THE NATURE AND CONSEQUENCES OF CLASSROOM DISRUPTION

by

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted as a micro ethnography of two classrooms, a regular education class of fifth graders and a self-contained special education class of students between the ages of nine and twelve. The focus of the study was on the conception of classroom disruption and its components. The components of classroom disruption consisted of the definition of classroom disruption, the perception of the causes of disruption, the consequences of classroom disruption and how the perception of classroom disruption drove the practice of the participants.

Clearly there was a difference between the participants in conception of classroom disruption in general and a difference in the conception of the components of classroom disruption. The differences were more clearly delineated between the teachers and the students. Classroom disruption, in the minds of both teachers, created an impediment to what was generally felt as the most important goal of the teachers, the learning process. This disruption was defined in terms of the disruptive actions of the students and disruption meant, on most occasions, that the teacher or a staff member was being disrupted.

The perception of the teachers was that disruption was basically caused by a) emotional problems resulting from issues outside of the school environment, such as an upsetting home life; b) frustration caused by school work and; c) frustration caused by a student's inability to get attention. The perception of the students was that disruption was additionally caused by being bored, not getting attention fast enoughand teachers who in their opinion were unfair.

Both teachers generally relied on Behaviorist methods to prevent classroom disruption. However, the special education teacher used many preventative measures to avoid disruption; measures which included aspects of Humanistic theory.

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In loving memory of Mollie Wittes

- a woman of limited formal education who possessed the wisdom to know that love is the substance that truly makes a difference -

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to describe the nature and consequences of classroom disruption in two different classroom settings. Disruptive actions are conceived of differently by different individuals. Differences in the conception of disruption exist among teachers, students, administrators, and other staff members; differences which are likely to be related to differing philosophies of teaching and learning. Additionally, the consequences of conceived disruption are many and varied. It is my intention to describe and illuminate how conceptions of disruptive action, and the consequences of that disruption, drive the practice of teachers in their dealing with disruptive actions. It is my hope that by studying the nature and consequences of disruptive classroom actions, new knowledge can be provided in terms of understanding and dealing more successfully with disruption in the classroom. In this way teachers would be able to accommodate a wider range of student action through the use of a more positive and effective approach.

Statement Of The Problem

An important issue in schools and classrooms across this county is disruptions, ranging from minor distraction to violence. Disruptive actions of

both a minor or more serious nature are commonly experienced by teachers and can present an interruption to normal teaching and learning (Clarke, Parry-Jones, Gay & Smith, 1981). Classroom disruption is becoming a grave matter as antisocial and aggressive behavior escalates in the schools. This kind of disruption is a major source of concern for school officials and society at large (Walker & Sylwester, 1991). Patterson and Bank (1986) claim that the single best predictor of adolescent criminal behavior is a long established pattern of early school antisocial behavior.

One of the primary goals of education is to provide an appropriate atmosphere in which to teach academic skills, while another important goal is to instill values that are consistent with successful functioning in the society. It is believed that both the individual and society will be served by fulfilling these goals. Dealing with the disruptive actions of students will have an impact on the actions that these students will choose in their future lives; actions that may, in turn, impact their communities and society as a whole.

The process of teaching is often interrupted by what are conceived to be disruptions. When disruptions occur, teachers and other educational staff find themselves in the role of disciplinarians. This scenario raises the question of what do teachers define as disruptive and why do they do the things they do to alter what they see as disruptive? This study addresses that question through the examination of the conception of what is disruptive, the reason it is considered to be so, and the consequences of the disruption.

Teachers face the daily challenge of implementing educational strategies suitable for increasing student motivation to participate, and for encouraging non-disruptive actions from those students. The degree to which classroom teachers are meeting this challenge has been the subject of much public debate. Professional educators agree that poorly selected and implemented disciplinary techniques have a negative influence on students and teachers. The effect on students of these inadequate disciplinary techniques is documented by the fact that discipline problems are the major cause of student referrals made by regular educators to special education (Smith & Misra, 1992). Additionally, Smith and Misra (1992) reported that the influence of discipline-related problems on teachers has been identified as the prime stress-producing factor in teaching.

With the current trend of integrating and including students with disabilities into regular education programs, the issue of disruption in the classroom becomes even more important. The benefits of inclusion have been documented; some teachers talk about the positive effect inclusion has had on everyone in the class. "Disabled students become more confident and independent, and their classmates learn tolerance" (Parsavand, 1994, p. A1). However, inclusion brings up new concerns and issues. Regular education teachers in inclusionary situations often feel overwhelmed by having to work with too many students with special needs. "For many of these teachers, accommodating the students' academic and behavioral difficulties requires considerable effort or may even necessitate instructional expertise they have

not yet acquired" (Heckman & Rike, 1994, p. 30). The American Federation of teachers has publicly stated their opposition to full inclusion, saying teachers aren't adequately trained to deal with the wide range of disabilities, physical and emotional (Feldman, 1994). It should be noted, however, that in any event, issues of disruption, whether caused by the classroom environment or caused by individual students, need to be addressed.

An important factor to consider when thinking about classroom disruption is that individual students and teachers, as well as other staff members may have different interpretations of what constitutes a disruptive action. Another point to keep in mind is that not all disruptive action is unwarranted. In some cases, disruptive action exhibited by a student may be essential for his or her emotional or physical welfare. Even with this in mind however, one of the most serious issues facing teachers is the presence of challenging behaviors such as aggression, swearing, defiance or other disruptive acts. (Foster-Johnson & Dunlap, 1993) It is important to gain an improved understanding of the disruptive actions of students.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To understand and theorize about the nature and consequences of disruptive classroom action requires an understanding of the classroom and teachers. It is important to know what teachers think, believe, experience, and most importantly the actions they take. It is as equally important to understand the ways in which teachers make meaning in the classroom.

Much of the judgment, knowledge, and decision making that teachers exercise follows from interpretations of their own experiences. "The study of teacher thinking is based in part on the assumption that the teacher refers to a personal perspective, an implicit theory, and a belief system about teaching and learning (Clark & Yinger, 1978, p. 30)." Nespor and Barylske (1991) considered teacher knowledge as a situated construction of social networks, a textually produced phenomenon. It is formulated by previous experience, environment and interactions with others. Based on judgments reached, teachers formulate theories about the practice of teaching that include techniques of instruction and classroom management.

Some discussion of theories and how theories are put into practice would be useful in terms of discussing the thoughts and actions of teachers. Argyris and Schon (1974) described theories as "vehicles for explanation, prediction, or control," (p. 5). They go on to differentiate between espoused

theories and theories-in-use. "When someone is asked how he [sic] would behave under certain circumstances, the answer he usually gives is his espoused theory of action for that situation. This is the theory of action to which he gives allegiance, and which, upon request, he communicates to others. However, the theory that actually governs his actions is his theory in use," (pp. 6 & 7). Many teachers discuss their conceptions of teaching and say which overt (espoused) theories guide their actions when they teach. However, what they say may be in opposition to the way they act. (Angulo, 1988)

Interviewing and asking teachers what their theories of learning or behavior are might not yield an accurate picture of their teaching practices. Argyris and Schon stated that espoused theories and theories-in-use are often incompatible and that the individual may be unaware of the discrepancy between the two. "We cannot learn what someone's theory-in-use is simply by asking him. We must construct his theory-in-use from observations of his behavior. In this sense, constructs of theories-in-use are like scientific hypotheses; the constructs may be inaccurate representations of the behavior they claim to describe" (Argyris and Schon, 1974 p. 7).

Theories-in-use maintain a person's sense of consistency. They give order to a person's world. "When our theories-in-use prove ineffective in maintaining the constancy of our governing variables, we may find it necessary to change our theories-in-use. But we try to avoid such change because we wish to keep our theories-in-use constant. Forced to choose between getting what we want and maintaining second-order constancy, we may choose not to

get what we want" (Argyris and Schon, 1974 p. 17). Change is difficult and, in an effort to stay with the familiar, it is often avoided. Teacher practice that is ineffective may be continued in an effort to avoid change which is perceived as uncomfortable. Clark and Yinger (1978) found that when instruction is interrupted by students, "teachers occasionally considered alternatives [to their planned instructional process] but hardly ever implemented those alternatives," (p. 40). That is, for various reasons, teachers tend not to change the instructional process in mid-stream, even when it is going poorly.

Congruence is when an individual's espoused theory matches that individual's theory-in-use. "Lack of congruence between espoused theory and theory-in-use may precipitate search for a modification of either theory since we tend to value both espoused theory (image of self) and congruence (integration of doing and believing)" (Argyris & Schon, 1974 p. 23).

The espoused theories and theories-in-use of teachers are shaped by many factors, both experiential and theoretical. Certainly, for teachers who have formal training, many of their stated beliefs (espoused theories) and practices (theories-in-use) are based on the education they have received. Additionally, the structure of school systems, schools, and individual classrooms are influenced by educational learning theories. In turn, educational learning theory is influenced by the perceptions of those who have experienced the classroom environment. There have been numerous studies on the best methods of instruction. Some of these studies are concerned entirely with dealing with classroom disruptions; other research, although not entirely

concerned with disruptive actions, include strategies for dealing with classroom disruption.

It is useful to review major learning theories that may influence/guide teachers. These theories will impact the instructional methods and social interactions that teachers have with students. Learning theories can be divided into three perspectives; Behaviorist, Cognitive, and Humanist. (Two other major perspectives, the Psycho-analytical and Biophysical models, have been omitted from this study, not due to their lack of importance, but due to the fact that methods deriving from these perspectives are seldom utilized in the classroom.) Each of the perspectives reviewed in this study define classroom disruption differently and each prescribes different actions for dealing with disruptions.

Behaviorist Theory

General Principles

The major concepts in the Behaviorist theory of learning are based on the stimulus-response-reinforcement paradigm in which human behavior is thought to be under the control of the external environment. Behaviorists approach the study of learning by concentrating on overt behaviors that can be observed and measured. Behavior itself is seen as determined by events external to the learner. In Behaviorist theory there are no thought processes or internal mechanisms to rely on. Stimuli elicit or cue particular behavior and by reinforcement of that behavior the stimulus - response relationship is

maintained. A stimulus is "any condition, event or change in the environment of an individual which produces a change in behavior" (Taber, Glaser, & Halmuth, 1967, p. 16). By rewarding a student for what the teacher considers "appropriate" behavior, the student will continue to exhibit that behavior which leads to rewards. Unrecorded behavior or behavior that results in punishment will be extinguished.

B.F. Skinner's theory of operant conditioning is a classic example of a Behaviorist learning theory. Skinner (1954) described operant behaviors as voluntary behaviors used in operating on the environment. Skinner excluded subjective experience from his theorizing and discussed the manipulation of behavior through stimulation and reinforcement. He believed we are controlled by our past experiences through reinforcement and punishment. The Skinner approach to instruction involves building stimulus-response associations by cuing learners to the nature of the response desired and by providing immediate feedback about the correctness of the response elicited, so that correct responses are reinforced and incorrect responses are extinguished. Shaping behaviors by using small steps and reinforcing correct responses increases learning. "By making each successive step as small as possible, the frequency of reinforcement can be raised to a maximum (Skinner, 1954, p. 94)"

What Constitutes Disruption

In research studies using Behaviorist theories and techniques, disruption is usually defined by the teacher. The overall goal of the teacher is, most often,

to create a positive classroom environment. Overt actions that are targeted for behavior modification are often actions that disrupt the entire class and may include, but are not limited to; talking out, making unnecessary noise, being out of seat without permission, fighting, swearing and talking back to the teacher (Poteet, 1974). Once the teacher targets the action for modification, various methods are used to extinguish what is seen as disruptive and to reinforce what is seen as productive. Bates, (1982, p. 3) a proponent of behavior modification techniques, has identified what problem behavior is and when there is a need for intervention. "A behavior requires intervention when one of the following events occur: several independent requests for assistance are made with the same individual, the person is behaving differently than other comparisons groups and when there have been dramatic changes in the person's behavior." Bates targeted more specific behavior, such as non-compliance, which he defined as a refusal to follow specific directions and a failure to respond quickly to requests, for behavior modification. In a study by Adair and Schneider (1993), students were reinforced for arriving at class on time, for having materials to work on or study, for staying on task, and for interacting appropriately with staff. James (1990) used behavior modification to attempt to control and reduce calling out. Behavior such as hitting, kicking, biting, scratching, throwing an object that struck someone, climbing on furniture, repetitive jumping, loud vocalizations, spitting, knocking down furniture, damaging objects, and touching others, were all identified as aggressive and/or disruptive behavior in other studies (Mace, Page, Ivancic & O'Brien, 1986).

Strategies Used In Dealing With Classroom Disruption

Reinforcement

Reinforcement is a procedure that serves to maintain or increase a behavior. Positive reinforcement is the presentation of a stimulus, as a consequence of a response, and has the function of increasing or maintaining that response. A classroom teacher will reward student action that they find desirable in an effort to have a particular student and other students repeat that action and actions similar to it. Money, affection, approval, smiles, and attention are all examples of typical positive reinforcers. (Joyce and Weil, 1986, p. 114) Although chatting, and teacher proximity have also served as reinforcers in dealing with spelling errors, temper tantrums, irrelevant verbal behavior, and baby talk in special education classrooms for emotionally disturbed pre-adolescents. (Zimmerman and Zimmerman, 1966)

Negative reinforcement is the response of an individual based on the escape from, or removal of, an aversive stimulus as the consequence of a response. (Sulzer-Azaroff & Mayer, 1977)

Punishment

To increase the likelihood of a desired behavior occurring or to deter undesirable behavior, punishment is introduced. School detention, loss of recess, and being scolded by the teacher and/or the school principal are examples of common forms of school punishment.

Token Economy

Token economy programs involve giving students points that they can later exchange for a reinforcement of choice (Smith & Misra, 1992). Sulzer, Azaroff and Mayer (1977) described a well-designed token economy as one that targets a behavior, or an approximation of that behavior, that is immediately and consistently reinforced by delivery of an adequate number of tokens. The token is any object or symbol that can be exchanged for a variety of tangible reinforcing objects or events.

Researchers have cited some of the advantages of token systems. They permit immediate reinforcement for the students in a class by means of a common object that individuals can use to obtain objects that they find desirable. Since tokens are like money, the behaviors can gradually be brought under the control of a powerful natural reinforcer. Since tokens can have a variety of back-up reinforcers they are not likely to lose their reinforcing power. (Birnbrauer, Burchard and Burchard, 1970)

Adair and Schneider (1993) have documented the success of an elaborate token economy system in a resource room at Prospect High School in Illinois. The design of the point system was modeled after the functioning of a real-life banking system. Points were awarded on the basis of students' successful completion of set targeted behavior, such as arriving on time and staying on task.

Token economies are used to promote certain actions of students and to deter other actions. When students elicit the targeted actions that are desirable

they are rewarded by a token of some sort which can be used by that student to obtain something that the student finds valuable. Additionally, in an effort not to lose tokens students will elicit desirable targeted actions.

Behavior Contracts

A behavior contract is described as a "formal agreement between the client and other significant individuals who are affected by or who affect the client's behavior. These individuals include the counselor, teachers, administrators, parents, juvenile court workers, social workers, and the client's peers." (Hackney, 1974, p. 23) Hackney listed the following objectives of the behavior contract:

1. To obtain a commitment to a change of behavior.
2. To effect the change under conditions which are clearly specified.
3. To agree in advance to what the consequences of the change will be for parties involved.

When a student is exhibiting classroom disruption, that student and the teacher and/or other educational staff come to an agreement about what actions are acceptable and what actions are unacceptable. Once this agreement is made consequences for both acceptable and unacceptable behavior are delineated and also agreed upon. Usually the student is rewarded for performing acceptable actions and punished for displaying unacceptable actions. It is hoped that the behavior contract will promote the student to

engage in the agreed upon acceptable actions. Conversely, it is hoped that the agreed upon unacceptable actions will cease.

Bates (1982) recommended behavior contracting as a behavioral strategy that assures student involvement and clarification of program procedures. He described the behavior contract as a format for establishing mutual responsibilities of all persons who participate in a behavior management program. Bates felt that, "...by requiring signatures, a more formal commitment to conditions should result in more successful program efforts" (p. 13).

"Besides providing a logical, self-directed approach to problem solving, the contract system forces the student to assume responsibility for his own behavior" (Thomas and Ezell 1972, p. 31). The contract also provides a written record of the decisions made by the student and the course of action the student intends to pursue. The formal nature of the contract often acts as a motivational device not only for the student but for the teacher as well.

Shier (1969) documented the progress of a third grade boy who exhibited behavior that included making noise, wandering around the room at will, use of inappropriate language and physical aggression directed at classmates. Results from this study indicated that after the use of a behavior contract there was a significant decrease in the number of out of school suspensions for this individual student.

Behavior contracts deal with disruption by rewarding desired actions and punishing undesired actions. The contract serves as a commitment from both the educational staff and student and requires that all parties work together.

Modeling

Another intervention used for dealing with disruption in the class is the use of modeling through peers or adults. Behavior modeling is based on the concept that many behaviors are learned most effectively through modeling or imitation. (Bandura, 1965; 1969; 1971) For modeling to be successful, disruptive students would model either their peers or adults to elicit the desired actions.

Some individuals are more likely to imitate or model behavior from certain individuals, but not others. For example, young male teachers have observed young boys imitating them by copying clothing or hairstyles. Little girls often model their teachers, particularly if they are women (Reinert & Huang, 1987). It stands to reason that students will model a teacher whom they like rather than one they dislike.

Teachers often try to find positive students in the class that other students will follow and imitate. A student who is seen as disruptive by the teacher is often encouraged to imitate a student who is seen as cooperative. Modeling can also have the opposite effect such as when students imitate the disruptive actions of another student. This is often very frustrating to the teacher and is highly discouraged.

Cognitive Theory

General Principles

Cognitive theorists view learning as the acquisition or reorganization of the cognitive structures through which humans process and store information. The student is not passively reacting to stimulus, but is an active participant in the learning process. It is the learner's own information processing capabilities that determine their learning and it is the teacher's job to develop ways to stimulate learners to use these capabilities to process the information to be learned (Bruner, 1966; Gagne, 1985).

Bruner (1966) viewed learning as an ongoing process of developing an increasingly sophisticated cognitive structure for representing and interacting with the world. The teacher's role according to Bruner (1969, p. 9) was to, "... extend the student's range of experience, in helping him [sic] to understand the underlying structure of the material he is learning and in dramatizing the significance of what he is learning." Learning is considered to be information processing. "Once the stimulation from external energy sources reaches the human receptors, it is transformed by them into patterns that can best be understood as conveying information (Gagne & Glaser, 1987, p. 53)". When a child begins his or her educational experience they may not have the experience or knowledge of what social actions to take. This is particularly true if the child has had no previous experience socializing with other children. The teacher must provide an environment and present information to the child that

would enable that child to process the actions that would benefit that child the most. The teacher instructs the students in the class on the rules and tries to provide an atmosphere in which the student chooses actions that are non-disruptive. A child who is not used to taking turns must learn that in a school situation taking turns is essential in certain circumstances. The child who pushes ahead of other students at the water fountain will probably get some quick instruction from not only the teacher but from classmates as well. This information will be stored and processed and the next time the student is interested in getting a drink of water the course of action may be quite different.

Bruner (1969) discussed four themes of learning. The first theme is concerned with giving students an understanding of the "fundamental structure", (p. 11) of whatever subjects are to be taught. If students are to transfer knowledge to other areas, it is necessary to provide an understanding of fundamental structures which include not just teaching the mastery of facts and techniques, but the teaching of supporting habits and skills that make possible the active use of the materials learned. What is desired is assisting the student to reach an understanding of a "general idea", which can then be used as a basis for recognizing subsequent problems as special cases of the idea originally mastered. Children who learn to take turns at the water fountain will hopefully generalize that processed information and wait their turn in other areas such as on the playground.

The second theme focuses on Bruner's belief that "any subject may be taught to anybody at any age in some form" (pp. 12 - 13). The key is to present

information in a form that is at the student's readiness level. "The task of teaching a subject to a child at any particular age is one of representing the structure of that subject in terms of the child's way of viewing things, (p. 32)." A teacher, then, must consider the age of the student and other factors that might affect that student's ability to comprehend the information being taught. "A curriculum as it develops should revisit basic ideas repeatedly, building upon them until the student has grasped the full formal apparatus that goes with them," (Bruner, 1969, p. 13).

The third theme encourages the use, by students, of intuitive thinking, which provides the training of hunches and educated guesses. The teacher should support ideas generated by the student that are based on "gut feelings", that derive from what the student already knows and is using in an attempt to solve problems, social or academic.

Finally, the fourth theme relates to how students can be stimulated and motivated to learn. Bruner (1969) recognized that although competition for high grades exists, he does not feel that this is the best way to motivate students to learn. Creating an interest in a subject is the most beneficial method for developing motivation to learn. The best way to do this is "to create interest in a subject by rendering it worth knowing, which means to make the knowledge gained usable in one's thinking beyond the situation in which the learning has occurred" (p. 31). Providing information and instruction to a student in a manner that enables the student to see that it is useful information, and relevant to them, is essential.

What Constitutes Disruption

Cognitive theorists are concerned primarily with the process of learning and information acquisition. Since the student must be an active participant in this process, a student who simply refuses to participate would be considered disruptive. Students not open to the acquisition and processing of information may choose not to listen in class or to withdraw from the instructional experience. Students who process information but who choose not to use that information may also be considered disruptive. Disruptive actions would be considered those actions taken that are impulsive or actions taken without thought. The goal is for the teacher to present information to the student who in turn processes this information and uses it to formulate actions that are not disruptive. A student who is prone to losing his or her temper and to fighting would be encouraged to think before they act. Many of the articles concerning metacognition target impulsive behavior (Huhn, 1981; Larson and Gerber, 1984; Meichenbaum, 1971.) Other actions targeted are on task behavior, (Cameron and Robinson, 1980), interpersonal problems (Meichenbaum and Asarnow, 1987), and homework completion (Fish and Mendola, 1986).

Strategies Used In Dealing With Classroom Disruption

Numerous applications of cognitive theory relating to disruptive classroom actions have been cited. Structuring and assisting students in the storage of valuable information concerning disruptive actions can be quite useful. Most cognitive theorists believe that one starts with the pre-existing

knowledge students bring with them into the learning situation. From there the learner is brought from novice to expert (Nisbett, Fong, Lehman, & Cheng, 1987 ; Shuell, 1990 ; Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). In bringing the student to the expert level the teacher takes what the student already knows and assists the student in enhancing and expanding the pre-existing knowledge and strategies. In dealing with students, and teaching them to be non-disruptive, the teacher draws on what the students know about their own actions (what has been successful before, what makes them disruptive, etc...) and helps them to become more adept at dealing with social situations. Included in this process are the students' own reflection as they generalize concepts (Shuell, 1990). Students working on strategies to reduce disruption may test out some verbalizations that they have acquired in different social settings. Hopefully, the students will see the relationship between acting a certain way and achieving a certain desired goal, and will ascertain if these strategies are useful. At the expert level, the students who have acquired strategies for dealing with disruptive actions use these strategies automatically when they encounter situations that cause them to be disruptive in the classroom.

Gagne (1985, p. 246) presented nine instructional events that lead to learning. See Table 1 for a list of these steps and examples of how each step could be used to teach a student strategies such as reducing disruption. For example, in step one gaining attention is the instructional event. This means the student has to be aware of the event. To gain the attention of a disruptive student the disruption needs to be interrupted, which is the action example.

Table 1.

Applying Gagne's Instructional Events to Reduce Disruption

Instructional Event	Action Example
1. Gaining attention	Interrupting disruptive actions.
2. Informing learners of the objective	Explain to learner what the outcome of non-disruption would be.
3. Stimulating recall of prior learning	Ask for recall of previously learned strategies that were successful in reducing disruption.
4. Presenting the stimulus	Display a distinctive strategy to be used for a given situation.
5. Providing "learner guidance"	Suggest a meaningful organization for the student to access the strategy when needed.
6. Eliciting performance	Provide role play and ask student to display the strategy.
7. Providing feedback	Give informative feedback.
8. Assessing performance	Require additional learner performance, (specifically in real situations), with feedback.
9. Enhancing retention and transfer	Provide varied practice and spaced reviews.

Another application of cognitive learning theory to aspects of disruption is evident in Flavell's theory of cognitive monitoring. Derry and Murphy (1986, p. 9) cited Flavell's theory of cognitive monitoring (1979, 1981). This monitoring

consists of the following four components:

1. Helping learners build a library of learning tactics (actions).
2. Training students to recognize what they must learn (goals).
3. Enhancing the frequency and quality of experiences that lead to insights about learning (metacognitive experiences).
4. Helping learners build a store of information about the utility of learning tactics, including when and how to use them (metacognitive knowledge).

Metacognition

Metacognitive theory deals directly with teaching students strategies that are useful for monitoring their own actions (Fish & Mendola, 1986 ; Huhn, 1981; Larson & Gerber 1984 ; Waksman, 1985) . Metacognitive processes are those processes which enable the learner to self-monitor and to direct their actions through the monitoring of their own thinking processes. Meichenbaum (1971), who is a major proponent of using metacognition in dealing with classroom disruption, described metacognitive processes as including: (a) prediction and planning, which precede problem-solving attempts: (b) checking and monitoring, which are subsequently performed to evaluate the outcomes of these attempts; and (c) checking outcomes for internal consistency and against "common sense" criteria. In short, such processes as checking, planning, asking questions, self-testing, and monitoring ongoing attempts to solve problems, are seen as central components of metacognitive development.

In terms of classroom action the issue is how to teach students to discover and use strategies that will be successful in monitoring their actions. It is equally important to insure that once these strategies are learned, they can be generalizable across different situations. The idea is to teach the students strategies for planning and problem solving in a way that will enable them to use their thinking processes to choose a plan of action that is successful or may be successful when individual and different situations arise. Meichenbaum and Asarnow (1979) presented a four step program towards developing this strategy:

1. The subject needs to realize the need for a strategy.
2. The subject has to evaluate the task requirements and then has to select from an array of routines which one(s) might be appropriate.
3. Having selected one, the subject would have to execute the strategy and monitor its efficacy.
4. Such information (or feedback) would govern decisions about future actions.

Modeling procedures, behavioral rehearsal, role playing, and other methods provide useful tools to the teacher in teaching such metaprocesses. From this perspective, the teacher's task is to provide the necessary instructional prompts (this may include manipulating tasks, cognitive modeling, etc.) required to engender children's problem-solving behavior or metacognitive development. (Meichenbaum & Asarnow, 1979)

Meichenbaum and Asarnow (1979) discussed the need for teaching problem-solving techniques in the classroom which would enable children to become sensitive to interpersonal problems and which develop the ability to generate alternative solutions. Additionally, they suggest students should be taught to understand means-end relationships and the effect of one's social acts on others. Children are taught the distinction between facts, choices and solutions. A variety of teaching aids, such as verbal and behavioral video-tapes, cartoons, workbooks and poster-pictorial card activities, are used to teach children to identify problems, to generate alternatives, to collect information, to recognize personal values, to make a decision, and then to review that decision at a later time. Inherent in such an approach is the need for a careful task-analysis by both the teacher and the students.

Modeling actions in a social setting, a key element in metacognition, assists the student in understanding what actions to take (Fish & Mendola, 1986 ; Huhn, 1981). Joint participation in an activity permits cognitive processes to be displayed, shared, and practiced, so that the child is able to modify his or her current mode of functioning (Vygotsky, 1962). The teacher can model important metacognitive processes for the child, while teaching skills, by breaking up the processes into smaller components that are easier for the student to handle. In this model learning takes place at the zone of proximal development. This zone is the space between a student's display of independent abilities and a display of these skills only with social support. An example of the distinction of the zone of proximal development for teaching

strategies might be a student who has difficulty walking alone in the halls without engaging in some disruptive action (i.e. , yelling or running). The student is able to walk appropriately with one other student, but not alone. This is the place where learning takes place, or the zone of proximal development. A teacher may use the following methods to teach a student the cognitive skills which would enable that student to walk unescorted in the halls: rehearsal, self-verbalization and modeling of appropriate behavior in the halls.

A model of cognitive apprenticeship was presented by Collins, Brown, and Newman (1989). Using experts to model behavior, the goal is to develop expertise in students so they can be flexible enough to solve problems in novel situations. This is done by using a variety of metacognitive techniques which include modeling, scaffolding, removal of scaffolding, and coaching. This method encourages students to be reflexive and to self-monitor. Experts model the necessary physical and verbal skills. As in the Vygotsky model, this model stresses the importance of the social setting in learning.

An example of a student using metacognition to monitor actions might be a student who, when frustrated, verbalizes either out loud or internally strategies that have been taught for dealing with this frustration. These strategies may include breathing deeply or raising a hand and asking for permission to leave the room for a brief walk. Eventually, the verbalization diminishes as the student automatically employs the learned strategies for dealing with frustration.

Humanist Learning Theory

General Principles

Importance of the Interests of the Students

Humanist theory stresses the personal growth and interests of the individual student. Humanists emphasize the importance of understanding a student's perceptual world in order to help the individual fulfill his or her basic potential (Rogers, 1983). Instruction begins not only at the student's academic level, but where the student's interests lie.

In his book Summerhill, A.S. Neill (1960) described his school program which is based primarily on Humanist learning theory. Neill attempted to "make the school fit the child instead of making the child fit the school" (p. 4). At Summerhill, classes were optional because Neill believed that when a child was ready to learn they would. "... we do not consider that teaching in itself matters. Whether a school has or has not a special method for teaching long division is of no significance, for long division is of no importance except to those who *want* to learn it. And the child who *wants* to learn long division *will* learn it no matter how it is taught" (p. 5).

In order to make education relevant it is necessary to teach students in relation to the experiences that the students bring to school from their homes and communities. Many Humanist theorists are concerned about the lack of relevance of instruction in school. "Often the material is not translated into life-

terms, but is directly offered as a substitute for, or an external annex to, the child's present life. The following three typical evils result: 1. Lack of organic connection with what the child has already seen, felt and loved makes the material purely formal and symbolic. Without preliminary activities the symbol is bare, dead, barren. 2. Lack of motivation. 3. Even the most scientific matter, arranged in most logical fashion loses this quality when presented in external, ready made fashion. It becomes 'stuff for memory' " (Dewey 1902, pp. 24 - 26).

Dewey felt that schools were not adequately utilizing the students' abilities and community experiences and that the education provided to students was not useful in terms of the students' lives. "The great waste in the school comes from the student's inability to utilize the experiences he gets outside of school in any complete and free way within the school itself; while on the other hand he is unable to apply in daily life what he is learning in school. Natural connections should be made between the child's experience and education" (1900, p. 75).

Learning Environment

The learning environment should be a place where students feel wanted, cared for and listened to. A display of real sensitivity and empathic understanding in the classroom is desired as "when you understand without judging, when you understand what it is like to live in the world of this other person" (Rogers 1987, pp. 40 - 41) .

Humanists are bothered by many aspects of schooling, particularly the school environment which they feel does not often provide an accepting atmosphere partly because the teachers are, at least in class, impersonal and boring. Many students, they believe, accept school as an unpleasant experience and discover that most of their relevant learning occurs outside of school (Rogers, 1983).

Many problems in the classroom are related to the "assembly line" aspects of education, although most Humanist theorists understand that the impersonal tactics in the classroom are difficult to change significantly because of cost, efficiency, and traditions (Reinert and Huang 1987, p. 112).

Self-Confidence of the Student

In order for students to be successful in school it is vital that the student feel good about themselves and their abilities. Yau (1991) discussed the role of self-confidence in learning and being creative. "With a true self-confidence, youngsters can explore and build on their innate curiosity. Youngsters who are encouraged to explore, to risk-take, to ask questions and challenge established assumptions are more likely to become creative and flexible adults" (p. 157). Children should be nurtured and provided with a safe and secure environment. "Once a child feels truly secure, he/she is free to become an independent thinker" (Yau, 1991, p. 160).

Social Context

Humanist theorists consider the total child and the social world from which the child comes. In order to make the child's educational experience valuable, the social world of that child must be taken into account.

This is another area where many humanists feel that the schools are wanting. The use and knowledge of a child's social world to instruct that child is lacking. Dewey (1900) spoke about the weaknesses of many schools in the early twentieth century. Perhaps, the same can be said of many schools almost a century later: "... the tragic weakness of the present school is that it endeavors to prepare future members of the social order in a medium in which the conditions of the social spirit are eminently wanting. There is no sense of community. Schools are competitive and they foster an environment that makes cooperation bad" (p. 15).

Students who arrive into the school with "emotional baggage" have a particularly difficult time. "Schools are not successful in working with children in conflict. The child's home and community, which contribute to deviant behavior, are often ignored. More expedient areas of intervention, such as in-school punishments, are used instead of attacking the causes of the problem" (Reinert and Huang 1987, p. 112). School personnel generally have minimal training in sociological aspects of change. Programs designed to help those who are different are often funded on the basis of labeling, thus encouraging the isolation of students who are disruptive (Reinert and Huang, 1987).

Montessori teaching employs some Humanistic learning theory and promotes learning through feedback from the consequences of action. "Learning should also occur in the social context of the classroom: children discussing their ideas of why something is not working" (Yau, 1991, p. 155). This points to the fact that not only does the social world of the student need to be considered, but that the learning itself should be considered a social event.

What Constitutes Disruption

What is considered disruptive is what the individual or group finds disruptive. What is disruptive to one person is not necessarily disruptive to another. Because the humanistic perspective takes into account the individual as well as the group, decisions on what is disruptive is decided by the group. What would most certainly be considered disruptive would be any individual not observing the established and agreed upon rules of the class. Presumably, these rules would have been agreed upon by the entire class.

A lack of respect of another's feelings, actions or property would also be considered disruptive. An infringement of any individual's rights would normally be seen as disruptive. At Summerhill, "each individual was free to do what he likes *as long as he is not trespassing on the freedom of others*" (Neill, p. 155).

Anything that occurred in a classroom that would make an individual feel unsafe, unhappy or threatened would also be considered disruptive. These situations could occur in a physical form, such as someone striking someone else, or in an emotional form, such as an individual being teased or humiliated.

Since feedback and interaction from the child is so important, anything that discourages students from speaking, for example one person interrupting another, is disruptive. Limited opportunity for students to speak would be seen as disruptive for a whole class or for individuals.

Strategies Used In Dealing With Classroom Disruption

For Humanist educators a disruptive student is an indication that the student is unhappy or in conflict and in need of some attention. In dealing with students who are unhappy or in conflict, teachers should, humanists assert, treat these students in an empathetic way. This facilitates a situation in which students will be willing to talk and share their feelings. This may remove the need for a student to act in a disruptive manner due to upset; "... if a person is being met with a sensitive, empathic understanding, he or she realizes that someone understands 'what it is like to be me.' That realization brings a whole rush of expressions of feelings. People are hungry to have someone else understand the persons that they are, and so you get more feelings about self. The feelings that are expressed in regard to self are increasingly relevant to whatever the conflict is" (Rogers, 1987, pp. 43).

In a Humanistic program, what is disruptive, or what might be potentially disruptive, would be discussed with the entire group. Summerhill was a "self-governing school, democratic in form. Everything connected with social, or group, life, including punishment for social offenses, is settled by vote at the Saturday night General School Meeting" (Neill, 1960, p. 45). At Summerhill

the votes of the teachers and students were equal. Issues of what constituted "trespassing on others' freedoms" as well as all other issues of importance, would be discussed and voted on.

Neill (1960, p. 159) stated that discipline is not necessary to deal with disruptive actions; "... when a child of seven makes himself a social nuisance, the whole community expresses its disapproval. Since social approval is something that everyone desires, the child learns to behave well." Neill was against giving rewards claiming them superfluous and negative. "To offer a prize for doing a deed is tantamount to declaring that the deed is not worth doing for its own sake" (p. 162). Conversely, Neill felt that punishment was also to be avoided. "Punishment is always an act of hate. In the act of punishing, the teacher or parent is hating the child - and the child realizes it" (p. 165).

Dewey (1902) felt that students should be guided, but that education should be self-directed. In terms of handling disruptive behavior, I believe that Dewey would have felt the same as he did about teaching subject matter, that the student should be guided but the handling of disruptive behavior and the disruptive behavior of their peers could be self-directed. All that the students need is an interest. "Impulse or interest means to work it out, and working it out involves running up against obstacles, becoming acquainted with materials, exercising ingenuity, patience, persistence, alertness, it of necessity involves discipline - ordering of power - and supplies knowledge. (All the more better that the child is motivated. By necessity they will learn the discipline, since they need them to solve the problem.) For the child to realize his own impulse by

recognizing the facts, materials and conditions involved, and then to regulate his impulse through that recognition is education" (pp. 39 - 41).

As a way of dealing with classroom disruptions, conflict resolution and mediation programs have been implemented in many schools across the country (Araki, Takeshita, & Kadomota, 1989 ; Davis & Porter, 1985). These programs are a student directed effort which has students solving disputes and problems among themselves. These programs allow students to utilize their life experiences and community knowledge in an effort to solve problems.

There has been much recent research in the area of Conflict Resolution and Mediation programs. Robertson (1991) stated that mediation programs not only provide alternatives to traditional discipline practices, but also teach students important life skills. School-based peer mediation programs operate on the assumption that encouraging students in dispute to work collaboratively, to resolve a present conflict, is a more effective way of preventing future conflict and getting students to learn to take responsibility for their behavior, than punishing students for their actions (Cohen, 1987). Additional benefits cited include teaching students nonaggressive conflict resolution skills, improving the overall school climate, and shifting the responsibility for resolving student conflicts to students, enabling teachers to spend more time teaching (Davis & Porter, 1985).

There have been several School-based Mediation programs across the United States. Although each program has its own unique characteristics, they all basically operate in a similar manner. Usually the entire faculty, staff and

student body are educated about mediation. School assemblies or classroom instruction are most commonly the forum for this education. Next, selected teachers, administrators and students are trained to be mediators. The length of the training depends on the program. When the mediation program is in operation, students and staff have an option of choosing mediation as a way to settle a dispute. The mediators oversee the resolution of the conflict using the mediation skills they have learned.

With this approach, the responsibility of solving disruptive conflicts is placed in the hands of those having the dispute and other peers who can relate more realistically to the dispute at hand. "Mediation programs already in place illustrate that children and young people are capable - when given the appropriate tools - of handling many of their own conflicts" (Stichter, 1986, p. 42). The mediation process serves the purpose of having students deal with their own social problems in a meaningful way that is effective for them individually and effective for the school community.

Summary

The purpose of reviewing the three learning theories of Behaviorism, Cognitive Processing, and Humanism is to gain some understanding of the ways teachers and other educational staff can deal with classroom disruption. Although these theories are distinct from each other, there are some similarities between them. The interest of the students are seen as key elements in both the Cognitive and Humanist learning perspective. Additionally, both Behavioral

theorists and Cognitive theorists see modeling as a productive way to teach students.

Teachers who are familiar with certain learning theories, and who also feel that their own philosophies are compatible with any given theory, will attempt to define and deal with classroom disruption through that perspective. It would not be unexpected however to find a teacher using methods that come from a hybrid theory that they have formulated using methods based on practical experience and methodology that comes from a variety of learning theories. Additionally, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, "espoused theories" and "theories in use" may differ. The beliefs and practices of teachers concerning disruptions in the classroom are directly related to these theories. How they are enacted in the classroom are of prime concern in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This study is a micro-ethnography, explicating rules and consequences of disruptive actions in classrooms. The focus of this inquiry centers around four factors:

1. What are the participants' conceptions of disruption in the classroom environment?
2. Why are students disruptive?
3. How are defined disruptions dealt with?
4. How does the conception of classroom disruptions drive the action of the participants in the classroom environment?

The purpose of this study is to understand the actions taken by students, teachers, administrators and other educational staff members concerning the phenomena of classroom disruption. I have used an ethnographic approach because I believe it will yield the most comprehensive description and analysis for studying the phenomena of classroom disruption. "Some areas of study naturally lend themselves more to qualitative types of research, for instance, research that attempts to uncover the nature of persons' experiences with a phenomenon, like illness, religious conversion, or addiction. Qualitative methods can be used to uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is yet known. It can be used to gain novel and

fresh slants on things about which quite a bit is already known. Also, qualitative methods can give intricate details of phenomena that are difficult to convey with quantitative methods" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 19).

I felt it was important to study classroom disruption within the context of the classroom during day to day functioning in order to understand what disruption means to the participants of the classroom i.e., to get at theories -in - use. To do so required an understanding of the classroom culture; how the participants made meaning and rules concerning disruptive actions. I believed the best qualitative method for this purpose was using ethnographic research techniques. An ethnography is a written representation of a culture or selected aspects of a culture. "Ethnographic writings can and do inform human conduct and judgment in innumerable ways by pointing to the choices and restrictions that reside at the very heart of social life" (Van Maanen, 1988 p. 1).

Setting

Two classrooms were studied: a regular fifth grade class in a public school, and an upper elementary self-contained special education class. The decision to study both a special education class and a regular education class was based on the potentially interesting difference in the perception of disruption, and the use of alternate strategies for dealing with disruptions. Since the particular special education class I chose was designed for students who, for the most part engage in disruptive behavior, it was interesting to see the different strategies employed.

I chose this particular age group so that I could have two situations as similar as possible. Since I am looking at a self-contained special education class, I wanted a self-contained regular education class. Most secondary classes are not self- contained; thus I chose an elementary school.

I decided to look at just one special education class and one regular class because I had the feeling that if I looked at more classes I would "spread myself too thin" and not be able to get to the "meat of the matter." It was my intention to spend enough time in both classes so that I would become almost invisible. This enabled me to see interactions that were, for the most part, not contrived or altered due to my appearance in the classroom. The specific amount of time spent in both settings will be discussed in the design section of this chapter.

Participants

I contacted by phone the two teachers whose programs I was interested in and discussed with them the possibility of doing my research in their classrooms. Fortunately for me both teachers readily accepted. I chose these two classrooms because I felt that access to them would be relatively easy. I had met both teachers, but I did not have a previous personal or professional relationship with either of them. Once I had their verbal commitment to participate, I obtained written permission from the school district and the special education agency to conduct my research at these two sites. My proposal to the Human Subjects Review Board at the State University of New York at Albany to

conduct this research was approved, and permission from staff members, students, and parents was obtained in written form. To insure confidentiality the names of all those interviewed and observed were changed. Additionally the names of the schools and their locations were changed.

The regular education setting is located at Stuyvesant Elementary School in a mid-sized city with an enrollment of approximately four hundred students. The district contains nine other elementary schools, three middle schools and one high school.

Terry Bartok, the classroom teacher, has been teaching elementary school in this district for twenty-three years. Joy Bonneville, for the past three and a half years, has been the principal and only administrator of Stuyvesant Elementary School. The fifth grade class at Stuyvesant contains twenty-eight students. Six of these students, (two girls and four boys), are identified by the district's Committee on Special Education as learning disabled and receive resource room support. Ten of the students in Terry's class are girls, the other eighteen are boys.

Paula Smylie's special education class is located at Greenville Elementary School in a suburban school district. However, this special education class is not part of this school district and all of the students come from neighboring districts. The agency that operates this class rents space in several school districts and places students from local districts into their specialized programs based on the needs of the individual students.

For four years Paula Smylie has been a special education teacher for this agency and for one year prior to that she was a special education teacher in a neighboring district. This class contains twelve students; eleven boys and one girl. Six of the students are labeled Learning Disabled, four students are labeled Emotionally Handicapped, one student is labeled Orthopedically Handicapped and one student, who is blind, is labeled Multiply Handicapped. Paula had indicated that regardless of labels, at least ten of her students have emotional difficulties. Paula's room is staffed with two classroom educational assistants, and an additional assistant who serves as a visual aid instructor for the blind student. Additionally there is a half-time social worker assigned to this class and other ancillary staff, (physical therapists, occupational therapists and speech pathologists), who come in and out of the class on regular schedules. Some of the students receive speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and there is a visual aid therapist who works with the blind student.

Paula's supervisor, Peggy Ryan, who has been with the agency for four years, was assigned as supervisor to this class program in September, 1993. Sophia Russo, was Paula's supervisor for three years previous to this time. Ms. Russo has been with the agency for seven years.

Design

In order to portray the classroom cultures I needed to hear, see, and most importantly, write about what I witnessed and understood during my stay in the classrooms (Van Maanen, 1988). To this end, two basic data collection

processes were utilized in this study; interviews and observation. Field notes were also compiled during the data collection process and journal notes assisted me in collecting data.

Between October 1993 and December 1993 I conducted a pilot study and collected data in both classroom settings. During the pilot study I learned not only important information for future study, but I also learned how I could conduct my research in the most beneficial way. As Glesne and Peshkin aptly put it, "researchers enter the pilot study with a different frame of mind then they do when going into the real study " (1992, p. 30). I gained the knowledge of where would be the best place to observe, how to improve my interview technique and what were the most important times to conduct the research. Studying any specific phenomenon in a classroom requires an understanding of the general classroom culture first. I was able to gain much of that understanding during my pilot study. As with most ethnographies, data collection and analysis occurred concurrently; on-going insights about the nature of the classroom programs influenced future study. It had been my understanding that most researchers decide to study a certain aspect of classroom culture and then after conducting a pilot study often need to narrow the focus of their study. After conducting my pilot study I experienced the exact opposite. The original focus of this study was on how teachers teach their students to control disruption. Since I did not see any evidence of this occurring in either site, I broadened the focus of the study. Fortunately, I was able to gather important information about the nature and consequences of classroom

disruption and I felt this would be a more useful area of exploration. Future data collection took place starting in April, 1994, and continued until the end of the school year in late June of 1994.

Interviews

I interviewed the special education teacher three times and I interviewed the regular education teacher four times. The additional interview of the regular education teacher was necessary due to her initial discomfort about being interviewed. I kept the first two interviews short, thus I needed an additional interview to get information that I thought was necessary for this study. The duration of each interview lasted from thirty to sixty minutes and occurred at a mutually agreed upon time and place. Every interview was conducted after school with the exception of one interview of the special education teacher, which was conducted during a break for her in the school day. All interviews of the teachers took place in their respective schools and, with the exception of one interview, were in the classrooms of the respective teachers. One interview of the special education teacher took place in the faculty lounge which was empty at the time of the interview. The interviews of the teachers occurred at the beginning, middle and end of the research process.

It was my intention to interview five regular education students and three special education students; however, I was only able to obtain parental permission for two special education students so was limited to only two student interviews in this class. I received permission from five regular education

students to do interviews, but one moved during the school year so I was able to interview only four students. I limited each student interview to thirty minutes. All the students I interviewed were eager to come with me and be interviewed but I noticed that the students would develop a growing uneasiness after about twenty minutes of the interview. When I asked individual students, after about thirty minutes of interviewing, if they wanted to go back and join the class activities or if they were getting tired of my questions, the students most often responded, "yes." The special education students were much more comfortable with the interviewing process, in fact, they did not mind being tape recorded and were used to being recorded, since Ms. Smylie used tape recording as part of her reading program. The regular education students were much more tentative when answering questions. I interviewed two of the regular education students an additional time to clarify previous responses they gave and to ask several more questions. I found it unnecessary to do so with the special education students. The interviews took place during the school day at a time that was agreeable to the teacher, student and myself. The students were taken out of class individually and brought to a private area where the interview took place. The interviews of the regular education students took place in a secluded area of the school library. The interview of one special education student took place in an unoccupied music room and the interview of the second student took place in the back of the school library. I interviewed more students in the regular education class than in the special education class

because there were more students in this class. Conversely, I interviewed more adults in the special education class because more adults worked in this program than in the regular education class.

In the special education program I conducted one interview with one of the educational assistants, and one interview each with both the previous supervisor and the current supervisor of the program. The decision to interview both of the supervisors was based on the fact that the current supervisor had been supervising this program for less than one year. The interview of the educational assistant took place at the school during a break he had in the day. The interview of one of the supervisors took place at a restaurant and the interview of the other supervisor took place at my home. At Stuyvesant Elementary School, where the regular education program was, I interviewed the school principal twice. The teacher in the regular education program relied more on her principal for disciplinary support than the teacher in the special education program relied on her supervisor, so I felt an additional interview of the principal was necessary. One interview occurred during the beginning stages of research and the second interview occurred at the end of my research. Both interviews took place in the principal's office during the school day.

The interviews provided me with vital information and assisted me in focusing in on specific areas when I observed. A total of twenty interviews were conducted as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2

Number of Interviews Conducted

Program	Administrator	Teacher	Assistant	Student
Regular Education	2	4	0	6
Special Education	2	3	1	2
TOTAL	4	7	1	8

All participants, particularly the students, were reminded that the interviews were confidential and that their names would be changed. All interviews started with a bit of conversation to "break the ice" and help the participants relax. The major focus of the interviews included the following:

1. What individuals defined as disruptive classroom actions.
2. Causes of disruption.
3. Methods to prevent classroom disruptions.
4. Consequences of disruptive action.
5. The affects that classroom disruption had on the members of the class.

Other areas related to disruptive actions that were explored included the educational and teaching philosophies of the teachers. Additionally, interviews

were utilized to discuss actions observed in the class and clarification of issues discussed in previous interviews.

All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed within twenty-four hours while they were still fresh in my mind. I felt that if there were words that were difficult to decipher from the tape recorder I was more likely to remember them if the interview had occurred shortly before I transcribed the tape. The interviews were open-ended and questions were not asked in any particular order. I brought to each interview specific questions such as, "What are disruptive actions that take place in this class.?" However, I was prepared to follow unexpected leads that arose in the course of the interview. I also utilized "depth-probing" interviewing techniques. What is meant by this is that I "pursue(d) all points of interest with various expressions that mean *tell me more* and *explain* " (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 92). Most of the interviews contained information that went beyond the scope of my original agenda. Some digressions from the original questions provided useful information that I did not anticipate when I planned the interview. For example, when I arrived, for an interview of a student in the regular education class, I noticed that the seating arrangement had been altered and different students were sitting in different seats. I spent part of the interview discussing with the student the change of the seating arrangement and how they felt about it. Although I had not planned on doing this, it lead to some interesting information.

I thought of the ethnographic interviews as friendly conversations into which I could introduce new elements to assist informants to respond as

informants (Spradley, 1979). Although the interviews at first were uncomfortable to some, I believe that most found them enjoyable or grew more comfortable as we proceeded. In any event, the interviews were essential for gathering information and confirming and validating what I had observed and what I came to understand.

Observation

The purpose of observation is to understand the research setting, it's participants, and their actions (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 42). I observed each class ten times for periods of at least one hour at a time and I varied the time of the day of the observation in an effort to fully understand the routine and events of an entire school day. Additionally, I made sure to visit each class on each day of the week. I tried to enter and exit each classroom as unobtrusively as possible and I sat in a set place in each room. In both classrooms there was a table in the rear of the room that afforded me a full view of the activities and also provided an electrical outlet for the lap top computer that I used to record field notes. There were several times when I left this area in the special education class to observe specific situations such as when the class was doing science work at the far end of the room. This was never necessary in the regular education class since, during all my observations, students were always sitting at their desks.

The focus of my observations was on the individual participants of the classroom, and the participant's interactions concerning disruptive behavior. I

looked for ways in which students were disruptive, for teacher's methods of trying to prevent disruption, and for the consequences of disruption. During observations, descriptive and reflective field notes were written to document specific classroom interactions.

Fieldnotes

From the months of October to December 1993 I wrote all field notes in longhand using a legal pad, and later transferred and recorded these notes onto a computer. The remainder of the field notes were recorded directly onto a lap top computer that I had obtained in December, the date and time of each entry entered in the top margin. I recorded what I saw, questions I had, future areas to explore, and conclusions I had drawn which I would later try to clarify during future interviews with participants. All observations were recorded in small case letters and everything else was recorded in large case letters. Field notes written in small case were coded usually between one and two days after they were recorded. Conclusions and future areas to explore were recorded in my log notes and questions that I had for future interviews were entered under the names of particular informants to whom I wanted to direct the questions.

Data Analysis

Glesne and Peshkin (1992) describe data analysis as; "...organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned. Working with the data, you create explanations, pose

hypotheses, develop theories, and link your story to other stories. To do so, you must categorize, synthesize, search for patterns, and interpret the data you have collected" (p. 127).

The analysis of both the field notes and interviews were conducted on an ongoing basis in conjunction with data collection. Although I had some set notions about what I had wished to study, ethnographic research lends itself to the collection of useful data that has not been previously considered by the researcher. This occurred several times as I pursued issues brought up by informants that I had not thought of as issues before I undertook this research study.

I kept a journal in which comments and reflections were recorded as they related to impressions, apparent trends, and reactions. The journal was utilized to assist in future exploration of relevant issues as they emerged from the data collection and analysis.

Coded fieldnotes and transcribed interviews were read intermittently throughout the data collection process in order to find recurrent trends and repeating themes. Future observations and interviews explored these trends and themes for purposes of verification.

Coding Schemes

A coding scheme was used to categorize the above mentioned trends and themes. Field notes that had been entered into the computer in narrative form, and transcripts of interviews, were partitioned into units that were

systematically and discretely coded. The coding scheme assisted in seeing patterns of actions that took place in the classroom. Once patterns were established I was able to describe certain actions and then analyze these actions in terms of when they occurred and why they occurred. Categories derived from the coding scheme were increased or collapsed as data collection and concurrent analysis proceeded. Major over-hauls of the coding system were done three times during the data collection process.

The first coding scheme was done after the pilot study and was of a skeletal nature. Broad categories that related to what disruption was, how it was handled in the classroom and methods used to prevent classroom disruption were coded throughout the field notes and interview transcripts.

The second coding scheme was devised when approximately half the interviews were completed and half the observations were made. I filled in the broad categories with items that I had observed or heard about through interviews. This coding scheme included the educational setting as a broad category and included such situations as whether students were working independently, whether the teacher was lecturing or whether a transition from activities was taking place in the class room. The second broad category was types of disruption which included such items as verbal disruption, out of seat disruption, physical disruption etc... Responses to disruption was the third broad category and was coded into items such as verbal response, no response, physical response. Finally, the last broad category was preventative

measures to avoid disruption which were coded by items such as seating arrangement, relationship building and the setting of class rules.

The last coding scheme was developed after all the interviews and observations were completed. This coding scheme was a fine tuning of the second coding scheme. Some codes were grouped together and others were removed because they were irrelevant. Adjustments continued until such a time that the coding scheme could be applied to all episodes recorded in the fieldnotes and interviews. The coding scheme was directly generated from the data. The final coding scheme was used to record results and discussion of the study was:

1. instructional
    - 1a. students working independently (ISI)
    - 1b. students working with other students (ISO)
    - 1c. student working with adult (ISA)
    - 1d. teacher lecture (ITL)
    - 1e. teacher working with group (ITG)

2. non-instructional
    - 2a. free time (NF)
    - 2b. waiting (NW)
    - 2c. transition (NT)
    - 2d. teacher talking (NTT)

3. disruption
    - 3a. verbal alone (DVA)
    - 3b. verbal others (DVO)
    - 3c. loud verbal (DLV)
    - 3d. non compliance (DNA)
    - 3e. physical (DPA)
    - 3f. out of seat (DOS)
    - 3g. making noises (DN)
    - 3h. swearing (DSW)

Figure 1. Coding schemes.

3i. teasing (DT)
3j. throwing things (DTR)

4. disruption response
   4a. ignoring (RI)
   4b. verbal admonishment (RVA)
   4c. verbal prompt (RVP)
   4d. no response (RN)
   4e. glance/gesture (RG)
   4f. punishment (RPU)
   4g. sent to principal (RSP)
   4h. parent called (RCP)
   4i. physical (RP)
   4j. student response (RS)
   4k. suspension (RSU)
   4l. seat changed (RSC)

5. preventatives to disruption
   5a. verbal (PV)
   5b. written rules, posters etc. (PW)
   5c. physical (walking around, hand on shoulder) (PP)
   5d. positive relationship building (PR)
   5e. rewarding good behavior (PRW)
   5f. explaining expectations (reminding) (PE)
   5g. behavior contract (PBC)
   5h. class meetings/discussions (PCM)
   5i. motivational activities (PM)
   5j. provision of alternative space (PAS)
   5k. opportunities to vent (POV)

Figure 1 . (continued).

Coding categories were assigned and defined by similar actions. Categories 1 and 2 describe the event occurring in the classroom during a disruptive action, specifically if the event was during an instruction time or during a non instruction time. Category 3 lists all the types of disruption that were observed or described to me by staff or students. Category 4 lists all the

responses to observed disruption and category 5 lists the types of measures described to me by staff or students and/or measures observed by me that were preventatives of classroom disruption. Once the final coding scheme was developed I was able to see patterns of actions in terms of such specifics as what types of disruptions occurred and when these disruptions were most likely to occur. It may be useful to define and give examples of the individual coding categories; these are presented in the following sections.

Instructional

ISI - (Students working independently)

Students working independently are working on an assignment without staff or other student interaction. (definition)

Terry had been giving a lecture on creative writing, after which students were given a writing assignment. Once she left the front of the room the students began to work independently at their seats. (example)

ISO - (Students working with other students)

Students who are working with other students are either doing an assignment or other class project together. (definition)

Two boys sitting on the couch in the special education class reading quietly to each other. (example)

ISA - (Student working with an adult)

A student working with an adult is either receiving individual instruction or assistance by a staff person. (definition)

A student asks for assistance with seat work. An assistant pulls up a seat and works with the student. (example)

Figure 2. Definitions and exemplars of actions.

ITL - (Teacher lecture)

A teacher lecture is when a teacher is addressing the entire class teaching, in verbal form, a lesson. (definition)

Terry is going over a social studies lesson with the entire class. Students had their books open and were supposed to be following along. Terry on occassion would randomly call on students to answer questions. (example)

ITG - (Teacher working with small group)

A small group is no more than five students whom the teacher is instructing. (definition)

Paula sitting at the reading table with two students for twenty minutes going over a story and asking questions. (example)

Non Instructional

NF - (Free time)

Free time is a scheduled period of time when students may choose certain activities to engage in. Activities are usually not of an academic nature. (definition)

Students arrive in the special education class. They have fifteen minutes of free time, which means they can talk to each other, play the computer, play with a game or toy or other activity of their choosing which has been approved of by the teacher. (example)

NW - (Waiting)

Waiting is an unscheduled time period when the students are not engaged in any particular activity and have received no instruction as to what it is they should be doing. (definition)

Students in the regular class are waiting at the end of the day to receive word on when to get their things to go home. (example)

Figure 2. (continued.)

NT - (Transition)

Transition is the time period between the two activities. It differs from waiting in that the students know what it is that they should be doing. (definition)

Students in the special education class have just finished listening to Paula who was reading from the book Shiloh. They had been sitting on the couch. Others from the class come back from mainstreaming. Science is next and the students are asked to go back to their seats where they will have a science lesson. (example)

NTT - (Teacher talking with the class on issues other than academic)

The teacher addressing the whole class on topics that have nothing to do with instruction. (definition)

Terry talked to the class about getting ready to go home and about the long weekend. She asked them to look around their desk area and pick up any thing that was on the floor. (example)

Disruption

DV - (Verbal)

Disruption that is verbal is talking, laughing or other mouth noises that are audible by people sitting in the general vicinity. (definition)

During a math lesson in the regular education class two girls sitting in the back of the room are talking and giggling quietly. (example)

DLV - (Loud verbal)

Loud verbal disruption is when someone is talking laughing or making other mouth noises that are audible to everyone in the classroom. (definition)

Paula is calling on students to answer questions about the science lesson. One boy continues to yell out the answers even though they have been asked to raise their hands. (example)

Figure 2. (continued).

DOS - (Out of seat)

Out of seat disruption occurs when there is an understanding that a student(s) is to be sitting in their seat and they are not. (definition)

Students were told that they could start their math homework after the lesson was over in the regular education class. One boy got out of his seat and went across the room to talk to another student. (example)

DN - (Making noise)

Noise making occurs when a student creates a noise which is audible enough to distract one or more students. (definition)

A student in the regular education class drops his book during a math lesson. It makes a loud sound. (example)

DNA- (Non-compliance)

Non-compliance occurs when a student either refuses to do something they are asked to do or continues an action they are asked to stop doing. (definition)

Terry, the regular education teacher, reported to me that a student in the regular education class is asked to take his baseball cap off. He verbally refuses and does not remove the cap. (example)

DSW- (Swearing)

Swearing is the use of language that has been agreed upon by staff as not being acceptable. (definition)

During an interview a student from the special education class tells me that he sometimes mutters swear words under his breath. (example)

DT - (Teasing)

Teasing is a verbal remark made by an individual to make fun of another individual or to make that individual feel bad. (definition)

A girl in the regular education class tells me that sometimes kids tease her. (example)

Figure 2. (continued).

DTR - (Throwing things)

Throwing things involves tossing objects that are not meant to be tossed. (definition)

During an interview with a regular education student he tells me that students were throwing things across the room into the garbage instead of getting up and putting them in the pail. (example)

DP - (Physical)

Physical disruption occurs when an individual places their hands, feet or other body parts on another individual's body. (definition)

Terry, the regular education teacher, reported to me that a student pushed her when she told him he would have to stay after school. (example)

Disruption response

RI - (Ignoring)

A disruption is ignored when an individual knows that the disruption is taking place but chooses not to respond to it. (definition)

A student in the special education class is calling out that he's getting a big brother. He also calls Paula's name out about five times. Paula ignores him and does not answer. (example)

RV - (Verbal)

A verbal response occurs when a staff member(s) speaks directly to a disruptive student(s). (definition)

Terry is walking around the room checking on seat work. The students are supposed to be working independently, but some are talking. Terry says, "Let's stop the talking," and the students quiet down. (example)

Figure 2. (continued).

RSU - (Suspension)

When a student is suspended from school they are barred from attending school for a designated period of time. (definition)

A student is reportedly suspended from the regular education school for a day for pushing his teacher. (example)

RP - (Physical)

A response to disruption is physical if it involves touching an individual. (definition)

As Terry is going over the morning assignments with the entire class a student gets out of his seat to tell her that he doesn't have his sneakers. Without speaking to the boy she gently puts her hands on his shoulders and turns him around. He then walks back to his seat. (example)

RN - (No response)

There is no response to a disruption when it is neither seen or heard. (definition)

A student in the regular education class turns around and talks to the student behind him while students are to be working quietly. Terry doesn't see or hear this, thus no response. (example)

RG - (Glance/Gesture)

A facial expression or body movement conveyed as a response to disruption. Examples of this may be a glance or gesture. (definition)

A boy drops a book on the floor which makes a very loud sound during a lesson in the regular education class. Terry glares at him and he responds by gesturing that he is sorry. (example)

Figure 2. (continued).

RPU - (Punishment)

A response to a disruption that is intended to be unpleasant to the disrupter, in the hope that the disruption wont be repeated, is punishment. (definition)

A student in the special education class does not get free time because his assignments were not completed. (example)

RS - (Student)

A student response to a disruption is any response that is generated by a particular student. (definition)

A student in the regular education class asks another student to stop banging his pencil on his desk because he can't concentrate. (example)

RSP - (Sent to principal)

Being sent to the principal is a response to a particular disruptive act made by a staff member. (definition)

Several students in the regular education class told me during interviews that students who fight and swear get sent to the principal's office. (example)

RCP - (Call parent)

Calling a parent to inform them of their child's disruption is a response to student disruption. (definition)

A student in the regular education class told me during an interview that if students continue to not do their work that Mrs. Bartok calls their parent and lets them know they have to stay after school. (example)

RSC - (Seat Changed)

Having a student move from the current place they are sitting to another place, designated by a staff member, is a response to disruption. (definition)

A student is talking to another student during a math lecture. The regular education teacher tells the student to move to an unoccupied desk that is closer to the board. (example)

Figure 2. (continued).

Preventatives to disruption

PV - (Verbal)

Any verbal remark made by a staff member to avoid possible disruption is a preventative. (definition)

During a lesson Terry compliments several students, "....Jessica is doing what she is supposed to be doing, John is doing what he is supposed to be doing." This prompts other students to take out their pencils and paper. (example)

PW - (Written rules or posters)

Visual rules and/or posters displayed in a class setting that are intended to stop disruption before it starts are a preventative. (definition)

An entire bulletin board has displayed on it the STAR (Stop Think Act Review) program. "How can I make good choices?" is the theme and twenty little cut out stars that the students have written on are under this tittle. The stars have statements such as "no fighting, be polite, raise my hand..." (example)

PP - (Physical)

Physical activity that involves walking around or touching individuals in an effort to preclude disruption is a preventative. (definition)

As students in the special education class are doing seat work teacher assistants are walking around to monitor, among other things, behavior. (example)

PR - (Positive relationship building)

A positive relationship between student and teacher that encourages students to be non-disruptive is a preventative. (definition)

Paula maintains a friendly manner with the students. Facial expression and tone of voice expresses caring and concern. She smiles and laughs often and bends down to get eye contact when she talks to the students. (example)

Figure 2. (continued).

PRW - (Rewarding good behavior)

A reward is a tangible or non tangible item introduced by staff to encourage non disruptive actions. (definition)

A teacher assistant explained to me that the students "..were trying to be good so that they could go down to the gym and play dodge ball." (example)

PBC - (Behavior Contract)

A written agreement between staff and student that delineates expected and desired actions is a behavior contract. (definition)

A student in the special education class told me during an interview that he's on a behavior contract. (example)

PM - (Motivating activities)

Classroom activities that engage students in activities and prevent disruption are motivating activities. (definition)

Paula tells me that she takes her students on lots of field trips because they really enjoy them and it motivates them to be cooperative so that they can participate in them. (example)

PAS - (Provision of alternate space)

Giving students a choice of places to be in the room so that they will not engage in disruptive actions is the provision of alternate space. (definition)

Paula explained that students can leave the group if they choose to do work in another area of the classroom. (example)

POV - (Opportunity to vent)

Provision, in either a verbal or written form, for a student to discuss something that is upsetting or bothering them is an opportunity to vent. (definition)

Paula told me that she has a student who has a book that he writes in when he feels upset. "When he knows he's gonna go, he writes down his thoughts quick. That works for him." (example)

Figure 2. (continued).

Validity and Trustworthiness

In an attempt to provide the most trustworthy data I did several things. I spent a considerable amount of time in both classes so that I was able to develop a relationship with the informants that created a willingness on their part to be open and honest with me. As the study progressed and I became more familiar to all the participants, the actions of the participants became what I considered to be less contrived. My presence was ignored during observation and the actions of the participants seemed to be actions that would have occurred whether I was in the room or not. Additionally, interviews were easier at the end of the study as the participants were much more comfortable with me and spoke more freely with me. Certainly there were differences between the individual informants and at the individual classroom programs, but I felt satisfied at the end of the data collecting process that I got as much information as possible.

Additionally, I provide in this study, in the appendix, an explanation of my own values and how they might have affected the nature of my research and the conclusions that I came to. As a white, middle class woman with twelve years of experience as a special education teacher, I have developed preconceived notions about classroom disruption which might have influenced my interpretation of the occurrences in these two classrooms. After reading my "confessional tale" the reader will be able to draw conclusions themselves as to what my bias is and how, if at all, it effected my research and/or conclusions.

I also employed triangulation techniques. Glesne and Peshkin (1992, p. 24) described triangulation as the process of "...using multiple-data-collection methods that contribute to the trustworthiness of the data. It may involve the incorporation of multiple data sources, investigators, and theoretical perspectives in order to increase confidence in research finding." Mathison (1988, p. 13) stated, "The value of triangulation ... (using it) as a technique which provides more and better evidence from which researchers can construct meaningful propositions about the social world." Mathison also stated that triangulation enhances the validity of research findings. Very often there is a dissonance between what people say and how they behave. By using triangulation methods I hoped to uncover the understood meaning of actions concerning disruptive behavior by looking at what has been observed and what has been stated in interviews. There were times during interviews that participant's responses were contradictory to their actions. I discussed these contradictions with participants to assist me in gaining new knowledge and meaning behind their actions. Additionally there were times when participants contradicted each other. This was particularly true of students and teachers who often said different things about the same event. I used this information to ascertain how teachers and students often have different perceptions of the same phenomenon.

I employed what Guba and Lincoln (1981) refer to as "member checks" by going back to informants in this study, both formally and informally to discuss research findings. Although I did not authorize any informant "veto power" over

this research, discussions of findings with an informant assisted in refining results. On several occasions I described what I had observed and my perception of that observation to see if the teachers agreed. Additionally, I showed the teachers my coding scheme to see if there were categories that I had either left out or erroneously included.

I also used peer debriefing to assist in the trustworthiness of my findings. I chose one particular teacher who had twenty-five years of experience with both regular education students and special education students. I shared with her, from the beginning of this research, my research methodology and my conclusions. She was very helpful in pointing out things that I had missed, further areas to explore and conclusions I drew with which she did not agree. This process led me to rethink positions I had taken and brought me back to the field to check what I had seen and heard from informants. Her insight also brought to my attention other areas relevant to this investigation. On one particular occassion she asked me if I was judging the regular education teacher too harshly and whether that would inappropriately influence my conclusions. It caused me to reflect and be mindful.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Classroom Settings

Special Education Class

There were twelve students in this class, eleven boys and one girl. This special education class was designed primarily for students who had been labeled emotionally disturbed or learning disabled with some emotional difficulties. However, in this particular class there was a student who was orthopedically handicapped and a student who was blind, both of whom exhibited disruptive actions as well. To accommodate the academic and emotional needs of this class, three educational assistants worked in the program.

Most of the students had been in this classroom for more than one year; most students were in their second year. Many were used to the routine and were described by Paula as having settled down, engaging in "less frequent disruptive behavior" than they had the previous year. In fact, Paula described classroom disruption as "minimal" this year.

Most of Paula Smylie's support, in terms of dealing with classroom disruption, came from within her classroom, not from outside of it. It was not the responsibility of the administration of the school in which Paula's program was contained to oversee the running of the class. Although Paula did have some

students who were mainstreamed into regular education classes, she did not rely on any of the building supports for assistance with instructional matters or classroom disruption. As a matter of fact she avoided it and told me:

> The first thing I tell them on the first day is that the person who can help you the most is the person who knows you the most and I plan on being that person or all the adults in this room do. Do you think I'm gonna send you to the principal's office when you're misbehaving? He doesn't know you.' I said, 'no way'. I tell them we'll go up and say hello, and we'll go up there and visit and tell him what a good job you're doing I said, but you're not going up there because of behavior.

Paula's immediate supervisor was not often accessible. Her office was located about fifteen miles from Paula's school. If there was an emergency it would have taken her a significant amount of time for her to get to Paula's class. Paula did not seem to have a problem with this; she readily accepted the fact that the responsibility of taking care of classroom disruption was hers alone. When problems occurred, either minor or severe, Paula was involved with the disruption until its resolution. She used her ample staff to help her manage the class and to manage any classroom disruption. Paula spent a considerable amount of time working with her team and she devoted a great deal of energy to overseeing the team so they would function well as a unit. Peggy Ryan, Paula's supervisor, found this to be an essential aspect of Paula's program and seemed pleased with the way Paula dealt with her team:

> You were asking me before if there was anything else I wanted to say in terms of what works with students with disruptive behavior and I think another component in Paula's room is that, or what is significant, is that she works with the rest of the staff in a very team oriented approach. She uh ..., listens to other people's ideas. She communicates to them and she has team meetings apart from the kids so that they are able to take a step back and talk about the kids and where they're at as well as where the kids are at, as well as where staff is at in terms of dealing with it and their feelings about it.

Classroom set up

The special education classroom was shaped in a rectangle and had been basically divided into four areas. The right front corner of the room had thirteen desks in three rows with the middle row containing two desks that were pushed next to each other. In the first and third row the desks were single. The desks faced the wall which had a blackboard and a bulletin board on the right side of the wall. Also on the right side of this area was a bookcase filled with books. Group lessons were taught in this space and it served as the initial meeting space in the morning. Each student had a designated desk. The only windows in the room ran along most of the length of the right side of the room.

The right back corner of the room was divided from the front right corner by a large couch which faced forward and was capable of seating three or four people. In the middle of the right back area were two computers and four student desks pushed together to make a table. The computers faced the back

wall and to the left of the computers was a partition that was about seven feet tall and four feet wide.

The left back corner of the room had two large metal shelving cabinets, a water fountain next to the cabinets, and next to the water fountain, in the corner, was a bathroom. These facilities were in this room because this classroom was originally designed to be used for kindergarten students. There was some free space in this area, which was divided in half by a large rectangular table. The door to enter the room was in the middle of the left hand side wall. The front left corner had a sink on the wall and several file cabinets. There was also another rectangular table and two teacher desks set up in this area.

The room was set up to provide the students and staff with a variety of areas to have lessons, do independent work and do projects. There were tables around the room in different areas so that individual groups could work separately without disturbing individual students not in the group.

The walls and ceiling of the room were decorated with art work and writing assignments done by the students. The room gave off several different feelings: the desk area seemed formal and traditional, but the other areas seemed casual and comfortable. There were many places to work either in small groups or individually.

When describing the rationale for the set up of her room Paula stated:

> Well, I think in a room you want a bit of everything. There's a formal setting with the desk and the blackboard you know so that we can do group work. It's there so in the morning when they're doing seat work activities they can have that

> structured environment and their own space. Alot of them need that. With the references available to them over there, [points to a shelf with books on it], and with the adults circulating it's easy when the desks are in the same area so that the adults can circulate around. There's also work spaces around, you know, the reading table, reading zone, computer area and math is done over here or the game area. You know, it's broken off into the different areas. It's also to give time to other groups going on. So when some are working at their desks and then you can do different centers, not centers but have different things going on.

Instruction

This class was a self-contained program with students mainstreaming out for special area classes such as art, music and physical education. A few of the students were mainstreamed into academic areas for reading and math, but this was the exception. Most of the instruction in this class was done in small groups of two to four students with individualized assignments to meet the academic needs of the students. Two subjects, social studies and science, were taught to the entire class in a large group lesson. Assignments were often "hands-on" activities and since many of the students had difficulty reading, assignments were tailor made, or the students who had difficulty worked with an educational assistant. Students were often working independently on class work or projects, although cooperative learning was encouraged so I would often observe two or three students working together. Students were also encouraged to sit where they felt comfortable and did not have to sit at their desks; they were free to choose any of the different areas of the room to sit. The only time when students were required to sit in their assigned seats was when

Paula or any of the educational assistants gave a lesson to the whole class. During these lessons Paula would sit on a desk in the front of the student desk area while other staff usually stood in front of the desk area when conducting a lesson or lecture. Often during an observation I would see Paula working with a group on an academic lesson such as reading or math. Perhaps three or four other students might be working with one of the three educational assistants, while several other students would be working independently, either completing seat work, reading, drawing, or working on other projects. The other two educational assistants would be circulating around the room to answer questions or assist students. Additionally, they would monitor the room to make sure students were on task and to discourage disruptive actions.

I asked Paula about how students learn and also about her teaching methods:

Z Now I'm going to ask you some basic things, things we haven't talked about. How do you think kids learn?

P Hum... uhm..., Well I don't think it's anything..., like when I think of teaching reading or teaching anything. It's more like I'm a facilitator. Giving them the information or bringing it to them or exposing them to it in a structured type way. You know it's not a free learn uhm, like some of our schools of thought but more of a structured way. Because I can't make them do anything, you know, I can't make them learn things. But I can keep reinforcing it.

Z And how do you reinforce it?

P Uhm..., by offering the situations, like reading, offering them reading every single day and keeping it interesting.

Something that they want to do and not feeling bad about themselves. We keep that positive attitude going. When they do read the stuff we encourage it.

Z And how do you encourage it?

P Uhm..., pats on the back just "great job" "Super star" awards are the big thing around here. Uhm..., we try and stay away from tangible things uhm..., food or any of those things. Those are on a ... those will come out once in a great while. There's no set regime for them. We try to give them things that they would find when they get older... praise from other people.

Z Do you think that holds true when they learn anything, whether its science or math or reading or how to handle a social situation?

P I guess they can learn by either role models because a lot of the stuff we do to is..., you know we try to encourage them through ourselves and through the others who are doing a good job. Uhm ..., by looking at other people or how could you solve it by thinking, you know reflecting on the other choices you could make. That's more in social or behavioral aspects. Uhm...

Z Do you do that in terms of problems? I mean do you see it as a problem solving situation where you could have a problem solving situation in reading, how could you decode something, and in math and in social situations you see it as the same thing as kind of a problem solving type of situation?

P Yeah, that could happen?

Z Or am I putting words in your mouth?

P No, I agree. I'm just trying to look for the words I'm looking for. Yeah, they have to experiment. If something doesn't work we're going to approach it differently.

Z All right, so you present something and then what you do is set up a situation. You mentioned that it's structured. How do you structure it?

P Uhm..., any different situation or subject?

Z Whatever.

P Uhm. It's hard, I try to keep a structure, but not a structure. Uhm, because I don't want it too rigid because if they're expected to do X, Y & Z when I do this... For example social studies, we just started, and we sit around on the couch with our books on our laps and "hang out." More of like a hang out, but we're actually taking turns reading, we're raising our hands, we're doing all the things that we usually do, but relaxed.

Z And how do you think they learn? What's your philosophy on how they or anyone learns?

P Uhm...

Z What makes them retain the information? What makes them assimilate it, get it in and then learn it?

P We do a lot of repetition. Repetition, and keeping it interesting, so it's not the same things over and over. I know decoding with sight words, we use flash cards but we do a different game every single day with them. So that they're not bored. And the same with math facts.

Z Do you think it's in them and you're just drawing it out? Or that you're pouring something in?

P Well, with reading I have this idea that it "Clicks" You know it's the "Click Theory." I don't think I do any certain thing. I do the same thing and I'm just waiting for them to build up enough confidence so that they do it.

Z The best way to teach a subject is how? Or the best way to teach something is how?

P Uhm. I have a different approach for each subject. You know some are more structured some are not. Uhm, getting into hands on. I like to do a lot of hands on activities.

Z Give me an example.

P Uhm, science is always a hands on activity. We never sit at our desks and read a science text. Actually this is the first year I've ever used a text with any of my children where

we're sitting and reading a social studies book. Uhm..., only because I have such high learners that I want to get them ready for junior high because they'll be in shock.

Z And they'll be expected to do that.

P Right because we do mostly hands-on activities.

Paula's remarks indicate her leaning towards Behaviorist theory. Students are rewarded for completing tasks and doing the things they are asked to do. Additionally she employs social modeling which is also consistent with Behaviorist Theory. She also has some Humanist leanings as well as she tries to make lessons and assignments interesting and relevant to the students.

Motivators

Students were motivated to complete tasks and cooperate through several methods, but the biggest motivator was positive reinforcement. I observed Paula constantly praising students for things that they were doing or had done. The students responded quite well to this and seemed eager to show off their work to Paula, always smiling broadly when they received a compliment. Paula often did not wait for a student to show their work but she would walk around the room looking for opportunities to compliment students, often asking the other adults, "Didn't they do a great job?" or, "Hey, have you seen this? It's wonderful." Paula spoke about her use of positive reinforcement: "Right, well we work with a lot of positive reinforcement and

every time you see something that's going we ask the guys, 'Wow, don't you think you that's great? You did a good job.' "

The other motivating factor was the field trips that Paula planned for the students in the class. Students who, in Paula's opinion, were not "behaving properly" did not go on the field trips:

Z Do you ever find a situation where a kid is not going to be able to go on a field trip?

P Yep. I've had kids test me. And we've gone on field trips, not this year, in the past, when I had more difficult students and I think they do it just to see if I'll stick to my guns and to say well, I expect good behavior and if you're not gonna give it I'm not gonna take you. And they stay at home and they work.

The students found the field trips quite motivating. When I asked Ronnie, a student, his favorite thing was about the classroom, he quickly responded, "the field trips." Connor also mentioned the field trips:

Z Do you like this class?

C Yes.

Z Do you like it better than other classes you've been in?

C Uh huh.

Z How come?

C We get to do a lot of other stuff that we don't get to do in other classes.

Z Yeah, like what?

C Go on field trips a lot.

Class rules

The rules of the class were on individual sheets of paper, under a banner that said "Class Rules" on a bulletin board. The individual sheets had been drawn by the students and were as follows:

Keep your hands and feet to yourself.

Follow playground rules.

Please don't swear.

Do a good job.

Pay attention.

Earn your recess.

Keep listening.

Respect other people and their property.

I spoke to the students about the class rules and who made them up:

Z	Who makes up the rules in the class?
R	The teachers, I guess.
Z	The teachers make them up? I saw some rules hanging up on the walls...
R	Yeah, we made those.
Z	Who decided what rules would get put up there?
R	I don't know, the kids I think.

The general feeling the students had was that the rules were made by the adults, even though they were given opportunities for input. Certain rules

were understood by the students whether they were spoken or unspoken. Striking others, swearing, and disrespect towards staff were not acceptable, or at least would cause some consequences. Usually a student would be escorted out of the room with a staff person who would talk with them and let them calm down; perhaps a parent might be called. If the disruption was severe or dangerous the student might leave school or possibly be suspended from school the next day. Some rules were contextual, such as the fact that you could not call out for any reason during a lecture and if you had a question or wanted to respond to a question you needed to raise your hand, but if you were doing seat work it was considered important to raise your hand, but if you did not raise your hand and you called out that was fine.

Regular Education Class

The regular education class had twenty-eight students in it, six of whom were identified by the district CSE as learning disabled and they received resource room support. Ten of the students in the regular education class were girls and the other eighteen were boys.

Classroom set up

The classroom was in the shape of a rectangle. Most of the classroom space was taken up by the thirty student desks which were arranged in rows. The front of the room had a three-fourths wall-length blackboard which had a shelf underneath. To the left of the blackboard was one computer that was

equipped with a printer, and to the left of that was a filing cabinet. In the right front corner of the room was the teacher's desk. On the right wall was another wall-length blackboard that also had shelves underneath it. In the right back corner was an isolated student desk at which one of the students sat. There were windows that ran the length of the back of the room with several bookshelves underneath these. There was an unoccupied student desk located in the back left corner of the room. The left wall had a bulletin board and in front of the board was a supply shelf and a bookshelf. There was also a crescent-shaped reading table located on the left side of the room. There were two doorways in the left wall, one in the front and one in the back, that lead into a cloak room which was about four feet wide.

There appeared to be little space to walk around this room and consequently it seemed somewhat cramped. There were posters and charts on the bulletin boards, but almost no student work of any sort was hanging up. The arrangement of the student desks in rows gave the classroom a formal appearance.

I asked Terry about why she set her room up in this manner:

Z	Let me ask you about the way your classroom is set up and if you would just explain to me the rationale.
T	Ok, I start off the school year this way (in the rows). I just want to see... when the children come in the first day of school, who are they sitting next to.
Z	You don't assign seats in the beginning.

T No, no , no. I would say that the second or third day of school I assign seats. And I have. We'll start off with the first couple of days of school we're like this. I just want to pick out the kids who tend to talk and socialize. The kids learn their names, and then by the ..., oh, the beginning of the first week of school I get to know a little bit better who I need to place and I'll start off with boy girl, boy girl. Ok, maybe what I'll do is put them in a big square.

Z Why boy girl, boy girl?

T Why? ...., I don't know. It's something I've always done. I don't know.... Maybe because of the fact that I know that girls, if they're real good friends, they live near each other and have built up a relationship during fourth grade, third grade, and I know this ahead of time. The tendency is for them to chit chat.

Z So it's an attempt to prevent disruption?

T Yeah, exactly. Exactly, that's what I'm doing. Uhm and I'll put a big square and depending on how many student there are in the classroom, like twenty-eight, I need to develop a row in the middle. Ok, and another thing that I look for too uhm.. when I find out who my special ed. kids are. For some reason those kids and the kids that are complaining that they can't see the board, I get them closer to the board. I tend to focus right in the middle of the class room like where you saw me sitting during the social studies lesson. I'm right there focused right in the middle and you know there are times when they're working on something, I walk around. And...

Z You walk around, why?

T I want to see if they're working and what they are producing.

Z Is it also fair to say that you walk around to ...

T To avoid discipline?

Z Right.

T Yeah, yeah.

Z And to make sure they're on task?

T Yeah.

Instruction

All of the instruction was done in lecture, directed at the entire class. The special education students sat through these lectures, even if they were not involved in the lesson. Terry told me these students were expected to be doing their own independent work given to them by the resource room teacher. After lectures Terry would ask questions of the class, calling on students randomly to make sure they had paid attention to the lesson. When a student did not know an answer she usually responded with a remark about the fact that they had not paid attention. Students often raised their hands to respond to questions Terry asked, but she rarely called on a student whose hand was raised. After a lecture Terry usually gave an assignment or seat work related to the lesson, often in the form of a ditto or a text book or workbook page. Students had anywhere from three minutes to fifteen minutes to complete the assignment. Any assignment not completed during this time was to be done for homework and was due the next day. If the assignment was not done by the next day, students were told to stay in the room during lunch and/or recess to complete it.

Students were expected, at all times, to be sitting in their seats, whether they were doing independent work or were attending to a lesson:

Z When the students are in this classroom are they primarily to be sitting at their seats?

T Yes.

Z Is there any time when they are not sitting at their seats?

T At the end of the day..., getting ready for dismissal, basically, or changing for another class.

Cooperative work was discouraged and Terry made it clear that she wanted the students to be quiet, or at least as quiet as possible. I often observed Terry reprimanding students talking to each other, even if they were helping each other with an assignment. Terry reported to me that lectures lasted between forty and fifty minutes.

Terry and I spoke about how students learn:

Z OK, now I'm going to hit you with a broad question. How do you think kids learn?

T That is broad.

Z Yes, it's very broad. In other words, well, I don't want to give you an example because I want you to tell me in your own words, how you think kids intake information and assimilate it.

T Like how they learn? Do you mean learn from a (...). Or they learn from taking information that is taught like in the classroom and at home and outside of school. This is how they learn?

Z That could be one way. How do they take the information in? What do you believe happens that kids.... How do you teach kids?

T That is broad, Barb. Uhm... (long pause)

Z Let's say I came into your classroom and I didn't know anything about social studies and you were going to teach me about the revolutionary war. How would you go about teaching me?

T Ok, I would uhm, start off by talking to the kids about a concept and then giving them examples related to that concept and then I would have them possibly take notes uhm, take the notes home and reread the notes. We'd discuss it again the next day and it's just competition, it's competitiveness no, that's not the word I want I wanted uhm, I want them to, we want to go over and over and over it. Like I'll review.

Z Ok

T ... a concept over and over again and that's how I find that they learn and then testing.

Z Repetition.

T Yes! And the final evaluation would be testing to see how well I did as a teacher. How well did they learn. I'll also have them say, use a computer. If I have a computer game on teaching. If I'm teaching states and capitals I will give the kids the state capitals disc and they go and practice on that before a quiz.

Z So you just go over the material again and again.

T Constant repeating. Yeah I find that constant repetition allows them to learn better. In groups too, if they're working cooperatively. Ok, let's say I give them three questions about the American Revolution. Ok, sometimes I'll have them do it individually and then go over it, sometimes I'll have them work in teams.

Z What's the benefit of having them work in teams?

T Cooperatively learning.

Z They're learning from each other?

T Learning from each other, exactly.

Z Learning what?

T Uhm, learning about what the other person might not think about as a right answer.

Z Ok. Do you think teaching subject matter such as social studies or science is the same as teaching a behavioral strategy.

T No

Z What are the differences?

T Teaching an academic..., I find that I have the kids focus as a total group and well, I could say if there's a problem in the classroom I could stop everything right then and there and have a classroom discussion about the particular behavioral problem that I was having. So in a way I guess I could coordinate both of them at the same time. Yeah, I could.

Z But what are the differences in teaching? How would you teach a kid a behavioral strategy?

T Ok, if a child, say like Vincent, were to act out, ok, we would stop what we were doing and we would talk about the incident that happened. "Why did Mrs. Bartok get upset about the incident that took place" and we would have class discussion right away. I do that right away because I don't want it, you know to be ignored. I want the other kids to realize what act was done wrongly.

Z And how do the kids handle that?

T My kids this year handle it fine. There's no problem.

It's important to note that even though Terry thought that cooperative learning was a good way for students to learn she discouraged it and later spoke about not having the faith in the students to engage in cooperative learning without being disruptive by talking and socializing. Additionally, the

students I interviewed described talking to each other, even if it was about school work, as something that was not supposed to be done.

Terry employed Behaviorist theory in teaching. Although students were not offered rewards for their actions, they were punished if they did not do as they were asked. If school work or homework wasn't done then they were required to stay in after school or during lunch.

Motivators

I did not observe Terry extensively motivating the students, but when she did she tried to appeal to either their sense of accomplishment, in the form of getting good marks on tests, or she stressed the fact that they would be in middle school the next year and would have higher expectations placed on them. If students were not paying attention, Terry would chide them by saying things such as, "You didn't get a hundred on the last math test did you? Don't you think you should be paying attention?" Another motivator was a reminder that if work wasn't completed they would have to stay inside during recess and complete it.

These comments did not seem to motivate any of the students as I often observed students rolling their eyes or staring into space when these comments were directed at them. The major motivation to be cooperative and to complete tasks was to avoid punishment, such as staying inside for recess, or to avoid having a phone call made home.

Class rules

There were no class rules posted anywhere in the room. There was a bulletin board that had The STAR program poster on it. The STAR program was a school wide program who's letters stood for Stop, Think, Act, and Review. There were twenty cut out stars which the students had filled in on "how they could be stars." Fifteen concerned academic goals, such as to improve reading, or to improve writing. The rest were issues that dealt with classroom behavior and included: no fighting, control class talking while I'm supposed to be listening, be well-behaved for a substitute, be polite and raise my hand to respond.

Most of the students reported to me that the class rules were generated by the teacher, but that they had had some input. I asked Marta, a student, about this:

Z Who makes the rules in the class?

M Probably Mrs. Bartok?

Z Kids don't ever make rules?

M No.

Z Does Mrs. Bartok ever ask you what the rules should be?

M A little bit in the beginning of the year.

Jeremy confirmed this point of view:

Z Who makes the rules in the class?

J The teacher.

Z She makes all of them? And does she ever ask the students what the rules should be?

J Yes.

Z She does do that?

J She did that once.

Z She did it once?

J Yeah.

Z But she makes all the rules.

J Yep.

Student input on the decisions of what the class rules would be was superficial and minimal. Students in the regular education class understood that the rules stated definitively that they would stay in their seats and not talk. However, students also knew that if they did not talk too loudly or if they got out of their seats without being seen by the teacher that this was acceptable. The students knew that they were expected to raise their hands and ask for permission to get out of their seats and to leave the room. As long as Mrs. Bartok did not feel disrupted they could engage in disruptive activities. Disrespect towards Mrs. Bartok in the form of blatant non-compliance, fighting with others and swearing loudly, usually meant that the student involved would be sent out of the room to receive consequences such as detention, a phone call home or possibly suspension from school.

Classroom Disruption

What is Classroom Disruption?

Before examining techniques for dealing with disruptive actions, it is necessary to take a close look at what disruptive action means in terms of the two classroom settings. Adult respondents provided definitions that were remarkably similar, whether the respondent was an administrator, teacher, assistant, from a regular education setting or special education setting. Students in both settings also gave similar responses.

From the special education setting the following definitions were provided:

Paula (teacher)	Disruptive behavior ... uhm ... I would just say anything that is against the norms of the classroom that makes it run smooth. Uhm, acting-out, things like that, uhm... to such a degree that it interferes with other students' learning, even if the student is, you know, himself.
Sophia (supervisor)	... disruption generally, would be described as a child taking those actions interfering with self and negatively impacting others.
Conner (student)	...acting out, not listening and having a bad attitude.

From the regular education setting these definitions were provided:

Terry (teacher)	...children who interfere with the learning of other children in the classroom.

Joy (administrator)	... disruption from an educational perspective is anything that prevents the instruction that is being given by a teacher or by students in a classroom from continuing, preventing the kids from having an opportunity to learn and the teacher making sure that they can learn either by teaching them in front of the classroom, involved in a project whatever. So that's an educational thing. Something that doesn't allow even the kid who's disruptive of anybody else or the adult in the classroom to continue doing what they need to do to be able to learn.
Jeremy (student)	...Swearing, damaging property, going out of the classroom when you're told not to.

The implication is that disruptive action either interferes or prevents learning from occurring. The definitions provided by the respondents seem to indicate that disruption is thought of as something that occurs, usually an action of a student, in the classroom which interferes with what the teacher is trying to say or do. Marta, a student in the regular education class, stated:

> Well, I think it's like when the teacher's trying to talk and everything and the kids are interrupting and talking.

Stephanie, another student in this class responded by saying:

> It's when kids in classes and stuff be bad.... They get in fights and yell at teachers and stuff if they don't want to do what they (teachers) want them to do.

Disruption was seen by all respondents, particularly by students, as an unnecessary action that a student engaged in which interfered with an on-going activity. Students in both settings described disruption as something that students did to interfere with the teacher or with other students. The students in the regular education setting listed the following disruptive actions that occur in class: bossing other kids around, talking alot, talking back to the teacher, swearing, pushing and punching other kids, kids talking while the teacher is talking, fighting, yelling at the teachers, not doing what the teacher tells them to do, kids arguing, kids being mean to each other, damaging property, going out of the classroom without permission, being out of your seat, talking out of turn. The following is a list of what the students in the special education setting thought was disruptive: making sounds, swearing, teasing other students, name calling, fighting, using a negative tone of voice, punching, acting out, not listening, having a bad attitude, throwing stuff across the room, tipping over a desk, and making faces.

Expectations of disruptions and the intensity of the disruptions were not viewed in the same manner in the two classrooms. Additionally, the teachers saw their role concerning disruptive actions quite differently. The regular education setting was certainly quite different from the special education setting. Although the teachers and administrators knew they might have some disruptive students or that disruption might have occurred, it was usually not the primary source of concern. Terry Bartok listed first as a disruptive behavior, "constantly talking with each other when they're supposed to be concentrating

on a given task." Other disruptive behaviors she mentioned were: not paying attention in class, yelling answers out, leaving the room without permission, and students teasing other students. She did mention a situation where a student threw a chair several years ago, but stated that this was highly unusual.

The major source of disruption from Terry's perspective was "socialization". She felt that the students should not socialize with each other in the classroom and she tried to prevent socialization from taking place. She did so through seating plans, through having the students work independently, and by discouraging talking among students.

Terry had mentioned that one of the definitions of disruptions was when students interfered with the learning of other children in the classroom. I asked her about this;

Z	Can you give me a definition of what you think is disruptive?
T	Children who interfere with the learning of other children in the classroom.
Z	And how would you see that?
T	Do you want me to tell you the ways they interfere with other kids?
Z	Yeah.
T	Constant ..., like in the conferences that I'm writing up right now, the constant socialization. They're constantly talking with each other when they're supposed to be concentrating on a given task. And I have to remind them to concentrate on their own task.
Z	So you really try..., you see as one of your goals is to.. is to... ah, stop the socialization?

T Yeah. Yeah. At this age they're very social, extremely social and they get that in the morning, at the lunch hour and then after school as well.

During my observations I never saw any of the students in the regular education class working together. Terry told me that although she tries to let the students work cooperatively in the beginning of every school year, it just doesn't work out. I got the impression that she felt that she should at least try to allow them to work cooperatively, but that she had little faith in the students being able to do so in a manner that she saw as appropriate.

T I've tried to put them in groups for cooperative learning. I start off with two.

Z When you mean groups..., the desks right now are in rows. Do you change that?

T I'll put .... They'll change you know. They'll be facing each other.

Z Is that on a permanent basis or for a particular activity?

T No, it's on a permanent basis, until I can't take it anymore.

Z Explain that.

T I find that they're just wasting time and socializing and not producing the work.

Terry did everything she could to prevent the students from socializing, including the way in which she set up her room:

Z Ok, now you prefer the rows, I take it. Is that fair to say that you prefer them to be sitting in rows?

T Yeah, I do. I wish the room was bigger so I could spread them out a little more too.

Z Would you keep the rows?

T I'd probably keep the rows.

Z Tell me why?

T Individualization.

Z To keep them separated?

T That's basically it. Because it seems as years go by they're getting more and more social and talkative.

Z So you feel that the rows cut down on the socialization which in turn can be disruptive.

T And not only that but the test taking too. The evaluation for test taking. Because they complain too when they're in, say, a square. "Oh, so and so's copying me." You know I get that.

In the special education setting, disruptive behavior was expected and it was one of the primary sources of concern. The types of disruption were also expected to be of a more serious nature. When speaking of disruptive behavior, Paula Smylie talked about negative attitudes and students shutting down. She mentioned more specifically, throwing chairs, screaming, yelling and biting. Sophia Russo, one of the supervisors, said... "taking aggressive behavior toward others or materials in a given environment." Peggy Ryan, another supervisor, talked about climbing under desks, yelling, screaming, and throwing things. Frank Stanley, one of the educational assistants, told me that disruptive behavior was "... anything from talking out of turn to throwing things."

Socialization was not listed as a disruptive action; in fact, Paula Smylie wanted her students to improve their socialization skills. It was one of her goals for the students in the class. She encouraged them to learn how to talk and work with each other. When students were working on projects, Paula often suggested that they pick someone to work with. I observed students working together, doing assignments, tasks and projects, on every one of the visits I made. When conflict arose, Paula or another staff member helped the students talk out the problem and come to a mutual agreement.

Sometimes actions that were considered disruptive, by virtue of the definitions I got, were in reality not disruptive. This was true in both classroom settings. Terry, the regular education teacher, listed not paying attention as disruptive. However, students in her class who were not paying attention were often not attended to and continued to "not pay attention" throughout the entire lecture. At any given moment anywhere from one third to two thirds of the class were not paying attention when Terry was giving a lecture. As long as students were not noisy or did not interfere with Terry's lecture, not paying attention was not treated as disruptive.

In the special education classroom, calling out was listed as disruptive. However, it was only treated as a disruption if the calling out occurred during a full group lecture. At other times, during independent work, transition time or small group work, calling out was not treated as a disruption. Students were not admonished for it and quite often teachers or staff responded in a positive

manner to calling out either by attending to the student, or answering the question that was called out.

Since no one spoke of any other type of classroom disruption, other than student generated disruption, when I asked the general question of what was classroom disruption, I also asked what other disruptions occur in the classroom. Terry Bartok, the regular education teacher responded:

> Ok, announcements on the intercom, knocking at the door unnecessarily, uhm.. in other words, maybe a message from another teacher that doesn't have to come at that time... that can wait for another time. I could be with a student at the other end of the classroom and the phone rings.

During my observations I saw each of these events occur. Terry made no indication that she was annoyed or upset by them. In fact, a student from another classroom came into the room with a message from another teacher for a student in Terry's room. The student receiving the message was at the front of the room, presenting a report to the entire class. The messenger delivered the message to this student, interrupting his report and the attention of the entire class. Terry allowed the message to be delivered and made no comment about the disruption.

Paula, the special education teacher, and I, talked about disruption not caused by the students. The most disruptive occurrences in her classroom not generated by students, in Paula's view, were disruptions caused by the other adults who worked in the room:

Z Are there other things that are disruptive that are not generated by the students that you find disruptive?

P Uhm ...., staff. Working with a large team can be disruptive at times. Uhm ..., not only..., the kids are not the only components of this, you know it's everybody. Uhm..., I constantly work with my staff, and myself you know, how we get along with the kids. Because if we're not positive they're not going to be positive.

Z So you see that as a disruption that's generated by adults not ...

P Yes, it's not always the kid. When a kid has a bad day it's not always the kid's fault. Because if an adult working with him is not having a good day it shows and that's where I ..., you have to step in, you know, tell the adult or ask the adult if there's something wrong because it seems to me something's not working here.

Paula had many adults who came in and out of her room on a regular basis. There were three teaching assistants, a social worker, an occupational therapist, and a physical therapist who worked directly with the students. Additionally, other adults came in and out of the room frequently: class teachers who worked with students in Paula's class, parents, and visitors observing for possible student placement in the future. However, Paula was mostly concerned with her teaching assistants in terms of disruption. She worried that they were not being positive with the students and that their negativity would cause the students to be upset and disruptive. She worked at preventing this situation. Concerning the assistants in her room Paula stated:

> That's why we even have our own system amongst ourselves. We told each other that we can even say to each

> other, "you know hey, are you in a bad mood today? Because it seems like you're nagging with the kids", or something like that ...., try to get them to reflect on themselves. That's something new that we started.

The other adults previously mentioned did not seem to be a concern in terms of disruption in the special education room. During my observations, when adults came in and out of the room, the students for the most part, were not disrupted and continued on with assignments or tasks at hand. People came in and out of the room so frequently the students appeared to be desensitized to the situation and ignored it.

None of the students in either class program were able to identify other disruptions besides disruption caused by students. Disruption, in the minds of students, seemed to be defined in terms of what the adults had told them was disruptive, or by actions that were treated as disruptive by the adults. Presumably, what students have been told about disruption is that they cause it. In reality, however, during my observations, students were not bothered by some of the actions that teachers saw as disruptive, actions which the students themselves had defined as disruptive; in fact, many of the students welcomed disruption, whether it was generated by another student, or by something else. For them it was a break in the on-going activity. Students not involved in a classroom disruption would literally sit back in their chairs, put their pencils down and relax. Students would often, particularly in the regular education setting, "watch the show" and would appear to enjoy the disruption. The

students in the special education setting were more likely to ignore the disruption and some would go on with the task at hand.

The point I am making is that disruptions identified by teachers were not necessarily disruptions to students even though they included them in their definitions. I did observe, in both settings, students reacting to what they considered disruptive. Every now and then you would hear one student telling another one to be quiet. Sometimes this was done, it seemed to me, because the student sincerely wanted the quiet; other times it seemed to be an effort by the student to draw attention to the offender so that they would "get in trouble."

Why students are disruptive

Students can be disruptive for a number of different reasons. Paula Smylie, the special education teacher, felt there was usually a reason behind the disruptive actions of a student. She acknowledged, however, that several students who engaged in certain actions that could be considered disruptive were not engaging in that action to be annoying; rather the student just couldn't seem to control the action. She gave several reasons why she thought students were disruptive:

Z Ok., let me ask you a broad question. Why do you think kids are disruptive? I know there's more than one answer to that. What are some of the reasons kids are disruptive?

P I think some do it for attention because they're not getting it in other ways, you know at home or at school. Uhm ... Some it..., I think..., I see a lot from the other issue. It's not

that they want to be disruptive, it's just that something else is going on within them and causing them to act that way.

Z Can you think of other reasons?

P Uhm ..., Something in their nature, even though to me some behaviors aren't disruptive. Like I have a kid who fidgets. Uhm..., where that's just his nature. You know it's what other people term as disruptive.

Z One of the things that one of your students said when I asked him if he was disruptive, he was very open...

P Yeah, I'm sure.

Z When I asked him why (he was disruptive) he said two things. One of which he mentioned he said, "when I want to get attention" and the other reason he said was when he was bored.

P Yes. Sometimes they're not in tune with their work or they're not really paying attention. That's why I try to keep seat work activities exciting. Because when they're bored they really start to drag and that's when the eyes go around and you can see it with (some students). They'll start looking around then they'll start talking and then they'll start talking to others and start aggravating them.

Peggy Ryan, Paula's supervisor, commented on why she thought students were disruptive:

I think there are times where uh, well, sometimes, sometimes there are things that could be going on that are so distressing to a child ... that's going on in their personal life or it could be happening in school that is really extremely distressing to them that they're trying to remove the distressing behavior as a form of communication .... that they can't live with something that is going on in their life, whether it's home or whether it's school or whether it's something internal, a toothache and they can't verbalize it, but they're using that disruptive behavior to say "Hey, look at me I need to talk to you about something."

Ronnie, one of the students in the special education class, volunteered freely that he was disruptive by making sounds and demonstrated for me by belching loudly in the library. He also told me that he sometimes muttered swear words under his breath. I asked him about this:

Z	How come you're disruptive sometimes?
R	I guess to get attention.
Z	To get attention. Ok.
R	Cause I usually don't pay attention.
Z	You don't pay attention?
R	No, they.
Z	Who's they?
R	The teachers sometimes, that's why I want attention.
Z	What do you want attention for?
R	Because sometimes I say something and they don't do nothing.
Z	Like what?
R	Like if I ask them to help me and they just sit there and help another person and I asked first.
Z	Uh huh.
R	That's why I think it's not fair.
Z	You think they're not fair?
R	Well, I think they're fair but when they help other people and I ask first they don't help.

Z So sometimes when you ask first someone else gets help?

R Yeah.

Z And when that happens what do you do, you make noises and...

R Yeah, I get frustrated.

Z Is that the only thing that you do that's disruptive is make noises?

R (Shakes head yes) Sometimes I'll mumble like a swear.

It is certainly true that many of the students in this special education class were preoccupied by unpleasant and hurtful thoughts. Many of them came from dysfunctional families and a few were in foster homes. Ronnie, however, responded with a much more practical reason for his disruption; his perception of unfair treatment. It may have been quite difficult, as Peggy Ryan pointed out, for some of these students to remain non-disruptive since acting in a disruptive manner might have been the only manner in which they could communicate their pain. Since some students use disruption as a form of communication, I asked some respondents if they thought there were times when it was necessary for the student to engage in disruptive actions. Peggy Ryan commented this way:

Z Think in terms of Paula's room ..., the kinds of kids that she has. Can you think of situations when would it be appropriate for them (students) to be disruptive in class?

P Uhm...

Z If it would be.

P In terms of appropriateness, if something is going on in their lives that is just something they can't live with..., whether it's something that we would consider abusive or that they would be hurt in some way either emotionally or physically, whether that's at home or on the bus or whatever setting and they're so upset that they're trying to communicate that they're angry or hurt because of this. To me that's appropriate and then, uhm, we would need to listen to that and try to support, the support the student to be able to communicate what it is that they're angry about or why they're being disruptive.

Additionally, many of these students were not equipped with coping mechanisms that could help them make their way through the world. Students could become frustrated quickly and this frustration could cause them to engage in disruptive actions. Throughout my observations I saw the staff in the special education class being quite attentive to students, and responding quickly to them. Additionally, students were given many opportunities to talk to staff about problems or other issues that were upsetting them. Paula and other staff members checked in with each student throughout the day. Whenever Paula needed to be out of the room, upon returning to the room, she would check in with students to ask them how they were doing. Many students took advantage of this opportunity and either spoke with her or showed her things they were working on.

In the regular education setting the reasons given for disruptive actions were similar. Generally, the teachers and students felt students were disruptive because of difficulties and problems they have. Terry described disruptive

students as "immature", but sometimes they were disruptive because of their home environment. She talked to me about a student, Vincent, whom she felt was "very" disruptive:

Z When kids are disruptive, why do you think they're disruptive?

T I think a lot of it has to do with home environment. They bring a lot of the problems. I'm finding by talking on a one on one basis with a lot of kids there are a lot of problems at home ... that they need the attention here and this is an attention getter. This is what I'm finding out by talking to them. For example, Vincent, he was very concerned about his brother who was home over one weekend. The brother is now living at home under court order, for how long, I don't know, but he was very concerned on Monday, telling me he was very nervous about the brother being home because he's going to be now following his brother's footsteps and he didn't want that to happen.

Terry also talked about low self-esteem causing disruptive behavior:

T ...Oh, uhm, them not having good self-esteem in regards to themselves and they know that they're doing lower grade work. I think might cause discipline problems.

Z Like cause them to be disruptive.

T Yeah, Yeah, knowing that they can't do what other kids their age are doing and this will cause a problem.

Joy Bonneville, the principal, spoke about two possible reasons for classroom disruption: the frustration students face in school, and of the inability of some teachers to motivate students.

Z In terms of the classroom, why do you think kids are sometimes disruptive?

J Uhm... I think one they think, or in reality, they can't do the work or the task that is assigned.

Z And what does that do to them?

J Uh ... Typically that creates a frustration, uh... and from their perspective another "oh, no, I can't." So it becomes an innate..., another put down of themselves in terms of their ability to at least compete or perform where the other kids are performing. So in terms of how they feel about themselves it becomes a negative. I think often times, uh, kids act up in a classroom because they're preoccupied with something that is going on outside of the classroom or outside the school whether they've had an argument in the morning or a fight on the bus or a fight on the playground or somebody yelled at them that morning or they didn't have breakfast or whatever reasons so that it may be an external type of preoccupation with thinking about something else at that particular time.

Z Ok.

J I think in some cases it's ..., kids get disruptive because they may not be motivated or haven't bought into what's going on in the classroom at that particular time. Whether it's a lack of interest uhm... whether it's a lack of attention that they've received, whether it's an unclear set of directions or whether the stage has not been set appropriately for that particular youngster to engage in that particular activity.

Jeremy, a student in the regular education class, felt that disruption was caused by the student. He felt that sometimes students were disruptive because they were angry or that they wanted to socialize.

Z Let me ask you a hard question. Why do you think kids are disruptive sometimes?

J Cause they get angry ... they get angry at somebody else and take it out on other people.

Z Ok, and that makes them disruptive? What other things make kids disruptive?

J Like if somebody makes them mad.

Z I've been sitting in your class and I see things that.. you know I've seen a lot of stuff. Sometimes I see kids turning around during a lesson and talking to someone else. Why do you think they do that? They're not angry but they're just talking. Why do you think they do that?

J Cause their friend sits by them and they like to talk to each other about things.

Z Ok, and why do you think they don't pay attention to the lesson?

J They're kids that don't like to learn maybe.

Z Is there ever a time when you're talking when Mrs. Bartok is doing a lesson?

J Yeah, when I have to ask a question to someone next to me.

Z Yeah. Is there ever a time... I know when I was in school I sometimes would chat with my neighbor and...

J No, cause I don't have any neighbors that I can chat with.

Z You don't have any neighbors to chat with, even with the old seating arrangement?

J Yeah, I used to talk with my friend who sat across from me.

Z Sometimes I've seen kids in your class, not you, turn around and make faces and do stuff like that while either they're supposed to be doing independent work or they're listening to Mrs. Bartok. Why do you think they do that?

J Cause they don't know the person that they're doing it to.

Z The person they're making the faces at. I think that they make faces sometimes to make people laugh. Do you know what I mean?

Jeremy shakes his head yes.

Z Why do you think they do that?

J Cause they want attention.

Z Does it have anything to do with the work?

J No.

Stephanie, another student in the regular education class, felt, as her teacher did, that students were disruptive because of other difficulties they were having, particularly at home. I probed a bit further to find out if there were other reasons that Stephanie felt students were disruptive:

Z Let me ask you a question and this might be a hard question, but think about it for a minute. Why do you think kids are disruptive?

S They might have trouble at home.

Z And that makes them disruptive. Why do you think that is?

Stephanie shrugged her shoulders.

Z You don't know.

S No.

Z Ok, when you're..., you mentioned to me that sometimes you talk when you're not supposed to. Tell me why you think you do that. What would be a reason for you talking when you know you're not supposed to?

S Well, because ... I like... uhm... I like ask someone a question or tell someone sitting next to me or behind me what that word is and stuff.

Z Ok, so you're helping other kids sometimes. Are there times when you're just having a conversation with someone and you're not really talking about work and you're supposed to be working?

S Uh Uh (shaking her head no).

Z You don't do that, ok. Do you think some kids do?

Stephanie shakes her head yes.

Z Why do you think they do that?

Stephanie doesn't respond and shrugs her shoulders.

Z You don't know? Let's see, the kids who are talking about other stuff or ..., I notice that some of the kids in your class turn around and make faces and things like that. They do it when Mrs. Bartok is giving a lesson sometimes. Can you think of a reason why they would do that?

S Well, maybe they don't like Mrs. Bartok or that they think that the lesson is boring.

There were three students in the regular education class that Terry identified as particularly disruptive. One of the students, Vincent, was an identified special education student whom Terry described as having very little supervision at home. He is the same boy who was mentioned earlier as having concerns about his older brother's arrival back in the home. Terry told me that one of the other disruptive students had a father who is an alcoholic.

Perhaps these factors do contribute to classroom disruption. However, as I observed the class, I noted that these particular students and many others were often not engaged in either teacher lessons or independent work. It was at these times that disruption took place. These students, as did others, seemed bored, slumped down in their seats, their eyes wandering, constantly sighing. As Joy Bonneville mentioned, they were not motivated to participate and thus they engaged in disruptive actions; talking, turning around, and making faces.

Consequences of classroom disruption

The methods of handling disruptive actions were many and varied. The variables affecting what the consequences of the disruptive actions were also were numerous. As I interviewed staff members and students many different methods of handling disruptive behavior were mentioned.

Special Education Classroom

Most of the methods for handling disruptive actions in Paula's class were preventative. She talked about treating students with respect, encouragement and, the most important factor, being positive.

> Well, I try to give them something that they're not getting at home or they're not getting some place else or that they haven't gotten. I try and give them that positiveness and I make my adults, I tell the assistants, you know last year I operated with four EA's. I've got three this year. That's a lot of adults in the room, a lot of adults to give reinforcements and I tell them if a kid does a good job you let them know it and everything.

Paula tried to treat the students in her class as individuals. She had the luxury of having a small number and this made it easier for her than it was for the regular education teacher, who had over twenty-five students, to treat the students as individuals.

Sophia (former supervisor)	I think she is special in terms of her understanding that my concentration may be ten minutes on a task and yours may be twenty and she can have different expectations for us and she doesn't necessarily feel the sense of defending her different behaviors with us as two different kids, but she does have the responsibility to explain her differentness in terms of her interaction with us and still it all comes together.

Additionally, the lessons, tasks, and assignments in which the students participated were creative, interesting, and also provided students the opportunity to do hands-on work out of their seats. During my observations students were involved in projects that were engaging and a great deal of fun, such as drawing camouflage butterflies, hanging them up in the room, and then going on a butterfly hunt in the classroom. During a section of the study of human senses students chose certain items that had particular smells, such as cinnamon, terriyaki sauce, and shampoo, which were then put in unmarked bottles. These students then were sent around the school to ask teachers, administrators, custodians and other students to identify what was in each bottle using only their sense of smell. While the students were engaged, in these types of activities, disruption was almost non-existent. During most of the time

that I observed the special education class the students seemed to be engaged in activity. I saw very few signs of boredom. Students were wide eyed, alert, attentive and involved in positive interaction with the staff and their peers. I talked to Paula about her activities and about preventing boredom:

P I try to keep seat work activities exciting. Because when they're bored they really start to drag and that's when the eyes go around and you can see it with Ron. He'll start looking around then he'll start talking and then he'll start talking to others and start aggravating them.

Z To be quite honest with you, I saw very little boredom in this room in all the time I was here.

P We try and take any activity that would be boring, cause there's boring activities, and make it more interesting. These kids have to learn how to spell. They have to learn their sounds. They have to learn things like that and we try and we try and add it, you know make it interesting.

I often observed drills being turned into games of a sort. Paula told me she was always thinking up ways to get them to memorize number facts and spelling words. It was not unusual to see a group of students squealing with delight at the reading table after "beating the clock" to get a group of words correct. The students in the class seemed to respond well and feel positive about how they did their work. I spoke to Ronnie, a student in the class:

Z Does Ms. Smylie try to make things interesting or not? Are some things boring?

R Yeah, she does.

Z What does she do to try and make some of the work stuff interesting?

R She acts funny sometimes.

Z What do you mean she acts funny?

R She talks funny and stuff. Like she says , "Ronnie, come on down!"

Z I noticed that Ms. Smylie had some of the kids playing a reading game today. Is that something you like to do, better than reading from the book?

R Yeah, every Friday we do that.

Z Every Friday?

R Yep.

Z What do you do on other days for reading?

R Other days ..., read.

Z Just read?

R Or we write in our journals.

Z Do you like to do school work?

R Pretty much.

Paula also tries to take class field trips as often as possible. She uses the field trips to keep the students interested and motivated to be positive:

> ... I give them so many things to look forward to, I mean we're travelling all the time. You know in our own ways. When we can find vans and money and busses and ..., or even local field trips. Anything we can do to get out and they shoot for those things you know. We tell them you've gotta keep a good attitude so that they can head out.

Another preventative measure was the amount of supervision in the classroom. The needs of the students got attended to rather quickly and the constant monitoring of the students served to keep disruption down to a minimum. Staff were always circulating around the room to make sure things were running smoothly. It would be quite difficult for a student to be disruptive and not be seen by a staff member.

It was the pedagogical skills that Paula possessed that seem to be the major preventative strategy for handling disruptive behavior. During my observations I saw Paula and her staff express concern and caring for the students. When the adults spoke to the students they made sure that there was good eye contact. Students seemed comfortable talking with staff and asking for their support. On numerous occasions staff members "checked-in" with the individual students.

There was a casual and comfortable atmosphere in the special education class room. There was a couch and rug area and, at any given moment, you would see a student sitting on the couch reading or talking with another person. Paula was a teacher with a great sense of humor who seemed to put students at ease. She was resourceful and motivational. I got the impression the students in the class felt Paula and the other staff members cared about them and that they were there to help them.

Peggy (supervisor)	... uhm, I have been in Paula's room a number of different times since the school year started and

uhm, I've been immediately impressed by the way that Paula deals with the kids. First off, I think that Paula talks to kids not at kids. And I think she really listens and she uhm, is very positive with kids and not in a fake way, uhm. I think she provides a structure where she gets kids engaged in learning and gets them geared into things that are instructional for them and not frustrating and that kids see the real success that they're having academically. I think that she's real honest with them and sets goals with them on a personal level about what they're able to accomplish in dealing with different situations.

Sophia (supervisor) — Paula's very creative and very artistic and in a very short period of time, children do the mechanics of learning, the paper pencil tasks, the reading, the writing, and doing, but at the same time there's always built into those kinds of more usual school activities an art outcome, a project uhm, a product of their learning. I found that kids were truly excited to come to school. Excited about the unusual ideas that Paula had and her positive personality, her interactions with the kids, her excitement over their achievement, ability to just lead them in their wanting and willingness to follow.

The students seemed to flock to Paula and seemed anxious to please her. I got the impression that any number of her students would have been willing to do anything that Paula asked them to do because they liked her so much. Ronnie spoke about how he feels about the staff:

Z Do you like the teachers?

R Yeah.

Z All of them?

Ronnie shook his head up and down vigorously.

Z Who's your favorite?

R Mr. S. and Mrs. Smylie (Ronnie smiled broadly).

Z What's nice about them? What do you like about them?

R Uhm, they give us treats and stuff. They treat us nice. They play games with us and stuff.

Connor, another student in the class spoke about how he likes the class:

Z Do you like this class?

C Yes.

Z Do you like it better than other classes you've been in?

C Uh huh.

Z How come?

C We get to do a lot of other stuff that we don't get to do in other classes.

Z Yeah, like what?

C Go on field trips a lot. She (Ms. Smylie) explains what we're doing instead of just throwing it at us and saying, "do this." Ms. Smylie and all the other aides explains what we're doing, how we're doing it and why we're doing it.

Z Great. And that's helpful to you?

C Yeah.

Paula stated that she doesn't rely on a set reward system in her room. This is somewhat atypical for a special education class. She reported to me

that she used it only when she felt that she had no alternatives. There were no behavior charts or management plans for the individual students.

> When I started, I took over someone else's class a long time ago, four years ago, and they had the token system and the stars and all that and I do not like it. There is no set program so that they expect something every single minute of the day for their behavior.

Students do earn thirty minutes of free time for completing their work and being cooperative. So, in essence, students are rewarded for what is seen by staff as "appropriate behavior."

Paula also altered her class environment. She often provided different work areas for her students. Besides providing opportunities for students to communicate their feelings verbally, Paula assisted students who did not want to talk in finding alternative ways to express their feelings or a space would be provided for a student to think and calm themselves down, not as punishment, but as a vehicle to work things out.

P Uhm, I have one kid who likes to write in a book. When he knows he's gonna go, he writes down his thoughts quick. That works for him. I have another kid who knows he needs to leave the group and go sit in an area where he can work somewhere else.

Z And he asks for that or he just goes?

P Well, he can just do it. By now he knows who he is and he can just go and walk over and sit down and do it.

Paula often gave students choices for behavior, provided verbal prompts, and talked to her students.

Sophia	Those kinds of things I find in Paula's classroom environment... there's multiple choices and she's accepting of kids exercising those choices. She has the usual strategies with kids of a visual look, you know, a wink. Usually her communications with kids or theirs with her of those kinds of gimmicks, a wink, a finger kind of point uhm.. She communicates a lot without using words and she allows them to check back with her without necessarily using words.

Additionally, Paula taught strategies for students to self-monitor their own actions. At times, she and students set goals together. Additionally she enlisted her students in asking them how the whole class was doing.

Paula	We work individually monitoring their behavior and also group oriented. For the group, we keep a chart on the board. Now I might ask a kid at the end of the day, "Hey, how do you think the day was?" They'll go right over and write anything from "dynamite" to "Off." It runs from dynamite, good, OK, so-so, and off. And he'll just put it up. I don't have to ask the whole entire group. I might ask an individual student to rate us as a whole.

I was impressed by how responsive the students were to Paula Smylie. I feel that it was Paula's display of genuine caring for the students in the class that for the most part kept this class running smoothly. Sophia Russo, when speaking about Paula, said:

> She's tremendous in terms of rallying kids on celebrating their achievements. She does a lot a lot, a lot of group things where everyone is a contributor. And even those that are greater contributors aren't looking at those who contribute less as being less then they, but they're eagerly in there too. She just is a wonderful young woman who does wonderful things with kids.

Even with all of these preventative measures, however, disruption in the classroom did take place. There were times when Paula and her staff needed to use responsive methods for classroom disruption although the emphasis was always on preventative measures. I asked Paula what she did when students were disruptive. She mentioned talking to them and giving them space and alternatives, but there were also punitive consequences, such as missing some recess time if their work was not completed:

> I try to teach them that, you know, if I didn't do all my work in the morning you can be guaranteed that I'm not gonna sit at lunch time eating and talking and gabbing. I'm gonna be working and they learn that if they want to sit and talk and gab, that's a choice for you to make but, they're not gonna have thirty minutes later on having recess, or running around time or computer time.

I explored with Paula what she does when students were disruptive in terms of more serious disruption:

Z What do you do when a kid is really disruptive, like you mentioned, throwing a chair and maybe even out of control?

P Right. Well, we run in steps also. So if I can handle it immediately in the classroom I do. If the child needs to be removed from the situation, but remains in the class, we do that. And if he needs to just cool off and do his work in a different area. Sometimes kids just like to get away from the group and we'll do that. And then if he's completely out of control then we remove him from the room, with other adults and usually I do not go with a student because the students buy into me more than they do the regular teaching assistants. And I find that they demand my time in that situation and when I don't go they usually get out of it quicker. They... they will calm down quicker. If there's a restraint that needs to take place or something. Usually if I'm there they demand my time and they will make it prolonged itself. When they know that I'm not gonna leave the group to go take care of them at that one minute, you know, and that they can't have all my time then they'll usually turn it around and come back.

I asked Frank, one of Paula's educational assistants, how he helps students who may be getting disruptive or even engaging in dangerous actions.

Ah ... you might, some of them you can talk down, others just might keep building and building and you just ask them or say we're gonna leave the room now and some of them will be like ok, but in the past there have been a few who just say, "No, I'm not gonna go!" You say you know, and then it goes to the restraining, removing and things like that. But we try to avoid that.

When severe disruption occurs Paula handles the behavior and sees the situation through to its resolution. Sophia Russo described a situation where a student exhibited severe and dangerously disruptive behavior.

Z Have you experienced personally or maybe Paula recounted this to you, an instance where a student was disruptive? Could you describe the specific situation and the manner in which it was dealt with?

S Describe a student in Paula's program?

Z Yes, one who was disruptive, who you would consider to be disruptive. If you could describe that and then the outcome of that. What did Paula do? What actions took place after that?

S A young man of last year's class group uhm had a couple of occasions of being disruptive. His prior school experience had not been in public school, but a private school, a therapeutic private school location. Uhm... he was generally very quiet, withdrawn seemingly depressed. And Paula called me at the start of the school year to confer with her in terms of this young man's behavior. Her concern being, not a disruption, in the sense of acting out disruption, but a disruption to Paula's perception of healthy child coming into to school because of his self-withdrawal and depression. Uhm.. so I first really met this young man because of Paula's call for that kind of behavior and concern. Soon after that, he once arrived to school quite different in his behavior, he was seemingly agitated more active, making facial expressions, much more negative than he had before. He got to some point in his usual school work where he cried out a cry that, "I'm not going to do this anymore. I'm stupid." ... and so on and kind of very forcefully moved some furniture, his own desk and chair bumping into others, kind of became physically out of control wanting to push or push a person, toss material and so on. Paula felt obviously that he needed some time out of the classroom and whatever it was that was building within him to bring about this type of behavior. She did choose to leave the classroom with him and spent some time with him. His behavior continued to escalate where he became seemingly unsafe for himself.

Z In what way?

S He was thrashing about. He wanted to escape. He wanted to run from the room, run from the building. He was verbalizing concern in terms of that self-abusive, fleeing actions that he wanted to take. Was not responding and discussing where he was going, where he would be headed and so on. So Paula spent considerable time with him along with Jane Green (the program social worker) in a room outside of the classroom, while either one of the two would return to the classroom and pretty much discuss with other students that this young man was having an especially difficult time and really summoned their caring and support to continue with the activities of the planned day. His behavior became more demonstrative in his anger and upset. Requiring restraint to protect him and, uh uh, within this environment and that was done for a period of time until all parties believed he was safe and he would listen and be able to more reasonably discuss what was going on inside of him. I found, I was there at the school, I found Paula to be very forgiving in terms of all that occurred. There was no discussion that he is frightening, he certainly was that day. Uhm, there was no discussion that he required a change of placement or in terms of his actions, and the tremendous interference to the usual progression of the scheduled day. There was none of that. There was immense concern for him, his safety, his welfare and immediate return the next day. She spent a good deal of time before he left and, he was picked up by his foster parent from school that day, caring for him, having him talk, express, constantly reassuring him "When you come back in tomorrow what we'll do, how we'll set the day, let's devise a plan between the two of us if you and I need some time tomorrow." It's that kind of special caring, giving, convincing of kids that they're important. They're part of this team of kids working together. We all have issues and problems sometimes that are overwhelming and Paula has a natural gift and talent for that ability to generally communicate to kids her caring and concern and she's there for them and he knew it.

Z And when he returned things were Ok?

S It turned out to be most Ok, very Ok.

Connor, a student in the special education class responded to my question of what happened when students were disruptive:

Z What do the teachers do in the class when kids are disruptive?

C They try to talk to them or if they (the students) don't want to talk to them and they're doing crazy stuff like throwing stuff they have to grab them and drag them out to the hall.

I did not observe any disruptive behavior that required a student to be restrained. In fact, I observed very little disruption.

Regular Education Classroom

Terry Bartok was in the classroom alone with her twenty-eight students. When disruptive behavior occurred, she had to handle it and make decisions without the benefit of input from another adult. For the average day to day functioning of her class, this was generally not a problem. She was able to handle the minor disruptions within the structure of her class. I observed the following incident in her class. A student approached her to report that he could not find one of his sneakers. She was addressing the whole class at the time, delivering the morning announcements. As he came within a foot of her she gently put her hands on his shoulders and turned him around. This was enough of a cue for him. He quietly returned to his seat.

The primary preventative method for avoiding classroom disruption was seating arrangement. As previously mentioned the regular classroom had the desks arranged in rows, a system which Terry felt prevented disruption. Terry changed students' seats if she felt it would prevent disruption. Additionally, she required students to be in their seats for most of the time they were in the room.

Z You changed seats a couple of weeks ago. Do you change seats periodically?

T Yes. One was a request. I had a note. A note was left on my desk and I didn't see it before I left home, for home and I read it the next morning. And this girl was troubled by the constant talking that was going on around her so I moved the person who was doing the talking, which was Billy, up front and it's made a difference.

Z I've noticed Billy since I came.

T And now I've noticed now that he's up in front he's constantly turning around. I've had him all around. I've had him closest to my desk. I've had him in the front row, close to my desk. I've had him over here. I tried him in the back and he's just one child that no matter where you put him, he's going to be disruptive.

Z When you change a seat it is primarily to avoid disruption.

T Try, try.

Z And you make the assignments, the seating assignments for the kids.

T I do. I do. In the beginning of the year I told them the first day of school they can sit with whomever they want and then I will make a decision that, if it's necessary, to move you, I will. But if I see that you are getting along with the person that you are next to, fine, then there's no problem. Then you'll be able to stay there.

Z For this year, for the most part did you have them in the rows?

T Most of the times in the rows for independent work. Cause I find when they're in small groups, even with two, as large as four to six, there's too much socializing going on.

Z Have any of the kids who chose to sit with each other in the beginning of the year remained in those seats?

T Ummm... No, no.

Z When the students are in this classroom are they primarily to be sitting at their seats?

T Yes.

Z Is there any time when they are not sitting at their seats?

T At the end of the day... getting ready for dismissal, basically, or changing for another class.

There were some self-monitoring and preventive strategies activated in the regular education class room. The STAR program was being used school wide. The letters stand for STOP, THINK, ACT, and REVIEW. Every month a theme is introduced at a whole school assembly such as "courage" or "responsibility." Teachers were instructed to work the theme into the curriculum. In Terry's class there was a bulletin board devoted to the STAR program and I heard Terry make two references to the STAR program during my observations. When the class was noisy she spoke about the theme "respecting others" in an attempt to get the class to quiet down. I also heard her say, "remember our theme for the month is taking responsibility." Terry was giving out the

homework assignments and wanting the students to be responsible and complete their homework.

Joy Bonneville, the building principal, told me proudly that every student could tell you what the letters in STAR stood for. She also described how she used the program when a student was disruptive and was sent to her office. She explained that she used the program to help the student think through the situation.

> When a kid gets to my office we're always reviewing a situation. What did they typically forget to do? ... to stop and think about the consequences of their behavior.

Joy was hoping the program not only helped teach students that they had choices, but that it also helped to teach them to make what she described as successful choices. The measure of a successful choice would be if the student stopped themselves before engaging in a disruptive action.

I explored the effect that the STAR program had on disruptive actions and investigated to see, if indeed, students were disruptive less frequently, or if the program assisted students in the resolution of the disruption. While all the students interviewed knew what the letters in the STAR program stood for and told me that they sometimes used it, none of them were convinced of its use by students who were disruptive. The students interviewed were identified by their teacher as students who were typically not disruptive. I spoke to Marta first:

Z Now what about the STAR program. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

M Well it's ..., it's to..., if you go by the letters S T A R so it stands for Stop Think Act Review. And if you do something wrong, like before you do it then your supposed to think of star and your supposed to stop, think, act and review.

Z Does that help you?

M Well ...., yeah, it helps me and other kids.

Z Do you think that the kids who are disruptive ever use the STAR program to help them out?

M No, I don't know, maybe every now and then.

Z Not a lot.

M No.

I then spoke to Robert and he confirmed what Marta had said:

Z Can you tell me a little about the STAR program?

R Well, the STAR program is something that we have every month. STAR stands for Stop Think Act and Review and they tell you to do that before you do something. So, like if a kid hits you and you go to hit him and they tell you stop, think what you're doing and then act like ..., talk it out with him or go tell an aide or something like that.

Z Do you ever use the STAR program in your head before you do something?

R Yeah.

Z You do? Give me an example of when you would use it or when you did use it?

R When the kids were bothering me. There's a lot of kids who walk around and talk to everybody and when they come

next to me they start talking loud. I get really mad and I just stop think and try to hold it back before I do something.

Z What do you think you might do if you didn't do that?

R I might get up and yell at them and start hitting them or something.

Z You don't because you think of the STAR program?

R Yeah.

Z Would you consider yourself to be a kid who is disruptive a lot?

R No, not really.

Z Do you think the STAR program helps them?

R Well, I don't really think that they listen to the STAR program. I don't think that they follow it. They just have a mind of their own and they go on and do whatever they want to do.

When I talked to Terry about the STAR program she immediately defended it and told me it should continue, but she, too, said it probably did not work with students who were disruptive. In fact she mentioned that with Robert, one of "her star pupils", it would work.

Z Let me ask you a few specific questions first. The STAR Program, do you think the STAR Program had ..., what kind of an impact on your classroom?

T Ok, based on the monthly themes we would go over the theme...

Z Not what it is.

T I know but I just want to talk about, I'm not going to talk about each individual theme but after we would discuss it, I would reiterate to the kids the theme of the month and try to incorporate in my teaching and I found that the STAR Program was a big factor and I think it should be going on, continuing.

Z And you think that the STAR program, then helps with disruption, helps eliminate it?

T Oh, I think so, yeah, definitely.

Z Can you elaborate on how and why?

T Well, depending on the child..., all right for a behaviorally problem child. "How are you carrying out your commitment to do what is asked of you to do?" For example, I give you a homework assignment. Are you carrying out your commitment by doing your work. No, I'm not. Well, what can be done? We have to pay a consequence now. What is the alternative, what do we do? All right, stay inside at lunch to work on it, get extra help, this type of thing. So every time you know, the new monthly theme we base it on...

Z Ok, in terms of the Stop Think Act and Review, which they're supposed to say in their head if they feel that they're going to do something that maybe they should think about first, do you think that a majority of the kids did that or do that in this class?

T Uhm ...., no, I don't, I really don't and it's the kids that need to stop, think, act and review ..., they're the ones, they're immature and can't handle such a thing. But now if I had a problem with let's say Robert, who is one of my star pupils and he outwardly did a behavior that was uncalled for, yeah, that would work. But I think a child such as Vincent would say, "Fuck this, I don't need this" and walk away. It doesn't work with that kind of child. Your average and high average kid, yes, it does work.

Z So, would it be fair to say that the kids who are chronic discipline problems in terms of disruption, it didn't work for them.

T It's possible, Barb, being that I teach fifth grade, maybe at a lower grade level and younger aged children, maybe it would work better with them, but at this stage of the game they have a mind of their own and they do what they want to do anyway.

Finally, I talked with the building principal, Joy Bonneville about the effectiveness of the STAR program for students who were disruptive. Her response was to say that the students who were typically disruptive used the program ineffectively:

Z Right. I want to talk a few minutes about the STAR Program

J Yeah?

Z Tell me what you think the impact has been on those kids who are disruptive.

J Uhm ..., I'm not sure they, what.... I'm not sure that they use the decision making technique appropriately in terms of stopping literally, physically stopping and thinking about what they do... The part of the decision making model that they know whether they choose to use the initial stages in terms of being in self control, because they tend to be impulsive kids. I'm not sure that that's utilized the way you might like them to but they're still young.

The STAR program was perceived to work with students who were less inclined to be disruptive and who would probably not increase disruption without the program.

A mediation program was instituted during this research study at Stuyvesant Elementary School and Terry had four girls who were elected by

their classmates to be mediators. These students were trained, along with fifteen other students who were chosen, to be mediators. Additionally four staff people, including Joy Bonneville, were trained. Joy described the program to me:

Joy	We have conflict managers. We have nineteen fourth and fifth graders.
Zim	Talk a little bit about that.
Joy	... I saw as the next logical progression is empowering kids to help find the solutions so we wrote a small grant through Drug Free Schools and we're funded for this training. I had three teachers a 4/5 teacher, 5th grade teacher and my gym teacher and nineteen kids went through three days of training. There was an overview for all fourth and fifth graders. They talked about what the qualities were of a good listener and a problem solver and then each class had to come up with four names.
Zim	How did they come up with the four names?
Joy	They were chosen because each kid and each student had to come up with four names and then the teachers tallied what were the top four names and then those students went through those two days of training and they just began last Thursday so they have a little clipboard and a little form and they operate in pairs.
Zim	If there's a dispute between a teacher and a kid or a kid...
Joy	These are kid and kid.
Zim	Just kid and kid.
Joy	Right.
Zim	Ok, let's say there's a dispute between two kids. What happens, what are the steps that will be taken?

Joy What they do... and we had a whole school assembly last week for all of the kindergartners..., excuse me one minute. (Joy left for about one minute to talk to a student who had just come out of Time Out.)

Zim So you were telling me.

Joy About the conflict managers.

Zim Right, and two kids have a problem and then what happens?

Joy What happens is that the children will go over because they notice it themselves or they've been identified by the lunch aides.

Zim And this is for lunch problems only?

Joy Right. That's all we're doing it with. And they ask the children, they ask the kids, they ask the same question, "Do you want to solve the problem?" If the kids decide that they want to solve the problem, then they take it to the next step and say. What is it that happened? And then they get both sides of the story. There's no judgment it's just simply a listening and then they ultimately ask them what could you have done differently and how will you solve this problem. Well, it may mean that next time we will ask you to join us instead of you having to take the football and run away with it or it may mean that I'll play with the football today, you can play with it tomorrow. So that's ..., there's some type of solution from the participants. What's really cute is that the kids have come up with their own name and they call it the problem solving team. They're the PST. I did this because I thought this was the next logical progression in our STAR program. The middle school that we feed into is also going through mediation training and then the high school. In building it I thought it would be a model. Now the training is different at the other levels but it brings out kids in leadership roles that may or may not have been there and by having the fourth graders every year we can train new fourth graders and we can bring in a few new 5th graders if we need them.

The previous interview took place in October. I followed up on the progress of the mediation program in May. I spoke to Terry about the affect that the mediation program had on the classroom and she told me that it had no affect. None of the students in the class had been involved in conflicts that utilized the mediation program. Two of the four students who had been voted Mediators were no longer involved in the program; one had moved and the other, Marta, had dropped out. I spoke to Marta about the program:

Z You used to be in the mediation program, right?

M Uh huh.

Z And you dropped out?

M Yeah.

Z Can you talk a little about the mediation program?

M Well, what you had to do, you had to go and resolve conflicts. And you had to go around ... You'd have a special day and you'd have another partner and you and your partner would have to go around and see if there was any fights around and if there was you had to see what caused the fight and, uhm, see, uhm, have one person tell their side and have the other person tell theirs. Then they had to try and find some ideas to settle it.

Z Uh huh. And how come you dropped out?

M Well, uhm ..., there's my partner she went and she uhm ..., I'm like kinda shy for it and everything and I wanted someone else to take my place. Me and my partner were both shy.

Z So was it hard for you if two kids were fighting to get in and try and work it out with them?

M Yeah.

Z Did the kids listen to you?

M No.

Z Do you have friends who are still mediators?

M Yeah.

Z And do they have trouble getting the kids to listen?

M Well, sometimes.

Z Do you think the mediation program is helping?

M Uhm, a little bit.

The program did not have the type of success that Joy Bonneville had hoped for:

Z Tell me a little bit about the mediation program and how that worked out this year.

J Uhm ..., It was a moderate success and I say that only because one of the things that I've discovered is that you really need to have somebody who is ultimately responsible for the implementation of the program.

Z Like one designated teacher?

J Yes, and that it ...it needs to be somebody who is committed to the program and can expend the extra energy it takes to make sure that it works. What we did this year in our spring training is we went to some third graders and some more fourth graders so that we would have some kids who would be here for next year, hopefully and that our phys. ed. teacher went through the session with them. Uhm..., the kids liked it but what we found in some cases was the kid didn't want to give up their lunch time after having gone

through the training that they would rather play with their friends and that they didn't want to problem solve. It was a good exposure to the program but the effort that it takes, for example, I know at the middle school any kid who is on suspension has to come back through the problem solving team. Uhm..., but they have teachers who have that as their responsibility and have access to teachers and kids on the problem solving team out of class to be able to do that and we're not at that stage and we're not that formal. I think it has good merit because it's another way of enabling kids and I really saw that as the next step in terms of our STAR Program was getting the kids involved in that and I think that ... what ... the messages they're taught in terms of do you want to solve the problem and several of the teachers in the classrooms whose kids are trained use that model, but it takes somebody to do it and my dilemma is that I don't ... I can't be that person and in the elementary school you don't have quite the freedom in terms of scheduling that you have in other levels but I think it has it's merits. I think its message is good.

Z Do you think it impacted in the classroom?

J I think in some of the classrooms it did.

Z Particularly Terry's. Do you think it impacted in Terry's classroom?

J Uhm..., I haven't observed it. I haven't been in there enough to be able to observe that. I will tell you in one of the fourth grades where the teacher was very involved and actually went to training. She uses it in her classroom all the time. But in terms of Terry's room I can't answer that.

When disruptive actions were serious or severe, Terry relied on others, particularly the building principal. This sometimes created a problem for her because assistance, at times, was not always readily available. Terry talked about a situation with a student she had a few years ago who was engaging in disruptive and dangerous actions:

Zim — On the day that he threw the chair, what happened? Do you remember?

Terry — It happened so fast. I think my back was turned, if I remember correctly when this happened. And I just remember him storming out of the room and it was something that was building up inside and I don't know who he threw the chair at but...

Zim — What happened after he threw the chair and ran out the room?

Terry — He just stormed out and I quickly called the office. I didn't want to leave the class. Things had been happening. Things were brewing so I didn't t want to leave my class. So I just quickly picked up the phone. After that the parents were called.

Terry did not follow-up with this student concerning this incident. The principal took over the situation and Terry's involvement ended when the student stormed out of the classroom. Terry relied not only on the principal for assistance when disruptions were severe, but on the facilities the school had. The school had a Time-Out room in the basement. They also had an educational assistant who oversaw the Time-Out room. This year the school had a lunch detention area for students who were disruptive. Additionally, there was a late bus so if a teacher chose to keep a student after school they could do so.

Most of the methods employed in Terry Bartok's class were responses to disruption. Consequences for disruptive actions were universal in the class. When Terry spoke about discipline she did not mention the individual differences or needs of the students. This may be due to the fact that she had

twenty-eight students and she was the only adult in the room. It can be quite difficult to develop relationships with each individual student. There was no mention by anyone associated with the regular education class that the relationship a teacher has with the students, or the personal qualities of a teacher, may affect disruptive actions or the consequences of such actions.

The most frequently used strategy to deal with classroom disruption in the regular education class was to provide negative consequences. When a student was disruptive a verbal warning or a visual look may have altered a student's behavior. However, if the disruptive action persisted, the student engaging in the disruptive action would either be assigned a writing task or be asked to stay in for lunch or to stay after school. Sometimes parents were called. When disruptive action was severe the student was sent to the principal who might talk with the student, assign detention, call a parent, send the student to the Time Out room, or suspend the student from school. When I asked several of the students what happened to students who were disruptive, they generally answered describing consequences that were doled out for the disruptive actions. They clearly saw these consequences as punitive. I asked Jeremy about this:

Z What happens to students who are disruptive in class?

J They get punished.

Z And how do they get punished?

J They get written up.

Z Who writes them up?

J The teacher.

Z And what happens to that piece of paper that she writes on? Where does that go?

J It goes in their folder that goes on to middle school ..., if they do really bad things.

Z Are there any consequences for disruptive behavior? What kind of trouble do kids get into?

J Detention.

Z And what's detention?

J Staying after school or going upstairs in the music room for lunch detention.

Z Do kids in your class get detention?

J Yes.

Z Does Mrs. Bartok send them to lunch detention?

J Yeah.

Z How often do you think that happens?

J A lot.

I asked Robert what happened to students who were disruptive and he responded by saying:

> Well, if you do something that's real bad like push a kid around or hit him or punch him and stuff like that you get sent to the office and if you don't finish your work you have to stay in at lunch and do it and if you go outside and this keeps going on and on where you don't finish your work Mrs. Bartok makes the kids call their mother and father and

tell them that they haven't finish their work and they have to stay after school and do it.

There were many different strategies employed in both the regular education and special education classes that were intended to deal with the issue of classroom disruption. In Figure 3 I placed similar strategies in specific categories. In Figure 4 strategies previously mentioned in Figure 3 are divided into three groups; each group indicating whether a strategy was being used as a preventative measure, a responsive measure or both.

In Figure 3 five different categories of strategies for dealing with disruption are shown. The first category, pedagogical skills, are strategies that teachers have that involve their ability to work with and interact with the students in the class. These skills are usually used in relationship building with students.

Strategies that involve classroom environment involve the set up and design of the classroom. Such features as how the desks and work areas are arranged as well as the management of time are included in this category. Additionally, the presentation and administration of expectations and limitations for actions are included.

Positive consequences or incentives are introduced by the teachers and staff to encourage non-disruptive actions. Rewards are offered for actions that are seen as "appropriate" and are withheld from students who either do not display these actions or engage in actions that are considered disruptive.

Pedagogical Skills

Resourcefulness (P)[1]
Showing concern for students (P/T)
Visual looks (winking, pointing) (P/T)
Tone of expression (P/T)
Being Positive (P)
Being sincere (P)
Being a good listener (P)
Caring (P)
Humor (P)

Classroom Environment

Providing interesting assignments (hands- on) (P)
Providing verbal prompts (P/T)
Providing physical prompts (hand on shoulder) (P/T)
Providing a different work area (P)
Proving time to talk with staff (P)
Providing choices for behavior (P)
Teaching alternatives and choices (P)
Informing students of expectations/limitations (P/T)
Having students repeat expectations/limitations (P/T)
Re-directing students when disruptive(P/T)
Individualized attention (P)
Providing extra attention (P)

Positive Consequences (Incentives)

Providing extra attention (P)
Providing rewards (P)
Verbal praise for non-disruptive students (P/T)
Student of the week (P)
Earning reinforcers (P)
Earning a field trip (P/T)
Calling a Parent (to praise a child) (P)

Negative Consequences (Aversives)

Asking student to leave the room (P/T)
Restraining student (P)
Writing Assignments (P/T)
Time Out (P/T)
Keeping students after school (T)
Keeping students in for lunch (P/T)
Losing a field trip (P/T)
Suspension from school (P/T)
Suspension from bus (P)
Calling a parent (To report "bad behavior")(P/T)

Student Self-monitoring

Teacher and student working on a plan together (P)
Setting goals with students (P)
STAR program (T)
Having students monitor each other (P)
Having students repeat expectations (P/T)
Conflict resolution/mediation program (T)
Teach students where and when to voice disagreement (P)
Teaching students methods for dealing with anger (count to ten, deep breathing) (P)
Teaching students to rate their own behavior or behavior of class. (P)
Teaching students where and when to voice disagreement (P)

Figure 3. Reported and observed strategies for dealing with classroom disruption.

[1]"P" stands for actions displayed in Paula's room. "T" stands for actions displayed in Terry's room. "P/T" stands for actions displayed in both rooms.

PREVENTION OF DISRUPTION

Resourcefulness (P)[2]
Showing concern for students (P/T)
Tone of expression (P/T)
Being positive (P)
Being sincere (P)
Being a good listener (P)
Providing interesting assignments (P)
Teaching alternative choices (P)
Providing extra attention (P)
Providing rewards (P)
Verbal praise (P/T)
Student of the week (P)
Teacher and student working together on a plan (P)
Setting goals with students (P)
STAR program (T)
Having students monitoring each other (P)
Teaching students where and when to voice disagreement (P)
Teaching students methods for dealing with anger (count to ten, deep breathing etc...) (P)
Teaching students to rate their own behavior or behavior of class (P)
Caring (P)
Humor (P)

RESPONSES TO DISRUPTION

Asking students to leave the room (P/T)
Restraining students (P)
Writing assignments (P/T)
Keeping students after school (T)
Keeping students during lunch (P/T)
Time out (P/T)
Losing a field trip (P/T)
Suspension from bus (T)
Suspension from school (P/T)
Calling a parent (P/T)

METHODS THAT ARE PREVENTATIVE AND RESPONSIVE MEASURES

Providing verbal prompts (P/T)
Providing physical prompts (P/T)
Informing students of expectations/limitations (P/T)
Having students repeat expectation (P/T)
Conflict resolution/mediation program (T)
Individualized attention (P)
Teacher and student working together on a plan (P)
Providing an alternative work area (P)
Providing time to talk with staff (P)
Providing choices for behavior (P)
Re-directing students (P/T)
Setting goals with students (P)
Visual looks (P/T)

Figure 4. Preventative and responsive measures of disruption.

Conversely, negative consequences or aversives are used to discourage disruptive student action. Teachers hope that the threat of punishment will prompt a student to engage in actions which are seen as non-disruptive. The last category, student self-monitoring, involves engaging students in taking

[2] "P" stands for actions displayed in Paula's room. "T" stands for actions displayed in Terry's room. "P/T" stands for actions displayed in both rooms.

responsibility for their actions and includes metacognitive strategies such as teaching the student to visualize and plan a course of action. Additionally, students working with others to solve problems are included in this category.

I would characterize some ways of handling disruptive behavior as primarily preventative measures. These methods were employed to minimize the number of disruptions that could occur. Additionally, these methods were intended to help reduce the intensity of disruptive behavior.

Other methods of handling disruptive behavior were used primarily as a response when disruptive action occurred. Naturally there was some overlap in these categories. Some of these methods fit both categories. From my observations and from my interviews in both classes, I gathered information on methods that were used to handle disruption in the classroom. I have categorized the methods into three areas: methods that are used primarily as preventative measures, methods that are used primarily as responses to disruptive behavior, and those methods that are used equally as both preventative measures and responses to disruptive behavior. They are outlined in Figure 4.

To gain an additional perspective on disruption, or to look at the phenomenon of disruption from a different angle, it may be useful to look at the actual classroom disruption and the responses to that disruption. From the coding scheme I categorized disruptive actions and responses. This enabled me to tally the actions in the classrooms I observed. Figure 5 outlines the actions in the special education class.

TYPE	SETTING	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY
TALKING	Seat work	Verbal admonishment	6
	Seat work	Ignored	2
	Seat work	Verbal Prompt	1
	Small group	Gesture	1
	Small group	Verbal admonishment	1
	Lecture	Verbal admonishment	1
	Transition	Not heard	1
OUT OF SEAT	Transition	Ignored	2
	Lecture	Verbal Admonishment	1
CALLING OUT	Lecture	Verbal admonishment	2
	Lecture	Verbal prompt	1
	Seat work	Verbal admonishment	1
	Seat work	Verbal prompt	1
	Small group	Verbal prompt	1
MAKING NOISE	Seat work	Verbal admonishment	2
	Seat work	Ignored	2
	Seat work	Verbal prompt	1
PHYSICAL (throwing objects, playing w/objects, physical altercations)	Seat work	Ignored	1
	Small group	Verbal admonishment	1
ARGUING	Small group	Given a choice of actions	2
	Seat work	Verbal admonishment	1
SWEARING	Seat work	Given a choice of actions	1
RUNNING IN THE ROOM	Transition	Verbal prompt	1

Figure 5. Observed disruption and teacher response (Special Education Class).

In the special education class most of the students' disruptive actions took place while they were supposed to be doing seat work. Fifty-six percent of total disruption occurred at this time. Eighteen percent of total disruption occurred during small group instruction and fourteen percent of total disruption occurred during a total group lecture. Transition disruption accounted for only twelve percent of total disruption. The minimal amount of disruption, which occurred during lectures and small group discussions points to the fact that lessons were engaging and students were usually not bored during these activities. Another reason for the limited amount of disruption during a total group lecture was that the class was in a concentrated area, and when an adult was conducting the lecture, there were usually two to three adults monitoring students. There was a greater number of disruptions during seat work. Disruption that occurred during seat work was due to the fact that when students were completed with assignments they would become bored if they had to wait for others to finish their assignments. To alleviate the boredom those students who were waiting would become disruptive in an effort to get attention or just to have something to do.

The most common form of disruption observed in the special education class was talking, which accounted for thirty-eight percent of the total disruption. Calling out accounted for eighteen percent of disruption and was distinguished from talking by two factors; one, the degree of loudness, and two, who it was directed at. Talking usually meant talking in a whisper or a normal tone of voice

to a classmate in close proximity. Calling out was usually loud enough for the whole room to hear and was usually directed to the entire class.

The most common response, on the part of the adults, to disruptive actions by the students, was verbal admonishment, which was forty-seven percent of the total responses. It usually came in the form of a light scolding, but if the offense was repeated after the first verbal admonishment, the tone of the admonishment became more serious. Eighteen percent of the total responses was a verbal prompt, distinguished from the verbal admonishment by the fact that it wasn't scolding. A typical prompt would be "You probably want to stop talking so that your work is done in time for recess." Twenty percent of the responses were to ignore the disruptive action. This was an action that was seen or heard by staff, but ignored in hopes that the action or actions would stop. If the action did not stop a verbal admonishment was usually given. Eight percent of the disruptions were handled by giving the disruptive student(s) a choice such as this response to two students working together who were arguing: "You can continue working together and stop arguing or you can complete your work alone."

Figure 6 delineates class disruption that I observed and the teacher response to that disruption in the regular education class. During my observation throughout the year of the regular education class students were engaged in either seat work or lecture as these were the overwhelming majority of instructional settings used.

TYPE	SETTING	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY
TALKING	Seat work	Verbal admonishment	12
	Lecture	Verbal admonishment	11
	Seat work	Not heard	4
	Lecture	Not heard	4
	Lecture	Seat Changed	3
	Seat work	Ignored	2
	Seat work	Glanced at	2
	Seat work	Seat Changed	2
	Lecture	Ignored	1
OUT OF SEAT	Seat work	Not seen	5
	Seat work	Verbal admonishment	2
	Lecture	Verbal admonishment	2
	Lecture	Not seen	2
	Lecture	Physical	1
STANDING ON THE SEAT	Seat work	Not seen	1
CALLING OUT	Transition	Lights off/verbal admonishment	1
	Seat work	Verbal admonishment	1
MAKING NOISE	Seat work	Not heard	3
	Seat work	Verbal admonishment	1
	Lecture	Verbal admonishment	1
	Lecture	Glanced at	1
PHYSICAL (throwing objects, playing w/objects, physical altercations)	Seat work	Not seen	4
	Lecture	Verbal admonishment	4
	Seat work	Glanced at	1
ARGUING	Lecture	Verbal admonishment	2

Figure 6. Observed disruption and teacher response (regular education class).

Fifty-seven percent of all disruption took place during seat work and forty-three percent of all disruption took place during lectures. More than half of the disruption, (fifty-six percent) came in the form of talking. Disruption in the form of students being out of their seats was sixteen percent, physical disruption was thirteen percent and noise making was eight percent.

Responses to disruption were varied. However, the major response to disruption was verbal admonishment, which accounted for fifty-three percent of all responses to disruptive actions. Thirty-four percent of the total disruptive actions (these were actions defined by Terry and others as being disruptive) were not seen or heard. Terry's response to six percent of the disruption was to glance at the offender, four percent of the disruptive actions were ignored, and three percent of the disruptive actions resulted in changing the seat of the disrupter.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The phenomena of classroom disruption like most phenomena can be understood in a variety of ways. The conceptions of those involved will often be different depending on who they are and the experiences they have had. This is particularly true when comparing the differences in perception between students and teachers. "Many of the taken - for - granteds of adult thinking cannot be taken for granted when it comes to the thinking of children" (Marton, 1988, p. 178). The relationship between an individual and aspects of the world around him or her contribute to that individual's concept of any phenomena. In studying a phenomenon it is essential to describe the relationship between the individuals involved and the phenomena. "Leaving other aspects aside, we end up with categories of description that, though originating from a contextual understanding (interpretation), are decontextualized and, hence, can be used in contexts other than the original one. Above all, they are potential parts of larger structures in which they are related to other categories of description. Such a complex of categories of description is reasonably a very useful tool when it comes to understanding of other people's understanding." (Marton, 1988, p. 182)

A conception is a systematic arrangement of ideas; a description of a system that accounts for known or inferred properties. "Concepts reflect and

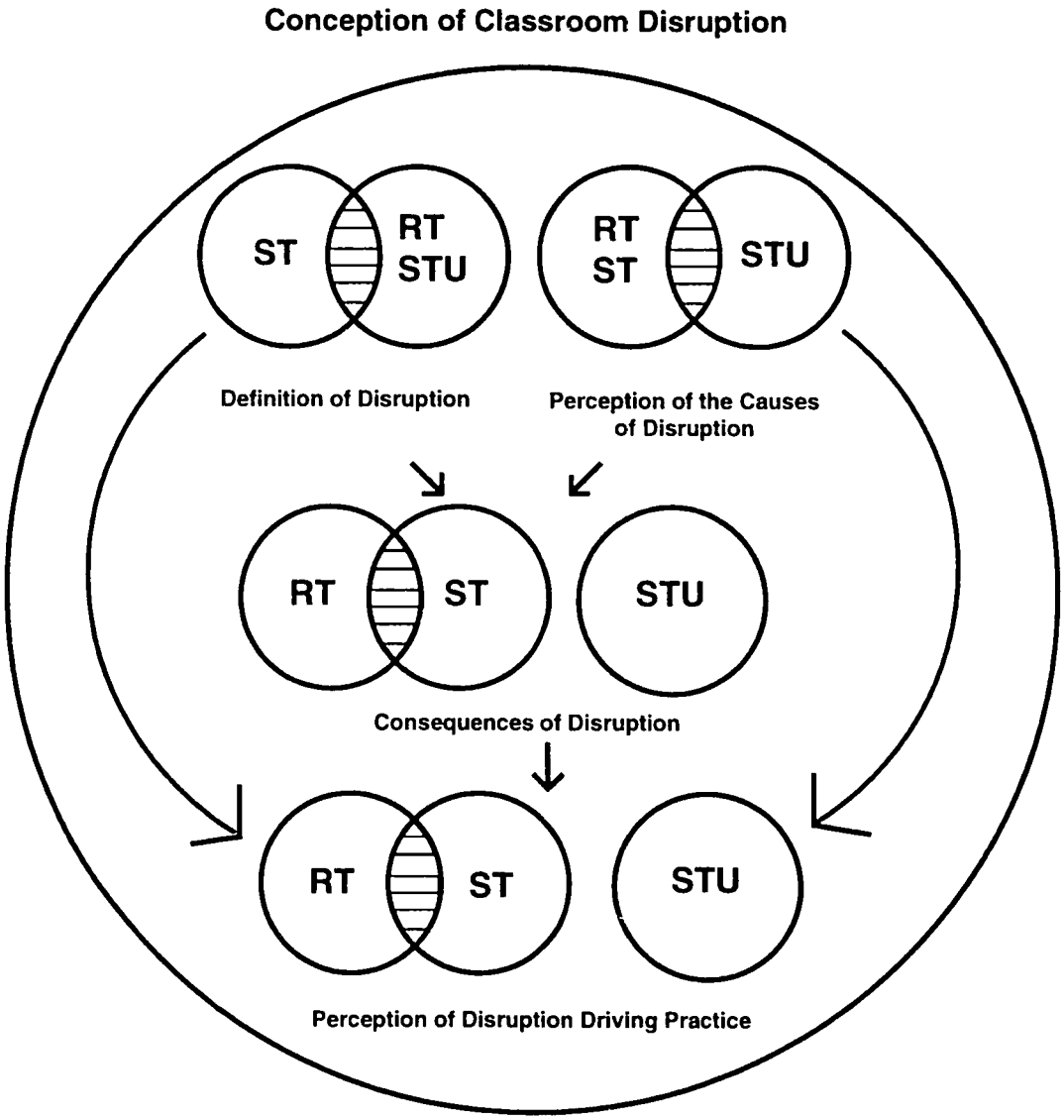
embody in their meaning beliefs about how the world operates, that is, the meaning of concepts is ultimately tied up with the beliefs which their users possess." (Fay, 1987, p. 44)

The concept of classroom disruption has several components to it, namely, the definition of disruption, the causes of disruption, the consequences of disruption, and how disruption drives the practice of the those involved. The relationship between these components also makes up the conception of disruption. Additionally, the differences in individual experiences affects how one conceives of disruption. For the two teachers and the students in this study some of the components were viewed in the same way, others in quite different ways, and, of course for some of the components there was overlap.

Figure 7 illustrates the conception of classroom disruption and its components. The differences and overlap in the conceptions of those involved in this study are delineated, categorized and described. It should be noted that the amount of overlap pictured in the figure is not representative of the actual amount of overlap. The overlap pictured only indicates that an overlap existed.

Definition of Disruption

Classroom disruption was easily identified by teacher, staff and student, whether they were from the special education setting or from the regular education setting. The point of view of the respondents, from both settings, was that disruption was some action that students engaged in that must be stopped or at least controlled in some manner.



KEY
RT = Regular Education Teacher
ST = Special Education Teacher
STU = Student

Figure 7. Conception of Classroom Disruption

The definitions of disruption, by the regular education teacher and all students, were remarkably similar and in Figure 7 are represented by one circle. There was a difference, however, between the special education teacher and the regular education teacher and students. Socializing during class time was not considered a disruption by the special education teacher. In this class, as in many special education classes, acceptable interpersonal relationships are a goal to be achieved and student socializing was perceived to be a means to the end.

Through observations and interviews, I have determined that disruption meant, on most occasions, that the teacher or a staff member was being disrupted. A teacher interrupted by a student during instruction, was considered to be a disruption. This is an example of a distinction between an espoused theory and a theory in use. The teachers talked about disruption occurring when the learning process of other students was interrupted, but in actuality actions were most often considered disruptive when the teacher was interrupted.

Disruption occurred usually in the form of students talking, getting out of their seats, or making noises. Serious disruptions, although not observed, were defined as students fighting, yelling loudly, swearing, throwing furniture, and being excessively non-compliant in terms of following a teacher's direction(s). Disruption that were not student generated were not considered important by the two teachers. These included disruptions caused by staff announcements

or staff who arrived in the classroom without previous notice. In all cases disruption was defined in a Behavioristic manner. Disruption was an overt and observable action.

Causes of Disruption

Both teachers shared a similar conception of why students were disruptive and, while there was some overlap between the teacher conception and student conception of the causes, there were some differences as well. The teachers' conception of the causes of disruption are represented in Figure 7 as one circle, while the student conception of the causes of disruption is represented by a separate circle that overlaps the teachers' circle.

Based on interviews and observations over the year I believe there were two major reasons why teachers felt students engaged in disruptive actions. One of these reasons had to do with factors that were unrelated to the school environment and the second reason was indirectly related to the school environment. Generally speaking teachers viewed disruption as something that came from within the student which could not be environmentally controlled.

The first reason teachers felt students were disruptive had to do with "the baggage" students brought with them into the classroom. Teachers believed the main reason students were disruptive was that they came from dysfunctional home settings. Teachers also felt that students who were preoccupied and

upset, due to home life problems, had difficulty following the school routine and rules.

The second reason teachers felt students were disruptive had to do with frustration. Frustration was caused by a number of factors, some of which included: a student's inability to understand or complete assignments, a student's need for attention they felt they were not receiving, a student's need to be heard, and a student's inability to follow the rules and routine of the classroom and school. In most cases teachers felt the frustration level of the students was excessively low and again, assumed the problem came from within the student. Both teachers stated that when students felt frustrated they often communicated this frustration by acting in a manner the teachers considered disruptive. Calling out was an example of such disruptive action. Even though the teachers acknowledged that some disruptive actions were forms of communication when used by some students, they usually treated the disruption as the problem, not as the symptom of the problem.

While some of the students did mention home environment as a cause of disruption, they spoke more about being bored, angry, and frustrated when their needs were not met in the classroom (not having their questions answered, not being called on in class, etc.). During my observations students were not disruptive when they were engaged in activity, no matter how dysfunctional their home life was. I noticed, during every observation I made in the regular education class, that there were students who were not attending to the lessons or to the activity at hand. Subsequently, these students became disruptive to

some degree. Many of the student disrupters had not been described to me as students with low frustration levels or as students who came from a dysfunctional home life. Although I never observed major disruption, in either class setting, there were many instances of low level disruptions in the regular education class. These disruptions most often took the form of talking, giggling or making noises.

Consequences of Disruption

The consequences of disruption were entirely different for students and teachers. There was overlap between the special education teacher and the regular education teacher. In Figure 7 three circles are represented. The two overlapping circles have been designated for the two teachers and the separate circle represents the students.

The consequences of disruption in the regular education class were usually seen through the eyes of the students as positive and most of the time even enjoyable. A class disruption, if large, enough usually meant a welcome break from whatever task the student was engaged in. Even minimal disruption was viewed as unobtrusive to a student or if the disruption was directed toward that student, (a whispered joke or a passed note), it was viewed as a pleasant experience. At times students would encourage fellow classmates to be disruptive or they would attempt to prolong the disruption. It was very rare that I observed any student in the regular education class showing displeasure at a

disruption. A student would show displeasure concerning disruption when he or she was caught by the teacher and suffered some type of punishment.

In the special education class students were much more prone to ignore disruption and carry on with the task at hand. There were, however, times when the special education students did seem to enjoy a disruption.

Classroom disruption caused anxiety for both teachers, particularly the regular education teacher. It was clearly an unwanted occurrence and when it occurred both teachers took measures to stop the disruption. Additionally, the threat of classroom disruption caused the teachers, particularly the special education teacher, to use preventive measures. When disruption occurred both teachers sought to have the disruptive students in the classes comply with the rules of the class. In order to discuss how this compliance from students was obtained it is necessary to review some of the learning theories discussed in Chapter Two. I found that no single pure theoretical perspective was used by either teacher and, as I suspect is true for most teachers, a hybrid of theories was used, either intentionally or unintentionally, by each teacher.

Regular education

The basic approach in the regular education setting was a Behavioristic approach. This was true for both the perception of what classroom disruption was and how it was handled. Classroom disruption in the regular education class was defined by the teacher. Even though no set Behavioristic program such as behavior modification or behavior contracts was in place, and the

teacher, Terry Bartok, did not identify her use of Behaviorist theory, (she did not identify any theory for that matter), she used Behavioristic techniques to deal with what she saw as classroom disruption. This is, in fact, how she "got the students to comply." Terry concentrated on overt behaviors that were observed and she presented stimuli to the students to elicit what she, and other school staff, saw as appropriate actions. Additionally, stimuli were presented to extinguish behavior that was unwanted. Although rewards, such as "Star of the week", were introduced to encourage non-disruptive actions and academic achievement, the more common stimuli was to punish disruptive actions. The common forms of punishment were detention, loss of recess, staying after school and phone calls home. There seemed to be a clear understanding, by both staff and students, that actions that were deemed disruptive by the staff would be punished in some manner, shape or form. Terry Bartok's sole reliance on Behavioristic techniques to deal with classroom disruptions points to her need to control the classroom environment. Unfortunately this created an atmosphere that was somewhat stifling.

Rogers (1983) claimed that most teachers are, at least in class, impersonal and boring and that many students accept school as an unpleasant experience. They discover that most of their learning relevant to themselves occurs outside of school. Terry's teaching style of lecture and seat work, presented to students who not only sat in rows but were expected to be in their seat for most of the entire time that they were in the classroom, lent itself to providing an impersonal and sometimes boring environment. I do not believe

that all the students in the regular education class felt that their classroom experience was unpleasant, but I do believe that there were some who felt exactly this way. I would say this was particularly true for those students who engaged in classroom disruption. School was irrelevant to them; lessons and seat work were boring and classroom disruption was a tool used to assist in surviving the day. This disruption was most unwelcome by Terry and in handling it, the atmosphere of the room would become tense and uncomfortable. Terry would punish the disrupter either by scolding them in class or by asking them to do something that they did not want to do. Asking a disruptive students to change seats was a common form of trying to deal with disruption. When talking about a student who was chronically disruptive Terry explained that changing his seat many times still did not improve the situation. However, she continued to use the seat changing strategy which points to the fact that she would rather continue a method that was not working than try something different. As Argyris and Schon (1974) point out, change can be quite uncomfortable and teachers would sometimes prefer an ineffective, familiar method rather than trying something new and unfamiliar.

Special Education

Disruption in the special education classroom was also perceived in Behavioristic terms and was handled by utilizing methods that were primarily Behavioristic. The stimulus for producing what was perceived of by staff as non-disruptive action was most often a reward for what was seen as "good

behavior." However, punishment was also used in the form of losing free time or recess time and, on rare occasions, if the disruption was serious and had occurred over a long period of time, the loss of a field trip. Rewards came in the form of physical and verbal reinforcements. Paula Smylie, the special education teacher, repeatedly told me that she used positive reinforcement often and trained her staff to use positive reinforcement as well. Zimmerman and Zimmerman (1966) stated that smiles, chatting, and teacher proximity serve as reinforcers. These forms of reinforcement, along with affection, were extensively used in the special education class. Tangible reinforcements, however, were not utilized. Paula reported to me that "tokens and things like that don't cut it in my room. I just can't do it." When I asked her if it was her style to use a behavior modification system she replied, "no." But when I asked her later what she did when a student had particular problems with disruption she replied, "We'll set up a reward system." Paula stated, as well, that these methods were not the only methods she used. This was certainly true. Additionally, Paula utilized social modeling extensively, encouraging her staff to set good examples for the students and encouraging students to be good role models for each other.

The use of Cognitive Theory was almost nonexistent in the special education classroom. This was somewhat surprising to me as I expected to find the use of some metacognitive techniques. I never observed the use of metacognition, but, then again, I saw such a minimal amount of classroom disruption during my visits that there appeared to be little need for it. When I

asked Paula if she taught the students to self-monitor their behavior she told me that on occasion she would ask a student to rate the whole class on "how they had done." What she meant by this was how the student thought the behavior of the whole class had been.

As much as Paula used Behavioristic methods, she also extensively used methods that were consistent with Humanistic learning theory. From a Humanistic point of view the learning environment should be a place where students feel wanted, cared for and listened to. Rogers (1987, pp. 40 - 41) talked about a display of real sensitivity and empathic understanding as "when you understand without judging, when you understand what it is like to live in the world of the other person." To this end Paula was a resounding success at creating such a learning environment. The tone of the room during every one of my observations was positive, friendly, and surprisingly free of tension. The students seemed happy, energetic, engaged and secure. The students were at ease and comfortable. They asked questions often and, at times, challenged the answers. The response from both Paula and the staff was most often acceptance and patience. Yau (1991, p. 157) felt that, "Youngsters who are encouraged to explore, to risk-take, to ask questions and challenge established assumptions are more likely to become creative and flexible adults." Additionally, Paula talked several times about instilling self-confidence in the students in the class. The first response to disruptive actions, even disruptive actions that were serious, was to talk to the student, not to send them out of the room.

John Dewey (1902) stated emphatically that education should be relevant to the student. I feel that Paula's curriculum and instructional style reflected this philosophy. Paula expended a great deal of energy teaching students subjects relevant to the students. Fortunately for Paula she did not have as much curricular constraints as Terry, the regular education teacher; she had free reign on what subjects to teach and how to teach them. Paula reported to me that she taught subjects that she felt were important for the students to know about for the future, but that she also taught subjects she felt the students would find interesting and relevant. The presentation of the material was in varied forms and, whenever possible, the lesson included a hands-on activity. Where the special education class deviated from Humanistic theory was in its consequences of disruptive actions that could not be handled by just talking with the disrupter. The consequences of classroom disruption, as mentioned previously, was clearly derived from a Behavioristic perspective.

Conception of Disruption Driving Practice

In Figure 7 as mentioned earlier, two overlapping circles reflect the two teachers and a singular circle represents the students. Both teachers struggled to maintain power and control in the classroom. This was more overtly apparent in the regular education class because in the special education class the struggle for power and control was softened by the teacher's Humanistic tendencies. However, since the causes of disruption, as seen by the teachers, were within the child, the concept driving their practice was to control the

students, not necessarily change the environment or instruction style. When the environment was changed it was to accommodate the disruptions within the child.

The methods used to stop disruption were supposed to, somehow, get the students to comply with "the law of the land." The law of the land was basically defined by the teacher and the staff, very much in line with Behaviorist techniques. There seemed to be a certain amount of anxiety on the part of the teachers, particularly in the regular education setting, about losing control of the class. Student compliance to the staff was seen as the key to removing disruptive actions in the classroom. From this perspective it is easy to understand why both teachers relied heavily on Behaviorist methods to get the students in the classes to comply. However, the special education teacher and the regular education teacher did have different perspectives, different levels of tolerance of student actions, and different views on whether or not these actions were disruptive or non-disruptive, that drove their own actions in different directions.

Regular Education Class

As mentioned previously, Terry Bartok, the regular education teacher, viewed socializing in her class as disruptive. I believe she felt that if she allowed the students in her class to socialize she would lose control of them. Terry did many things to prevent socializing from occurring: students did not work cooperatively, students were not allowed to talk, students were to stay in

their seats. In addition, the students' desks were arranged in a manner to prevent socializing. The expectation of Terry Bartok was that students should almost always conform to the classroom rules and norm; the norm being compliance to the teacher's wishes and sitting quietly and doing their work.

Terry also remained somewhat distant from the students in the class. I believe she felt a formal appearance would keep her in control of the class. The students did not seem to know a great deal about her. I did not observe much social interaction between Terry and any of the students in class; there was little emphasis on the students finding out about Terry or Terry finding out about the individual students in the class. Perhaps this was partially due to the fact that Terry felt she had too many students to know them all individually, that she did not have enough time, that she felt the pressure of getting through the curriculum would not allow this type of interaction. However, I also believe that she felt these types of interactions would cause her to lose a certain amount of control of the students in the class. Terry seemed determined to keep her students from gaining any power in the classroom as I believe that she felt that if she empowered her students, she would lose power. This belief is consistent with Terry's sole reliance on Behaviorist techniques.

Special Education Class

Paula Smylie was not only tolerant of socializing in the special education class, she encouraged it. Paula also had a greater tolerance than Terry for actions that did not always conform to the classroom rules. There seemed to be

a wider range of acceptance, on her part, of the student and of student action that others might find disruptive. For example: when an adult was not teaching a lesson to the entire class students were allowed to work cooperatively and a low level of talking was tolerated. Paula assumed their work would get done and that a student who was occasionally talking or getting out of their seat was not disrupting themselves or others.

Even though many of the students in the special education class had histories of frequent volatile actions, I did not sense an extreme feeling of anxiety from Paula about these types of actions occurring in the class. However, I do believe that Paula, and members of the staff, were always aware there were a number of students who could engage in this type of action at any time.

Paula was also much more casual with the students than Terry was. She shared stories about herself with the students and she joked and laughed with them. She did not hesitate to do these things and she did not appear to have any anxiety that these actions would cause her to lose control of the classroom. She did not seem to be afraid of the students finding out she had a sense of humor or finding out she had shortcomings as well. In turn, Paula made a concerted effort to find out about the students. She wanted to know how they felt about things and often asked them about specific things as well as how they were feeling in general.

Additionally, Paula shared power with her students. She tried to give students choices as often as she could, such as giving them the option of sitting

where they wanted to. Paula's sharing power made her a more powerful teacher. Her students loved her and trusted her, two very powerful feelings.

The Relationship Between the Components of Classroom Disruption

Figure 7 shows the relationship between the four components of conceived disruption. The definition of disruption had a direct affect on the consequences of disruption. As an example, since disruption had been defined, partially, as an interruption in the learning process, particularly interrupting the teacher, the result was a feeling of annoyance or anxiety about that disruption on the part of the teacher. Additionally the definition of disruption affected the practice of the participants. Since disruption was defined as something the student did, the practice was driven by the perception that the student needed to change.

The perception of the causes of disruption affected the practice of the participants. The students felt that if they were bored they would be more likely to engage in disruptive actions. I observed this often and if a student was unengaged or bored in the classroom their response was most often to become disruptive.

The perception by teachers that disruption was caused by a dysfunctional family life also drove their practice. Many of these students received social work services. Additionally, in the regular education class if the perception of causes of disruption had focused more on disruption caused by

the classroom environment, presumably some of the structure of that class would have been different.

The consequences of disruption clearly drove the practice of all participants. The teacher's anxiety and annoyance, caused by disruption, drove them to employ methods to stop any disruption. This was also true for the students who acted in a manner to either earn rewards or avoid punishment.

Disruption Observed in the Classroom

Special Education Class

In the special education class I observed minimal disruption. In fact, most of my observations were uneventful. Since most of the students from this special education class came with a great deal of "baggage", it may be surprising to some that there was not more disruption, for this reason alone. Disruption caused by frustration did occur on occasions, particularly when a student wanted some adult attention and did not receive that attention in a timely enough manner for that student. As amazing as this may sound, I never observed any boredom in the special education class. During each of my visits students were engaged in activity, whether it was a full class lesson, a small group lesson, or independent work.

I attribute the low amount of disruption to several factors. The small number of students in the class, as well as the large number of adult staff who could attend to these students, played a significant role in keeping disruption to

a minimum. The students' needs were attended to almost immediately because of the large staff and, if a student needed some individual attention outside of the class, this could usually be arranged without much difficulty. Additionally, the large number of staff increased the ability to monitor disruption when it occurred. It was almost impossible to be disruptive and not "get caught." Students were aware of this fact and were less prone to engage in disruptive actions. In fact, I only observed one incident of a student engaging in a disruptive action that was not seen or heard. The staff provided in-class support for Paula, the special education teacher. She had many opportunities to discuss classroom disruption with staff members and, in turn, staff members had many opportunities to talk with Paula about the same topic.

Another factor that contributed to the minimal amount of classroom disruption in the special education class were the students' frequent opportunities to deal with difficulties they were having. Paula Smylie was usually accessible, both physically and emotionally, to her students and most of the students felt comfortable sharing themselves and their problems with her. Students felt comfortable talking to other staff members as well. The special education program had a built in half-time social worker who worked with the class. Students saw the social worker on a weekly basis and also on an "as needed" basis. Students viewed Paula Smylie, and most of her staff, as their advocates, people who were on their side.

Students in the special education class were given many opportunities to work cooperatively and socialize with peers and staff. Most students have much

to say to each other and to staff. If given the opportunity to socialize during the day, students will be less inclined to engage in talking during lessons and during other activities; their energies are more likely to be spent attending to the lesson or task at hand. I observed the students in the special education class talking much less frequently during times when they were supposed to be quiet than the regular education students

The lively content of the lessons and activities in the special education class also, I believe, alleviated much classroom disruption. Students seemed happy and eager to participate in the events of the classroom. Additionally, assignments were individualized so that even if the entire class had the same lesson, the tasks to follow were tailor made to meet the needs of each student. This reduced the amount of frustration caused by the inability to do the assignment or by the feeling that the assignment was not challenging for the student.

The last and perhaps most important factor that contributed to the limited amount of disruption was the pedagogical skills of the staff, particularly of Paula Smylie. Paula was a warm and friendly person with a good sense of humor. Students felt welcome in the classroom environment and genuinely liked Paula, who in turn, genuinely liked them. Generally the interactions between the staff and students were friendly and pleasant. There was always a positive feeling in the room and there was always much laughter from both the students and the staff.

Regular Education Class

During my year of data collecting I observed about twice as many disruptive actions in the regular education setting than I observed in the special education setting. Some of this can be explained very simply by the fact that there were twelve more students and only one adult in the regular education class. The students' disruptive actions were often undetected, (thirty-four percent), by Terry Bartok, the regular education teacher. This, I feel, was partially due to the physical configuration of the room. Students figured out how to "hide" in the rows of desks so that their disruptive actions would be unseen or unheard. With only one staff person and twenty-eight students, it seems likely that when students engage in disruptive actions much of it will not be seen or heard.

Another factor concerning the cause of disruption was the fact that students were given almost no legitimate opportunity, during class time, to socialize. Students did socialize, clandestinely, throughout the day. Not surprisingly, more than half of the disruption that took place in the regular education class was in the form of talking.

The nature of the instruction in the room also contributed to disruption. I never observed any hands-on activities or any activities that allowed students to get out of their seats. Lessons were delivered in the form of a lecture, followed by a period when the teacher would ask questions about the lecture. After the questions there would be a brief period of time when students did seat work, most often from a text book, a workbook, or a ditto. I saw evidence of boredom

during every observation. Some students, who were mildly bored, would jump in and out of attention to lessons. Others would simply not attend at all; very often their text book or workbook was not opened to the assigned page. There were many times when students, who were not attending to either a lesson or an assignment, were not disruptive. There were usually no consequences for this. However, there were times when Terry would admonish a student if she noticed they were turned to the wrong page or staring out into space. Terry attempted to keep students attending to lessons, especially those not paying attention, by asking questions. But these questions came at the end of a lesson when it was, in my opinion, too late. During the course of a lecture Terry reminded students frequently to pay attention. Instruction was not individualized except for the six students who received resource room support. Some students who engaged in disruptive actions may have been frustrated, feeling the work was too challenging or not challenging enough.

Additionally, like most elementary teachers, Terry had no in-class support. Unlike Paula Smylie, who, could bounce ideas and thoughts off other staff members, Terry was the only adult in her classroom. When serious disruption took place in Terry's classroom it was handled outside of the class by someone other than Terry. The usual consequence of a student's serious disruptive action was that he or she was sent to the office. This was usually not viewed positively by the principal and other staff members and was sometimes even seen as a poor reflection on the teacher who sent the student to the office. Naturally, Terry did not like to use this option often; thus it became critical for her

to control her students, to prevent disruption. This created a certain anxiety, on her part, about student action and compliance.

Implications

Although this study focuses on the phenomenon of disruption in a special education class and a regular education class, caution should be used when making generalizations concerning methods used in either class program. The strengths or weaknesses of either program may not be so much a function of whether they were from a special education or regular education class, but more a function of the expertise and skills of the individual teacher. However, much can be learned from the environment and structure of this particular special education class which experienced limited disruption. Perhaps regular education classes could benefit from the same features that this special education class had. The physical set up of the classroom and the creativity of the instruction in the special education class contributed to the successful functioning of the program. Additionally having more adults to deal with fewer students meant that the needs of the students were met in an efficient and positive manner. Finally, the positive environment in this class fostered successful experiences for the students and staff.

In spite of the fact that there are a variety of ways to view and deal with classroom disruption a Behavioristic perspective seemed to be the dominant perspective used in both classrooms I studied. Although Behavioristic techniques can be of value, schools and staff may be well advised to explore

other options derived from different learning perspectives to deal more effectively with classroom disruption. I would encourage teachers to take some risks in using unconventional methods in dealing with classroom disruption, particularly when the accepted methods are not working.

Additionally, incorporating the views of the students and including the students when creating strategies for dealing with classroom disruption could have countless benefits. At the very least, opening a dialogue between staff and students may provide insights that have previously been ignored.

The results of this study seem to indicate that the more involved students are in their environment, the less likely they are to engage in disruptive actions. This means that classroom instruction and curriculum must be relevant and interesting to the students.

Finally, it seems that one of the most important factors in reducing classroom disruption is to create an environment where all participants feel safe, secure and happy. Providing such an environment will eliminate many of the causes of classroom disruption.

Future Study

It would be advantageous to explore other areas in relation to classroom disruption. Investigating secondary schools as well as alternative schools that provide instruction in a variety of ways, would provide useful information.

Additionally, this study did not investigate how the school experiences and educational training of the teachers may have affected their teaching skills. This also would be an important area to explore.

Summary

The components of classroom disruption consisted of the definition of classroom disruption, the perception of the causes of disruption, the consequences of classroom disruption and how the perception of classroom disruption drove the practice of the participants. The definition of classroom disruption and the perceived causes of that disruption affected the consequences and practice of dealing with disruption. The consequences of disruption also drove the practice of dealing with disruption.

Clearly there was a difference between the participants' conception of classroom disruption in general and a difference in the conception of the components of classroom disruption. Although there were differences between the regular education teacher and the special education teacher, there was a greater difference between the conceptions of both teachers and the conceptions of the students.

There was not a great deal of classroom disruption in either of the classroom settings I studied and the disruption that I observed was not of a serious nature. Classroom disruption was an important issue to both teachers and both told me it was one of their primary concerns. Classroom disruption, in the minds of both teachers, created an impediment to what was generally felt as the most important goal of the teachers, the learning process. This disruption was defined in terms of the disruptive actions of the students and disruption meant, on most occasions, that the teacher or a staff member was being disrupted.

The perception of the teachers was that disruption was basically caused by emotional problems caused by issues outside of the school environment, such as an upsetting home life, frustration caused by school work that was either too challenging or not challenging enough, and frustration caused by a student's inability to get attention. The perception of the students was that disruption was additionally caused by being bored, being angry, not getting attention fast enough and teachers who in their opinion were unfair.

Both teachers felt that it was one of their duties to prevent disruption of all sorts and both generally relied on Behaviorist methods to prevent classroom disruption. However, the special education teacher used many preventative measures to avoid disruption; measures which included aspects of Humanistic theory, i.e., providing students with opportunities to talk about problems, creating an environment in which the students felt safe, secure and happy. The regular education setting used the STAR program, a metacognitive technique in dealing with disruption. This program had almost no impact on students who were chronically disruptive and it had limited success with other students. In addition, a school wide mediation program used during the lunch and recess period had almost no affect on classroom disruption.

The results of the Behaviorist techniques in the regular education class were successful from the perspective of the teacher. The students, for the most part, were compliant and non-disruptive. Most of the students were compliant in order to avoid punishment; thus, they would engage in disruptive action if they felt that they would not be caught. If a student's disruption became severe

or dangerous, the consequence of their disruption was handled outside of the classroom, usually by the building principal. The atmosphere of the regular education program was formal and, at times, tense. There were also times when there was an adversarial relationship between the teacher and the students.

In the special education class students were non-disruptive for a different reason. They wanted to gain the approval of the teacher and staff. However, the students in this class were almost always engaged in activity because the teacher and staff usually made the content of the activity relevant and interesting to the students. The need of the students, in the special education class, to be disruptive seemed to be minimal. The atmosphere of the special education class was comfortable, friendly and relaxed. No moments of tension were noted during my observation.

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Appendix

WHERE MY HEART LIES: A CONFESSIONAL TALE

This is the part of the research where I come clean. I have presented my research in a way that was "supposed" to be objective and nonjudgmental, but I think these are two concepts that are fantasies, fantasies used to protect the integrity of what we say about other people and events. It is virtually impossible to observe the activity of other human beings and not make some judgments about what they are doing, why they are doing it, and how they are doing it. No matter how hard we may try to fool ourselves and others into believing that we are totally objective and nonjudgmental, I don't think it can be done. I also don't think that it is necessarily bad to be judgmental or subjective, but it is the responsibility of the researcher to inform the reader of what their experiences have been and, if you will, where their heart lies. This is done to assist the reader in understanding the conclusions of the researcher, and to assist the reader in drawing their own conclusions about the research. I hope this confessional tale sheds some light.

As student:

I suppose everyone who chooses to study some particular phenomenon chooses on the basis of interest and relevance. I know I found this true for myself. I have a long personal history with "classroom disruption." Indeed,

since almost the first week of my schooling experience, in kindergarten, I was "in trouble." It was impossible for me to stay quiet during nap time, being prone to spontaneous bursts of laughter. I guess I just wasn't tired. I wanted to play with the blocks, which in 1962, was strictly an all boy activity in the white middle class suburban district where I grew up. Much to the chagrin of my kindergarten teacher, I went against the rules and always wandered over to the blocks, shunning the dolls and dress-up corner. They just weren't my thing. Sitting for more than ten minutes at a time was also impossible as I was always in search of adventure. Of course there was that "line thing" too; I couldn't color within the lines nor could I manage to stand in line when the class was required to do so. This pattern continued for much of my elementary years and I progressed to becoming an accomplished "class clown." Teacher reports said the same thing from year to year; "Barbara is very immature and quite impulsive." I did have one teacher who told my parents that although I was high spirited, I would settle down one day and be ok. I have fond memories of that teacher and have paid tribute to her in this dissertation by using part of her name for one of my major respondents. Unfortunately, I have many more memories of teachers who were rigid, unimaginative and used heavy doses of humiliation to get me to cooperate. A particularly nasty memory is of my sixth grade teacher calling me up to the front of the room and slamming me in the back of the head with a math book with enough force to send my glasses flying across the room. My offense was two fold: I didn't know the answer to the problem on the board, and I didn't have my math book open to the correct page. He made no apologies for his

actions and, in fact, probably felt some satisfaction from it. I logged a considerable amount of time in the halls or in the principal's office and sometimes wonder how I managed to learn to read, write and do math. Somehow, however, I did manage and although not a great student, I made my way through the public school system. I received my diploma and then it was off to college.

My parents wanted me to become a school teacher or librarian. I come from a long line of teachers and, being somewhat rebellious, I decided that I wouldn't follow the pattern. Being a librarian was totally out of the question for my personality, as librarians are suppose to maintain order, not encourage chaos. I decided to become a social worker in my second year at college and, for perhaps the first time in my life, I not only enjoyed school work, I excelled at it.

As teacher:

Two weeks after graduation I found myself working as a counsellor at a residential facility for teenage girls. These girls for the most part were sent to the facility by the courts of New York State and had many problems in their schools and communities. Many of these girls were not much younger than I and I thank them for the education I received from them. It was a very difficult job as the facility was often understaffed and the burn-out rate was quite high. However, it was a rite of passage for me and the experience helped shape my future endeavors. I worked there for two years, but after I was rendered unconscious in an altercation, I decided to go back to school.

With my new found adult perspective on life, I decided to stop being rebellious and become a teacher, as I really had always wanted to do, but was too stubborn to admit. I received my master's degree in Educational Psychology/Special Education and was lucky to secure a special education teaching position immediately after I graduated. My teaching career includes one year in high school, three years in elementary and the last eight years I spent in middle school. The majority of students I worked with were "labeled" emotionally disturbed.

Additionally, for five years I taught remedial math to inmates working on an Associate's degree at a local medium security prison. Some of my friends, however, believed that I was actually "doing time there." This was quite an interesting and satisfying experience for me, but the need to deal with disruption was minimal, as correction officers roamed the halls of the school building. In fact, I was often more concerned about the correctional officers than the inmates.

Now the tough part, the self-reflections on what my own espoused theory was as a teacher and what my theory of practice was. To operate as a Humanist was always my intent, however pragmatically, I used many Behaviorists techniques in dealing with classroom disruption. My goal was to provide as Humanistic an environment as possible to prevent disruption, but when disruption occurred and I determined that it was a disruption that needed to be dealt with, I employed Behaviorist theory. I guess that makes me a Humanistic Behaviorist or a Behavioristic Humanist. I loved all my teaching

experiences but my favorite years were the middle school years. To understand my approach and attitudes toward teaching and students I wish to talk about the middle schoolers with whom I had the privilege of working. These students were between the ages of thirteen and sixteen. Most of them were "labeled" emotionally disturbed, although at times I think it is they who were stable, and the public school system that was emotionally disturbed. They had incredibly hard lives. Most of them were inner city kids. They had abusive parents, minimal supervision and problems far worse than mine. Everybody knew about this kind of student. Everyone wished they would just go away. It was very hard to deal with the problems those students faced or the problem of how to make them "better." It was difficult to confront the issue emotionally because these students were a reflection of society's failures. They came to the schools with a tremendous amount of "baggage." Some came to the system badly damaged, some weren't quite that badly off, but after a few years in the system, they became worse. They didn't trust anyone and I couldn't think of too many reasons why they should. For the most part these students were treated as pariahs. I heard it all the time in the faculty room, "He can't help it, he's emotionally disturbed. Just look at his home life," and on and on it went. There was no end to the stories that were spread in order to justify giving up on a student. Those kids didn't care about the State Education mandated curriculum. For the most part they didn't care about passing any New York State competency exam. This is not to say that they didn't care about learning.

They did want to learn. They wanted to learn much more than anyone could imagine.

After twelve years of teaching I've come to realize several things. If a student does not feel safe, physically and emotionally, that student will not learn. If a student does not feel respected by the person trying to teach them, that student will not learn. If the curriculum is not made relevant to the student, that student will not learn. To this end I am a Humanist.

The students I worked with were a difficult, yet exhilarating crew to work with. There were days I came home exhausted and miserable and there were days I came home energized and ecstatic. Some of the kids I worked with may never learn all that they "should" learn, but they will always learn something. It seems to me that if students feel secure, comfortable, welcome and happy, they will learn. They will learn even if you do not try to teach them anything.

Whenever possible, and as often as I could, I left the decisions about what to teach up to the students. I guess I was more fortunate than most teachers by having this luxury. To be honest, if the students didn't kill each other or destroy valuable property during the school year, then the "important people" considered the year to be a success. Anything the students may have happened to learn was "gravy."

The classroom I taught in was self-contained. It was a rare occurrence when an administrator came in, a fact that usually delighted me. Naturally, this left me with a tremendous amount of power; which I was quite willing to share with my students. The empowerment of the students not only benefited the

students, but it was quite beneficial to me as well. The students were given voice. I tried to make sure that they were heard. Their desires and expectations were respected, although not always met. Hopefully, they gained some self-confidence and learned how to make choices that would prove to be successful, gratifying and rewarding. As for myself, I've learned an amazing amount of information during my twelve years. Thanks to the varied tastes of my students, I have become a proficient Trivial Pursuit player.

Of course, I was not totally autonomous. There were some curricular requirements to which I had to adhere. There were also subjects and topics that I felt were very important for the students to study. Sex and drug education are two examples that come to mind. There were times when I had to do a good "soft-shoe" act to motivate the students to participate in some curriculum that I felt was important, but one that they found unamusing. However, because they most often got a choice, they usually trusted me and followed my lead. The class didn't always run smoothly and I never expected it to. In fact, it was very often during the times when it was not running smoothly that we all learned the most.

However, many of the students who walked through the door of the classroom had complex emotional issues to deal with and many of these students could not even identify what they were feeling. This combination often lead to some disturbing and dangerous disruption. In my twelve years of teaching I saw books, pencils and furniture fly; I dealt with students who totally shut down and would not complete or attempt to even start an assignment; I

heard students verbally berate each other with such a ferocious force that I would feel like crying; I had students who, just by virtue of my being a member of the adult population, would question, challenge and fight me on every decision that had to be made. As I previously mentioned I tried to give the students choices and tried to communicate a feeling that I would like them no matter what. I also let them win some of the battles and I tried to empower them by sharing my power. Very often, however, it just was not enough. To provide what I thought was an environment conducive for learning and to provide positive social interactions, I employed behavior charts and behavior contracts, two very Behavioristic techniques. All of my students had behavior charts, although they were individualized and each student was asked what issues they wanted to work on. The students attempted to get checkmarks; they worked for small daily rewards and a larger weekly reward. Additionally, there were, every year, between one and three students on a behavior contract. When a student was having particular problems and seemed receptive to using a contract, we would negotiate together in terms of the things I wanted and the things that the student wanted. The contract was tailor made by myself and the student.

I felt very successful as a teacher although I'm sure there are those who have had greater success. I was always comfortable with my style, although, admittedly I didn't think much about theory. In the actual living in a classroom I think teachers do what they can to have successful programs. I don't think teachers think too often of what theory they are operating under or what theory

they wish to operate under. How they choose to structure their classrooms depends on many things, some of which include their own school experiences, the training they have, their teaching experience, and the students with whom they work.

I hold within me cherished moments of the triumphs of some of my students, and I also feel the profound sadness of the misery some of them would encounter. Sometimes I run into students I had in the past who are now grown up, married with children and seemingly happy. This is a delight that I can't compare to anything else. Reading about a former student in the newspaper who has committed a crime or who has come to an unfortunate end is a heartbreak that is almost unbearable.

I am no longer working in the classroom. For the past two years I have been a consultant working with teachers, psychologists, administrators and other educational staff, providing workshops and individual consultations for students who exhibit disruptive and dangerous behavior in school.

As novice researcher:

My classroom observations brought up many feelings and thoughts for me. I realized how much I missed having a classroom filled with students, although I do enjoy my current position. There were, however, times that I was reminded of how difficult, and sometimes tedious, teaching can be. Preparing students for state wide exams and filling out mountains of paperwork come to mind. It was difficult at first for me to sit in a classroom and not think about "how

I would do it." In the beginning I needed to remind myself that I was not there to judge the performance of the teachers but to observe and learn about the class culture. This became much easier the further I progressed through the research process. My interviewing skills became more finely tuned. I would cringe as I listened to the early interviews that I had recorded. I would never have believed a person could say, "uh huh", as much as I did. By the end of the data collecting process I was pleased to hear less of myself and much more of the respondents on the tape. I learned to zero in on the issues and become much more efficient during interviews.

It was interesting for me going from the two different classroom settings. The students related to me in a different manner in both settings. The students in the special education class were used to visitors and, although I sat quietly in the back of the room and only interacted with the two students I interviewed during the interviews, most of the students wanted to include me in the classroom community. Students said hello to me when I came in, showed me things they were working on, asked me questions about myself and my computer and in general were warm and friendly to me. I interacted with them as little as possible; just enough so that I would not be rude or insensitive. When my research was completed I was invited to the end of year picnic and had a great time talking and "being with" the students. The two students I interviewed were easy to talk with and I felt that for the most part they were up front with me. I was fortunate enough to interview two students Paula Smylie

had identified as "live wires" and they were open with me in terms of the things that they did that they thought were disruptive.

The students from the regular education classes, although not rude, were much less friendly and somewhat suspicious of my presence. Except for the students I interviewed, no one ever said anything to me and none of the students ever got up to talk to me. There were furtive glances in my direction at times, but for the most part, the students ignored my presence in their classroom. The four students I interviewed were more difficult to interview than the special education students, as they tended to give very brief answers, and I had to work harder at drawing information from them. There were three students in this class that were identified by Terry Bartok as disruptive and whom I had observed being disruptive. It was disappointing to me that I couldn't interview any of them, since I was unable to obtain parental permission.

I think that the different interaction styles are related to the different structure of each class. It could also be related to how the students from both settings view adults in general. The students from both settings acted in a manner which was consistent with this structure.

I'm sure I missed some relevant and important things during my year of data collecting. As I sat down to make sense of all I had seen and heard during my observations and interviews, there were many times when I thought, "Why didn't I follow up on that?" As I read my transcripts about students being bored I wanted to kick myself for not probing further on what being bored meant to the students. I wish, also, that I had thought to interview the students in a group. I

think this would have relaxed them more and I probably would have gotten more information. Additionally, I'm sorry I never asked either teacher about their own school experiences. I think it would have been useful to hear what their childhood perceptions of school were and discuss with them how these childhood perceptions may have influenced their perceptions as adults now teaching children.

I think I learned a great deal during my time spent in these two classrooms and not just about the individual classes. I learned a bit about myself as well. I am grateful to both teachers who allowed me to spend time in the classrooms where they worked. I am also grateful to the students and other educational staff who assisted me in my research. Fortunately for me I encountered almost no resistance and, in most cases, was made to feel welcome. Both students and adults made themselves accessible to me for observations and interviews.

At a latter time, when I have more research projects under my belt, I'm sure if I re-read this dissertation I will find gaping holes in it. I hope I'll be kind to myself and remember that this was just the beginning of my research career and that the novice researcher will always have far to go. I leave it up to the readers to form their own conclusions.