upon the 'halo effect' (Mr. Collins) and how they were conscious of giving such pupils more attention. This form of pupil behaviour was constructed around very effective forms of cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1977). The immaculate dress, communication skills, engaging personalities and intelligence of these pupils endeared them to teachers. Their ability to access the formal language/elaborated codes (Bernstein 1975) of the dominant school habitus gained them advantage within the institution. Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh were all observed working in lessons where disruption had created weak framing and confused the learning objectives. They were able to access the 'invisible pedagogy' of such weak framing through their implicit understanding of what the learning involved. Interestingly none of these pupils seemed conscious of or concerned by any *uncool to work* discourse (Jackson 2006). Jackson portrays pupils negotiating the *uncool to work* discourse with the dominant school *academic credentials* discourse – balancing academic success with peer group status. Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh openly embraced the *academic credentials* discourse and maintained peer group status. They openly flouted their hard work rather than trying to create the persona of the *effortless achiever* (Jackson 2006).

5.1.3 Resistance:

Resistant behaviour was displayed by the other six pupils in different forms. The common element was a direct and active opposition to the teacher's will or viewpoint. The target of their behaviour was not just the framing of the pedagogic process but its social classifications (Bernstein 1971). These pupils targeted the teacher's authority within the hierarchy of the institution. *Resistance* can thus be defined as:

Pupil behaviour which targets the social classifications of the pedagogic process and thus directly and intentionally contests the will and/or viewpoint of the teacher.

Sarah and Vicky, although praised by teachers for their conformity in lessons, seemed to display a very passive form of resistance. Unlike Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh their conformity reaped few rewards – they attracted very little teacher acknowledgement or attention and expressed their frustration at being overlooked for the rewards and plaudits that these other pupils seemed to attract naturally. Sarah and Vicky seemed to lack the forms of cultural and symbolic capital of the other pupils; Sarah used the phrase *"we're social misfits"* **(I 11).** The ability to command teachers' attention and engage them in general or work-related discussion was not part of Sarah or Vicky's personality. The frustration that this lack of recognition/attention created was manifested in what they claimed was their own particular form of resistance. They would deliberately *blank* (ignore/ostracise) the teacher. Although empirical proof of such behaviour was hard to gather both pupils were witnessed declining interaction with teachers. Of course this could be due to shyness or their naturally reserved personality but both pupils claimed to be deliberately ostracising staff who they felt did not recognise their conformity and effort. When I fed-back my observations to these pupils they assured me that their

behaviour in this sense was a deliberate strategy. Both pupils continued to focus on their learning despite apparent frustration in lessons. Both had the formal language skills (Bernstein 1975) and the *recognition* and *realisation rules* (Moore 2004) to access the invisible pedagogy of lessons. Their resistance was not against the framing of the pedagogic process or learning but rather a sense of unfairness at the way teachers performed their role. Their target seemed to be the social classifications (Bernstein 1971) of the pedagogic process – the hierarchies which prevailed with teachers conferring attention and status upon particular pupils. They were resisting the will of the teacher in the sense that they were consciously withdrawing their involvement in classroom activities and interactions. Vicky's comment about feeling 'invisible' in the classroom and teachers' admissions of the unfair allocation of their time highlights the hierarchy that seems to prevail. (One teacher, Mr. Collins, rather cruelly referred to such pupils as 'cardboard cut-outs'). The characters of Sarah and Vicky were complex in that they did not feat into any neat typology of pupil behaviours. They were conformist in terms of school work, high achievers, marginalised by most of their peers, dismissive of many teachers and displayed symbols of non-conformity – unkempt uniform decorated with subversive badges. They displayed some characteristics of Jackson's (2006) 'swot but I don't care group' but their distance from teachers was atypical of such pupils.

What the observed actions and opinions of Sarah and Vicky illustrate is that the concept of the 'conformist pupil' can contain many multi-faceted behaviours. Willis' (1977) portrayal of the 'ear'oles' and their investment in the formal structure of the school would seem one-dimensional. The conditional conformity of Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh and the passive, ostracising forms of resistance born of the frustrations of Sarah

and Vicky suggest that high ability, outwardly conformist pupils possess more critical insights that has often been presented.

Lindsey and Toni's form of resistance was very much of a confrontational nature. They disrupted many lessons by targeting the framing of the pedagogic process and this seemed motivated by a desire to seek 'fun'. This disruption escalated into resistance whenever the teacher was unable/unwilling to accommodate their sense of 'fun'. This would provoke Lindsey and Toni into very personal attacks against the teacher's authority in the classroom. Some of the symbolic forms of capital held by Lindsey and Toni endeared them to teachers – their gregarious, engaging personalities and sociability allowed them to charm teachers (Mrs. Lopez described Toni as her favourite pupil – *"I love her"*, despite Toni frequently disrupting lessons). However these pupils lacked other forms of symbolic capital – polite manners, language and their humour was often risqué and inappropriate. Their communication was of the public language/ restricted codes (Bernstein 1975) form. Observing them in friendship groups in lessons their language was fluent, had particularistic meanings and was often alien to an outsider. Some teachers found these traits hard to reconcile with the dominant school habitus. The ensuing tension between pupil/teacher precipitated a very confrontational form of resistance.

Lindsey and Toni's dislike for one particular teacher was always explained by them in terms of the way she curtailed their sense of fun/self-expression. As this teacher declined to be observed and interviewed it would be unethical to speculate about the possible causes of this tension. Lindsey and Toni's expression of anger (Lindsey used the term *"I hate her"* eight times in one interview) illustrates how pupils can clash with staff

and how their resistance is very much against the hierarchy and rationale of pedagogic authority.

Sophie's expression of resistance was likewise very confrontational but targeted against a different aspect of the social classifications of the school. Whereas Lindsey and Toni targeted the authority of teachers who curtailed their self-expression, Sophie targeted the authority of teachers whom she perceived as acting unfairly or inflicting an injustice. Sophie was the cause of much classroom disruption and it is important to distinguish this behaviour from her resistant behaviour. Much of her disruption (targeting the framing of the pedagogic process) was petulant, nihilistic and counter-productive – it had resulted in her being moved down two sets in Science. This behaviour was reminiscent of Willis' (1977) 'lads' – 'having a laff' and rejecting learning. The tendency in neo-Marxist accounts of schooling to romanticise such behaviour as resisting the logic of capitalist schooling (Anyon 1981) is not repeated here. Her disruption was often of the type highlighted by Dickar (2008:185) – a form of 'clowning' which bullies those who don't accept the humour. Like the sexism and racism of Willis' (1977) 'lads' such behaviour should be alien to Marxist notions of social justice.

Despite aspects of unsavoury behaviour the difference between Sophie and pupils like Willis' 'lads' was that her innate intelligence enabled her to achieve and progress despite her disruptive behaviour. Like Lindsey and Toni she lacked forms of symbolic capital which conform to the dominant school habitus. Her strong dialect, impolite tone of voice and personal comments about teachers' dress/appearance created much tension. However the capital she did possess was the ability to confront and cross-examine staff whenever she perceived an injustice to have been served. Her *resistance* as opposed to

her classroom *disruption* targeted the social classifications of the school – the sanctity of pedagogic authority. Again it is wrong to romanticise pupil behaviour which could be perceived as intimidatory. However observing Sophie's battles with teachers she very often had right on her side. Her reputation had resulted in injustices being done to her – being moved down in Science, being CALMED from lessons when the teachers had not followed the correct procedure, being rebuked in English for the manner of her contribution to the lesson (*"Sir these poems ramble on about nowt!*). Confronting the Science teacher and Head of Year to get a detention reversed is a course of action few pupils take and fewer are successful at. The teacher in question confessed that he found this physically diminutive pupil "*intimidating*" and other teachers recognised her confrontational skills – (*"She's a feisty little character isn't she?"* – Mr. Stewart). Jackson (2006) makes a pertinent point in her discussion of 'laddishness'; she observes that the increased levels of confidence and assertiveness associated with this trait should be welcomed. Although I would hesitate to apply the label 'laddish' to Sophie the point remains – the ability to be assertive and question perceived injustice should be nurtured and not suppressed. Sophie's intelligence and confrontational character did engender unsavoury forms of disruptive behaviour but her ability to resist authority in a questioning and analytical manner was a qualitatively different form of expression. This would seem to have the potential to be a more constructive form of pupil resistance separate from the often petulant and nihilistic forms of expression that neo-Marxist approaches are prone to romanticise.

Abbi likewise displayed examples of this more constructive form of resistance. Her personality seemed like an amalgamation of the conformist and confrontational

pupils. She possessed the cultural capital to charm teachers and her keen intelligence and achievement meant she was highly regarded by staff. Abbi was able to converse with teachers in their formal language/elaborated codes (Bernstein 1975) and also switch to the public language of her peers who also held her in high regard. Abbi did not conform to the high ability female pupil portrayed by Jackson (2006). She made no attempt to hide the effort she put into lessons and did not subscribe to the *uncool to work* discourse. She was very much focused on the *academic credentials* discourse yet her status amongst her peers indicated that she was not in the 'swot but I don't care' group (ibid:82). Abbi seemed to gain her peer status partly through her academic ability; her intelligence was respected by her peers. This status also seemed partly built upon Abbi's ability to confront authority in a calm, rational and very effective manner.

Abbi's comments to her Science teacher who was rebuking the class are worth repeating here: *"…expect the least from those people you think most of – that way you won't be disappointed"*. This ability to question the authority of a teacher in a very rational manner was remarkable to observe. Abbi explained her intention as: *"I wanted to annoy him in a way that he didn't realise"*. This would seem to illustrate a rational *modus operandi* behind her actions. Abbi seemed acutely aware that teachers have a duty to listen and respond to rational requests - *"Teachers think they have to listen if you say it in a sensible way; it's their job isn't it?*" **(I 9).** Like Lindsey and Toni Abbi seemed to target her resistance against particular teachers who had offended her in some way. Abbi's targets seemed to be those teachers whom she perceived as acting inappropriately, unfairly or incompetently. On two occasions in interviews she spoke at length about her Science teacher and his tendency to emphasise his qualifications to the pupils. This

expression of hierarchy and superior knowledge seemed to irk Abbi's sense of equality:

> *'Well I'm not gonna stand here and be talked to by an old man who thinks he's something just coz you've got a Science degree'. That's all he talks about – his Science degree.* **(I 9)**

Again when relating these comments there is no wish to romanticise the arguments which erupt between pupils and teachers. The key point is that Abbi displays a form of resistance which is predicated upon a sense of unfairness/injustice and expressed in a calm and rational manner. This would seem to be a qualitatively superior form of resistance than behaviour which attacks the framing of the pedagogic process in a petulant and nihilistic manner. Observing Abbi confront a teacher to defend a fellow pupil illustrates this more constructive and intelligent form of resistance. Abbi was able to act as an advocate for a friend and succeeded in overturning a given detention. In this instance Abbi was able to confront authority on its own terms – giving a rational argument and provoking a teacher into questioning the equity and consequences of her actions.

Another key aspect of Abbi's resistance was her readiness to confront teachers whom she felt were acting in an unprofessional or incompetent manner. Abbi was observed questioning teachers about the relevancy and appropriateness of the work they had set. This did not seem to be a petulant attempt to avoid work but rather a genuine concern that the teaching was inadequate. This more constructive form of resistance would seem to reflect a critical awareness and a confidence to question unjust and inadequate practice.

Pupils who challenge the social classifications of the institution would seem to have the potential to question the social classifications of wider society. Resistance in this

sense is not a pathology to be corrected or an expression of 'laddishness' (Jackson 2006). It is neither a romanticised form of petulant and nihilistic behaviour (Anyon 1981). It also distinguishes pupil resistance from retreatism – the passive rejection of the pedagogic process. Resistance which may be predicated upon constructive forms of pupils' cultural expression would seem to be a distinct and qualitatively superior form of action. The term *constructive resistance* is being used in this sense to describe a form of pupil behaviour which not only challenges authority but also seeks to rectify and correct unfairness and injustice. Unlike forms of pupil behaviour which seek to obstruct and thwart the pedagogic process in a nihilistic manner (*destructive* forms of resistance), constructive resistance involves discourse and debate. Pupils are able to question the logic of pedagogic authority and posit alternative explanations and courses of action. When I discussed my findings with Sophie and Abbi to feedback the identities which I felt they adopted they strengthened my view that their resistance was based upon confronting injustice. They both spoke passionately about unfairness and ill treatment from teachers and both seemed determined to counter this. Their constructive arguments were based upon principles of equity and justice – fair use of school sanctions, the need for competent teaching, respect for pupils, consistency from teachers.

The forms of resistance displayed by Sophie and Abbi were distinctive in another sense – they seemed to counter teachers' expectations of what a child's behaviour should be. Teachers commented on their high intelligence and how it distinguished them from the way less able pupils resisted authority – *"… less intelligent kids couldn't argue the way she does"* (Mr. Francis on Sophie) and *"She's wise because she knows how to do it"* (Ms. Lopez on Abbi). Pupils using their intelligence to contest authority can be

intimidating for teachers. This may suggest that the way childhood is socially constructed within the school excludes any notion of the child as being able to competently debate 'adult' issues. Age act as a form of capital to exclude the child from having any right to question teacher decisions.

An interesting corollary of the observed pupil resistance is the question as to whether the symbolic forms of capital which underpinned them are grounded in economic capital. Bourdieu (1977) argues that there is a 'misrecognition' that symbolic forms of capital are naturally acquired talents when in fact they are economically grounded. Observations in this study revealed that pupils can possess a complex and conflicting array of forms of capital. Sophie lacked the cultural capital to charm and engage teachers due to the manner of her expression – her crude, colloquial comments and impolite tone would seem to support Bourdieu's thesis that symbolic capital is economic/class based. However her ability to articulate her feelings and gain victories in cases of perceived injustice was a very powerful tool. High ability working class pupils would therefore seem able to compensate for lack of cultural capital through exploiting other forms of symbolic capital (advocacy/debating skills, confidence in questioning authority). These forms of capital win ground but cannot be 'misrecognised' as being predicated upon economic forms of capital/economic status.

To summarise the various pupil identities and forms, targets of resistance a typology is offered (see *Table 4* overleaf). The outcomes in the shaded area illustrate the potential for pupil actions to move beyond petulant and nihilistic forms of behaviour highlighted by many ethnographies of schooling (Willis 1977, McLaren 1993, Dickar 2008).

Table 4 – **Forms of Pupil Opposition to Authority.**

	Targets:	**Pupil Actions:**	**Outcomes:**
Form of Opposition: **DISRUPTION**	Targets the framing of the pedagogic process – the pace, structure, timing and rituals of the classroom. Does not directly oppose the will of the teacher. 'Infrapolitical resistance' (Dickar 2008).	Petulant and nihilistic behaviour; 'dragging feet' and 'work to rule' (Dickar 2008). Refusal to conform to punctuality, uniform and learning rituals. 'Horizontal violence' (Freire 1993), Willis' (1977) 'lads'.	Teachers can: • Correct disruption. • Accommodate disruption. • Surrender to disruption. (The above 3 responses will nullify or contain disruption). • **Provoke resistance** through inability to nullify/contain disruption.
PASSIVE RESISTANCE	Targets the social classifications of the pedagogic process – pupils target their resistance against the body of the pedagogue as a symbol of authority.	Pupils actively ignore/ostracise the teacher to express frustration at lack of recognition/attention they feel their conformity/achievement merits. Continue to work/achieve academically.	Passive resistance remains impotent as teachers may interpret pupils' actions as conformity or retreatism. Pupils lack symbolic forms of capital to translate passive resistance into more active/ constructive forms of resistance.
CONFRONTATIONAL RESISTANCE	Targets the social classifications of the pedagogic process – pupils target their resistance against the body of the pedagogue as a symbol of authority and also the wider hierarchies of the institution.	Pupils directly oppose the will/viewpoint of the teacher to express anger/frustration at some perceived injustice or their cultural expression being curtailed. Such confrontations may be intimidatory petulant and nihilistic.	Confrontational resistance and pedagogic authority exist in a constant battle of wills. School sanctions operate to suppress such behaviour but pupils can frequently win ground against pedagogic authority. Pupils expressing constructive resistance can critically assess their social environment and resist perceived injustice. They also possess the potential to question the social classifications of wider capitalist society. Moving constructive resistance beyond localised targets requires critical pedagogy.
CONSTRUCTIVE RESISTANCE		Pupils directly oppose the will/ viewpoint of the teacher to questions the equity and competence of pedagogic practice/authority. Pupils possess the symbolic forms of capital to effectively question the logic, validity and justice of aspects of pedagogic authority.	

5.2 Pedagogic Practice and Teacher Identities:

The 'critical' aspect of this ethnography is focused upon the concern that current forms of pedagogic practice do not sufficiently engage with pupils' cultural expression. The concern is that forms of constructive resistance from pupils are being suppressed and punished, that teachers are adopting identities which impose/defend the frames of learning at the expense of engaging with pupils' critical expression. The aim of this section is to outline and assess observed pedagogic practice, teacher identities and how they interacted with pupil resistance.

The teachers observed and interviewed in this study adopted a range of identities when dealing with pupil behaviour. At one extreme was the disciplinarian 'hegemonic overlord' persona (McLaren 1993). In interviews the pupils referred to such teachers as 'stressheads'. Within this persona teachers would impose strong framing and visible forms of pedagogy. There was very little negotiation regarding what pupils could do in terms of work or behaviour. Teachers who successfully adopted this persona were able to dictate the pace, rituals and structure of the pedagogic process. Pupils were often complimentary of such teachers (Sophie praised her strict History teacher, Abbi praised Ms. Wood her disciplinarian Science teacher). Teachers successful at the 'hegemonic overlord' persona were respected by other teachers – they were described as 'good/solid teachers'. Their success lay in their ability to control pupils' behaviour and create a working environment. Bernstein (1975) suggests that working class pupils can benefit from such visible pedagogy; their restricted language codes are better able to read the visible pedagogy. Ms. Wood and Mr. Rose both commented that they believed pupils preferred this degree of order and direction. In observations Ms. Wood and Ms. Charles were the prime examples – pupils working quietly, no disruption, clear objectives, a distant/professional relationship between teacher and pupils. Any disruption was given short shrift and was not

allowed to escalate into resistance; the will of the teacher was never opposed. Other teachers were observed trying to adopt this persona with varying degrees of success. A Spanish teacher trying to impose discipline upon the class was ignored and ridiculed; a Science teacher's attempt to impose discipline merely resulted in provoking confrontational resistance. These teachers resorted to defending the frames of learning (McNeil 1999) – detentions were issues, voices raised in vain. Learning was reduced to mundane, repetitive rituals (McLaren 1993) which served to minimise the freedom of pupils in order to defend the framing of the lesson. It was when teachers adopted this persona that the most confrontation ensued. Toni and Lindsey's confrontation with their Geography teacher stemmed from what they perceived as excessive/ unfair discipline. Sophie's confrontation with her Science teacher was a direct result of him imposing the frames of learning in a manner which she considered unfair. Although effective teaching and learning were observed in lessons taught by successful 'hegemonic overlord' teachers this persona suppresses and punishes pupil resistance rather than engaging with it. A pupil questioning the will of the teacher is deemed unacceptable and suitably punished. Teaching in 'hegemonic overlord' lessons involved little engagement with pupils' critical awareness; there were very few pupil oriented tasks where they could explore and critique issues.

The other extreme was those lessons where the pedagogic process had broken down. The teachers had relaxed the framing to such an extent that there was a complicit understanding with pupils that very little work was required. This situation was observed in DT and Science lessons. Disruption and resistance were minimal. Only when the teacher attempted to re-impose the framing did any resistance occur; otherwise a state of academic inertia dominated. Observing such an occurrence it is hard not to be critical of the competence and professionalism of the staff. Their lack of consideration for the progress of pupils was unacceptable. Although

this situation only dominated in the two mentioned instances, within other lessons teachers would sometimes adopt this persona. Relaxing the pace of the lesson, letting pupils sit and chat and overlooking obvious disruptive behaviour were common occurrences during observations. Ms. Burns the Cover Supervisor related very few discipline problems; the fact that she was not required to teach the pupils in her charge meant that very little resistance evolved. Pupil resistance in this context has no provocation or target; it requires neither management nor harnessing. The teacher response is to acquiesce and engender an environment where resistance fades as it is deprived of any provocation or ammunition.

The vast majority of lessons observed involved teachers drifting between the 'hegemonic overlord' identity (with varying degrees of success) and relaxing the framing of the lesson. The critical proposition of this study is that such methods do not critically engage pupils to a sufficient degree. Both of the above mentioned teaching models seek to suppress pupil resistance rather than engage and harness it. These models are essentially the reflex of the dominant hegemonic school agenda – the focus is on the transmission of knowledge and the control of any counter-hegemonic pupil agenda. The prime example of this was the way Sophie's disruption/resistance had been dealt with in Science. Moving her down two sets was not just a punishment for her behaviour, it also serves to maintain discipline in the higher sets which are the main focus of accountability and league tables. Removing this high ability pupil from the top set illustrates the lack of adequate strategies employed to engage with pupil resistance. They are moved on to an environment in which they will cause less damage to results. Jennifer made a pertinent comment in this respect: *Teachers concentrate on the good pupils; not the naughty ones who disrupt.* **(I 10)** The two pupils with the highest targets and

whom I considered to be the most insightful/intelligent (Sophie and Abbi) were not invited on the *Aimhigher* trip.

The teacher responsible for moving Sophie down described the action as 'justified'; the teacher to which she was sent expressed frustration at having to deal with a pupil whose ability far outstripped the level of others in the class. In my wider experience such set movements are common. The teacher moving Sophie stated that the setting structure affords this advantage. Access to higher level work and qualifications is thus dependent on a degree of conformity. Pupils expressing confrontational or constructive forms of resistance are prone to the vagaries of set movements. This seems to illustrate that it is not just a *lack* of symbolic forms of capital which can disadvantage pupils; it would seem that pupils who have the intelligence and ability to constructively question authority are prone to differential treatment.

Observing Abbi in lessons her resistance seemed to provoke a mixture of anger and frustration in teachers. She would highlight poor practice, inconsistency and suggest improvements and this was consistently met with a blunt show of discipline from the teacher. In her Science lesson Abbi had an obvious and running conflict with her teacher. Although she was sometimes disruptive and petulant she also had right on her side on many occasions – lessons were unengaging, school discipline was often inconsistently or dogmatically applied, work was not differentiated to cater for the more able. In this context it is easy to empathise with the frustration pupils can feel. Their opposition to this unacceptable situation is punished and suppressed. As a teacher I can also empathise with colleagues that it is difficult to make every lesson engaging and classroom management can create stressful situations. However the lack of engagement by teachers with any form of pupil dissent was almost universal. On asking Vicky why she didn't speak up and protest about feeling marginalised in school her reply was:

You don't want to take it any further just in case nobody listens to you coz you're only a child – you feel really small. **(I 11).** The following exert is also relevant in this context. I asked Lorna and Jennifer why they did not express their frustrations more:

Lorna: *If you argue you know it'll end up against you... it'll go back to being your fault.*

Jennifer: *Teachers always believe teachers over pupils.* **(I 6)**

Discussing these issues with teachers revealed a more complex scenario than merely 'hegemonic overlord' teachers imposing discipline on unruly pupils. Teachers seemed to relate that they were 'managing' behaviour; more a process of containment than control. Speaking to teachers after I had witnessed them struggling to teach disruptive/resistant pupils was uncomfortable; they rationalised their actions as being part of a coping strategy. Ms. Lopez the Spanish teacher admitted to discipline problems and saw no solution; Mr. Francis, Sophie's Science teacher, speculated that his discipline problems may be due to pupil boredom. The lack of any willingness or awareness to engage with the deeper causes of pupil behaviour was apparent. The lack of any discourse or dialogue between teachers and pupils regarding teaching and learning was very evident; classroom observations revealed very little democracy. Teachers are of course subject to forces beyond their control. Finding the time to engage with pupils' disengagement and dissatisfaction in a results driven environment is problematic. A further critical point of analysis is that this discourse of accountability leads to teachers adopting identities which erode the organic relationships of the school. Many teachers expressed a desire to make their lessons more engaging (Ms. Wood, Mr. Rose, Ms. Lopez, Ms. Turner) but felt restricted by the demands of targets and accountability: ('*... you go back to the pressure we're all under in terms of the delivery of the curriculum'* – Mr. Rose. *'Other interesting stuff – kids might want to know it and discuss it but we're pushed for time, it's*

frustrating/ – Ms. Turner). Ms. Burns the Cover Supervisor reported excellent relationships with pupils; she described Sophie, the pupil who conflicts greatly with teachers, as *my favourite*. Without the pressures of accountability organic relationships develop. Relationships between staff and pupils outside of the classroom are very positive. Ms. Woods relates the example of a class she struggles to control being charming and polite when she encounters them on corridors. The school detention data reveals that only 5% of detentions are given for corridor behaviour; an average of 3 per day in the period of analysis. It would seem that less confrontation and organic relationships develop in those environments where pedagogic authority is weakened. In all lessons observations I never once witnessed a pupil or teacher beginning a lesson with a confrontational approach. In the Science lesson in which Sophie was CALMED she began the lesson asking questions (*'Sir what's igneous?')*. The confrontation arose from the teacher attempting to keep Sophie on task, reacting with frustration when she refused and her feeling she was being treated unfairly. Reflecting on my own practice I feel a constant concern that pupils may not be making sufficient progress in lessons. I feel compelled to chivvy, pressurise and often threaten them into working. My fear is that their lack of work will impact upon results and appraisals of my own competence/ performance.

An interesting corollary of this is the tendency amongst staff to highlight parents/ the school locale as being responsible for low expectations/underachievement. Teachers were universal in their desire to encourage achievement but felt this was being hampered by low expectations from home (*'It lacks the parental push in our kids'* – Mr. Bell). These opinions conflicted with those regarding parental support for the school – the pastoral staff (Ms. Gould, Ms. Henderson, Mr. Bell) all reported that parents were very supportive of school policy. This may suggest that teachers seek to offer explanations for underachievement which deflect

attention away from the disciplinary gaze of accountability – parents rather than pedagogic practice are to blame.

Pupil resistance is undoubtedly exacerbated by a lack of understanding and communication between teachers and pupils. By resorting to the 'hegemonic overlord' persona teachers can alienate pupils. Lorna commented on teachers: *'It isn't just that it's the way they teach; it's the way they interact with the class'.* **(I 6)** Ms. Lopez, Mr. Francis and Mr. Jordan all commented that their problems with behaviour were partly due to having little rapport or understanding with the pupils.

The issue of teachers containing rather than engaging with pupils behaviour is a common theme of ethnographies (Willis 1977, McLaren 1993, Jackson 2006, Dickar 2008). When teachers were asked why they did not attempt to engage the pupils in interesting/ culturally provocative lessons the issues of time and trust were the dominant responses. For example Mr. Jordan felt that he could not trust his Science class to carry out practical work sensibly. In interviews pupils repeatedly referred to the lack of engagement they felt in lessons. A particular concern was the lack of differentiation for higher ability pupils. Sarah explained that she was often told to sit and wait for the rest of the class to catch up if she had completed her work. Mr. Rose commented that the high ability need little attention but rather 'guidance'.

An interesting aspect of Dickar's (2008) ethnography was that she was a teacher researching her own practice. She does relate examples of her own efforts to engage with her pupils' cultural expression by democratising the classroom. In this study there were two observed teachers who did engage with pupils cultural expression and resistance. Ms. Turner the RE teacher was able to teach very effectively within very weak framing. Pupils freely shouted out often risqué comments which were acknowledged and incorporated into the lesson.

There was an atmosphere of freedom of expression and the teacher encouraged this. Ms. Turner also related the story of Year 7 pupils becoming engaged in a debate regarding the miners' strike and Margaret Thatcher; an issue which provoked feelings which had obviously been passed down generations of their family. Mr. Stewart likewise fostered a classroom environment built upon freedom of speech and cultural awareness. This teacher bemoaned the punishment of a pupil for celebrating correctly answering a question: '*... you* [teachers] *know their targets but you don't know their personality or their culture?* In these classrooms there was little need for the 'hegemonic overlord' persona; pupils were engaged within weak framing and freely expressed opinions which were valued by the teacher.

Upon asking other teachers whether they referenced wider cultural issues relevant to pupils in their lessons some explained that they did (Ms. Wood, Ms. Lopez) but very little of this was witnessed during observations. Some teachers seemed suspicious or unsure of this notion – Mr. Rose: '*...that sounds like a pretty difficult ask';* Mr. Collins: '*...teaching them to question authority – no. Why should they question authority?'* McLaren (1993) uses the term 'cultural provocateur' to describe the teaching persona which engages with pupils' cultural heritage. The critical aspect of this ethnography suggests that such a persona is all too rare in contemporary schools. The role which the 'cultural provocateur' can play in harnessing pupil resistance to authority is central to neo-Marxist resistance theory.

Although there were fleeting examples of this 'cultural provocateur' persona it is suggested that what was observed were incipient examples of teachers engaging with the cultural heritage of pupils and experiencing high degrees of engagement and learning. Within weak framing which fosters a classroom environment encouraging freedom of expression and critical thinking it is possible to engage with rather than attempt to suppress pupil resistance.

Bernstein (1977) suggested that weak framing and the associated invisible pedagogy may benefit middle-class pupils who have the ability to decode the meaning. However the pupils witnessed in the lessons of Ms. Turner and Mr. Stewart referenced above were very able to contend with the weak framing and their learning and cultural expression were enhanced. The obvious danger with weakening the framing is the vulnerability to discipline problems and the possibility that some pupils may not be able to decode the resultant invisible form of pedagogy. The 'cultural provocateur' role would therefore seem to require a high degree of skill from the teacher and a curriculum which provokes a high degree of interest from pupils.

Johannesson (1992:306) is critical of Marxist approaches which place the teacher in the role of a "transformative intellectual". The fear is that an elitist form of instruction will develop – pupils will be programmed rather than invited to develop their own insights. However the pupils expressing confrontational and constructive forms of resistance in this thesis illustrate that education rarely involves transmission to passive recipients. McLaren (1993) uses the words 'servant' and 'provocateur' to describe the culturally aware teaching role; the objective is to engage in discourse and not transmit ideology – the pupil remains the active interpreter.
To illustrate the range of teacher identities described above the following typology is offered:

Table 5 – **Teacher Identities:**

<table>
<tr><th></th><th colspan="3">Teacher Agenda:
Hegemonic / Counter-Hegemonic</th></tr>
<tr><td>The Frames of Learning:</td><td rowspan="2">Teacher protects the dominant ideology of the school. Imposes or defends the framing of the pedagogic process and becomes the ‘hegemonic overlord’ (McLaren 1993).
Successful ‘hegemonic overlord’ teachers dominate and suppress pupil resistance.
Unsuccessful ‘hegemonic overlord’ teachers can provoke greater disruption and resistance.</td><td colspan="2" rowspan="2">Teacher develops an incipient form of the ‘cultural provocateur/liminal servant’ (McLaren 1993) identity. Engages the ‘constructive resistance’ of pupils (see shaded zone in Table 4 above), but maintains teacher/pupil dualism. May progress to……</td></tr>
<tr><td>Strong Frames</td></tr>
<tr><td>Weak Frames</td><td>Teacher becomes complicit in pupils’ academic inertia. The pedagogic process breaks down, little teaching or learning takes place.

Frames may be weakened for purposes of control; lower ability, disruptive pupils are ‘managed’. (Bernstein 1971).</td><td colspan="2">Two possible outcomes:</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>Weakening the frames erodes the liminality of the teacher and undermines the constructive resistance of pupils.</td><td>Weakening the frames enhances liminality of the teacher; teacher and pupils engage in critical pedagogy and constructive resistance.</td></tr>
</table>

The shaded zones in *Tables 4* and *5* are the ideal type identities and situations to develop pupil resistance into positive, counter-hegemonic activity. Analysing the education system from a neo-Marxist agenda the advantage of these typologies is five-fold:

- They injects a level of construct validity into the concept of pupil resistance. Petulant, nihilistic behaviour is no longer romanticised into having transformative potential (Anyon 1981, McLaren 1993). The 'horizontal violence' (Freire 1993) of petulant disruption or some forms of confrontational resistance is relegated to a qualitatively inferior form of resistance to the more constructive forms of resistance which question social classifications.
- It overcomes the emasculating criticism (Hargreaves 1982:113) that retreatist pupils share many traits with neo-Marxist descriptions of resistant pupils. This typology creates a distinction between retreatist behaviour, passive forms of resistance and more confrontational and constructive forms of resistance. Forms of pupil resistance are operationalised as qualitatively different to retreatism.
- It moves pupil resistance to authority beyond pluralist explanations of resistance as a form of pathology by outlining an intelligent and reflective form of constructive resistance which has the potential to be harnessed.
- It grounds neo-Marxist resistance theory in a realistic analysis of pupils' identities; it avoids making a theoretical 'leap of faith' between pupils' often petulant and nihilistic cultural expression and transformative action.
- By viewing teachers as active social agents in the pedagogic process it highlights the dialectical nature of teacher/pupil interactions. By avoiding the representation of teachers as stooges of capitalist schooling (Willis 1977, Wexler 1992) it highlights how teachers have the potential to harness and direct pupil resistance.

5.3 System Relations:

The typologies presented in *Tables 4* and *5* above, outlining pupil and teacher identities are necessarily functionalist in their approach. They outlines the roles which high ability pupils and teachers adopt within the school. The Marxist approach of this thesis seeks to investigate whether pupils' actions and identities have any wider political, transformative potential. The aim is to link the setting of the school to wider macro issues.

Carspecken (1996) argues that analysis in critical research needs to move beyond the setting and onto a wider social platform. The first stage of this process is to draw relationships between the setting and other cultural sites. In this thesis the observed behaviour and opinions of the social actors were undoubtedly informed by other cultural sites. The most apparent was the family. Teachers repeatedly made references to the influence of parents. The vast majority of these comments were dismissive of parents' expectations and ambitions for their children; most teachers cited parents/family as a hindrance to raising expectations and achievement. Bourdieu (1977) suggests that the forms of cultural capital working class children acquire within the family do not equip them to access the dominant habitus of the school. However the evidence from this thesis suggests a very complex relationship between family, forms of symbolic capital and school habitus. For example Sophie conflicted heavily with pedagogic authority; her crude language and confrontational nature were at odds with the dominant school habitus. This had adversely affected her education; she had been unjustly moved down sets in Science. However Sophie is a very high achieving pupil. Despite her unwillingness or inability to conform to the school habitus she achieves; she employs other forms of symbolic capital – intelligence, self-confidence, the ability to advocate her own sense of justice to maintain her academic/social status. Having taught Sophie's elder siblings and met her mother at many

parents' evenings I can confirm that this is a family with high expectations in terms of education and careers. Likewise Lindsey and Toni developed some intense conflicts with particular teachers; their crude language and unwillingness to conform to a system which they felt was curtailing their self-expression led to conflict. Interpreting this as purely a situation where working class pupils lack the cultural capital to gain favour with teachers is too simplistic. Lindsay and Toni were quite able to charm and endear themselves to some teachers (Ms. Lopez described Toni as '*perfect… my favourite pupil*').

Willis (1977) and Munns and McFadden (2000) attribute working class educational failure to wider 'cultural support' from their communities. There is a 'moment' when pupils become *differentiated* form school values (Willis 1977); a process accepted and supported by parents and family. There is however a danger in drawing a too crude and simplistic isomorphic fit between pupils' family background and school persona. Working class pupils may lack certain forms of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1977) or elaborated language codes (Bernstein 1975) leading to disadvantage. High ability pupils may however compensate for this by employing other forms of symbolic capital to maintain success and status. Also the opinions and experiences of teacher/parent Ms. Turner may suggest that parental expectations are not low, rather they differ from those of the dominant school habitus. Family in this context tempers the target driven, managerialist philosophy of the school. Parents in this sense still share the academic values of the school; they however temper them with their own values of happiness and security. Sugarman (1970) uses the term *collectivism* – a loyalty to the group rather than an emphasis on the individualist philosophy of the school. Of course this could be interpreted as the family subjecting a form of 'self-elimination' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979) on children. The potential for greater success is compromised in favour of security. The high ability pupils

who are the focus of this study will undoubtedly enjoy academic success; whether this success will extend and transform into them fulfilling their potential in higher education and high status careers is however not so clear. Harker (1990) makes the pertinent point that the advent of higher working class achievement in schools had led to institutions of higher education and employers having to differentiate between candidates on terms personal attributes/symbolic capital. High ability pupils like Sophie, Lindsey and Toni who don't readily adopt the social graces of middle class habitus may be disadvantaged in this respect. The impact that family values and expectations can have on working class children's future roles in society would seem complex. There is no isomorphic fit (Carspecken 1996) between the values pupils adopt in the home and in school. These two cultural sites would seem to act dialectically to influence the educational choices and outcomes of working class pupils' education.

A further cultural site which clearly impacted heavily upon the research site was the culture of educational policy. Teachers' attitudes, expectations and practice were heavily influenced by discourses which came from beyond the school setting. Carspecken (1996) suggests that cultural commodities such as language, objects and rituals are transferred between cultural sites and their origin is an important source of analysis. A central, and critical contention of this thesis is that teachers do not sufficiently engage with the resistance and cultural expression of pupils. One reason for this is the pressure they encounter to satisfy the disciplinary gaze of the managerialist discourse. The language and rituals which this discourse has dispersed into schools is ubiquitous. Teachers talk in terms of value-added, residuals, average points scores, APP's (regular tests which *assess pupils' progress* and are fed into a centralised spreadsheet to measure value added). Such language and rituals originate in the cultural sites of academia and government and act to shape pedagogic practice. This shaping

process does not just impact upon school administration; it affects the way teachers interact with pupils. The pressure teachers feel to achieve targets, maximise value-added and continually assess and measure pupils is clear. Giroux (1983) views this technocratic process of information accumulation as a form of commodity fetishism; the value of testing and league tables becomes distorted into a marketable product. Capitalism seeks profit even in the classroom. Ball (1992:157) sees this 'discourse of management' as a move to exert greater control over the process of schooling which:

> ...views the world as locked into irrational chaos, as needing to be brought into its redeeming order. (Ball 1992:157).

Foucault's (1979) analysis of the 'exam' or individual appraisal is directly applicable to the construct of the 'accountable teacher'. The classroom becomes a "space of domination" (Foucault 1979:183) where teachers must reveal themselves to the observer. The "meticulous archive" (ibid) of documentary records and data analysis assesses the teacher against an established norm – "the constraint of conformity that must be achieved" (ibid).

Classroom observation, performance management and pupil targets are the technologies of power which transform teacher appraisal into a form of confession (Ball 1992). Accountability exposes the intimate relationship of the teacher to the school; failure to meet set standards and targets becomes a confession of inadequacy. The individual is duped into thinking that their own worth and effectiveness can be defined in the measurement of set variables. Education is taken out of its social and political context and becomes a matter of school effectiveness. It is recast in the neutral language of rational management by creating the dualisms of good/bad school, teacher, lesson, pupil.

Mac an Ghaill (1996:165) bemoans the "erasure of social class" from the educational agenda and sociology in general. In examining New Labour's discourse with neo-

conservative/liberal policy in education Mac an Ghaill argues that the "hegemonic managerialist" (ibid: 169) philosophy prevails. The effect that social class has on education is marginalised in favour of the meritocratic ideal; an ideal that technocratic rationality seeks to achieve through measure and accountability. The danger is that such an approach becomes

> ...uninterested in how complex sets of power relations may distort the learning experiences of large numbers of working class students (Mac an Ghaill 1996:169).

Failure and resistance are labelled aberrant and pathological – irrational imperfections in a rationally efficient system. They become de-politicised and the aberrant school/teacher is recentred as the focus of causation. Within such a discourse any analysis of education "neither recognizes nor responds to social and structural dysfunctions" (Giroux 1983:180).

In the context of this thesis the effects of the discourse of management are the erosion of organic relationships within the school and a reluctance/fear by teachers to engage with pupil resistance and cultural expression. Teachers impose or defend strong framing in the classroom. Verkuyten (2002:119) argues that teachers adopt strong frames of learning to defend their own professional competence in the light of accountability pressures; "defining a pupil as disruptive offers an explanation for poor educational outcomes". Teachers thus deflect the pressure of the 'disciplinary gaze' onto the pupil. Wexler (1992:111) argues that damaging relationships ensue; they create a "mutual withdrawal of emotions and identification by students and teachers." The irony of this situation is highlighted by McNeil (1999:88); the more defensive teachers become, the more knowledge is restricted and fragmented for pupils, the more reified the rationalised relationships in the classroom become, then the more pupil disengagement occurs producing the potential for disorder and dissent – "alienation increases for all participants, further reinforcing patterns of control."

5.4 Theoretical Issues:

Thomas (1993) explains that the aim of critical ethnography is to scrutinise forms of power, rituals and assumptions which act to repress and constrain. Individual and institutional power is mediated through social structures and therefore critical ethnography seeks to explain social phenomena by reference to structural conditions. Carspecken (1996) suggests that this can be done through establishing a 'fit' between research analysis and macro social theory. The aim is to apply social theory and illustrate how it provides a valid and credible explanation of the research findings. This does not mean that findings should be manipulated to fit social theory; findings should question and provoke debate regarding theory. Social theory should evolve through constant reference to research data. The aim of this section is therefore to engage in a debate between research findings and Marxist theories of education. To employ theory to explain the impact of structural conditions but also to consider how research findings can act to inform and evolve theory.

Theoretically the aim of this thesis was to engage with neo-Marxist interpretations of schooling; specifically resistance theory and how this can be reconciled with the current neo-liberal discourse of education, and Rikowski's (1996, 1997) work regarding the capitalisation of schools and the role they play in the social production of labour power. These will be considered in turn.

5.4.1 Resistance Theory:

The relevance of Willis' (1977) study must be considered in the light of the dominant discourse of neo-liberalism in contemporary education. Willis (1977) argued that the lads' resistance took place in the 'zone of the informal'; it was at odds with the formal structure and rituals of the school which they had rejected. The pupils in this thesis have not rejected the

formal structure of schooling; like the pupils in the ethnographies of Jackson (2006) and Dickar (2008) they maintain an often strong bond of attachment to school procedures and an underlying belief in competitive individualism and meritocracy. Their resistance was often targeted against teachers who they believed had misused school procedures; the pupils' resistance was action to espouse the correct use of school policy. Willis (1977:72) used the term *post-differentiated* relationships to describe how pupils separate themselves from the formal zone of the school; in this thesis it would be more accurate to describe the pupils as drifting between conformity and resistance (Matza 1964) - their differentiated relationships are not permanent or irrevocable. High ability/high achieving pupils express forms of resistance but maintain an investment in the academic credentials discourse (Jackson 2006). Resistance is expressed but pupils act to balance this against their desire for academic success. Their resistance does not involve a sacrifice of their potential status in future jobs markets. Their high ability affords them the potential to access the world of mental labour which Willis' lads viewed with suspicion and derision. Of course this could be interpreted as a justification of meritocracy – high ability working class pupils achieve upward social mobility. However high ability/achievement does not guarantee upward social mobility. Bourdieu (1977) argues that qualifications act as a form of symbolic violence against working class pupils who achieve them; they do not guarantee higher status as wider discriminatory forces maintain social reproduction. Within the contemporary school there would therefore seem to be two opposing forces acting upon working class pupils - a faith in the neo-liberal agenda of meritocracy and social mobility, or developing an insight into how the education system facilitates social reproduction. The key point of analysis for neo-Marxist resistance theory is to articulate

whether high ability working class pupils have the capacity to develop critical insights into capitalist schooling within this neo-liberal discourse.

The investment which the pupils in this thesis maintain in the academic credentials discourse could be seen as an indication of strong underlying conformity. However I would suggest that the resistance of pupils like Sophie and Abbi is a far more powerful tool than the forms of resistance described by Willis (1977), McLaren (1993) and Dickar (2008). Willis (1977) describes the lads' resistance as 'having a laff'. Similar behaviour was noted from pupils in this thesis – Lindsey and Toni sought fun and enjoyment and often disrupted lessons. Their confrontational resistance was targeted against teachers whom they believed were curtailing their sense of fun. However the concept of 'having a laff' would seem a weak foundation for any potential political agenda. The more constructive and critical forms of resistance associated with the behaviour of Sophie and Abbi would seem a qualitatively superior form of expression. Pupil resistance which targets the social classifications of schooling – injustices, hierarchy, inadequate practice, would seem to be a form of expression which has the potential to target the wider injustices of society. The high ability pupils in this study would seem to possess a form of cultural production which is not predicated upon 'having a laff'; it has a far more critical and constructive foundation than the cultural production of Willis' (1977) lads. The Marxist notion of social transformation would seem better placed in the hands of high ability, critically aware working class pupils than the nihilism of Willis' lads.

Willis (1981) makes the very important point that *Learning To Labour* was not a study of social reproduction. He explains that the fate of the 'lads' *was* social reproduction but that this is not an inevitability for other groups. Willis (1981) argues that cultural production changes between generations and has the power to counter cultural and social reproduction and

the dominant habitus. High ability working class pupils questioning social classifications would seem to possess a form of cultural production with the potential to question the forces of social reproduction. Of course the very simple and effective criticism of this suggestion is that the pupils do not in fact seem to express any wider awareness/ penetrations (Willis 1977) into their situation. Fernandes (1988) uses the term *partial resistance* to describe this localised, incipient form of expression. It must be acknowledged that the resistance expressed by the pupils in this thesis was localised and incipient. They did not seem to express any wider awareness or sociological imagination (Mills 1959); it would be presumptuous and methodologically incorrect to attribute them with an insight into the mechanisms of capitalist schooling or society. However what they did express was the capacity to be very critical regarding their localised setting. Expressing forms of confrontational and constructive resistance they would often unsettle the pedagogic process in an intelligent manner which teachers found hard to combat.

A key difference between the forms of pupil resistance proposed by this thesis and those of traditional resistance theory is that those in this thesis are not predicated upon a rejection of schooling. Willis (1977) suggests that the behaviour of the lads had deeper relevance because it had wider cultural support; the lads' rejection of schooling was accepted by family/community. Evidence from this thesis indicates that parental support for school policy is widespread – pastoral staff reported a very high degree of parental support when dealing with discipline problems. This is an important point as the resistance of Willis' (1977) lads is criticised for its nihilism and unsavoury expression (Walker 1986, Rikowski 1997). Rejecting schooling *per se* means that Willis' lads offer no critical insight into how it could serve them better; their resistance lacks any constructive element. The resistance of the pupils in this thesis exists partly

within the *formal zone* (Willis 1977) or *public transcript* (Dickar 2008) of the school. Their resistance contains constructive elements (Abbi and Sophie regularly confronted teachers regarding what they perceived as unfair/inadequate practice). This form of resistance therefore operates from within; it involves critique rather than nihilistic rejection. Resistance theory therefore needs to move away from embracing and romanticising pupil behaviour which displays no apparent critical logic or awareness. It needs to acknowledge that pupils are active social agents who have the capacity to critically analyse their circumstances.

The potential for constructive forms of pupil resistance to develop into a wider critical awareness of capitalist society depends crucially on the roles teachers adopt. Some teachers were observed directing and harnessing these abilities. There is no suggestion that there was any political intent behind this but it does demonstrate how the pedagogic process can operate within a critical agenda; how high ability pupils can be encouraged to direct constructive forms of resistance beyond the localised setting of the school (Shamai 1990). The practice of such 'cultural provocateur' teachers (McLaren 1993) also highlights how ineffective and disengaging other forms of pedagogic practice can be. It is this sense of domestication which Rikowski (2009) targets for the Marxist agenda.

From a Marxist perspective working class pupils who display constructive forms of resistance possess the *qualities* to be instrumental in the process of social transformation; to act as "organic intellectuals" (Gramsci 2005). They have the potential to be community leaders whose intelligence and critical insights can direct others. Any such role would need to have developed from a strong sense of class consciousness and an awareness of inequality and injustice at a *class* level and not just an individual level. Neo-Marxist resistance theory therefore needs to refocus its attention away from the nihilistic rejection of schooling models

which romanticise an uncritical and impotent form of resistance and onto the more constructive forms of resistance expressed by high ability pupils. It is suggested that these more critically sensitive forms of cultural expression can interact with effective pedagogic practice (the 'cultural provocateur' teacher persona) to develop class consciousness and the potential for social transformation.

5.4.2 Rikowski and the Capitalisation of Schooling:

For Marxist theories of education to develop meaning and significance in relation to notions of social transformation Rikowski (1996, 1997) argues that the relevance of labour power as a capitalist commodity must become the central point of analysis. Rikowski sees schools as heavily capitalised institutions whose function is reduced to producing labour power for capitalist work. The ideas of Rikowski and those of Marxist resistance theory marry in the sense that the focus of resistance needs to be on this very process of labour production. Developing an awareness of and resisting this weak underbelly of capitalism contains the seeds of social transformation. Therefore the potential for constructive forms of pupil resistance to target and develop a wider insight into the significance of the social production of labour power is central to the contemporary neo-Marxist debate. There would seem to be two barriers to such a situation developing:

- Schools are *not* heavily capitalised institutions and are ineffective in the role they play in producing labour power.
- Pupil resistance is too localised against pedagogic authority to develop and wider awareness of or impact upon the role schools play in producing of labour power.

Taking the first point the evidence for schools being heavily capitalised is contradictory. Yes they operate on technocratic, managerialist principles but their wider efficacy at producing

labour power is questionable. Evidence against the 'school as a capitalised institution' thesis is found in the often confused actions and opinions of pupils regarding the workplace. During interviews teachers often expressed frustration and incredulity at pupils' vague and naïve understandings of higher education and the workplace. Although most teachers sought to attribute the blame for this at the hands of parents this situation would seem to suggest that schools are not very effective at producing a disciplined labour force for capitalism. However the neo-liberal managerialist discourse has been effective in raising the achievement levels of working class schools. This has been achieved through a business model approach of targets, assessment, inspection and low tolerance of under-performance (Lauder *et al* 1999). The advent of academies in working class communities sponsored by industry also adds to the dominance of the 'school as a capitalised institution' model. Although there is evidence that schools may be ineffective in aspects of this role the model would seem to be the dominant discourse of contemporary schooling.

Rikowski (1996, 1997) suggests that the social production of labour power involves teaching both the *capacity* and *willingness* to work. Results at the school which is the focus of this study have improved year on year for a decade. Pupils would seem to be acquiring the capacity to work at least through their academic skills. The huge increase in vocational qualifications (Edexcel 2004) also suggests that schools are more focused on providing workplace skills.

Regarding the willingness to pursue such roles teachers commented on what they perceived to be a lack of ambition from young people in the area. Yes increasing numbers are enjoying academic success in improving schools but teachers expressed frustration at the pupils' lack of wider ambitions. Mr. Collins (Careers teacher) bemoaned the attitude of pupils

towards work experience; Mr. Rose bemoaned sixth formers reluctance to access prestigious universities; Mr. Bell bemoaned pupils self-elimination regarding higher-education; Ms. Wood bemoaned the naiveté of students applying for university courses. These examples suggest that pupils do not passively and willingly accept the roles which schools point them towards. Lambert (2006) and the BBC (2006) both express concerns about the attitudes of school leavers towards work. It would seem that schools may not be that effective at the social production of labour power. The under-resourced *Aimhigher* programme is also indicative of how the government/school seek to direct high ability pupils towards higher level qualifications and the potential for higher status jobs but confuse the issue. Some pupils were unsure of the purpose of the visits, allocated money had not been directed into the programme and pupils were not taken to institutions with high academic status. There is a wider tendency amongst high ability students to remain in the locale to attend less prestigious universities than their abilities may warrant. Teachers from outside the area used the term 'parochial' to describe the local culture; teachers from the area bemoaned the lack of ambition and lack of any wider, metropolitan cultural awareness. Teachers freely and passionately related anecdotes of pupils whose expectations were low. Bourdieu and Passeron (1979:42) refer to the "social function of elimination" – objective opportunities which pupils perceive through the habitus of dominant groups shapes the subjective intentions of working class pupils. Harker (1990:91) links this to security – a satisfaction with what is known and a suspicion of the unknown.

Rikowski (2009) also cites the pluralism of modern schools as a reason for the lack of a radical agenda within pupils. A diverse range of ethnic, religious and cultural influences can affect the role schools play in the social production of labour power. There is often a very tense and contradictory relationship between the academic and pastoral function of schools. Bowles

and Gintis' (1976) notion of a *hidden curriculum* acting to socialise pupils into subservient roles presents a very one-dimensional view of staff-pupil interactions. The pastoral system often espouses values which run counter to this. The interviews I conducted with pastoral staff (Ms. Gould, Ms. Henderson, Alison the Chaplain) revealed that many interactions between pupils and staff concern emotional and moral support. The Catholic ethos of the school espouses the Christian values of community and forgiveness. The key point is that if schools espouse values counter to those of capitalism then this dilutes the notion of the school as a heavily capitalised institution. From a traditional Marxist perspective espousing values incommensurate with capitalism may act to lower the class consciousness of working class pupils/teachers; akin to Marx's notion of religion as the opiate of the masses. The target of resistance becomes blurred; values which encourage forgiveness and acceptance may encourage fatalistic interpretations of social inequality/social reproduction. Ms. Turner raised the issue of the Catholicism of the pupils and how it may act to temper the meritocratic, market-oriented philosophy of current education. This teacher speaks from the unique perspective of not only having grown up in the surrounding locale of the school but also being a parent of a current pupil – her daughter is a close friend and classmate of the pupils who are the focus of this study. Ms Turner's contention based on the experience with her own parents and daughter was that parents balance their wish for the academic success of their children with notions of security and happiness. Gaining the highest possible grades is not the sole consideration; if lower grades satisfy a desirable career path then parents will be content to settle for this. The example Ms. Turner gives of her own father overriding a school homework policy he felt was sometimes excessive illustrates how family and school can be at odds. It would seem that the managerialist philosophy of schools measuring the value added to pupil performance can be countered by parents advocating the

primacy of the importance of their children's happiness. Ms. Turner's description of her father as a staunch Catholic man raises further issues regarding the link between labour power and religion. Whether Catholic families value spirituality/contentment above material achievement is an interesting point of analysis. Interpreting this as an absence of a 'Protestant work ethic' (Weber 1958) may be a too simplistic and crude form of analysis. Whenever I sought out opinions and explanations as to the relevance of the school's Catholic ethos the results were vague and confusing. The pupils seemed very uncomfortable discussing religion; especially in relation to their families. In interviews they did make the odd religious reference – Jennifer mentioned the Ten Commandments, Sarah 'turning the other cheek' **(I 12)** and whenever prayers are read in school the pupils dutifully cross themselves. However observations of RE lessons revealed pupils expressing very critical and dismissive views of religion. The school weekly Mass is attended by fewer than 15 pupils. Interviewing the school Chaplin revealed many examples of religious observance from pupils which occurs out of the focus of everyday school activity. She related stories of pupils bringing family rosaries into school to pray, acts of kindness from pupils labelled as troublemakers by teachers and a willingness on the part of pupils to become involved in community activities. The religious ethos of the school and the way it may interact with ambition, achievement and managerialist procedures warrants further investigation. There is the possibility that pupils' spirituality may temper their inclination or willingness to question issues regarding social class and social reproduction. The Chaplin made it very clear to me that she believed the local area was irrelevant in explaining pupil behaviour – she referenced faith and a communion with God.

Willis (1977) attributes 'the lads' with having an awareness of the meaning of their own labour power; they are instinctively aware of the power of "knowing, settling and controlling

their own activities" (ibid:130) - they show "a responsiveness to the uniqueness of human labour power" (ibid:132). A similar form of pupil awareness would seem necessary in Rikowski's model. However for Rikowski (2009) this needs to be more than *disrupting* work – it needs to be a constructive insight into the role of labour power in capitalist society.

The more confrontational pupils in this study (Lindsey, Toni and Sophie) did display examples of withdrawing their willingness to work in lessons. However this behaviour was generally in response to confusion at the weak framing of lessons. For example a big factor explaining the academic inertia in Sophie's DT lessons was the lack of a permanent teacher and the resultant confusion this was causing. Whenever these pupils were given clear learning objectives they worked. The withdrawal of their labour in this sense seemed to be due more to their inability to access/decode the invisible pedagogy of weak framing (Bernstein 1977) than any insight into the wider social relevance of labour power. The more conformist pupils were observed working regardless of the disruption of others (Lorna diligently worked in the same DT lesson as Sophie despite any noticeable requirement from the teacher to do so). The pupils also sought to rationalise any lack of work in lessons – *I don't care coz I'm not doing it next year* (Lorna regarding DT). Overall there was a strong work ethic and a concern to make progress through learning in lessons. During interviews I repeatedly asked how the pupils would feel if classroom disruption began to affect their progress and the answer was consistent – they would seek intervention from parents or Head of Year. Therefore although pupils disrupted lessons and resisted authority there was no suggestion that they were engaged in any process of rationing their labour power. Indeed the evidence would suggest the opposite – they would engage in any set task as long they had an understanding of what was required of them.

It would therefore seem that the pupils have little if any awareness of what Rikowski (2009) describes as the role schools play in the social production of labour power. Rikowski's contention that it is possible to subvert this process and develop "a politics of human resistance" (ibid) was not witnessed in the actions and opinions of the pupils in this study. The pupils' labour was willingly given in return for the future rewards they believe it would ultimately confer upon them. The forms of resistance observed in this study would therefore seem to have little connection to labour power.

Rikowski (2009) argues that neo-Marxist resistance theory has too often focused on pupils' cultural expression without articulating what is being resisted and why. Sophie and Abbi certainly resisted the will of the teacher and targeted the social classifications of the school. They continuously resisted the school hierarchy and sought to contest and expose what they felt was incompetence or injustice. Their intelligence meant that teachers often felt uncomfortable and intimidated by their behaviour. These two pupils had the clearest insight into how the school hierarchy operated and how that system can be flawed. Sophie and Abbi undoubtedly have the critical capacity to question and confront their environment. To address Rikowski's question as to *what* these pupils were resisting suggests that it is more focused on the injustices and imperfections of school hierarchy than any critique of the role of labour power in capitalist society. Considering Rikowski's question as to *why* these pupils resisted authority it would seem that their intellectual capacity provoked a keen sense of injustice which they felt obliged to articulate. When Sophie negotiated to get her detention cancelled she was satisfied at that outcome; in a subsequent interview she expressed no satisfaction at having subverted the system. Her only concern seemed to be to correct a perceived injustice; there was no wider agenda against the logic of schooling.

Within this thesis there is therefore very little evidence to suggest that pupils who resist authority have any wider awareness of logic of capitalist schooling or the relevance their labour power has in wider capitalist society. Their underlying work ethic and expressions of faith in meritocracy suggest that they have a degree of confidence that their high ability will be rewarded. However what is apparent is that some pupils have the critical capacity to question the system they find themselves in; their resistance has the capacity to critique capitalist schooling in a rational and articulate manner.

5.4.3 Developing Resistance Theory:

Neo-Marxist resistance theory has been hindered through its tendency to romanticise pupils' petulant, nihilistic behaviour and its lack of construct validity. For resistance theory to regain relevance and meaning within the current neo-liberal discourse it needs to refocus upon the following three principles:

- **Constructive Resistance** – Resistance theory needs to acknowledge that the behaviour of working class pupils is varied and complex. Petulant and nihilistic forms of pupil behaviour need to be distinguished from more constructive forms. By focusing attention upon constructive forms of resistance expressed by critically aware pupils, resistance theory can move beyond romanticising nihilistic and often unsavoury forms of behaviour. High ability, high achieving and critically aware working class pupils can be viewed as potential community leaders and activists with the ability to contest the inequalities/injustices of wider capitalist society.
- **Teacher Identities** – Resistance theory needs to acknowledge that pupil resistance is inextricably linked to teacher resistance. Pupil resistance will remain localised and incipient unless it is harnessed and directed by pedagogic practice. 'Cultural provocateur' (McLaren

1993) teachers who provoke and engage with pupils' constructive forms of resistance have the potential to nurture a more critical and potent form of social action.

- **Targets of Resistance** – Resistance theory needs to focus much more explicitly on what is being targeted through pupil resistance and how effective this is. Resistance which targets the framing of the pedagogic process is inferior and relatively impotent compared to that which targets the social classifications. It is forms of constructive resistance which have the potential to target inequality and injustice and the 'weak link' of capitalism, labour power (Rikowski 1996, 1997).

5.5 Recommendations:

Thomas (1993) suggests that a key aim of critical ethnography is to highlight the importance of alternative meanings; to look beneath the veneer of hegemonic interpretations. Rather than being complaint and protest there should be a constructive assessment of how such alternative meanings can have practical application. Therefore deriving from the comments of pupils and teachers and my own observations I would like to offer the following recommendations. The aim is to nurture a form of pedagogic practice which embraces rather than ignores the cultural heritage of the social actors of the school; teaching practices which seek to nurture and harness pupils' cultural expression and constructive resistance rather than suppress them.

- **Pedagogic Discourse** – Bernstein (1990) argues that the pedagogic discourse of a school mediates between different cultural fields. Teaching methods and resources recontextualise the official knowledge of the curriculum. It is within this process of recontextualisation that the potential for embracing the cultural heritage of the schools' social actors exists. At present teaching resources are bland, value-neutral and do little to provoke

pupils' interest. Employing more culturally relevant materials would act to provoke pupils' interest and allow teachers to more easily adopt the persona of the 'cultural provocateur' (McLaren 1993). Interestingly in September 2008 the new Secondary Curriculum (QCA 2008) came into operation. Part of the rationale behind this is to encourage 'thinking' amongst pupils rather than rote learning:

> Analysing offers students models to use to go deeper into their thinking and understanding. It also stresses the importance of finding patterns and alternative meanings in things. (QCA 2008).

This presents a new opportunity for schools to refocus the curriculum in a critical way, to teach by reference to pupils own cultural and existential experiences, to nurture the constructive resistance of pupils. For example my own subject specialism, Mathematics, is ripe with opportunities to engage with pupils' critical cultural expression. Anderson (1997: 296) argues that Maths has generally been taught with "little or no historical, cultural or political references"; it tends to adopt a Eurocentric and ethnocentric agenda. Action projects which seek to make Maths teaching more culturally relevant with a social responsibility (Frankenstein 1990, Gutstein et al 1997) argue that the Maths classroom can become a site of social emancipation. The aim is to merge Maths with critical social science; "define Mathematics as a tool for critical social analysis" (Murtadha-Watts and D'Ambrosio 1997:767). By taking students' own cultural milieu as the starting point, the aim is to construct a form of critical pedagogy which engages with this and raises social awareness. Lesser and Blake (2007) argue that social justice has more resonance "when classes seek out examples that speak strongest to their locality". Gutstein et al (1997) implemented a form of critical pedagogy Maths into a US junior high school in a Mexican neighborhood. By using critical questioning techniques and statistical analyses of culturally relevant data the teachers were able to create a form of cultural

emancipation. A teacher in this study argues that the aim is to

> ...help make individuals who question, who do not just accept, who are fighters, who can help change society. (Gutstein et al 1997:722).

Gutstein et al (1997) reflect that in this school the classroom became an extension of the family and the community; there was a sense of cultural solidarity provokes by critical pedagogy.

Frankenstein (1990) implemented a programme of critical pedagogy into a Maths course for working-class adults in a black US community. Lessons involved using Maths to analyse culturally relevant data; housing, healthcare, education, corporate profits, utility bills were analysed and put into a wider social context. Frankenstein (1990:337) believes that such an approach

> ...prompts individuals to question taken for granted assumptions about how a society is structured and enables them to act from a more informed position on social structures.

Frankenstein (1990) comments that prior to the course many students believed that social injustice was a personal problem; the course provoked them into seeing it as "woven into the institutional fabric of society" (ibid:343). By adopting such forms of critical pedagogy constructive forms of pupil resistance can be directed and harnessed. Resistance can be interpreted as form of cultural expression with the potential to question and change social inequality rather than a pathology to be suppressed and corrected.

- **Accountability** – a major factor which seemed to prevent teachers planning and delivering more engaging or 'liminal' (McLaren 1993) lessons was the pressure they felt to achieve targets and measure the progress of pupils. Teacher opposition to such technocratic managerialism has been commonly reported (O'Brien and Down 2002, Apple 2001, Humes 2000). There is no suggestion here that accountability *per se* is unwarranted; rather that the procedures and rituals imposed upon teachers by school management are over-burdening and

unnecessary. The drive to rationalise and control procedures becomes the objective. Releasing teachers from the bureaucracy of excessive assessment, recording and monitoring of data would allow them more time to plan effective, culturally provocative lessons and engage with pupils. At present the dominant interpretation of pupil resistance by teachers is that it presents a threat to their competence/professionalism as measured by the agents of accountability (performance management and OFSTED). Pupil resistance within this framework must be suppressed. Relaxing the pressure to constantly assess and measure pupil progress against standardised targets would create the space for teachers to spend more time planning, to widen the scope of their resources and to critically engage with pupils' cultural expression.

- **School Disciplinary Policy** – the distinction drawn in this thesis between forms of pupil oppositional behaviour (see *table 4* above) suggests that schools need to more sensitive and aware of the targets and intentions behind pupils' conflict with authority. At present all forms of oppositional behaviour receive equal treatment and response from pedagogic authority. Little distinction is made between petulant disruptive behaviour and pupils who seek to question the equity and justice of the system. Both are viewed as a threat to pedagogic authority, both receive equal sanctions. By treating all oppositional behaviour as homogeneous school discipline serves to alienate high ability pupils who are often justified in expressing misgivings regarding injustices and inadequate teaching. Observing pupils like Sophie and Abbi being punished for speaking out against what they perceived was unjust use of authority suggests that school policy needs to incorporate a way for pupils to legitimately express their grievances. The current *teacher is never wrong* approach serves to marginalise genuine pupil concerns and exacerbate disruption and forms of confrontational resistance. Pupils expressing constructive forms of resistance need to be recognised as distinct from those seeking to disrupt lessons.

Punishing pupils for expressing valid critical opinions would seem antithetical to the values of any educational institution. Incorporating a procedure or facility to allow pupils to express their grievances and have their concerns taken seriously would give them a degree of ownership and responsibility for their own education. Observing high ability pupils demonstrating advocacy skills raises the possibility of schools adopting *pupil advocate* programmes (Mills 1997) whereby pupils can formally act as advocates for their peers in communications with pedagogic authority.

5.6 Evaluation of the 'Critical' Approach:

Cohen et al (2003:28) explain that critical ethnography within education seeks to question and change social reality by "examining and interrogating…the relationship between school and society". The critical element of this study sought to highlight how current pedagogic practice is inadequate and ineffectual at engaging working class pupils into a critical dialogue regarding their position in capitalist society. The emancipatory aspect of this critical study concerns the potential that forms of critical pedagogy have in harnessing the constructive resistance of working class pupils. Ultimately the critical aim was to empower working class pupils; to point to a model of education which raises class consciousness.

The dynamics of Marxism are predicated upon notions of social change. A critical study with Marxism as its theoretical foundation needs to give an account of its function in the context of emancipation/social transformation. A simple but very important question is – *did this thesis have any effect in changing the lives of its participants?* My own stark and honest answer to this question is *no*. The lives of the nine pupils who were the focus of this study go on; their high ability will no doubt afford them academic success and I hope future roles commensurate with their talents. When I asked the pupils what they had gotten out of the

experience one view was that it was good to discuss issues with other people; akin to a form of therapy. This disappointed me as it seemed the polar opposite of my intention; catharsis rather than empowerment. The interview discussions did involve the pupils reflecting upon the way they interact and conflict with teachers. We did discuss the notion of constructive resistance and how this would seem to be a more intelligent way for pupils to express themselves. Whether this has had any impact upon their behaviour would need further empirical testing.

Another view was that I was the beneficiary – they had helped me to write my *story* (as they referred to it). I had shown the pupils the finished text and Toni and Lindsey howled with laughter as they read passages referring to themselves. Again this is far from any notion of empowerment. However in terms of the completed ethnographic text I feel that the pupils' experiences and cultural expression has been captured and related to a wider (albeit very small) audience. In this sense the process of storytelling within ethnography is empowering; the pupils' experiences have been documented and scrutinised and not disregarded.

In terms of school staff I would again be very doubtful whether this study has impacted upon their everyday practice in any way. I had many in depth interviews with staff regarding pedagogic practice. I debated the use of more culturally relevant resources with Mr. Rose, a Geography teacher with 35 years experience. I debated the damaging effect that a target driven culture can have on schools with Mr. Bell, the Assistant Headteacher. I spoke with many teachers about the issues Sarah and Vicky had raised – their feeling angry and frustrated in lessons due to teachers allocating their time unfairly between pupils. Such interactions can raise awareness and provoke a wider debate. Policywise the impact of this study would of course have more impact if it were discussed with school senior management or those with wider political influence. However those in such positions are pressurised by the discourse of

accountability; striving to achieve targets takes precedence over the musings of a classroom teacher.

Although the above reflections seem pessimistic regarding the critical objectives of this study I would suggest that this is mainly due to the limitations of the medium being used to present them. An academic thesis is rarely a widely read document. However the school which is the focus of this study actively supports and finances action research projects. The findings of such projects are a subject of interest to those in positions of power (school management, LEA officials). In this sense the basis of this thesis is a platform, a foundation which can be transferred to other media and thus related to a wider audience. Therefore although the critical element of this thesis seems to have had little direct impact upon policy or the lives of the social actors at its heart, there is potential for its findings to be discussed and considered by a wider audience.

5.7 Reflexivity:

My role as a teacher researching pupils and colleagues in my own place of work warrants attention regarding the impact I had upon the research process and product. Throughout this study I have attempted to acknowledge that I am "implicated" (Skeggs 1999:45) in the construction of the design, methods, concepts and analysis. A key question is whether the research process has been tainted by my own presence, preconceptions, enthusiasms and prejudices.

Regarding the ethnographic process my presence in lessons did undoubtedly produce a certain degree of reactivity from pupils and teachers. At the start of the first lesson I observed Sophie greeted me with a portentous *'Watch me Stevie!'* However I would contend that such occurrences were in the minority. Most lessons I observed the pupils treated me with a passive

indifference; they made little eye contact and I made a point of asking teachers if the pupils had acted in accordance with usual behaviour. On those occasions when reactivity was significant I have acknowledged this in the text. An important point to make is that any such reactivity from pupils is part of the research process and must be treated thus (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). For example the fact that Sophie would confront authority with two teachers in the room was very revealing. Regarding interviews with pupils I believe that only Toni and Lindsey indulged in any form of exaggeration or bravado. I felt that some of their tales were embellished for my benefit but once again this was very revealing with regard to their identities; it was indicative of their quest for fun. The research design also protected against reliance on one source of data. Interviews were triangulated with observations so that pupils' accounts of behaviour in lessons could be witnessed first hand and also discussed with teachers.

A concern that I had throughout the research process was that 'over rapport' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) between the pupils and I was impacting upon the data. I would speak to these pupils every day of the school week – in my own lessons, in observations of other lessons and in interviews. Having also known them for three years our relationship was very familiar and relaxed. One of the dangers of such familiarity was that it would cause me to assume that I already knew the pupils and thus seek data to confirm these preconceptions; I would sidestep the process of 'enculturation' (Spradley 1979) necessary in ethnography. Although it is difficult to prove that this did not in fact happen I would point to the fact that much of what I learnt about the pupils was surprising to me and contradicted my preconceptions. For example observing these pupils in lessons other than my own was a revelation; they often acted completely differently. Observing Abbi working without distraction or issuing sardonic comments in her English class went against what I considered type. My

other concern regarding ‘over rapport’ was that my familiarity and fondness for the pupils would lead me to be overly sympathetic in reporting their conflicts with authority. Sophie in particular was very adept at playing the victim and very skilled at provoking my sympathy. Her behaviour was often petulant, offensive and unacceptable and warranted punishment. As the research progressed I was fearful that the portrayal of her in the text had glossed over these traits. The danger was that my over familiarity had led me to romanticise the pupils’ behaviour. To counter this I would point to the distinction I make between pupil disruption and resistance and the examples given of the former. I feel that gender was also a factor in the over-sympathy I may have extended to the pupils. As a male teacher I am aware that I am often inconsistent in the way I apply school discipline between male and female pupils. Female pupils are more likely to court my sympathy and some are acutely aware of this. I am not suggesting that the female pupils in this thesis were able to manipulate me; rather that they were able to play to my protective, chivalric instinct towards them.

One aim of the research design was to avoid reactivity through giving the pupils a degree of ownership of the research process. Viewing them as active social agents capable of directing the research agenda would minimise the need for me to impose my own direction on the process. Regarding the pupil interview process I do feel that this was often led and directed by the pupils. I did not dictate the agenda, I did not attempt to maintain the teacher-pupil hierarchy, I actively encouraged the pupils to speak in their native language. Quite often questions I had prepared for the interviews were superfluous; the pupils began talking about lessons I had observed and answers flowed from this. In the later stages of the interview process it was necessary for me to prepare more direct questions. There was a need to feedback to the

pupils and explain to them my findings and interpretations; this was necessary to be able to then allow them to comment.

I regarded the reactivity of teachers to be a much greater threat to validity than that of the pupils. Speaking as a teacher I confess that I always change my own behaviour in subtle ways whenever another adult is in the room. Although all but one teacher agreed to be observed/interviewed in some cases I came to believe that agreement had been given out of politeness rather than enthusiasm. I consider it natural for teachers to associate observation with judgement; OFSTED and performance management are part of a teacher's life. My concern was with the very marginal role I was forced to adopt during lesson observations. I did not want to interfere with the pupils' learning and so found it hard to avoid being an onlooker writing notes in judgement. I felt that teachers may change the way they dealt with pupil disruption and resistance; (I shamefully confess that I become more patient and understanding of pupils' behaviour when I am being observed). I would temper these concerns by explaining that in all but one case I observed three lessons for each teacher. It is possible for a teacher to change their behaviour for one lesson but over the course of three fifty minute lessons I would suggest that the validity of what is observed becomes stronger. Also triangulating observations with teacher interviews (formal and informal) afforded me a deeper insight into teachers' opinions of pupils and the success of lessons.

The effect that my own identity had on teacher interviews also need to be considered. When I interviewed teachers who I had observed struggling to cope in lessons I often felt very uncomfortable and sensed they did too. Whether their subsequent words were an attempt to defend and justify their actions is open to question. On some occasions when I spoke informally to teachers at the end of observed lessons our perceptions of the lesson seemed very different.

Some lessons I had considered poor in terms of learning and pupil progress were talked up by the teacher. Also in formal interviews I often felt that younger, less experienced teachers were hesitant to express critical views regarding school policy/practice. Answers were sometimes couched in the rhetoric of agreed practice. For example on two occasions teachers seemed reluctant to expand on points they were making about inadequate school discipline and the weak role of senior management in this respect. With the older more experienced teachers my concern was that they regarded the interview as a request from me to be enlightened by their views on education. One senior teacher seemed to regard the whole process as a platform to discuss his own superior practice – he attempted to give a monologue on why his methods gain best results. Interpreting this data was difficult as I considered much of it to be aimed at impressing me rather than a reflection of true practice.

Regarding the ethnographic product my own role in its creation raises the issue of it being a construction purely of my own making. A very pertinent question is *what gives me the right to come to the conclusions I have arrived at?* Garman (1994) makes the important point that researchers do have the right to reach a scholarly position. However this needs to be balanced against marginalising the participants' interpretations of their own subjectivities. I have undoubtedly taken the raw data of lesson observation notes and interview transcripts and translated them into specific portrayals, conceptual, metaphorical and theoretical discussions. The data has been reinterpreted using conceptual and methodological processes that are of my own making. For example the typologies of pupil/teacher identities are constructions of my own making. These concepts have been operationalised through my own interpretation of the data. Their construct validity is somewhat dependent on my own objective and balanced reading of this data. I would temper these concerns by indicating that these concepts were the subject of

discussion with pupils and teachers. Carspecken (1996) advocates a *dialogical method* of discussion, member checks and negative case analysis. In this sense the study involves a constructive dialogue between the participants, the existing literature and the conceptual and methodological processes I have evoked. For example the concept of *passive resistance* was discussed extensively with pupils and staff. This concept was introduced to me by the pupils (Sarah and Vicky) although I did attribute it with the label *passive resistance*. Its existence is therefore not purely of my own making. There is a transparent process indicating how this concept appeared, was discussed and evolved. Wider auditability of such processes also exists through the free availability of all lesson observation notes and interview transcripts.

5.8 Other Limitations of the Study:

Aside from the limitations and concerns outlined above there are three other issues which require consideration. The first concerns the research setting and whether it is possible to generalise finding beyond this. The school is atypical of secondary schools in the sense that it is a Catholic school and also draws pupils from a very wide catchment area. Being the only Catholic school in a ten mile radius means that pupils are drawn from a wide variety of communities. Although the focus of ethnography is necessarily on a localised setting analysis and conclusions inevitably become extrapolated from that setting. The forms of behaviour observed in the setting of this study have been shaped by particular and specific cultural factors. I would however suggest that schools from different class/cultural environments have much in common and that transferring the findings of this study to other sites would be a valid exercise.

The second limitation concerns the lack of any input from pupils' parents within this thesis. Parental opinions are alluded to via the opinions of teachers and less so of pupils. A wider parental voice would have acted to question and counter the often disparaging opinions of

teachers and may have provided a deeper insight into the background and outlook of the pupils. I was acutely aware of this during the research process and did ask the nine pupils about arranging interviews with their parents. The pupils were however uncomfortable with this suggestion. I can understand how pupils would feel intimidated at the prospect of having a teacher enquire into their home life and therefore I did not pursue these requests. It could be argued that the lack of a parental voice affects the validity of the data regarding the cultural expectations of the pupils in the area. I would however temper this by highlighting the emphasis given to the views of Ms. Turner – a teacher/parent.

Thirdly it could be argued that this thesis underestimates and marginalises the power of pupil disruption. Disruption is relegated to an inferior, petulant form of expression which is generally dealt with or contained by teachers. Such petulant and nihilistic behaviour can certainly have an effect on the pedagogic process; it can disrupt, undermine and overwhelm teaching and learning (Willis 1977, McLaren 1993, Dickar 2008). However the key point of analysis is the effect of such behaviour. The idea that classroom disruption can somehow have an impact upon the wider forces of social and cultural reproduction (Anyon 1981) is disputed here. At its point of impact it can overwhelm individual teachers causing a high turnover of staff and a weak, ineffective and failing school. Whether this constitutes a force of social change is debatable. Failing schools are generally identified, labelled and acted upon by the process of inspection and accountability; they are subsumed by the dominant educational ideology. The OFSTED labels of ‘serious weaknesses’ or ‘special measures’ can be interpreted in one sense as the process whereby the dominant educational ideology tackles the effects of the excessive power of pupil disruption and confrontational forms of resistance in schools. The short and long term effects of these forms of behaviour would seem to be the same – social and cultural

reproduction. If they dominate by negotiating or winning spaces of resistance in the classroom the effect is a state of 'academic inertia'; teaching and learning are worn away by a process of attrition. The long term effect is underachievement and social reproduction. A telling episode in Willis' (1977) study is when he revisits 'the lads' when they have left school and are working in their manual labour, low status jobs. Their optimism and self-assuredness have been eroded as the reality of working life has become apparent.

5.9 Recommendations for Future Research:

The research process highlighted areas which raised pertinent issues but were impractical to pursue in the context of this thesis. Suggestions for future research include:

- A wider investigation into the concept of *constructive resistance.* The sample of this study was limited to nine female pupils. The prevalence of constructive forms of resistance across gender, ethnic and class groups would develop understanding of how and why it is expressed. The potential for constructive forms of resistance to develop a wider awareness of social injustice in capitalist society warrants further study.
- Investigating the resistant behaviour of high ability/high achieving pupils needs further and deeper analysis. The assumption that achievement is synonymous with conformity seems to prevail. This study suggests that high ability/high achieving pupils adopt complex and multi-faceted identities which warrant further investigation.
- The impact which religious faith has on pupil resistance raises many questions. Whether religion can act to temper class consciousness or counter the neo-liberal managerialist discourse warrants further investigation.
- The roles which parents play in developing or diffusing pupil resistance need further investigation. The potential for parents to develop the class consciousness of pupils is apparent.

5.10 Concluding Comments:

Unlike many ethnographic researchers I will not be leaving the site on the completion of this study. My immediate wish is that the findings of this study be considered by school management in the hope that a more culturally relevant curriculum and more engaging teaching practices be developed. The pupils who were the focus of this study will no doubt succeed academically; what is less certain is whether they and their like will resist the forces of social reproduction. Although expectations, standards and achievement are rising in many working class schools it does not necessarily follow that a more equitable and just society will follow. For neo-Marxist accounts of education to gain more relevance to the social actors of schools it is necessary to raise class consciousness through critical forms of pedagogy which engage with the cultural expression of pupils. Observing high ability, high achieving working class pupils in this study expressing constructive and critical insights into their environment suggests that neo-Marxist resistance theory still has relevance within the current neo-liberal discourse of schooling. Raising the class consciousness of such pupils to develop their potential as community leaders gives an agenda to what Rikowski (2009) refers to as the "politics of human resistance". Rising levels of expectation and achievement form working class pupils may raise their awareness of social inequality; if the long term rewards do not match their achievement then they may begin to question the foundation of a society which fails to deliver social justice. It is within these spaces of uncertainty that contemporary neo-Marxist theories of education need to focus. Constructive forms of working class pupil resistance have the potential to develop into a wider critique of social injustice.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: An Overview of the Socio-economic Make Up and Educational Achievement/Participation Levels of Easington District:

Easington district is located in the North East of England and its traditional industry was coal mining. The area is composed of former mining villages and two larger conurbations. The district has a population of 95,000 with 99.2% described as being of 'white' ethnicity.

Employment:

Unemployment levels are detailed below:

Table 1 – Easington District Unemployment Rates Compared to National Rates 2007:

	Easington District:	National:
Unemployment Rate %	9.8	5.5
Percentage of those unemployed aged 18-24	45.2	30.3

Table 1 highlights the issue of high levels of unemployment especially amongst the young.

For those in work levels of pay are substantially below the national average:

Table 2 – Easington District Gross Weekly Pay (£) Compared to National 2006:

	Easington District:	National:	Easington Pay as a % of National
Full-time workers	338	448.6	75%
Male full-time	359.3	489.4	73%
Female full-time	304.7	387.1	79%

Source: Adapted from NOMIS (Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2006)

Table 3 – Easington District Hourly Pay (£) Compared to National:

	Easington District:	National:	Easington Pay as a % of National
Full-time workers	8.34	11.24	74%
Male full-time	8.88	11.88	75%
Female full-time	7.82	10.26	76%

Source: Adapted from NOMIS (Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2006)

Tables 2 and 3 indicate that levels of pay in the district are around 75% of the national average.

Appendix 1(contd):

Socio-economic Status:

The Government Office for the North East (2007) splits the district into 63 subsidiary areas and reports that:

- 45 of these areas (71%) are classified as being in the most deprived 20% of areas in England.
- 32 of these areas (51%) are classified as being in the most deprived 10% of areas in England.

The Annual Population Survey (2007) analyses the population by occupation and socio-economic groupings:

Table 4 – Easington District Socio-economic Status by Occupation (2007):

	Easington %	North East %	Britain %
1. Managers and Senior Officials	11.4	12.3	15.0
2. Professional Occupations	*	11.0	13.0
3. Associate Professionals	8.6	13.4	14.3
4. Admin. And Secretarial	10.7	12.3	12.1
5. Skilled Trades	13.3	11.4	10.9
6. Personal Services	9.0	8.4	8.0
7. Sales and Customer Services	9.9	9.7	7.7
8. Process Plant and Machine Operatives	14.7	8.8	7.3
9. Elementary Occupations	16.9	12.4	11.4

Source: Adapted from Annual Population Survey (Jan 2006 – Dec 2006) updated August 2007
* = not available since the group sample size is too small.

Appendix 1(contd):

Education:

In 1998 two Education Action Zones (EAZ's) were set up in the district; these functioned until 2005. Although achievement has been increasing the district lags behind national levels of achievement. However as *table 5* below indicates this gap has closed considerably over the past four years:

Table 5 – GCSE Results School, Local Authority and Country 2006-2009.

Percentage of Pupils Gaining 5 A* - C GCSE's including English and Maths.

Year:	School:	Local Authority:	National:
2009	48%	48.7%	49.8%
2008	41%	44.5%	47.6%
2007	44%	42.3%	46.3%
2006	36%	40.4%	45.6%

Adapted from BBC (2010)

In terms of all levels of qualifications the district lags behind the wider region and country:

Table 6 – All Qualifications of Those of Working Age:

	Easington %	North East %	Great Britain %
NVQ 4 and above	14.7	22.7	27.4
NVQ 3 and above	31.1	42.7	45.3
NVQ 2 and above	60.1	64.1	63.8
NVQ 1 and above	75.5	79.2	77.7
Other qualifications	6.9	6.5	8.5
No qualifications	17.6	14.3	13.8

Source: Adapted from Annual Population Survey (Jan 2006 – Dec 2006)

NVQ4 and above – e.g. HND, Degree and Higher Degree level qualifications.

NVQ3 and above – e.g. 2 or more A levels, advanced GNVQ, NVQ3, 2 or more higher or advanced national qualifications (Scotland) or equivalent

NVQ2 and above – e.g. 5 or more GCSEs at grades A-C, intermediate GNVQ, NVQ2, intermediate 2 national qualifications (Scotland) or equivalent

Appendix 1(contd):

NVQ1 and above – e.g. fewer than 5 GCSEs at grades A-C, foundation GNVQ, NVQ1, intermediate 1 national qualification (Scotland) or equivalent

Other qualifications – includes foreign qualifications and some professional qualifications

An OFSTED inspection of the LEA reports:

> Participation in post-16 education and training has improved since the time of the last inspection [1999] of the local authority when it was amongst the lowest in the country. However, the proportion of young people not in education, employment and training and those whose destinations are unknown is still unacceptably high at around 20%. (OFSTED 2005).

In 2008 the percentage of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment and training (NEET's)

was 6.8% nationally. In Count Durham the figure was 10.8% (DCSF 2010).

Appendix 2: **Staff Interview Calendar:**

Name:	Interview Date:	Duration:	Profile:
Alison	13/07/09	34 mins.	School Chaplin. Non-teaching role. Responsible for the spiritual and pastoral care of pupils. Organises many extra-curricular activities including school Mass. Has been at the school for 2 years.
Ms. Barnes	23/06/09	36 mins.	Design Technology Teacher. Long term supply covering for absence. Has been at the school for 6 months.
Mr. Bell	7/06/09	35 mins.	Assistant Head Teacher responsible for school discipline and pastoral care. Has been at the school for 7 years.
Ms. Burns	6/07/09	43 mins.	Cover Supervisor. Non-teaching role – supervises classes in the absence of the teacher. Has been at the school for 4 years.
Mr. Collins	15/07/09	45 mins.	Maths Teacher and responsible for Careers – organises pupil work experience visits. Has been at the school for 17 years.
Mr. Davies	30/06/09	35 mins.	Science Teacher. Grew up in the surrounding catchment area and attended a nearby school. Has been at the school for 6 months.
Mr. Francis	29/06/09	28 mins.	Science Teacher. Newly qualified teacher. Has been at the school for 6 months. No previous work experience.
Ms. Gould	25/06/09	40 mins.	Head of Year 9. Responsible for the pastoral care of pupils. Also English Teacher. Has been at the school for 24 years.
Ms. Henderson	1/07/09	46 mins.	Year 9 Pastoral Manager. Non-teaching role. Responsible for the pastoral care of the pupils. Has been at the school for 4 years.
Mr. Jordan	10/06/09	43 mins.	Science Teacher. Newly qualified teacher. Has been at the school 6 months.
Ms. Lopez	25/06/09	41 mins.	Spanish Teacher and Spaniard. Has been at the school for 8 years.
Ms. Robson	29/06/09	39 mins.	Exclusion Base Assistant. Non-teaching role. Works with pupils excluded from lessons in a mentoring role. Has been at the school 5 years.
Mr. Rose	25/06/09	70 mins.	Exclusion Base Manager and Geography Teacher. The Exclusion Base teaches pupils who have been removed from lessons long term because of behaviour issues. Has been at the school for 34 years.
Mr. Stewart	24/06/09	38 mins.	English Teacher. Has been at the school for 5 years.
Ms. Turner	10/07/09	45 mins.	RE Teacher. Grew up in the catchment area and has a daughter in Year 9 at the school. Has been at the school for 7 years.
Ms. Wood	24/06/09	26 mins.	Science Teacher. Has been at the school for 7 years.

Appendix 3: **Lesson Observation Calendar:**

Date/Time:	Teacher:	Subject:	Pupils:
Mon 11/05 AM	Ms. Lopez	Spanish	Lorna, Vicky, Sophie
Mon 11/05 PM	Ms. Gould	English	Jennifer, Ashleigh
Tue 12/05 AM	Mr. Jordan	Science	Abbi, Jennifer, Sarah.
Tue 12/05 PM	Ms. Charles	English	Abbi, Sarah
Wed 13/05 AM	Ms. Slee	Geography	Sophie, Lorna
Thu 14/05 AM	Ms. Gould	English	Jennifer, Ashleigh
Thu 14/05 AM	Ms. Wood	Science	Abbi, Sarah, Jennifer
Friday 15/05 PM	Ms. Gould	English	Jennifer, Ashleigh
Mon 18/05 AM	Ms. Lopez	Spanish	Lorna, Vicky, Sophie
Tue 19/05 AM	Mr. Jordan	Science	Abbi, Jennifer, Sarah
Tue 19/05 PM	Ms. Charles	English	Abbi, Sarah
Wed 20/05 AM	Ms. Slee	Geography	Sophie, Lorna
Wed 20/05 PM	Ms. Barnes	DT	Sophie, Lorna
Thu 21/05 AM	Ms. Wood	Science	Abbi, Sarah, Jennifer
Fri 22/05 PM	Ms. Charles	English	Abbi, Sarah
Wed 3/06 AM	Ms. Wood	Science	Abbi, Sarah, Jennifer
Thu 4/06 AM	Ms. Wood	Science	Vicky, Lorna
Thu 4/06 AM	Ms. Lopez	Spanish	Ashleigh, Toni, Lindsey, Abbi
Fri 5/06 AM	Ms. Slee	Geography	Sophie, Lorna
Mon 8/06 AM	Mr. Jordan	Science	Abbi, Jennifer, Sarah
Mon 8/06 AM	Ms. Lopez	Spanish	Lorna, Vicky, Sophie
Mon 8/06 PM	Ms. Turner	RE	Toni, Lindsey, Vicky, Sarah
Tue 9/06 PM	Mr. Stewart	English	Sophie, Toni, Lindsey, Vicky
Wed 10/06 AM	Mr. Stewart	English	Sophie, Toni, Lindsey, Vicky
Wed 10/06 PM	Ms. Turner	RE	Abbi, Sophie, Jennifer
Thu 11/06 AM	Mr. Watson	DT	Toni, Lindsey, Ashleigh
Thu 11/06 AM	Ms. Wood	Science	Vicky, Lorna
Fri 12/06 AM	Ms. Turner	RE	Toni, Lindsey, Vicky, Sarah
Mon 15/06 PM	Ms. Lopez	Spanish	Ashleigh, Toni, Lindsey, Abbi
Tue 16/06 AM	Mr. Davies	Science	Toni, Ashleigh, Vicky
Wed 17/06 AM	Mr. Francis	Science	Sophie
Wed 17/06 AM	Mr. Stewart	English	Sophie, Toni, Lindsey, Vicky
Thu 18/06 AM	Ms. Lopez	Spanish	Ashleigh, Toni, Lindsey, Abbi
Thu 18/06 AM	Ms. Wood	Science	Vicky, Lorna
Thu 18/06 PM	Ms. Barnes	DT	Sophie, Lorna
Mon 22/06 AM	Ms. Barnes	DT	Sophie, Lorna
Mon 22/06 PM	Ms. Turner	RE	Toni, Lindsey, Vicky, Sarah
Tue 23/06 AM	Mr. Davies	Science	Toni, Ashleigh, Vicky
Wed 24/06 PM	Ms. Turner	RE	Abbi, Sophie Jennifer
Tue 30/06 AM	Mr. Watson	DT	Toni, Lindsey, Ashleigh
Tue 30/06 AM	Mr. Davies	Science	Toni, Ashleigh, Vicky
Wed 1/07 PM	Ms. Turner	RE	Abbi, Sophie, Jennifer
Tue 7/07 AM	Mr. Watson	DT	Toni, Lindsey, Ashleigh

Appendix 3 (contd):

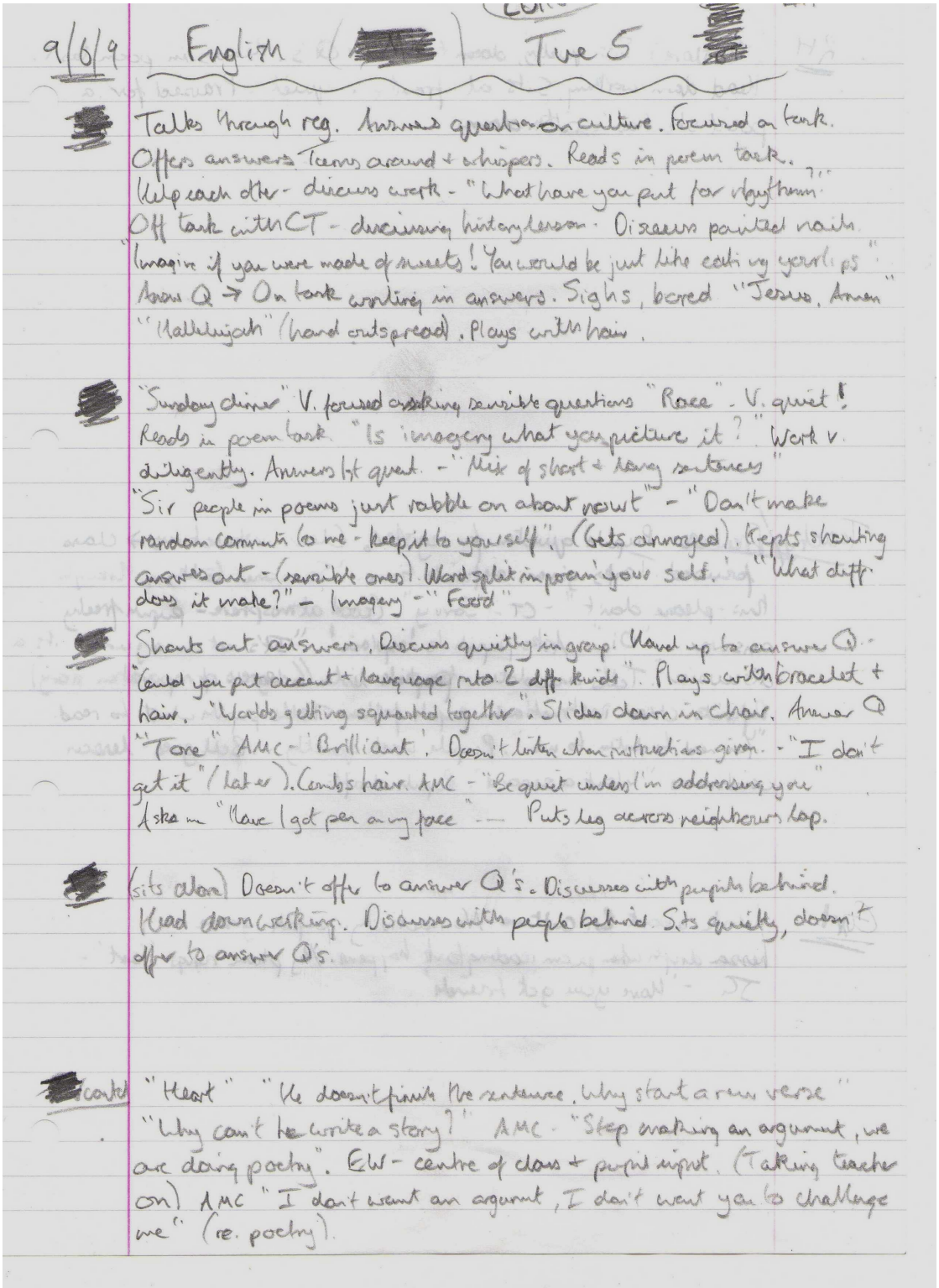
Observations by Subject Area:

Subject:	Observations of Teachers:
English (9 observations)	Ms. Gould x3 Ms. Charles x3 Mr. Stewart x3
Science (13 observations)	Ms. Wood x6 (2 classes each observed 3 times) Mr. Jordan x3 Mr. Davies x3 Mr. Francis x1
Spanish (6 observations)	Ms. Lopez x6 (2 classes each observed 3 times)
RE (6 observations)	Ms. Turner x6 (2 classes each observed 3 times)
Design Technology (DT) (6 observations)	Ms. Barnes x3 Mr. Watson x3
Geography (3 observations)	Ms. Slee x3

Observations per Pupil:

Pupil:	Lessons Observed:	Total:
Abbi	Spanish (3), Science (6), English (3), RE (3)	15
Ashleigh	Spanish (3), English (3), DT (3), Science (3)	12
Jennifer	English (3), Science (6), RE (3)	12
Lindsey	Spanish (3), English (3), RE (3), DT (3)	12
Lorna	Geography (3), DT (3), Science (3), Spanish (3)	12
Sarah	Science (6), English (3), RE (3)	12
Sophie	Geography (3), DT (3), Spanish (3), English (3), Science (1), RE (3)	16
Toni	Spanish (3), English (3), DT (3), RE (3)	12
Vicky	Science (6), RE (3), English (3), Spanish (3)	15

Appendix 4: **Fieldnotes Example:**



9/6/9 English ([redacted]) Tue 5

[redacted] Talks through reg. Answers question on culture. Focussed on task. Offers answers. Turns around + whispers. Reads in poem task. Help each other - discuss work - "What have you put for rhythm?" Off task with CT - discussing history lesson. Discuss painted nails. "Imagine if you were made of sweets! You would be just like eating your lips" Answ Q → On task working in answers. Sighs, bored "Jesus, Amen" "Hallelujah" (hand outspread). Plays with hair.

[redacted] "Sunday dinner" V. focussed asking sensible questions "Race". V. quiet! Reads in poem task "Is imagery what you picture it?" Work v. diligently. Answers lit quest. - "Mix of short + long sentences" "Sir people in poems just rabble on about rowt" - "Don't make random comments to me - keep it to yourself". (Gets annoyed). Keeps shouting answers out - (sensible ones) Word split in poem 'your self.' "What diff does it make?" - Imagery - "Feard"

[redacted] Shouts out answers. Discuss quietly in group. Hand up to answer Q. - "Could you put accent + language into 2 diff kinds". Plays with bracelet + hair. "Worlds getting squashed together". Slides down in chair. Answer Q "Tone" AMC - "Brilliant". Doesn't listen when instructions given. - "I don't get it" (later). Combs hair. AMC - "Be quiet unless I'm addressing you" Asks me "Have I got pen on my face" — Puts leg across neighbours lap.

[redacted] (sits alone) Doesn't offer to answer Q's. Discusses with pupils behind. Head down working. Discusses with people behind. Sits quietly, doesn't offer to answer Q's.

[redacted] (cont) "Heart" "He doesn't finish the sentence, why start a new verse" "Why can't he write a story?" AMC - "Stop creating an argument, we are doing poetry". EW - centre of class + pupil input. (Talking teacher on) AMC "I don't want an argument, I don't want you to challenge me" (re. poetry).

Appendix 5 Pupil Interview Calendar:

Interview Stage:	Interview No.	Pupil Informants:	Date:	Duration:
Stage 1	1	All 9 pupils.	4/6/09	32 mins.
	2	Sarah, Jennifer, Abbi.	9/06/09	28 mins.
	3	Sophie and Lorna.	11/06/09	25 mins.
	4	Vicky, Lindsey, Toni, Ashleigh.	12/06/09	38 mins.
Stage 2	5	Sophie, Abbi, Vicky, Ashleigh.	17/06/09	36 mins.
	6	Jennifer, Lorna, Ashleigh.	25/06/09	36 mins.
	7	Sarah and Vicky	30/06/09	33 mins.
Stage 3	8	Lindsey and Toni.	3/07/09	28 mins.
	9	Sophie and Abbi.	5/07/09	22 mins.
	10	Jennifer, Lorna and Ashleigh.	9/07/09	25 mins.
	11	Sarah and Vicky.	16/07/09	28 mins.

First Stage – General discussions about observed lessons and feelings about school.

Second Stage – Continuing discussions about lessons and school but also feedback to pupils about my opinions on the data.

Third Stage – Pupils whose identities I thought were similar and were thus going to be described together in the ethnographic text were invited to discuss these identities with me. For example two pupils, Lindsey and Toni, had similar identities I felt so I invited just those two pupils to discuss how I had interpreted the data and how I planned to represent them in the text (interview 8).

Appendix 6: School Detention Data:

The school operates a centralised detention system. Teachers issue a lunchtime (25 minute) detention by filling out a 'pink slip' – recording the pupil's name, their own name, the date and ticking a box to indicate the nature of the offence. The 'pink slips' are handed in to the school office where they are collated to produce daily detention lists.

A sample of 17 consecutive school days (26 March to 7 May 2009) detention lists was taken. The data was typed into a spreadsheet each day by myself. The data provides a crude measure of how pupils conflict with pedagogic authority and must be used with caution. Teachers apply school sanctions subjectively and inconsistently; some issue detentions freely for minor offences, others rarely resort to the system. Also 28% of all detentions are issued for '*other reasons'*. Teachers tick this box on the detention slip if the offence does not fit the other categories. '*Other*' is an all encompassing category and can cover diverse reasons such as lack of effort, insolence, eating/drinking and graffiti. Therefore when considering data on 'classroom disruption' it must be considered that there is no universal definition of what this constitutes. As related in the ethnographic text the conformist pupils seemed to commit many offences of classroom disruption (in my opinion) but were never issued with a lunchtime detention. Similar behaviour for the more confrontational pupils did attract detentions.

Data Analysis:

- During the 17 day sample 1040 detentions were issued; an average of 61 per day. This means that on average 8% of school pupils are on detention per day.
- 61% of all detentions were issued to male pupils.
- 'Classroom disruption' was the most common reason detentions were issued, accounting for 43% of all detentions.

Appendix 6 (contd.):

Table 1: Reasons for the Issue of Lunchtime Detentions:

Offence:	Percentage:	Percentage Male:	Percentage Female:
Classroom Disruption	43%	61%	39%
Homework	11%	63%	37%
Punctuality	9%	62%	38%
Uniform	4%	68%	32%
Corridor Behaviour	5%	63%	37%
'Other'	28%	60%	40%

Table 2: Proportion of Detentions per Year Group:

Year Group	7	8	9	10	11
Percentage	10%	28%	29%	21%	12%

Finer analysis is required regarding *who* is receiving detentions. For example in Year 9, the year group the pupils who are the focus of this study belong to, 74 different pupils received a detention over the sample period. However 21 of these only received a single detention whereas others are repeat offenders. 7 pupils accounted for 29% of all Year 9 detentions; one female pupil receiving 14 and a male pupil 17. Repeat offenders make up a sizeable proportion of the detentions in all year groups. Of the pupils who are the focus of this study only Sophie received any lunchtime detentions during the period of the sample; 7 in total.

Male members of staff (who make up 41% of all staff) issued 68% of all detentions. Some teachers did not issue a single detention during the sample time, others issued up to 90:

Table 3: Detentions Issued per Staff Member:

No. of Detentions:	Members of Staff
0 - 10	33
11 – 20	16
21 – 30	5
31 – 40	4
41 – 50	2
51 – 60	1
61 – 70	1
71 – 80	0
81 – 90	2

Appendix 7: **Pupil Review Sheet:**

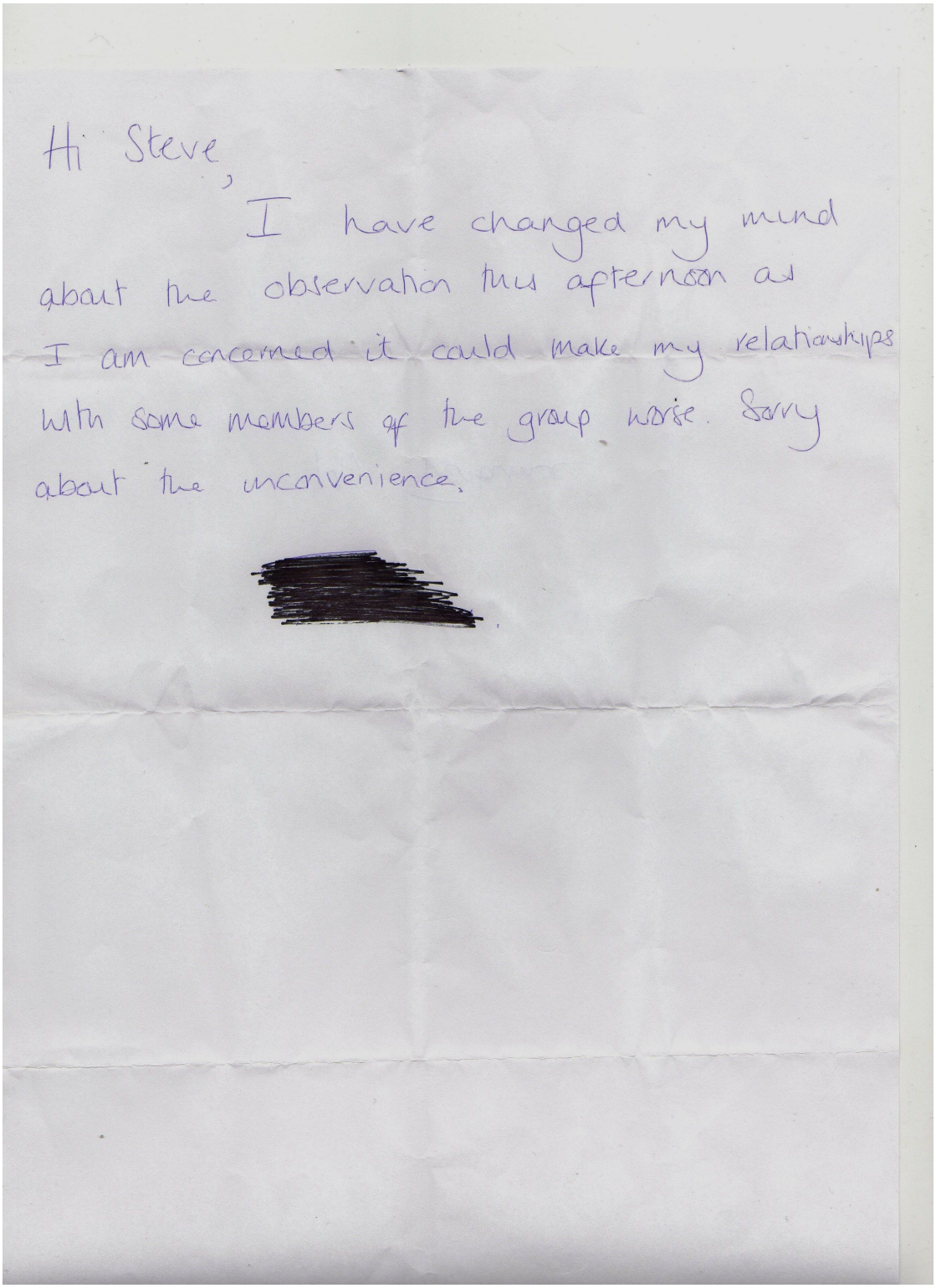
Subject	End of Key Stage 3 Target Level	National Curriculum Review Level October	Concern Code October	National Curriculum Review Level December	Concern Code December	NC Review Level March	Concern Code March	Teacher Assessment Level June	Concern Code June
English	7c	5a	8	5a	8	6a	8	7c	9
Maths	7a	7b	8	7b	8	7a	9	8c	9
Science	6a	6b	8	6b	8	6b	8	7c	9
Art	7c	6b	8	6a	8	6a	8	6a	0
French/ Spanish	7c	5b	8	5a	8	5a	0	6c	0
Geography	7c	6a	8	6a	8	6c	8	6a	9
History	7c	6a	8	7c	9	7c	9	7c	9
ICT	7c	6c	8	6c	1	6b	8	6a	0
Technology	7c	5a	8	6b	8	6a	8	7c	9
Music	7c			5b	0	5b	0	5a	0
P.E.	7c	5b	0	5a	0	6c	0	6c	0
R.E.	7c	8c	9	8a	9	7b	9	8a	9
Citizenship								7	

Percentage Attendance 100.0

Targets and reviews – 5a = high level 5; 5b = middle level 5; 5c = low level 5
Please note that the June Teacher Assessment Levels are not sub-divided, as required by the Government.

Concerns –
0 = No specific concerns, but not achieving as they should and therefore not on track to reach target by the end of the year/course
1 = concerns about application (i.e effort made) 2 = concerns about behaviour that disrupts their own or others progress 4 = concerns about homework
So therefore 3 = 1 + 2 5 = 1 + 4 7 = 1 + 2 + 4
and 8 = not yet on target, but on track to reach it by the end of the year in KS3 & 5/end of course in KS 4 9 = on target or better than expected – well done!

Appendix 8: **Teacher Note:**



Hi Steve,

I have changed my mind about the observation this afternoon as I am concerned it could make my relationships with some members of the group worse. Sorry about the unconvenience.

[redacted]