

Perceptions of Moving from an Old to New Building:  
An Ethnographic Study of a School in Transition

A Dissertation submitted  
to the Graduate School  
Valdosta State University

in partial fulfillment of requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in Curriculum and Instruction

in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
of the College of Education

December 2004

David Lamar Cole

MA, Valdosta State University, 1998  
BA, Presbyterian College, 1991

© Copyright David Lamar Cole

All Rights Reserved.

This dissertation, "Perceptions of Moving from an Old to New Building: An Ethnographic Study of a School in Transition," by David Lamar Cole, is approved by:

Dissertation  
Committee  
Chair and  
Researcher

---

Dr. Richard W. Schmertzing  
Associate Professor of Educational Leadership

Committee  
Member

---

Dr. A. Lorraine Clevenger-Schmertzing  
Assistant Professor of Curriculum and Instruction

---

Dr. Chet Ballard  
Professor of Sociology

---

Dr. Marsha V. Krotseng  
Chief Planning Officer

Dean of the College  
of Education

---

Dr. Phillip L. Gunter  
Professor of Special Education and Communication  
Disorders

Acting Dean of the  
Graduate School

---

Dr. Brian U. Adler  
Professor of English

## FAIR USE

This dissertation is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (Public Law 94-553, revised in 1976). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgement. Use of the material for financial gain without the author's expressed written permission is not allowed.

## DUPLICATION

I authorize the Head of Interlibrary Loan or the Head of Archives at the Odum Library at Valdosta State University to arrange for duplication of this dissertation for educational or scholarly purposes when so requested by a library user. The duplication shall be at the user's expense.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## ABSTRACT

During the second half of the 2002-2003 school year, the students and faculty at Valdosta Middle School moved from an old to new school building. The events leading to, during, and after the mid-year transfer presented a rare opportunity to observe the culture of a school in transition. If the themes that emerge provide insight into positive and negative aspects of the transitional process, a more appropriate protocol for the planning of, construction of, and transfer to new educational facilities could be established. The purpose of this study was to uncover the perceptions of students, teachers, and administrators who participated in the move from a fifty-year-old school to a new building.

An ethnographic study was conducted at Valdosta Middle School (VMS) during the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 school years using researcher fieldnotes and journal reflections, student, teacher, and administrator focus group interviews, and an individual administrator interview. Issues, themes, and foci emerged as the researcher's understanding of participant perceptions increased. The end product of the research is a reconstructed story of the transition from an old to new building as told by those who experienced the mid-year move.

There were many findings associated with the study. Firstly, there exists at VMS a power struggle between students and faculty in which adult desires for control and order are in opposition to student needs for freedom and spontaneity. Secondly, all participants identified increased general tension, student/faculty conflicts, and student-initiated resistance following the transition. Finally, the move to the new building brought significant changes in school culture, instruction, achievement, and curriculum.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### I. CHAPTER ONE: THE BEGINNING

Introduction.....	1
Conceptual Context .....	5
Research Questions.....	8
Methodology.....	9
Data Collection, Analysis, & Interpretation. ....	14
Validity.....	17
Assumptions and Biases.....	19
Preliminary Observations.....	19
Organization of the Dissertation.....	20

### II. CHAPTER TWO: BEFORE THE MOVE

Introduction of Journal Notes .....	23
Journal Notes (August 1, 2002 – February 14, 2003).....	23

### III. CHAPTER THREE: AFTER THE MOVE

Journal Notes (February 18, 2003-May 6, 2003).....	39
May 6, 2003 Student Focus Group.....	47
May 9, 2003 Administrator Interview.....	76
May 12, 2003 Teacher Focus Group.....	86
May 13, 2003 Administrator Focus Group.....	96
May 19, 2003 Student Focus Group.....	107
May 26, 2003 Teacher Focus Group.....	137

IV.	CHAPTER FOUR: ONE YEAR LATER	
	February 5, 2004 Student Focus Group.....	154
	February 10, 2004 Teacher Focus Group.....	175
V.	CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
	Introduction to Discussion and Conclusions.....	189
	Power, Control, and Order.....	193
	Tension, Conflicts, and Resistance.....	199
	Instruction, Achievement, and the Hidden Curriculum.....	203
	Culture, Space, and Time.....	211
	Recommendations for Practice and Suggestions for Further Research .....	217
VI.	REFERENCES.....	221
VII.	APPENDICES.....	225
	Appendix A: Institutional Research Board Approval.....	226
	Appendix B: Consent Forms.....	228
	Appendix C: Participant Demographics.....	234

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The entire process of conceptualizing and completing a dissertation has been both exciting and frightening. I often found myself fluctuating between the pinnacle of academic endeavors and the nadir of intellectual confusion. When faced with questions of what to do next, I soon realized no one could provide me definitive answers. Nonetheless, there was guidance as I trekked through the unknown.

Firstly, I would like to thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Richard Schmertzinger. It was his passion for qualitative research that inspired me to explore a new way of looking at the world around me. Dr. Schmertzinger's enthusiasm and wisdom have been constant sources of motivation throughout the past three years. I have come to regard Dr. Schmertzinger as not only a mentor, but as a friend. He has the rare ability to make his students feel like colleagues rather than lowly pupils. I am especially indebted to Dr. Schmertzinger because he has opened his home to me and given unselfishly of his time. I can only hope that one day I will be regarded as highly by one of my students as I regard Dr. Schmertzinger.

I would also like to thank Dr. Lorraine Schmertzinger. It has been said that behind every good man is an even better woman, and I believe Richard would agree that this saying applies to him. Lorraine uses her strengths of organization and attention to details to deftly compliment Richard's sage-like philosophical meanderings. Often, when Richard and I would get lost in the endless possibilities of directions my research could take, Lorraine served as the only voice of reason and restraint. I have seen in Lorraine and Richard an example of the great things that can be achieved by extending mutual respect to and having reliance upon one's spouse. I have enjoyed the countless Monday afternoons that I have spent at the Schmertzinger's home and will miss their delightful and enlightening company.

I would like to thank Dr. Marsha V. Krotseng and Dr. Chet Ballard for their willingness to serve on my dissertation committee and the valuable expertise. Both Dr. Krotseng and Dr. Ballard have provided me with guidance and encouragement as I have worked through the arduous process of writing and rewriting. I consider myself blessed to have worked with a dissertation committee comprised of consummate professionals and dedicated educators.

I would like to thank Dr. & Mrs. Lamar Pearson for their encouragement and support. Dr. Pearson directed my Master's Thesis and has continued to offer assistance and inspiration over the years. It is through professors such as he that I have learned how to be a more compassionate and dedicated teacher.

Finally, I would like to thank my loving wife Cheryl and my two daughters, Logan and Ellie. They too have been living with my doctoral studies and research for the last four and a half years. I cringe when I think of how many nights they have spent moving about our house with no indication of my presence except for the continual clicking of the computer keyboard or endless shuffling of textbook pages. They are my inspiration and my motivation for becoming a better educator and a more caring human being.

## Chapter I

### THE BEGINNING

#### *Introduction*

During the summer of 2002, I began to explore various topics that I believed would be suitable for a dissertation topic for completion of an Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instructional Technology. Throughout my course work in the doctoral program, I had researched many aspects of modern education and curriculum design and had decided that my primary interest lies in exploring practical applications of Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theories. As I completed the culminating, pre-dissertation course, Dissertation Conceptualization, I began to realize that my admiration for Dr. Gardner's theories had obscured my vision of a rare research opportunity that lay before me. While pursuing my doctorate, I have been employed as a full-time eighth-grade Social Studies teacher at Valdosta Middle School (VMS) in Valdosta, Georgia. Compared to countless other schools across America and the Southeast, VMS seems to be very much like any other middle school. However, as an insider at VMS, I knew that our school was a few months away from very unusual circumstances.

After many years of deliberation, proposals, school board meetings, and discussions of feasibility, the decision had been made to build a new Valdosta Middle School at the same campus location as the current facility. Construction began during the 2001-2002 school year. The plan was simple, at least in theory. The Valdosta Middle School teachers would continue to educate, without a gymnasium and athletic fields, until the

new facility was complete. When the new building was complete, students and the entire faculty would pack up their essential belongings and move into the new facility. Based on my understanding of qualitative research, I began to believe that before me was an opportunity to look at a familiar environment from a completely new perspective. With any move comes change, and it was the possibility of uncovering and interpreting the perspectives of those involved in the impending transition that intrigued me.

The settings for the research were both the old and new buildings. At the subject schools, there are approximately 868 students in grades six, seven, and eight. The student population is 57% African-American, 39% White, and 4% Other. The division along gender lines is approximately equal. Approximately 53% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch. The school employs 36 regular academic teachers, 8 special education teachers, 9 elective teachers, and 4 administrators.

During the second half of the 2002-2003 school year, the teachers, administrators, and students at Valdosta Middle School (VMS) moved from an old to new school building. The transfer from a fifty-year-old school into a new facility brought changes at physical, social, and cultural levels. As researcher, I sought to discover the ways in which these physical, social, and cultural changes were perceived by teachers, administrators, and students at VMS.

How did teachers, administrators, and students describe the old and new facilities? How did these groups construct and interpret their understanding of each environment? Through the exploration of multiple perspectives, I hoped to gain understanding of and insight into the complexities of a school in transition (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). I believed

that the most effective way to accomplish such understanding and insight was through an ethnographic case study.

Why do an ethnographic study of an educational institution in transition? I believe that what we consider to be true about a person, place, or thing may be altered through examining changes and transitions that occur. The study of this institution in transition has illuminated hidden aspects of school culture that became apparent as a result of environmental changes. Jackson (1968) illustrated such a perspective on schools when he stated, “All these sights and smells become so familiar to students and teachers alike that they exist dimly, on the periphery of awareness. Only when the classroom is encountered under somewhat unusual circumstances, does it appear, for a moment, a strange place filled with objects that command our attention” (p. 7). Moving a faculty and student body into a new building during the middle of a school year was an unusual circumstance to say the least.

What makes a school setting a good selection for an ethnographic study? In his landmark book, *Culture Against Man*, Henry (1965) proclaimed, “The paradox of the human condition is expressed more in education than elsewhere in human culture, because learning to learn has been and continues to be Homo sapiens’ most formidable evolutionary task” (p. 283-284). Schools are the institutions in which learning to learn takes place. Schools are a part of modern American society and yet there are many features of a school that are distinctly different from most other institutions. Jackson (1968) noted, “There is a social intimacy in schools that is unmatched elsewhere in our society. Buses and movie theaters may be more crowded than classrooms, but people rarely stay in such densely populated settings for extended periods of time and while

there, they usually are not expected to concentrate on work or to interact with each other” (p. 8).

Schools do not solely exist for the purpose of inculcating students with knowledge and skills as defined in the curriculum but also, particularly in complex and densely populated societies, for the transmission of norms and values. Johnson (1985) stated, “Public education is mass initiation and rite of passage adapted to the educational requirements of stratified, multicultural, nation-state societies. In particular, the process of preschool through twelfth grade public schooling initiates young people into aspects of American culture and society” (p. 9). Johnson further proclaimed, “Public schools and school classrooms are a small society and culture - a way of life into which children are initiated and conditioned to adhere” (p. 3). McLaren (1986) extended Johnson’s perspective on schooling when he stated that “schools serve as rich repositories of ritual systems” (p. 1) and “rituals play a crucial role in the whole of a student’s existence” (p. 2).

While schools transmit information to students concerning appropriate behaviors within American society, students must also adapt to the rules, regulations, and norms of the school itself. McLaren (1998) made reference to an often overlooked aspect of schools when he referred to a hidden curriculum that “includes teaching and learning styles that are emphasized in the classroom, the messages that get transmitted to the student by the total physical and instructional environment, governance structures, teacher expectations, and grading procedures” (p. 187). Jackson’s (1963) idea of the hidden curriculum borrowed heavily from Henry’s concept of *noise*, which according to Henry, is the “random fluctuations of the system that cannot be controlled. They are the sounds that are not part of the message...” (p. 289). Examples of *noise* may include the

tapping of a pencil, tone of a principal's voice, the demeanor of a teacher, or message over the intercom. Perhaps the most crucial aspect of Henry's (1963) concept, as it applies to a school environment, is contained in his claim that, "The most significant cultural learnings – primarily the cultural drives – are communicated as noise" (p. 290).

In addition to the inherent value of examining changes in culture, there are also practical financial considerations that provide support for the proposed study. It is estimated that the United States spends over \$20 billion dollars each year renovating or building schools based in part on the belief that the physical condition of a school has an impact on student learning (Nair, 2002). This belief has been confirmed by some research (Frazier, 1993; Holloway, 2000; Lyons, 2001) and questioned by others (Lewis, 2000; Nair, 2002). The Council of Educational Facility Planners International has expressed concern over the lack of research on the relationship between school facility conditions and student achievement and has undertaken the goal of expanding research on the topic (Moore & Warner, 1998). Goodlad, Klein, and Associates (1970) identified school facilities and their condition as a major concern of both administrators and teachers.

Perpetual questions arise concerning the effect of air quality, lighting, and spatial arrangement upon a student's behavior and grade performance. At stake are billions of dollars and millions of young lives. Failure to research new school facilities opens the door to fruitless spending and wasted educational opportunities.

### *Conceptual Context*

The study was based on a constructivist paradigm signifying a philosophical belief that "human behavior is based upon meanings, which people attribute to and bring to situations, and that behavior is not 'caused' in any mechanical way, but is continually

constructed and reconstructed on the basis of people's interpretations of the situations they are in" (Punch, 1998, p. 157). When applied to an ethnographic study, "what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to" (Geertz, 1973, p. 9).

The dominant theoretical foundation of the study was symbolic interaction, which emphasizes the understanding that "people act, not on the basis of predetermined responses to predefined objects, but rather as interpreters, definers, signalers, and symbol and signal readers whose behavior can only be understood by having the researcher enter into the defining process through such methods as participant observer" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 25). Charon (1986) explained symbolic interaction as a means to create and recreate society based on everyday interactions of people when he stated that, "continuous change, not stable patterns, is the real nature of society" (p. 157).

At the center of a discussion of constructivism and symbolic interaction, with regard to a proposed study of a school in transition, is the concept of culture. What makes up a culture? According to Geertz (1973) in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, "...culture is composed of psychological structures by means of which individuals or groups of individuals guide their behavior" (p. 11). Therefore, culture is explored by looking at what people do and why they believe they do it. The culture of a school is more than the rules and regulations, creeds and mission statements, and desires of the school board members and administrators. The culture of a school is constantly evolving through the symbolic interaction of its inhabitants. "Thus, it is not just the school and its formal organization that perpetuates the social and political system of which it is a part, but also

the very adolescent subculture itself, born of an interpretive process that in many cases strains against the larger regularities” (Everhart, 1983, p. 22).

The psychological foundations of this study were rooted in the theories of social cognition and group processes. The way in which people construct their perceptions of others (social cognition) is influenced by the conceptual schemas they form based on their surroundings and the interaction between individuals with one another (Fiske, 1995). Equally, environmental influence can be profound in dictating the manner in which group members relate to one another as exhibited in three essential aspects. First, there is the physical environment (the school building) in which a group operates. Second, there is a social environment (interactive behavior) of the group. Third, there is the temporal environment (culture) of the school. Collectively, all three have an impact on group processes (Levine & Moreland, 1995).

How students, teachers, and administrators construct and perceive their school culture is decisively more complex than a routine examination of the code of conduct, academic objectives, and daily schedules. Underneath the surface of daily interactions at a school resides a hidden curriculum. In his book, *Life in Classrooms*, Jackson (1968) identified three major characteristics of this covert side of school culture: crowds, praise, and power, which students, teachers, and administrators must learn and master to survive and thrive. Jackson further illustrated the concept of a hidden curriculum through his reference to “four unpublicized features of school life: delay, denial, interruption, and social distraction” (p. 17). In his book *Reading, Writing, and Resistance*, Everhart (1983) illustrated the need for examining hidden issues within a school when he stated, “The

topic of student power, then, is certainly central to an understanding of student culture...” (p. 197).

Since the primary purpose of schools is to educate young people, any study on the culture of a school must pay special attention to institutional effects upon students, effects that many may be uncomfortable exploring. Jackson (1968) made an interesting comparison when he stated, “There is an important fact about a student’s life that teachers and parents prefer not to talk about, at least not in front of students. This is the fact that young people have to be in school. In this regard, students have something in common with the members of two other of our social institutions that have involuntary attendance: prisons and mental hospitals” (p. 9).

### *Research Questions*

To answer the questions concerning the effects of moving a school population from one building to another, I initially constructed very general mapping questions for project participants. Each question was open-ended and thus “...leaves the response open to the discretion of the interviewee and is not bounded by alternatives provided by the interviewer or constraints on length of the response” (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999b, p. 121). The focus of the research was on school staff and student perceptions of the transition from an old to a new school building. The primary focus group topics are listed below:

1. The old school.
2. The new school.

Further questions (as the study evolved) included:

1. What are your impressions (what do you think) of the new school?

2. What do you like best about the new school?
3. What do you like least about the new school?
4. What were your impressions of (what do you remember about) the old school?
5. What did you like best about the old school?
6. What did you like least about the old school?
7. What differences have you noticed since the move to the new school?
8. Have your daily activities at school changed and if so, how?
9. What are the similarities and/or differences between the two school buildings?

Depending on the depth of participant responses, Schensul et al. (1999b) suggest the use of a probe, "... a neutral question that encourages the interviewee to think more deeply, clearly, or broadly about an issue" (p. 126) to draw further details. Examples of probes suggested by Schensul et al. (1999b) included:

1. Repeating the participant's response in question form.
2. Neutral agreement of the statement made.
3. Asking for more information.
4. Asking for clarification.
5. Asking for an opinion.

### *Methodology*

The study was conducted based on qualitative research principles. According to Maxwell (1996), qualitative studies are especially designed for understanding the context in which participants act, the meaning participants give to events, actions, and situations, and the processes by which events take place. Maxwell also stated that identifying

unanticipated phenomena during the course of a study aids in generating grounded theory. However, merely to describe my study as qualitative would be somewhat simplistic.

A more precise description of my study is that it is an ethnographic study designed to answer the primary question: What is happening? “Unlike qualitative research in general, the principal and most important characteristic of ethnography is that it is rooted in the concept of culture. The end product of ethnography - the story or narrative - constitutes a theoretically informed interpretation of the culture of community, group, or setting” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999b, p. 8). So what is culture to an ethnographer? “Culture refers to the various ways different groups go about their lives and to the belief systems associated with that behavior” (Wolcott, 1999, p. 25). I wanted to research the ways in which students, teachers, and administrators at VMS went about the process of moving to a new building and how they perceived their individual and collective behaviors prior to, during, and after the transition was made. In short, I wanted to research the culture of VMS.

Why did I choose an ethnographic study? Wolcott (1999) described his perspective of ethnographic studies when he stated:

The underlying purpose of ethnographic research in this view is to describe what people in some particular place or status ordinarily do, and the meanings they ascribe to what they do, under ordinary or particular circumstances, presenting that description in a manner that draws attention to regularities that implicate cultural process. One can do ethnography anywhere, anytime, and of virtually anything, as long as human social behavior is involved. (p. 68)

Therefore, I observed and recorded the transitional process to a new school facility, interviewed students, teachers, and administrators concerning their perceptions of the transition, and I have presented their story in a descriptive manner that focuses on elements of the culture of Valdosta Middle School.

How is theory generated in this form of research? According to Schensul et al. (1999b), “ethnographic theory is constructed recursively, that is, it begins with a set of connected ideas that undergoes continuous redefinition throughout the life of the study until the ideas are finalized and interpreted at the end” (p. 2). To achieve this goal, I kept a journal of my observations, biases, and personal reflections. This journal served as a repository of ideas from which I defined and redefined concepts and themes that evolved throughout the course of gathering, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting my research.

Ethnographic studies are emergent in nature. Issues, themes, and foci will take shape as the researcher’s understanding increases. In *Analyzing and Interpreting Ethnographic Data*, LeCompte and Schensul (1999a, p. xiii) stated: “Sometimes, the research problem to be addressed is not yet clearly identified and must be discovered. In such cases, ethnographic research provides a valid and important way to find out what is happening in programs and to help practitioners plan their activities.” I conducted focus group and individual interviews to elicit participants’ perspectives concerning the most important aspects of a school in transition.

As an ethnographer, I participated, overtly and covertly, in the daily lives of the subjects for an extended period of time, listened to what they said, observed what they did, asked questions, collected data, and finally made sense of the environment I was studying (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). As a teacher at Valdosta Middle School who

was conducting research, I was in a position to use my status to gain access to information that might otherwise be restricted and to people that might otherwise be unavailable or unwilling to provide information. Due to my employment within the institution that I was studying, I was also committed to long-term observation within the setting, which further lent credibility and legitimacy to data collected. LeCompte and Schensul (1999b) listed four characteristics which I possessed to effectively engage in ethnographic research: an enjoyment of interaction with people individually and in groups, an inquisitive and a curious nature, the ability to be flexible in one's approach, and the fortitude to cope with the ambiguity of an emergent study.

What are the advantages of ethnographic research with regard to my topic? Harry Wolcott (1999), in his book *Ethnography: A Way of Seeing*, lists six primary advantages that are applicable to my research. Ethnographies

1. Can be conducted entirely by one person.
2. Do not require special training.
3. Can be carried out almost anywhere.
4. Require no specified duration.
5. Rely on a human observer or other humans.
6. Allow the researcher to employ personal strengths and skills.

There are six characteristic features of ethnographies, as identified by Punch (1998) that guided the study:

1. There are shared cultural meanings of a group.
2. Behavior, actions, events, and contexts have particular meanings to the people within the cultural setting.

3. Studying subjects is done within their natural setting.
4. The unfolding and evolving nature of the studies.
5. Ethnographic data collection is eclectic.
6. Ethnographic data collection is prolonged and repetitive.

What have I produced upon completion of the study? LeCompte and Schensul (1999b)

summarize the goal of ethnography best when they state:

The product is an interpretive story, reconstruction, or narrative about a group of people (a community). It includes some historical material and paints a picture of people going about their daily lives as they happen over a relatively representative period of time. The content of an ethnography can address some or all of the following: beliefs; attitudes; perceptions; emotions; verbal and nonverbal means of communication; social networks; behaviors of the group of individuals with friends, family, associates, fellow workers, and colleagues; use of tools; technology and manufacture of materials and artifacts; and patterned use of space and time. (p. 4)

I envisioned my end product as an ethnographic account of changes that occurred to the culture of a school when the students, teachers, and administrators experienced a mid-year move from an old to a new building. It is the reconstructed story of Valdosta Middle School during the 2002-2003 school year as told by those who experienced unusual circumstances that made a once familiar environment unfamiliar. I have changed the names of participants to ensure confidentiality. Most notably, I intended to uncover the participants' perceptions of the moving processes as well as their beliefs, attitudes, and emotions associated with each facility.

### *Data Collection, Analysis, and Interpretation*

Before collecting data, one must decide what kinds of information are most important and how to gather that information. “The basic tools of ethnography are the researcher’s eyes and ears as the primary modes for data collection” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999b, p. 2). At a researcher’s disposal are such diverse data sources as fieldnotes, observations, audio recordings, documents, newspapers, memos, maps, journals, and photographs. I employed each of these sources of data during the course of my research. With regard to fieldnotes, I used Agar’s (1980) definition, where he stated that fieldnotes are a “record of the ethnographer’s observations, conversations, interpretations, and suggestions for future information to be gathered” (p. 112) because, as he emphasized, “Fieldnotes are considered the traditional core of data from ethnographic research” (p. 111).

I employed focus group interviews as a means of gathering data relevant to the study. “As a form of qualitative research, focus groups are basically group interviews, although not in the sense of an alteration between the researcher’s questions and the participants’ responses. Instead, the reliance is on interaction within the group, based on topics that are supplied by the researcher, who typically takes the role of moderator” (Morgan, 1988, p. 9-10). I conducted two student and two teacher focus groups, one administrator focus group, and one administrator interview within weeks of the move to the new school, for the purpose of gathering information needed to uncover themes and topics associated with the study of a school immediately following a transition. I then followed up with one student and one teacher focus group one calendar year after the move, for comparison with the focus groups and interview of the previous year. There are many advantages to using focus group interviews for an ethnographic study. Focus group interviews generate

a considerable amount of data in a short period of time and allow the researcher to record and analyze group members' reactions to ideas and to each other (Schensul, LeCompte, Nastasi, & Borgatti, 1999a).

What served as my database? "The ethnographer's principle database is amassed in the course of human interaction: direct observation; face-to-face interviewing, and elicitation; audiovisual recording; and mapping the networks, times, and places in which human interactions occur" (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999a, p. xiv). As a former student and current teacher at the chosen research site, I used my insider status advantageously to observe subjects and gather data prior to, during, and after the move from an old to a new school building. I interviewed twenty students, thirteen teachers, and three administrators to gain multiple perspectives into the culture of VMS throughout the transition process.

How did I begin collecting data? The first step was gaining entry into the cultural setting. How can one successfully enter a field setting? According to Schensul et al. (1999b), the ethnographer must know how to function in the setting (language, rules of behavior, beliefs, social relationships, etc.), locate and build relationships with gatekeepers, be able to collect and record data in an unobtrusive manner, and have the ability to sort and organize interesting and new information. Due to my insider status, I was equipped to accomplish all these goals. I was a part of the culture being researched, and my presence was less intrusive than if I were an outsider attempting to blend into the school setting. In a sense, I was hiding in plain view.

Throughout the 2002-2003 school year, I took photographs of the old building and of the new building as it was being constructed. I kept a daily journal chronicling my perceptions and reflections of the transition process. I created memos to myself

concerning my personal beliefs and perceptions of Valdosta Middle School's unique culture. I gathered maps of the old and new schools, kept a record of comments made by students, teachers, and administrators about the processes of moving from an old to new facility, and compiled a notebook of newspaper articles and other printed materials associated with the new school construction.

LeCompte and Schensul (1999a) stated that analysis and interpretation are processes designed to "turn piles of data into a story worth telling" (p. 2). They described the analysis stage as the reduction of data into a more manageable form for constructing a story around the focus of the study and the interpretation stage as a rich description written by the ethnographer of what the story means. Most importantly, in terms of an ethnographic study, analysis facilitates the discovery and linking of themes and patterns in data (Patten, 1997). Wolcott (1999) further defined the ethnographer's responsibilities of analysis and interpretation when he stated, "... the overriding concern of ethnographers everywhere is for the description of collective human behavior, accompanied by the kind and extent of analysis and interpretation deemed appropriate by one's colleagues and patrons" (p. 39).

I have taken information generated from observational notes, archival information, individual and focus group interviews and reduced it, through "selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10) to discover the salient themes and patterns. Throughout the data collection process, continual data reduction occurred in the forms of coding, summary writing, memo writing, and cluster constructing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I used matrices, charts, and graphs as necessary to organize text into

more manageable forms for drawing justified conclusions or continuing research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Collectively, the final conclusions have allowed me to tell the story of those involved in the transition of VMS students, teachers, and administrators into a new building.

### *Validity*

According to Maxwell (1996), there are two major threats to the validity of a qualitative study: researcher bias and reactivity. To address researcher bias, I maintained a collection of memos with personal recollections of the old school and views of the impending move to new facilities in order to gain insight into my personal biases throughout data collection and interpretation processes. Further, I participated in bi-weekly dissertation seminars, in which my colleagues and professors helped me to identify areas of bias. Reactivity, the second major threat Maxwell identified, is the influence of the researcher on the setting and participants. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) addressed this threat by stating that the goal of qualitative research is not to eliminate a researcher's influence, for that would be impossible. The task is to understand reactivity and use it as a component of the research processes.

To add to the credibility of my study, I employed triangulation techniques for gathering information from diverse sources in order to reduce potential errors (Maxwell, 1996). I gathered information through focus groups, interviews, personal observations, photographic documentation, and archival data analysis. Second, I elicited feedback from individuals who are knowledgeable of my topic as well as from persons whose expertise lies outside of my particular research area (Maxwell, 1996) in order to give multiple perspectives throughout the process. I continued this process, throughout the study,

through participation in a qualitative dissertation research support seminar. Finally, I delved intensely into the topic to uncover rich data (Maxwell, 1996) that provides more than a superficial exploration into the transition from one school facility into another. I began this process through categorically photographing both the old and new school buildings, keeping a collection of personal memos reflecting on Valdosta Middle School, compiling a journal of observational notes on emerging events during the building phase of the new facility, and collecting archival data from the local newspaper.

LeCompte and Schensul (1999b) identified a poignant advantage that ethnography offers in relation to the issues of validity when they stated:

The codification of ethnographic research methods - represent an effort to insure that researchers gather data carefully, thoroughly, and in a way that is understandable to others, and that they use procedures that can be replicated by other researchers even though the field situation may change. This rigor is what helps to produce scientifically valid and reliable data. (p. 2)

Though the conditions of my proposed study are unique, careful research on my part has not only provided rich insight into Valdosta Middle School's transition to a new facility but has also created a model for future studies of the impact that significant facility change may have upon school culture and curriculum. Ultimately, with regard to my research and findings, "the course of my interpretation builds upon assumptions of fact that I incorporate into a line of reasoning. My credibility rests on others seeing and accepting the relationship between my facts and my reasoning" (Peshkin, 2000, p. 6).

### *Assumptions and Biases*

Based on my preliminary research and experience in the setting, I believed there would be differences in teachers', administrators', and students' perceptions of the old school and new school buildings. I also believed there would be variations based on gender, ethnic, and age differences of the subjects. How and if the perceptions of the subjects would relate to and affect the transition to a new learning environment I was unsure.

With regard to researcher bias, I wrote reflective memos to myself to flesh out my personal memories, perceptions, and beliefs about the old and new school facilities. As a former student and current teacher at the subject school, this process was both enlightening and beneficial in maintaining credibility for the validity of my research findings. My personal reflections began upon my first day of school of the year the transition was to be made, August 1, 2002 and continued for the duration of the data collection.

### *Preliminary Observations*

Based on observations and preliminary analysis of data early in the research, I identified several reoccurring themes that illustrated changes in perceptions that prevailed among students, teachers, and administrators during the transition from an old to a new school facility: loss of freedom, power struggles, resistance to authority, solitude from peers, structural differences in the old and new buildings, and the availability of new technology. These points of interest, while not part of the school's official curriculum or mission statement, have emerged as focal points that beckon further scrutiny.

I believed a detailed qualitative exploration into the varied perceptions of moving from an old to a new building would reveal rich data related to topics and themes that emerged early in my research. Through observational memos, of what students and faculty said and did, and journal exercises, I found subjects to be highly opinionated on the proposed topic and willing to share their views. I expected analysis of data gathered during the study to reveal an interesting glimpse into the nature of a school's culture and potential avenues for shifts in curriculum and student achievement.

### *Organization of the Dissertation*

When I began organizing data for the presentation of my dissertation, I used several ethnographic studies as guides (Everhart, 1983; Johnson 1985; McLaren, 2003; Metz, 1978). In *Reading, Writing, and Resistance*, Everhart (1983) stated of his organizational style, "I have sketched the general premises of the study so as to indicate early on in the book the theoretical approach that arose from the fieldwork and which has influenced the eventual organization of this volume. Still, the study is meant to be ethnographic for it is largely descriptive, with analysis of that information largely growing out of that description" (p. 23). Like Everhart, I have chosen to write a descriptive and reconstructive story, based on two years of fieldwork, centered round the culture of a school, in this instance, a school in transition. As for the inclusion of journal notes throughout the text, I found McLaren's (2003) rationale in *Life in Schools* applicable when he stated, "The purpose of the journal is to provide you with some insights into school life as it is lived by students and teachers" (p. 56). I have extended his argument for the inclusion of journal entries to administrators as well because of their relevance to the data collection and analysis phases of my study.

In order to address concerns of subjective analysis of varied qualitative data, I have employed precautions advocated in *Classrooms and Corridors* by Metz (1978) when she stated, “First, I tried throughout the fieldwork to be aware of my own pedagogical prejudices and personal likes and dislikes and to lean over backwards to see what they would tempt me to deny. More formally, I made a rule not to accept even small conclusions without data of several different varieties” (p. 13). Metz (1978) continues her explanation of her research by saying that her “qualitative statements are only broad based approximations of the situation in these schools” (p. 13). Likewise, I have attempted to present the perspectives of those involved in my study, not in terms of statements that can be verified for statistical accuracy, but in a descriptive manner consistent with ethnographic research.

I looked to Johnson (1985) for a model for the presentation of focus group and individual interviews. In *West Haven*, Johnson proclaims, “Despite a vast store of information on schools and schooling most of this material does not describe for us the day-to-day reality of classroom life” (p. 6). While Johnson focuses on providing the reader with his classroom observations and interpretations in a chronological and comprehensive narrative format, which he believes is “the most desirable reporting format” (p. 6), I have chosen to adopt a similar format centered round student, teacher, and administrator focus group and interview responses to open-ended questions. Borrowing a stylistic mode employed by Johnson, I included interpretative analysis of data to the right side of transcribed participant responses. While letting the participant perceptions take precedence, it is my hope that the descriptive interpretations, in which I utilize a slightly reduced font for purposes of distinction, will highlight social and cultural

features of school life that are in Johnson's estimation "the life blood of public schooling" (p. 6).

Following consultation with my dissertation committee, I chose to include italicized interpretive notes throughout chapters three and four as a means of presenting a retrospective view of my interpretations of the things I saw and heard. The italicized commentary serves as my voice as I narrate an exploration through the body of the dissertation text. It is my intention that the reader will examine the responses of participants, compare student, teacher, and administrator perceptions with my interpretations, and subsequently agree or disagree with my observations and conclusions.

## Chapter II

### BEFORE THE MOVE

#### *Introduction to Journal Notes*

In order to tell the story of the transition from the old Valdosta Middle School building into a new facility that would bear the same name, I began keeping journal notes at the inception of the 2002-2003 school year, the year in which the change would occur. According to the Valdosta City School's Special Projects Coordinator's projections, at some point early in the academic year, the students, administrators, teachers, and support staff would make the move from a fifty-year old building into a brand new facility. When I began journaling, I was unsure whether my idea would develop into a proposal worthy of further investigation. Nonetheless, I believed that through journaling, I would begin an exploration into the complexities of conducting qualitative research within an institution with which I was very familiar. Being unfamiliar with the process of journaling, but feeling a sense of eminency, I began recording my reflections on what I saw, read, and heard around me. I was unsure if I would have something of merit to write every day, but resolved to become as diligent in my journaling as possible.

#### *Journal Notes (August 1, 2002 – February 14, 2003)*

August 1, 2002:

It's my first day back at Valdosta Middle School (VMS). This is the beginning of my ninth year teaching at VMS. For the first three years of my teaching career, I taught Exploratory Spanish. The last five years I have been an eighth grade Georgia History/Social Studies teacher. I was a student at VMS, or Valdosta Junior High School (VJHS) as it was called back then, from 1982 until 1984. I have many fond memories of

being a student at VJHS. In 1982 the school was just for seventh and eighth grade instead of sixth through eighth. I was a good student, both academically and socially. I was involved in athletics (basketball) and involved in club activities, most specifically the Industrial Arts Club. Industrial Arts was centered round the wood working class that I had for an elective class. The club operated after school and involved long term preparation for state and national competition in the areas of public speaking, parliamentary procedure, and vocational/technological education. As an officer in the club, I was able to develop a sense of pride in my school and belonging to something bigger than myself. The Industrial Arts class was taught and the club sponsored by one of my best friend's father. Tommy Richards, or Opossum as we affectionately called him, was like an uncle to me. He was energetic and enthusiastic about everything he taught us. That seems like such a long time ago. Tommy died last spring, only about a year and a half after retiring. For me and countless other young men and women who have walked the halls of VJHS and VMS, Tommy was the sage who made our adolescent years in junior high school meaningful.

As I begin my research on a school in transition, observing that construction on the new building is nearly done and the old school is already being partially torn down, I think that it is almost poetic that Mr. Richards is gone. I'll always think of the old school and Mr. Richards as one. Very soon, both live only in my memories.

Upon returning to Valdosta Middle School today for pre-planning, I noticed how decrepit the building looks. During the summer the custodial and maintenance staff typically wash the walls, repaint damaged areas, and clean the floors and desks. Not this year. Since we are scheduled to move into the new school during mid-to-late September, I guess they did not want to spend the time or money on such endeavors. The bathrooms are especially dirty.

Upon arriving, I noticed that the demolition crew is nearly done tearing down the old gymnasium. I cannot help but think of the many hours I spent practicing, playing, and eventually coaching basketball in that gym. The weight room, which I used extensively as a young teacher and coach, was torn down last school year to begin the new construction. The plans are for Physical Education teachers to teach only health at the beginning of the year since there are no indoor facilities or outside fields for PE activities.

I feel particularly excited about the new school year, mainly because I am finally through with my doctoral course work. However, I have already noticed that many of my coworkers seem tense. I have not been back a full day and have already heard complaints about textbooks, lack of instructional supply funds, and countless other deficiencies.

There is some question as to whether we will actually get in the new building in September. From what I have heard, the builder does not get assessed any financial penalties until late November, so it may be later than we have been led to believe before we get into the new building.

From my perspective, the new building looks good, at least on the outside. I took a tour of the new facility last spring, but the inside was still just a shell. The ceilings look much higher in the new building and the security measures seem more extreme, from multiple cameras on every hall to security doors throughout the building.

The old building has a lot of roof leaks. As I walked throughout the old school this morning, I noticed several trashcans strategically placed throughout the building. That was a problem last year. Dripping ceiling brought by heavy rains were a constant bane all

last year. Another problem we have faced in recent years has been the infestation of insects. On top of the daily appearances of roaches and ants, the math teacher, across the hall from my room on wing A, has battled termites for two years in a row.

Another noticeable change this year is the absence of an outdoor smoking lounge. I am not a smoker, but over the years, I have forged many friendships with the several fellow teachers who are. I have spent countless hours discussing everything from the state of education to the weather between wings C and D, safe from the impressionable ears of my students. I had come to think of the wooden barricade and second-hand patio furniture as my sanctuary from the constant scrutiny a public teacher must endure daily.

August 5, 2002:

One day until the kids come back. The principal has asked all the teachers to decorate the old school as best they could. He encouraged the use of colorful bulletin boards, wall decorations, and a team hall display that would rotate every nine weeks. He said that last year he felt that academic teams did not do a very good job of taking pride in the look of the building, perhaps because they were anticipating the move to a new building. I know this is one area that is a personal weakness of mine. I don't usually decorate my room much and this year, even though it was requested, I have done even less because it will be in my opinion a waste of time. I have a student teacher who will report for duty soon and I will get her to decorate the new room a bit more.

The rumor amongst the teachers is that we will be moving sometime in September into the new school, but most feel that is a stretch since there is still a lot of work to be done. The administrators told us to get boxes, that were donated and stacked on the stage in the lunchroom, to begin boxing up things we will not need until after the move into the new school. The Principal also asked the teachers to leave materials, that they have not used in years, to be trashed along with the old school.

Today, we were informed that even when we move into the new school, it will likely be next year before the exterior of the new school will be complete. The athletic fields, the track, and the parking lots and driveways will be the last elements of the new school to be addressed.

The old school continues to leak in several spots and the custodians are busy today cleaning things up for opening day. It looks as if it is going to be down to the wire getting ready for the students.

August 6, 2002

Today was our Open House, an annual meet-and-greet opportunity, before the new school year begins. Our principal said he had had many parents commenting on how impressed they were with the teachers' attitudes concerning the old school. He will meet with the staff at the end of the day to address any final concerns before tomorrow, when the kids arrive.

August 8, 2002:

I have been assigned outdoor afternoon duty for the first time and am shocked at how the traffic is backed up on Burton Avenue, at the front of the school, when parents come to pick up their children. The cars extend into the main road, Patterson Street. I have heard that this has been a problem area for years. Perhaps the dismissal areas at the new school will be better designed.

August 12, 2002:

As I rode by the new school this morning, I could see the entire front for the first time. They have finally taken apart the old gym. It is a very surreal experience for me. I could not help but remember a basketball game that I played in the old gym during my seventh grade year. I had a major crush on a cheerleader who was in the eighth grade and as any young man, I hoped that my athletic prowess would catch her attention and garner her affections. As if it were written in a dime store novel, I found myself on the free throw line with no time left on the clock and an once-in-a-lifetime chance to play the hero. I needed only one of my two shots to land. I had spent countless hours in my back yard preparing for just such an opportunity. There probably were no more than fifty people in the gym, including the players, coaches, referees, and cheerleaders, but for a seventh grader it might as well have been a capacity crowd at Madison Square Garden. As the referee handed me the ball, I glanced over toward my coach. My attention, however, was just to his right where the cheerleading squad stood anxiously. After a long pause and deep breath, I released my first shot. I had practiced free throws enough to know instantly, as the ball left my hands that I had served up a dreaded "air ball". Tension mounted as I steadied my hands for a second attempt. I bounced the ball cautiously several times before raising it above my head. I do not remember exactly what went through my head before I shot. I do, however, remember the feeling of disappointment as, once again I was unable to score. We eventually won the game in overtime and I scored six of the final eight points. I still remember that game above all others that I played because I knew that no one would remember my overtime heroics, least of all that little cheerleader. The only thing that would remain was my missed opportunity at junior high immortality. As I gazed at the rubble, a smile formed on my face. The sight of one of my greatest embarrassments had now been demolished.

For months, the view of the new building has been blocked and much of the construction area has been obscured. I was impressed by the new school's facade. At least on the surface, it looks nice. The building would sit much higher up than the old one. I was still unable to envision what it would look like without the old building in its shadow.

During the day I had the worst scare a South Georgia teacher could have in August. I thought my old air conditioning unit was broken. It turned out to be something quite simple and I was delighted as the repairman restored the comfortable flow of air to my room.

August 13, 2002:

I asked the Principal this morning how he was doing as a matter of courtesy. He responded by saying that he was having allergy problems from all the stale air and mold in the old building. His response reminded me of my third year teaching, when I had a cough for an entire school year. I went to the doctor and had chest x-rays, convinced that I had developed a chronic lung disorder, perhaps even cancer. The problem did not subside until the summer came. I began to speculate that the infirmity was a psychosomatic manifestation of the stress that I had encountered trying to educate the youth of Valdosta. After moving to a different wing and a class with dry erase rather than chalk boards, I eventually came to the realization that the cough was most likely a reaction to chalk dust and poor ventilation within my old classroom.

I had a student ask today if they could write their name on the wall or bulletin board before we moved into the new school since they are going to tear down this one. At this point I was unwilling to grant them their wish, however, I had a feeling that the closer we got to moving the harder it would be to keep students from leaving their “mark” on the old school.

September 10, 2002:

For the first time, I can feel the ground movers vibrating outside. On the eighth grade wing the feeling and sound is faint but one can feel the vibrations heavily down at the sixth grade end of the building. I wonder how the students and teachers are able to concentrate. The Principal says that the machines are raising the level of the earth six feet to accommodate landscaping needed for the new building which sits much higher up in elevation than the old facility.

September 11, 2002:

The Principal says he has been told that we will most likely move during the in-service days, October 21 through October 22.

September 17, 2002:

As I walked down the main hall this morning, I noticed the maintenance men are spray-painting the walls and water damaged ceiling tiles. I asked the Principal what they were doing and he said he wanted the school looking its best for parent's night tonight. He, like many of us, expected at the beginning of the year to be showing off a new school by this time.

October 15, 2002:

During planning, our eighth administrator called a grade level meeting to discuss the current situation with regard to the new building. He said it looked like we would not be moving during in-service days as previously stated. He said the builders have until November 15 before they have to pay \$2000 a day in penalties. By his estimation, it

would probably be late November before we would be able to transfer to the new facility. He had recently been in the new school and said that although the insides of the school are nearly complete, the school system is still awaiting installation of computers. Apparently, the computers have arrived, but the administration does not want to put them in until all the door locks have been installed.

October 18, 2002:

During my planning period at the end of the day, the Principal asked several others and me if we would like to take a tour of the new school. I was shocked at how much work was still needed to finish up. One of the teachers on the tour said they had heard that there were less than three weeks until the construction deadline and the builder would have to pay penalties. They expressed concern that the workers might feel pressure and would rush things and “cut corners” in completing the new building. I kept thinking, as we walked through the dimly lit halls, how impressive the new school looked. I also reflected on how very different it was in shape and form from the old school that I had become so accustomed to.

October 24, 2002:

I awoke to heavy raining this morning. When I arrived at work, I noticed leaks in the roof, pouring down into strategically placed trashcans, all over the old school. As I passed the front office, I heard a teacher voicing their complaints. The principal politely told her to put a trashcan under the leak because the maintenance workers would no longer be repairing problems with the roof on the old building. Apparently, a decision had been made at the Central Office, that it would be pointless to waste anymore time or money on a building that was soon to be a pile of rubble. As persuasive and logical as his explanation was, the dire frustration of the teacher was apparent.

October 30, 2002:

I walked up on a conversation between a maintenance man and the Principal in the main hall in which they were discussing the physical problems of the old school. The principal congratulated the gentleman and his crew for the job they had done stopping the roof leaks thus far.

They began discussing the new school, which the principal said he had been going into and examining regularly. He said he had seen some major problems, such as no caulking on some of the windows in the academic wings, which were supposed to be through. He had also noticed concrete residue in some rooms and that some windows were not set properly and consequently, could not be opened. He said he saw the same problems at J.L. Newbern Middle School (NMS), the systems other middle school, when he was a vice principal there during its inaugural year in 1994 and that the company that was building the new VMS was the same one that built NMS. During their conversation, neither man attempted to censor their comments for my benefit, even though the Principal knows that I am conducting research on the transition from the old to the new school. I would not expect the maintenance man to worry what he says to me, he doesn't even

know who I am nor does he have any real reason to feel threatened by my intrusion. Likewise, it has never been my experience with the Principal that he was one to be overly concerned about expressing his opinions. I have always thought of him as a “straight shooter” when it comes to his views of school business. I have observed him questioning the practicality and logic of Central Office and School Board decisions on many occasions with tempered bravado, a quality that has earned him my admiration.

The maintenance guy says that recently, he had been dealing with leaking roofs at NMS and at an elementary school, Sallas Mahone, which was built only a few years back. He said the problems originated at both sites with the metal roofs, exactly like the roof on our new facility. The roof expands and contracts considerably depending on temperature variations and leaks occur mostly at the joints. The principal said that he too had observed leaking in the new building, where the wings join the main building.

There was a brief discussion speculating that due to political factors and considerations, perhaps the best architects and builders are not always chosen for a particular job. The maintenance man continued to describe the troubles he was having with the old school’s flat roof and how even the newer annexes (wing E and the addition to the lunch room) which were added in the early 1990’s have had leaking problems. Apparently, the principal’s claim the previous week that maintenance would no longer be repairing our roof, had undergone revision. Knowing what I do about our Principal, I would not be surprised if he had not found a way to finance continued repairs.

The principal finished his discussion by telling the maintenance man that he would like for the new school’s exterior doors to all be coded with the same key, so one key would fit all the exterior doors. This would eliminate the current dilemma where each administrator has to carry a multitude of keys to unlock the school every morning. The maintenance man said he would take care of the Principals request. The conversation gave me a deep appreciation for the varied skills a Principal must have. He must be equally adept at dealing with parents, students, teachers, board members, maintenance personnel, and other support staff.

After the maintenance man left, I asked the principal for and received permission to take pictures in the new school. I had been taking pictures of the old school for several weeks and wanted to get visual data on the new facility. At this point, I am unsure in what capacity and to what extent I will use the pictures, but I would rather have them if I need them. I entered through a side entrance and noticed that there were a lot more people working inside and out than I had seen at any previous time. I was approached after taking one picture by a man wearing a hardhat, who I believe was a foreman of some kind. He was the only person in the building who had a hard hat on, was relatively clean, and appeared to be supervising rather than physically working. He asked, “Are you spying on us?” I informed him that I was working on a college research project and needed photos merely for reference. He seemed a little uneasy or confused by my explanation. He said, “This is the last part we have to finish. The rest of the school is done. Have you seen it? It looks great.” I politely agreed with him and continued on unobtrusively, hoping to avoid any further confrontations or inquisitions. I found the encounter exciting at a visceral level, harkening back to my college years when I fancied myself a “James Bond” secret agent in training. Although the stakes were not very high, being compared to a spy was a boost to my ego.

Contrary to the foreman's statements, the remainder of the new facility was far from complete. I continued around to the front office, the media center, the In-School Suspension room, and other sections to get photos of the work in progress.

At lunch, conversations centered in the teacher workroom centered round the latest news that we might be moving into the new building in December. The consensus was that such a move, at least at that time, might present problems. Firstly, it would have us moving at the end of the semester and no one seemed excited about the prospect of packing up and leaving before or during exams. One teacher offered some consolation by saying that moving before Christmas might be ideal, allowing the kids can move there stuff into new lockers. A second problem that might be encountered with a premature move focused on technology. "What grading program will we be using?" one teacher inquired, concerned about the rumors that we would be switching computer grading programs. The technology people have said that it will take at least a month to get the internet and e-mail accounts up and running. In my estimation, that would be a major problem. In recent years, students and faculty have become very dependent on technology. Finally, several teachers are concerned about the lockers at the new school, which have built in combinations. The students will have to learn a series of new combinations, a feat usually reserved for the beginning of the school year.

The main sentiment I gathered from the lunch crowd was a feeling of uncertainty. The teachers were stressed because they did not know when we were moving, what we would have when we got there, and how the transition would work. Anxiety seems to be building as the time for moving draws closer.

November 5, 2002:

As I waited for the students to enter the building this morning, the math teacher across the hall from me said that the Principal told her that barring any changes in the current schedule, we would move in mid-December. He said he wanted the demolition crew to tear down wing E, the closest part of the old building to the new facility, first.

November 6, 2002:

Once again, we had heavy rains during the night. Upon arriving at school, the talk in the halls is of flooding. This time, however, the location is not the old school but the new one. During the night, there was some major flooding in the gym and elective rooms at the new facility. Apparently the elevation and landscaping was incomplete and the layout of the lower sections of the new building facilitated funneling of rainwater. The workers have spent all morning pumping out the excess water. I wanted to get some photos of the situation, but due to continued efforts, was unable to get a first hand view.

A fellow Social Studies teacher told me that he slipped into the building, during a break, and said there was extensive water still in the gym and some in the elective areas. He said the academic wings were spared inundation because they were at a much higher elevation. He continued by saying that his new room, on the eighth grade academic wing, looked good although he thought the color choices were poor. I asked him what the colors were? He said that we would have blue desks with brown carpet in the rooms and green and white tile in the halls.

November 7, 2002:

I went into the building to take pictures and survey the aftermath of the heavy rains. There was still some water in the gym, where much of the building supplies still resided, and I saw some water in the elective rooms. The water on the elective room floors was of particular concern to me because each room had cabinets, which were set at ground level, already installed. Although I'm not a carpenter, I do know that if the water was not removed quickly there would be severe warping of the cabinets. It would be a shame to move into a new school and have warped cabinetry there to greet you. From what other teachers are saying, the flooding would have never occurred had the builders correctly landscaped the areas around the gym and had they properly secured the doors. With as little rain as we have had in Valdosta the last few years, the construction crew was apparently caught off guard by the torrential rains yesterday.

November 21, 2002:

Work on the gym and elective wing is continuing. Workers are laying tile down the sloping elective wing hallway. The exterior of the new school building is finally taking shape. Workers have spread asphalt for the front parking lot and around the exterior of the school, giving the building a ready-to-go facade.

November 22, 2002:

In the hallway, just before homeroom began, the eighth grade vice principal told me to tell teachers on my team to clear out their teacher workroom desks, which will be moved to the new school. Some teachers make great use of these desks while others, like myself, use them mainly for storage. They are kept in the teacher workroom and will be one of the few items that will be moved to the new school. Most of the desks, filing cabinets, and other furniture will be discarded, however, the teacher's work desks are fairly new and I guess the decision was made to utilize them in the new facility.

November 25, 2002:

Today, the principal and several students, mostly football players, moved the last of the teacher workstations into the new building. The workstations are the first things to be moved from the old school into the new one. The process of moving has finally begun.

November 26, 2002:

As I was getting ready for school this morning, I overheard a local profile story, on the channel 10 WALB, which is an NBC affiliate station, about an old school building in Mitchell-Baker County. The county had already funded and constructed a new grammar school and had plans to demolish the old building when a group in the community, comprised of citizens who were former students and teachers at the old school, decided to purchase the school and turn it into a community resource center. The news report

consisted of their personal recollections and memories as students and teachers. The segment ended with one interviewee saying, "This school has memories"

November 29, 2002:

I had an opportunity tonight to reflect on the impact of a new school and what people remember most about it over time. I was at my parents having dinner with an old family friend, Mrs. McClurg. Her husband was the principal at a kindergarten through sixth grade school in our system when it was brand new. I told her that I was hoping to do my dissertation on the transition from an old to a new school facility. She said the thing she remembered most, from when her husband was going through the same process in the mid 60's, was how he was forced to move into a new building with old desks and materials from the school from which they moved because the school system ran out of money. She said that, although it has been nearly forty years, the disappointment was the one thing about the whole move that had stayed in her mind.

December 2, 2002:

I took a tour of the new school with the special projects coordinator from the central office, Will Anderson. When I was an eighth grader at the old VMS, Mr. Anderson was the vice principal. He became principal at Valdosta High School my freshman year and remained at that position for many years. When I was in high school, I always felt intimidated by Mr. Anderson. He had a very serious expression on his face every time that I saw him and his glare could stop me dead in my tracks. My impression of him as a teen is a far cry from the man that is giving me a tour today. He is very cordial and smiles incessantly as he shows off the new building. Now that I have nearly a decade of teaching experience myself, I have a better understanding of the stoical façade he maintained as an administrator.

Mr. Anderson said we would probably be moving in during the second week of January. He described the planned landscaping, which was designed to prevent the campus from washing away. Not being skilled in the art of horticultural, I always assumed the exterior layout would be left to the landscaper's whims, however, he. Anderson informed us that there were strict state regulations to be followed concerning the design of the campus and location of trees and bushes.

Without inquiry, he offered information on a key point of interest, the total cost of the new facility. According to his calculations, the total bill for the new building, landscaping, construction of a new track, and demolition of the old school would be 12.4 million dollars. Early on in the process of planning the new building, one option that was proposed called for selling the old school and its surrounding land, purchasing a new campus location, and building on that site. The proposed cost of that facility, taking into account the proceeds from the sale, would have been substantially less. For various political reasons, the relocation option was discarded.

The interior of the school was nearly complete. As we continued our tour, I noticed that the principal was in the school with some students moving the last of the library books into the new media center. He quietly acknowledged our presence and continued with his task. I have been impressed, throughout the planning and building phases of the

new school with Mr. Randall's hands-on approach to the new school. He's not afraid to break a sweat to expedite the transitional process.

The teacher workrooms are especially nice and spacious. They contain something that we've never had since I have been teaching at VMS, teacher's bathrooms divided along gender lines. We will also have a microwave, a refrigerator, vending machines, and a conference table for each grade level. In the past, our workrooms were located in old classrooms and often prove uninviting and inadequate for our needs. I feel that these workrooms will become a safe haven for teachers, allowing them an escape from the constant company of students.

January 6, 2003:

Once again we returned from Christmas break on my birthday. In nearly nine years of teaching it seems we always have to come back on my birthday. The system is constantly altering the school calendar and every year, when the adjustments are made, I end up spending my favorite day at school. C'est la vie. To no one's surprise, the principal informs us, via e-mail, that according to his latest information we will not be moving into the new building until the middle or end of February.

Throughout the day, I get the sense that some of the teachers are upset. They were told that we would move by mid-January and many of them have boxed up most of their instructional materials and sent them to the new school, as they were instructed to do. During our planning period, many of the teachers had to go to the new school and to get anything that they will need for the next six weeks. Luckily, over the last few years, I have transferred most of my instructional materials to a computer based multimedia format, so as long as I have a computer and my CDs, I have all that I need.

The landscaping around the school is nearly complete. It appears that a lot has been accomplished over the holidays.

I hope to get into the school tomorrow to take some more updated photos of the gym and elective wing. When I was last in the new building, before the holidays, finishing touches on the lower wing of the school were all that was lacking, except for the classroom computer installations.

January 7, 2003:

The principal has decided that we will issue a free locker to every student when we finally move into the new school, to avoid the confusion of trying to determine who has paid for a locker and who has not. The new lockers have built-in locks. This is a contrast to the lockers of the old school that required students to bring their own combination or key lock. This will eliminate a host of perennial problems such as cutting off locks with forgotten combinations, usage of lockers that are unpaid for, and confusion over whose has been assigned a locker. Each homeroom teacher will have a copy of all the combinations to lockers that their homeroom has been assigned and all administrators will have a master key to all lockers. One notable difference, which may cause some problems, is the taller height of the top lockers compared to the old school.

The eighth grade vice-principal, a math teacher and I were on the new eighth grade wing looking over the classrooms when the principal came walking up and surprised us.

He said that he saw us on the surveillance cameras. He led us to the front office area to show us the surveillance cameras. Hidden within a cabinet behind the receptionist's desk, was an entertainment center. Within the inset shelves were three television sets that displayed a constant flow of rotating images from the thirty-nine cameras that are scattered throughout the interior and exterior of the new building. Mr. Randall said that each camera records continuously throughout the day and any camera could be isolated and digitally magnified with high resolution. The new surveillance system may not deter student misbehavior, but it could make catching perpetrators more efficient.

January 11, 2003:

There was an article today in the local newspaper about the upcoming opening of the new school. One school board member, who was my teacher in the fourth grade, was quoted as saying that the school was so nice that she wanted to come out of retirement.

January 14, 2003:

There were workers placing the Valdosta Middle School name on the front of the new school. I teased the principal by saying that he should have had told the workers that the new school was going to be called Randall Middle School.

Moving of supplies to the new building continues slowly. Students and administrators are transporting each teacher's materials a few boxes at a time. There is still no sight of the school system workers that were supposed to help move boxed materials.

January 15, 2003:

Due to continued delays many teachers, who packed everything up anticipating an earlier move, are once again having to search through boxes in the new building to find essential teaching materials while we await the actual move. The morning announcements informed teachers that while it was ok to pack and move their materials to classrooms in the new building, they should not begin unpacking and arranging materials in their new rooms yet.

January 16, 2003:

Perhaps as a gesture of goodwill, the principal stated on the morning announcements that relaxed dress, which for teachers means jeans, was permissible in the coming weeks if one was moving things to new school during a scheduled planning period. The announcements went on to state that after today, because workers would be waxing the floors in the new building over the weekend, no teachers should enter the building until school resumes following the upcoming long weekend, in observance of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.

January 30, 2003:

According to information given to the principal, the builder is losing approximately \$2000 per day since the building deadline in late November passed. In the last week, most teachers have spent their planning periods at the new school getting their rooms ready. Several teachers have complained because none of the system workers have helped moving heavy items into the new building. Many teachers are either unable to move the items themselves or are uncomfortable with the idea of getting students to move the materials.

February 3, 2003:

The principal distributed keys to the new classrooms to teachers today. He said that one key per class would operate all the cabinets as well as the door. He asked the locksmiths to limit the number of keys each teacher and administrator would have to carry to fully utilize their new rooms. I appreciated this gesture very much since over the years I have seen my work keys increase far beyond what I feel is necessary.

February 4, 2003:

The morning announcement stated that any teacher who has not yet received his or her new room key should pick them up today. There was also an emphatic warning included: **Please be careful with closet doors! Do not open the ones next to the computer stations too hard or all the way as the counters have an edge that will put a hole in the door. This is going to be fixed.** The announcements concluded with a reminder not to go to the middle of the complex, because the floor wax was still wet.

February 7, 2003:

Finally, it looks as if we have an actual move in date. Copy machines are being moved into the workrooms on February 14. February 18 is supposed to be, if all goes as planned, our first day in the new school. Most of the teachers view this news with suspicion.

While standing in the hall during afternoon dismissal, one of the school speech teachers asked Mrs. Tarpin and me about the old school. She wondered when the wing A annex was added. Mrs. Tarpin, who has taught at the school for nearly twenty years answered and explained that wing E was also added more recently to the original layout. The speech teacher had further inquiries into the construction date of the original building. She said that she thought it would be interesting if someone did some research on the history of the school. I agreed but did not indicate that I was conducting research on that very subject, thinking that perhaps she would elaborate more. Mrs. Tarpin, who knows of my research, looked at me and smiled.

February 10, 2003:

Once again the move-in date has changed, but this time only by one day. The decision has been made that we will use Tuesday, February 18, the day after President's Day to walk kids over and assign lockers. The following day, February 19, will be our first official day in the new school.

I made another run through the school this afternoon. The rooms are complete and look wonderful. The computers and TV/VCR combos have been installed, which is of especial concern to me since I make great use of multimedia presentations in my classroom instruction. There is still a plethora of work going on around the elective and Physical Education wing.

February 11, 2003:

Many of the students are in the new building helping teachers move things around and decorate rooms. Mrs. Tarpin was in the new school yesterday when they tested the fire alarm. She said the system was very loud, with an alarm in each room and flashing lights for the hearing impaired.

We received an e-mail memo from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade vice-principal stating that we will be taking the kids over on Friday, February 14 to issue lockers and move books. As if Valentine's Day isn't already hectic enough. I know enough about middle school students to realize that very little class work will get done on this Friday. At least I will have a long weekend to recover.

The 8<sup>th</sup> grade vice principal informed us that the planned field trips to Valdosta Technical College next week might be cancelled.

February 12, 2003:

The day starts out with confusion amongst eighth grade teachers. The vice-principal for our grade will be absent the remainder of the week. Many items, such as the Valdosta Technical College trip are undecided and all the teachers are unsure about procedures for this week and the next.

The Principal sent e-mail stating that he would be sending home a letter this week explaining the new school procedures, for drop off and pick, up to the parents. The e-mail also includes a promise that teachers will receive assignment to new duty posts and new procedures for the new building at grade level meetings on Thursday, February 13.

February 13, 2003:

Morning announcements said:

"Please do not move furnishings (school or personal) to the new classrooms. If you have been in your new rooms, I think you realize why."

"Please make sure that you have saved the items on your computer. All hardware must be left in your room for inventory, including printers. The tagged computers will be moved later."

At the afternoon grade level meeting with the vice principal, I decided to take notes concerning final preparations for the move. Below are quotes from the meeting:

“We are moving to a new building. That doesn’t mean it’s going to be a new school. We still have the same kids.”

“Clamp down on the kids. They are not ready for freedom. You teachers need to be strict and enforce the rules.”

“Monitor the halls, locker time, and bathrooms breaks.”

“The same rules apply, no gum, eating, CD’s, etc.”

“We need to re-adjust locker times so less kids are in the hall at one time.”

“We have more stalls in the bathrooms, so there should be less backing up.”

“Continue monitoring rest rooms to prevent writing on the walls, bomb threats, and otherwise.”

“Connections classes should be easier. All teachers are on one hall now. They are not spread out like the old school.”

February 14, 2003:

It’s Valentine’s Day and the last day in the old school. The morning announcements shed some light on areas previously left without explanation.

“The new school will be opened on Saturday from 10-6, Sunday 1-6, and Monday (President’s Day) from 8-4.”

“The location of the bike rack at the new school is at the end of connections wing. Some of the kids were concerned.”

In the afternoon we had a faculty meeting in the media center at 3:30 p.m. The principal started the meeting by saying, “I appreciate the staff. I know it is a stressful time. Any problems you see in your rooms, put them on the maintenance list in the work rooms. There are going to be some kinks to work out in the new building. We will have to be patient.”

“There are some problems with the new building. The power has shut off once in the last few days and there have been two plumbing cut offs.”

“The school should be ready to go. If you observe any threat to safety-let an administrator know.”

“The parking situation is as follows: one parking faculty area in front with 68 spots. One in back with 20 spots reserved for connections and PE.”

“Until the roadwork is complete, there is only one way in, from the backside of the campus, on Oak Street. There will be two lanes. The lane to right to let kids off and the left lane to continue around. This is a completely new system.”

“Make sure you get here early on Tuesday because the traffic is going to be crazy, even though letters were sent home recently explaining the new procedures.”

“Exiting will now be on Patterson Street. The crossing guard has been moved and the traffic patterns around the school will change. I have asked the local police to help monitor the dismissal. They said they will and will enforce the new rules even with tickets.”

“The traffic patterns will change again several times in the next few months. Eventually, Burton Avenue will be two way again, for the first time in many years.”

“Oak Street, which goes both ways and has for as long as I can remember, is going to be one way going south.”

The new traffic patterns seem to confuse the teachers, as evidenced by a flurry of questions. In despair, the principal back tracks and tells them not to worry about the future changes yet.

“All teachers enter and sign in through the front door, except for PE and connections who have early morning duty and park in the back.”

“The new school will have phones in every room. To call room to room and out. Just don’t call a kid’s parent to report a problem in front of the students. Wait until planning or another time.”

“Lunch procedures were covered by your area administrator.”

“If you are short on desks, borrow from a team member. There are 28 desks per class. There shouldn’t be any class with more than that.”

“Students need time to adjust to the new schedule. Don’t count any students tardy for the first week back.”

“After that, if a kid is tardy the parents will have to come in and sign them in. All these tardy students have been inconveniencing teachers, we are going to inconvenience the parents for continually bringing them late.”

“We have dress code problems. Our system policy is very liberal. Not much support higher up.”

“This is a golden opportunity to clamp down on discipline. There will be no talking in the halls starting out. Assign pages and follow procedures. Enforce the rules.”

“If you give the students an inch they will take more than a mile.”

“No CD’s, hats, sweatbands, gum, games, cards, etc.”

“Use the green tiles on the floor as a visual aid to keep the kids to the right.”

“Cameras will aid in seeing who is walking the halls. Work together as a team.”

“We need to run the school, not the kids.”

“Newspapers and TV stations will be here Tuesday.”

“New dismissal procedures are as follows: 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade down the hall first, 8<sup>th</sup> graders out connections wing.”

Then, in a rather anticlimactic manner, the principal suddenly ended the meeting. Perhaps he was sensing restlessness among the faculty or merely felt that everyone must be tired after a long day of work. Either way, without opening the floor to questions about or further discussions of tomorrow, the meeting was over. I could not help but wonder if I was more excited about tomorrow than the rest of the faculty. For them it is a transfer into a newer work facility, but for me it is that and much more. The transfer to the new building will provide me with a setting to conduct research for my dissertation. I view the opportunity with excitement and apprehension. I will finally have the chance to explore questions that until now had been merely theoretical concepts. Six months of journaling, picture taking, and artifact gathering will now have to merge with the completed dissertation proposal. Tomorrow we will move into a new school and there will be no going back. Likewise, I must look to the new school for answers to my increasing curiosity concerning the effects of a school transition on school culture.

## Chapter III

### AFTER THE MOVE

*Journal Notes (February 18, 2003 – May 6, 2003)*

February 18, 2003:

It is the first day in the new school. Morning announcements greet the student and faculty on the intercom:

“Good Morning. Welcome to the New School. Come early to avoid traffic problems and being late. New expectations in the new school: No gum. Stay to right in halls on the green tile. Silent halls. You are the charter group in the new school. The old school lasted 50 years. You are the first.”

Teachers receive separate morning announcements via e-mail:

“Thanks to teachers who came over the weekend to get rooms ready.”

“Ignore the bells today. They are on automatic and we are still adjusting.”

“Review conduct rules with the kids.”

Many of the kids have begun the day saying that they don't like it and want to go back to the old school. I responded, “It's like trading an old car for a new one.” One student said, “Yeh, but those old cars be runnin' better.”

February 19, 2003:

There is a sign up sheet in the front office for the March 6 PTO meeting. The main purpose of the meeting will be a “New School Celebration.”

The students' behavior seems much better, probably because of the new surroundings. Only one student has asked to leave my room in two days, which is very unusual. Perhaps they are nervous with the cameras? I have noticed one immediate problem. There are no flagpole holders in the rooms. This makes the pledge of allegiance very difficult during homeroom. I stapled a poster of the American flag on my bulletin board to compensate.

February 20, 2003:

The morning announcements requested that teachers lock up the TV and VCR remote controls because several have been stolen by students. They take the batteries out for CD players and video games.

The principal is going to pay for faculty dinners at the New School celebration. Perhaps this is an added incentive to encourage faculty attendance at the PTO meeting.

The vice principal said, “I've been tense,” during lunch duty. Apparently the change to the new school makes him nervous. He misses the old lunchroom. “It had a lot more

space to spread the kids out.” Later in the day he sent a memo stating that he will escort any teacher who needs to get anything out of the old school, because it will soon be off limits. Demolition time is near.

February 21, 2003:

Classroom phones are being installed today. This is a new feature. I’ve noticed the walls are thinner. You can hear the rooms next to you much clearer than in the old school. This appears to distract the kids more than me, perhaps because I went to Valdosta High School where there are no closed walls.

I went to the old school to get PC/TV converter to turn into my area administrator. They are being collected and sent to other schools in the system. I got an eerie feeling walking through the old building, like trekking through a ghost town or a post-apocalyptic landscape.

February 24, 2003:

The phones are being worked on today. The principal requested that each teacher bring one of the two copies for all classroom keys: a door and cabinet key, a key for the teacher’s desk, and one key for each of the two filing cabinets, to the front office. They want duplicates in case a teacher loses keys or moves.

We have to fill out new property inventories. The form states that teachers shouldn’t have brought anything like VCRs, TVs, or old furniture from the old school. One of the teachers has an old podium he showed me. He said that he brought it anyway, because he got it his first year teaching, nearly twenty-five years ago. It was on a truck bound for the high school and he unloaded it and took it to his make shift room in the gym. He has used it ever since and says he will not give it up until he retires. I asked if he would leave it to me when he is gone. He said that when he retires he does not care what happens to it.

The vice principal e-mailed a memo stating, “I feel like things are going well in the new building. I hope you feel the same. I think it would be unrealistic to expect total silence during locker breaks. A healthy noise level will be fine, but I do want you to stress something to your students: silence in the main halls. They should be conditioned to be quiet on the way to electives.”

February 25, 2003:

The phones are working and operation instructions were placed in our mailboxes with a reminder not to discuss a student on the phone with other students present. The computers with Integrate, our grading program, are in teacher workrooms and will be ready for use within two weeks, which is cutting it close to interim report deadlines.

February 26, 2003:

Morning announcements: Please have your rooms completed by March 6 Open House. Report any phone or technology problems

February 27, 2003:

We had heavy rains last night. This morning I saw Mr. Anderson, the special projects coordinator from the Central Office, looking over school for leaks, of which he found several. He said that the seams in the new building are still settling in.

The Technology elective teacher said when it rains the noise in his room is unbearable, because of the metal roof. He says that it is nearly impossible to teach during a heavy downpour.

After two weeks in the new building, I still am seeing construction people checking on reported problems and making final adjustments.

February 28, 2003:

In a conversation with the eighth grade vice principal today he said that he loved the new school, because of its brighter, wider halls. He measured the old halls and new ones to compare. He also loves the green tiles, which serve as a visual reference for the students to stay to the right when transferring classes.

March 3, 2003:

On my way home from work today, I drove by my first school, Sallas Mahone Elementary, where I went from first until fourth grade. They have begun tearing it down. The new Sallas Mahone, which was built on a different site, has been up for several years. I have heard that the old building and campus were sold to South Georgia Medical Center, which has gradually purchased several blocks around their original facilities. Within a few months, two of the four public schools that I attended, while growing up in Valdosta City Schools, will be gone. Now that I am a parent and a historian, I lament the fact that my children will not be able to go the same schools that my wife and I did. Time marches on.

March 4, 2003:

During our weekly grade level meeting, the vice principal has had some observations on the new school and suggestions for continued order during the transitional period.

“Being in the new building, I see more positives than negatives.”

“If we can’t do it, control the kids, here, then we can’t do it.”

“We have wider main halls, eleven feet versus fourteen to fifteen feet in the new school.”

“The green lines help them know to stay to the side”

“The wing halls are wider also, eleven feet in the new school versus seven feet in the old one.”

“We are training the kids”

“We will break them, like wild horses”

“Accountability is coming from the superintendent down.”

“The principal said he has already seen some teachers slipping.”

“Focus on enforcing the rules of the school”

“It’s a group effort. Everyone needs to help keep order.”

“Make sure you are not slack in your duty. Be at your hall posts when you should.”

He shifts the accusatory tone to a more positive ending by saying that he felt that the eighth grade teachers were doing well in keeping the bathroom schedules and hall pass logs.

The meeting ended with an explanation of the air conditioning system and how to custom the program in each room. While he is discussing the programming procedures, I casually run my hand over what I believe to be a sensor on the unit. Suddenly, the school fire alarm begins wailing. As the security doors in the halls close and the safety lights begin flashing, we departed the school. I could not help but wonder if I had unintentionally triggered the alarm. When I was five years old, my best friend J.W. talked me into pulling a fire alarm at our church. I remember being scared that I was going to be arrested. The other teachers teased me by asking what I had done. As it turns out, the alarm company was working on the system and one of their technicians had unintentionally set off the alarm.

March 5, 2003:

I noticed a large crack in the wall at end of the eighth grade wing at a joint area. Workmen were re-mortaring it. The teachers commented on the structural problems in the new school that they have already observed.

There was a four-page insert today in the local newspaper, The Valdosta Daily Times, inviting citizens to the Valdosta Middle School Dedication Ceremony tomorrow night. The advertisement began, “Don’t miss the opportunity to tour the most modern school in the Valdosta school system.” There was an inclusion of the school’s mission statement, pictures of the Valdosta City Schools’ Board of Education members, pictures of the old and new buildings, listing of staff, community partners in education, and PTO officers, a comprehensive list of principals of Valdosta Junior High/Middle School and a time line of events leading up to the move. It looks like everyone who had a part in the new school becoming a reality has received recognition.

March 6, 2003:

We have our first Open House in the new building scheduled for tonight. I almost began laughing when I heard the morning announcements on the intercom during homeroom. “We are aware of the odor in the building. They are having problems with the sewer.”

The Dedication Ceremony, which was the central theme of the Open House, was like a church service. It was complete with responsive readings much like the ones I had become accustomed to as a youth in the First Presbyterian Church. Our principal began the ceremony by reading a soliloquy about a retiring Valdosta City Schools teacher who was a student at VMS when the old building was constructed over 50 years ago. The teacher was his mother. I became aware of the emotional toll that must be exacted from an administrator who must oversee the transition of an entire school into a new facility, when I saw an out pouring of emotion from the normally stoical and reserved Mr. Randall. Throughout the last few months, he had spent countless hours, day and night,

working to insure a smooth transition. During that time, his wife was pregnant with their second child. As he fought back tears, I realized for the first time the awesome sacrifices that some people had made to make this move possible.

The school system Superintendent said that he would miss the old school because he had been a rookie teacher there twenty-five years ago. He recalled that when he was a new college graduate with little money to his name, he would ride his bike to work. He, like our principal, had developed a special affinity for the old building.

March 7, 2003:

When I checked my e-mail this morning, there was a memo sent out by a teacher addressing the need for mats at side doors. The teacher asserted that a hazard was being introduced by the tracking in of rainwater. Apparently, a teacher in the seventh grade has already suffered an injury from a slip a few days ago.

The morning announcements read: "Save power, cut off lights, and log off computers not in use. Budget cuts are coming to local school boards from the Governor."

March 12, 2003:

Once again we have a meeting with the principal to discuss the new building. He said that there were still some construction problems that were being addressed. Teacher's chairs in the workroom are on back order until late April, which will make using the workroom for conferences and team meetings difficult. He stressed the need to conserve energy. The new school's power bill is approximately \$11,000 a month as opposed to \$5,000 a month at the old school.

"Hopefully you have seen improvements in student behavior with the new school. After a while, when the kids get used to the new school and the cameras, they will get back to the way they were."

"Hopefully, you have seen an added benefit of the phones."

March 13, 2003:

It was raining heavily when school began today. Several students in my reading class commented that the new school was already leaking like the old one.

March 14, 2003:

Mr. Randall had two wall murals from the old school cut out, framed, and placed in the central hub of the new building. He said he wanted, "A piece of the old school in the new school."

March 25, 2003:

Tile outside technology and art rooms was being replaced today after three weeks of wear. I wonder if we are having such problems already if this building will hold up as well as the last one.

March 27, 2003:

I noticed that the corner of the sixth grade wing is right at the edge of the driveway which extends around the school and is currently the primary route for morning drop off. I wonder how long it will be until a parent runs into the side of the building. I think this was one of the poorest design features of the new school that I have observed thus far.

Mr. Brown, the technology teacher, pointed out to me that trees were planted three feet in front of all the wall mounted air conditioning units on the exterior of the building. He commented, "That's stupid. In a few years, you are going to have the limbs growing into every unit." I had to agree with him. That was poor landscaping design and planning.

April 8, 2003:

The Cat Chat, our school system newspaper, was in my mailbox this morning. It contained pictures of the dedication ceremony that I had sent in to central office. The woman in charge of putting the flyer together was my Business Law teacher at Valdosta High School. She forgot to bring her digital camera to the ceremony and asked me to send her some of my pictures for the publication. She is unaware of my research topic and must have assumed that I was a particularly nostalgic employee.

April 24, 2003:

I printed consent, assent, and project explanation forms for students, teachers and administrators. My faculty subjects were chosen from various grade levels, subject area concentrations, genders, races, and had varying years of experience.

For student respondents, I picked three classes that were heterogeneously grouped, of mixed race, gender, ethnicity, and ability level, to send out permission forms and project explanations.

April 25, 2003:

At lunch, the vice principal casually walked up and said to me, "You can put this in your paper. Most of the new school is a hundred times better than the old school, but they should have built a bigger lunchroom. They shouldn't have built a 12.5 million dollar facility with no room for expansion. Look at the kids, they are all over each other."

April 28, 2003:

As I drove down Patterson Street today, I noticed that Sallas Mahone is gone. The remainder of the building was torn down this weekend.

Next Thursday evening, we will be hosting honors night. The principal told me that he wanted to name the new technology room after Mr. Richards, but was not allowed to by the school board, so he had created an award called the Thomas N. Richards Award for Outstanding Technology Student. He, like I had been a student of Mr. Richards as well

as his coworker for several years. He further explained, “You give thirty-two years of your life to a school, you deserve some recognition.”

May 1, 2003:

I handed out project explanation, assent, and consent forms to my reading, second academic and fourth academic classes today. All three classes are diverse in terms of race, gender, and academic ability. This was made easy for me because state regulations prohibit the leveling of classes, thus ensuring I will have a random sample of students in any class that I distribute forms in.

I had a teacher, at the end of the first academic period, to ask me if I had given out some sheets. I said yes. She said several had been balled up and thrown at her during class when she turned her back. I figured that the students must have been from my reading class, which is my most academically gifted group but often the least cooperative class. I could not help but wonder, “Why did she turn her back to the kids?” That is one of the first things that I learned as a rookie teacher, never take your eyes off of middle school students. They are masters of launching projectiles. The incident did make me realize that I might need to offer a tangible incentive to the kids to participate. I cannot expect everyone to intrinsically share my passion for the subject matter that I wish to explore.

May 2, 2003:

Only five students returned the consent forms today, one in reading and four from my social studies academic classes. I am not totally surprised. It usually takes the average student three to four days to return things that are sent home. If by next Tuesday, I don't have enough for a focus group of six to ten students I will recruit participants from other class periods. I would like to conduct two to three student focus groups, one per period if possible, two administrator focus groups, and two teacher focus groups.

May 5, 2003:

There are no paper towels left in the boy's bathroom. The vice principal gave us a stack to give each male student a couple of paper towels as needed. Apparently, the boys on the seventh grade wing have been stuffing paper the toilets and flooding the bathroom and the eighth grade boys have been throwing wet towels in the bathroom and urinating on the toilet paper in the stalls. It looks like the newness of this school is wearing off and the bad behavior has resumed. Viva la resistance. I observed one class going to the bathroom today and was amused by the teacher's reaction to our newest bathroom directive. The teacher gave each of the students one paper towel. I heard several students complain about the absurdity of the new regulation.

I was able to arrange the Focus Group with the administrators for Friday, May 9, 2003. All four administrators are willing to participate, but only the principal and two of the three assistant principals have indicated that they will attend. One vice principal will be out and said they would meet with me later for an interview or whatever I needed.

I have spent time today trying to schedule two teachers focus groups. Scheduling, I have learned, is one of the most difficult parts of qualitative research. I have had several people qualify their acceptance by saying they would participate as long as they can get the focus group done here, during their planning period or right after school. I realize that volunteering free time is a lot to ask of teachers, since they are caged up in the same room for most of the eight-hour workday. A few of the teachers, who received consent forms, have not responded. I sent an e-mail reminder to them politely asking when would be a good time for them to meet with me. Hopefully, by allowing the proposed participants to schedule the focus group, I will have an increased response.

May 6, 2003:

During my planning period today, I held my first focus group interview with a group of nine students. Two additional students, who returned their forms, chose not to attend. One decided at the last minute to not participate, perhaps because they were nervous and another claimed later that he forgot about the meeting.

I realized that I would have to be more involved in the focus group at first to get things started. I began by giving the students a general overview of the focus group procedures and project purposes, which was similar to the following: "The purpose of this study is to find out what happened in the process of moving from an old to a new school facility and also to find out what you think about it. I'm looking at students', teachers', and administrators' perspectives. I want to get some of your ideas and am going to start off and give you some prompts or questions that I want you to respond to anyway you feel. I do ask is that if someone is talking, wait until he or she has finished and if you want to disagree, agree, or add something to it, then that would be the point at which you may respond."

I had a list of general focus group topics and inquiries to guide my questioning and prevent the conversations from randomly drifting off topic. The students seemed to grasp the focus group concept quite well, although I did have to moderate a certain amount. Some new topic areas and questions emerged as the students interacted and I perceived an opportunity to ask more probing questions on participant generated themes. From the very beginning, I noticed one student, Paul who has been identified as gifted, dominated the focus group through his vivacious personality and keen sense of humor. Interestingly enough, the second most dominant participant, in terms of comments and time speaking, was Shannon, who is in Special Education classes.

As stated in the Organization of the Dissertation, I employed Johnson's (1985) technique as a model for the presentation of focus group and individual interviews. In *West Haven*, Johnson focuses on providing the reader with his classroom observations and interpretations in a chronological and comprehensive narrative format, which he believes is "the most desirable reporting format" (p. 6). I have chosen to adopt a similar format centered round student, teacher, and administrator focus group and interview responses to open-ended questions. Borrowing a stylistic mode used by Johnson, I included interpretive analysis of data, in a slightly reduced font, to the right side of transcribed participant responses. At points where the topic of conversation shifts, I have included interpretive comments and notes in italicized form.

*Student Focus Group: May 6, 2003*

Researcher: "What do you think of the new school?"

Paul: "Safe. Safer."

Order: Safety

Researcher: "Than the old school?"

Paul: "Less violent."

Conflicts: the student perceived the old school to be more violent.

Researcher: "OK. Why do you think that is?"

Paul: "We have the cameras and more regulations."

Control through security cameras and rules.

Andrew: "It's like a prison."

Hidden Curriculum: Prison comparison. Do the students feel imprisoned?

Paul: "They pretty much changed the whole code of conduct, except, like the minor issues."

Control: Has the Code of Conduct (school rules and regulations) really been changed or has enforcement increased?

Researcher: "OK. So you said like a prison. In what way?"

Andrew: "They got the wires in between the glass, like a prison. The front door locks, so no other people can come in but students and faculty."

Hidden Curriculum: Students description of what he perceives as the similarities between the new school and a prison.

Researcher: "OK, so it's."

Andrew: "The Green Mile."

The Green Mile refers to the Tom Hanks prison movie. Students have begun to describe the green tile line on the floors of the new school in this manner.

Researcher: "A little more secure but it makes you feel almost like being."

Andrew: "Yeh."

Researcher: "In prison."

*The prison comparison was introduced very early in the focus group session. Given the question, "What do you think of the new school?" Andrew immediately drew a comparison between his status in the school and that of a prisoner. Paul made reference to the school code of conduct being changed. I wondered had the code actually been changed following the transfer to the new school or had enforcement of the existing code merely increased? Andrew referred to "The Green Mile," a Tom Hanks movie set in a prison, as a metaphor for the new school. There are green tiles along the sides of the halls in the new building to provide a visual reminder to students to stay to the right when changing classes. Many of the students had begun calling it "the green mile."*

Brandy: “It’s boring. Everything’s the same. Like, every hallway, the classrooms. Everywhere is like, too organized.”

Space and Design Features: The student thinks the layout is too organized or sterile?

Andrew: “There’s no variety.”

Design Features: Lack of variety.

Paul: It’s too, um, there is too many rules. The old school had, you can’t go to the bathroom when you want to.”

Control: Once again the perception that rules have increased.

Researcher: Um, so it’s a little bit more strict?”

Shannon: “And if you went to the bathroom, the cameras, when you go to the bathroom, the cameras, uh, the cameras in the hallway, they will look at you.”

Freedom and Hidden Curriculum: How much of a student’s civil rights do they leave at the front door?

Researcher: “OK.”

Shannon: “They look at whatever you doing.”

Control: This students concerns reminds me of George Orwell’s 1984. Big brother is watching!

Researcher: “OK, so you feel like you are being watched?”

*Brandy introduced a divergent perception on the design features of the new facility, describing it as boring and too organized. Andrew seemed to agree by criticizing the lack of variety. If true, I wonder what effects the similarity in classroom and hall designs might have upon perceptions of the operations of the school. Do such design features contribute to a feeling of institutionalization among students?*

*Issues of control emerged as Paul and Shannon referred to perceived increase in rules and surveillance. Shannon’s comment, “They look at whatever you doing” paints an Orwellian picture of the inner workings of a modern school. Where is the middle ground between a need for school order and student needs for freedom and independence?*

Researcher: Ok, you said something about the rooms, they’re all the same basically?”

Brandy: Yeh, like, I guess one thing is because you can’t put up things on the wall. But like, if you go, all the classrooms are set up in the same way. Like at the old school, they had desks over here and desks over there.”

How important is the layout of the classrooms? Is there a lack of variety in the classrooms in the new school?

Researcher: “And I think, yeh, like you said the decorations teachers, have they been decorating like they did in the old one?”

Shannon: “We miss our old school.”

Culture: This student expresses nostalgia for the old school.

Paul: “Yeh, it’s like a new mattress. I’d gotten used to the old school because I felt like I’d broke it in and got comfortable in the old school. Then we moved to, like, the new school is a new mattress and it’s like hard to get comfortable with.”

Culture: The student uses an analogy of the schools as mattresses to express his comfort level in each building.

*Paul and Shannon shifted the conversation from a discussion of the physical layout of the new school to a nostalgic reminiscence of the old facility. I found it interesting that Paul used the analogy of the schools as mattresses to express his comfort level in each building. I began to see evidence of the cultural impact that a school building has upon a child’s daily life and emotional state.*

Researcher: “Was it difficult moving in the middle of the year?”

Group: Yes simultaneously.

Paul: “I was doing a lot of work, going back and forth. Then once you get moved over here you got to get caught back up on the work that you missed.”

Distractions: The process of moving in the middle of the year created an interruption of instruction and student learning according to this student. How much interruption?

Shannon: “I miss the old school.”

Researcher: “You miss the old school. What about, uh, what do you remember about the new school? I mean the old school? What do you remember about that, positive or negative?”

Shannon: “What do I remember about the old school, I remember I had, um, I had failed. I had failed.”

Achievement: The student associates the old school with memories of failure.

Researcher: “So you are doing better academically here?”

Shannon: “Academically, I had failed and then graduated.”

Achievement: Perceived academic improvements in the new school.

Researcher: So you are doing better now?”

Shannon: “Doing better now.”

Paul: “The old school was all broke down, and raggedy. I mean I got ... (mumbling). For an old fifty-year old school, it sure held its ground, for that long. It’s raggedy.”

Space and Hidden Curriculum: Description of the old school is less than flattering. Did the condition of the old school send an unintended message to students?

Shannon: I miss my bathroom.”

Researcher: “You miss the bathroom?”

Shannon: “I miss my bathroom.”

Personal attachment to bathrooms.  
Why?

Paul: “I don’t.”

Shannon: “In our bathrooms, you get to do anything you want in there and teachers can’t see what you are doing.”

Space, Freedom, and “goofing off”: The lack of adult supervision (control) in the bathrooms created a feeling of freedom for this student.

Paul: “Yeh, but on every hall there’s a bomb threat... (Several people begin talking at once).

Distractions: There were several bomb threats this year that were written on bathroom walls.

Daphanie: “It’s always the Black children. Always the Black children.”

Shannon: “What I don’t like about a bomb threat, we done had too many bomb threats this year, because of six and seventh grade had bomb threats and call in. And then, when we go to our lunchroom, we had to run out the door. My teacher had to run, she had to run. She had to run, she had to run and go out the door because we was going to lunch. And then we, she had to run.”

Distractions: Actually, the last two bomb threats in the old school were by eighth graders.

Researcher: “So the bathrooms are something ya’ll have noticed that are different?”

Paul: “Well.”

Brandy: “There’s no privacy in the bathrooms.”

Freedom vs. Order: In a quest for order, has student need for privacy been eliminated?  
Time: How much of the school day is spent waiting?

Queenie: The bathrooms here, there is more stalls and in the other school you’d have to wait for a long time.”

Paul: “And then you’d get kicked out.”

Queenie: “You have to wait a long time, in the old school.”

Time: The new school has more stalls and less waiting.

Researcher: “At the old school you did?”

Paul: “Yeh. If you were just standing around in the bathroom waiting to go to a stall, you’ll get kicked out for just standing around.”

Time and Hidden Curriculum: The student perceives injustice and a lack of self-regulation of time.

Researcher: “OK. So at least here you have...”

Shannon: “More time, yeh.”

Time

Brandy: “Yeh, you now how you need to fix yourself up sometimes, in the mirror? Everyone, almost everyone who walks by can see you in the mirror.”

Freedom and Control: Being watched is mentioned again.

Researcher: “What, standing in the hallway?”

Brandy: “Yeh. They don’t even have to come in. They could just be walking down the hallway and see you.”

Design features and Freedom: Old versus new school bathrooms. In the old school, the girl’s bathroom doors were closed, giving the students freedom from adult supervision.

Paul: “But I don’t think anybody’s written a bomb threat in the bathroom at the new school since we’ve been here.

*The concepts of space, in this case the bathrooms, and time, to socialize and or “fix yourself up,” appeared to be of major concern to students. Paul, Shannon, Queenie, and Brandy indicated that they had diminished “privacy” and consequently less freedom, especially with regard to bathroom breaks, since moving to the new school. However, there was a general agreement that the newer facilities afforded students more stalls and thus required less wait time.*

Researcher: “Have you seen any differences, like let’s say you know, teachers, as far as the way they act?”

Group response: “Yeh, oh yeh!”

Researcher: “In the way they act, or teach, or both?”

Queenie: “The way they act!”

Culture: Has there been a shift in teacher culture?

Paul: “The way like, the teachers have become more organized. And they, uh, the teachers at the old school followed rules, but they just kind of would go with the flow, and didn’t really pay attention.”

Culture, Control, and Order: The student perceives that since moving to the new school, teachers are more observant.

Queenie: “There all strict now.”

Culture: This student states that teachers are stricter after the move.

Paul: “No one paid attention to all the rules.”

Culture and Control: Once again, the perception that teachers have changed their approach to discipline.

Researcher: “So it’s a lot stricter.”

*It is interesting that Paul and Queenie felt that teachers changed following the move to the new building. They perceived a cultural shift among the teachers concerning discipline. According to the students, teachers had become more observant of inappropriate student behavior and stricter in their enforcement of school rules following the transfer.*

Brandy: “It kind of depends on the teacher, because we have some teachers who, since they have their computers, don’t know what they are doing.

Technology and Instruction: Interesting shift to perceived ineptness of some teachers.

Paul: “Mrs. Denton.”

Brandy: “So they don’t really know what they are doing. Then you have other teachers who are always on the computer. So, it’s kind of different.”

Technology and Instruction: Wide variation in teacher efficacy and use of technology.

Researcher: “In terms of the way they teach or the way they allow you to learn? Some are you using the computers more and some still aren’t?”

Queenie: “Edwards, he uses them a lot for our projects and making stuff. Say if we had a test tomorrow, he will let us go over like a little quiz on the computer.”

Technology: Usage of computers for instruction, review, and alternative assessment.

Paul: “Or like a CRCT practice test. I mean, the teachers are letting students use the computers more.

Technology: Increased student use of computers since the move.

Brandy: “Yeh.”

Researcher: “Do you think that helps?”

Group: “Yes!”

Researcher: “It helps you learn?”

Queenie: “Sometimes the teachers don’t go over half the stuff that be on your tests.”

Instruction: the student believes they are being tested over un-taught material.

Paul: “Most of the time, when you have a computer, you have fun.”

Technology and Instruction: Is fun a prerequisite for student learning?

Researcher: “Right, so you enjoy the computer learning and being in the new school you have more computers?”

*The conversation took an abrupt shift from school discipline and teacher enforcement of rules to the use of computer technology and classroom instruction. While Brandy's comments focused on either teacher ineptness or excessive usage of computers, Queenie, Paul, and the rest of the group indicated more positive effects of increased use of computers for instruction, remediation, and assessment. Paul concluded with the statement, "Most of the time, when you have a computer, you have fun." His claim made me ponder whether fun is a prerequisite for student learning.*

Shannon: "I don't like PE."

Researcher: "You don't like PE as much?"

Daphanie: "The cameras. They have too many cameras."

Control: Being watched. What message is the constant surveillance sending to the students? (Hidden Curriculum).

Shannon: "They need, they (mumbling). You can see all..."

Researcher: "Where are the cameras in PE?"

Paul: "In the corner."

Researcher: "Just in the gym?"

Shannon: "Just in the gym. I don't like it. It's too many. How much they spend on the cameras in this whole school."

Technology: Concern over the number and cost of surveillance cameras.

Researcher: "Do the cameras make you nervous?"

Paul: "Yeh, really nervous, because you can't play around like you used to."

Freedom: Playing around. I would not have thought this would be important to a 13 or 14 year old.

(Several people talking at once)

Queenie: "I still play around."

(Several talking at once)

Shannon: "How Miss Whatley, How Miss Whatley and she, they have a nasty attitude how they talk to you, cuss at you, they do cuss and someone don't believe me, but my mama will come out here and raise..."

Power and conflicts: This student sees the conflict as a dimension of the teacher's attitude.

Researcher: "Uh huh."

Shannon: "Hell."

(Laughs among the students.)

Researcher: "What about, let's say, like electives and anything? Has that changed between the old and new school?"

Shannon: "Yes, Mr. Brown, because how he called Mr. Parker, and told Mr. Parker that that girl had her phone in her (unintelligible), but it was off. And he should've not took it up neither."

Power and Control/Technology: Reference to a student having a cell phone confiscated. How do new technologies affect school order?

Paul: "Alright." (quieting Shannon)

Interesting that one student encourages another student to censor her comments.

Researcher: "You talking about a phone?"

(General noise as several try to speak at once)

*Once again, the issues of power and control resurfaced in the conversation. The students seemed especially concerned about the number of security cameras in the new school and express their dislike for being watched continuously. I wondered what intentional and unintentional messages are being transmitted to students through the new facilities employment of surveillance equipment. I was also interested in discovering the impact of new technologies, such as cameras, cell phones, computers, etc., on school order and power struggles.*

Researcher: "All right look, ok, what about the electives? Are they any different?"

Paul: "The rooms are bigger and it's more spread out, instead going down one hall, turn to the boys, and then turn to the girls, like, to the locker room and the gym. You have two separate hallways, so guys can't and girls can't sneak into the guys' locker room."

Space: Design features of the new school. Separation of male and female students at P.E. I am not sure if this was a problem at the old school. How does the layout of the school dictate or limit student movement?

Group: (Laughing as a group)

Queenie: "I think the chorus room, they should've built it a little more bigger than what it is, because they have the pianos on like the little piano..."

Space: Design features. This student believes the chorus room is too small.

Paul: "Yeh, the chorus room is bigger..."

This student contradicts the last, indicating an increase in classroom size.

Queenie: "... on each side, you have the chorus and there's a lot of chorus students, so like we need our room, our space you know. You don't like other people singing

all in your ear.”

Brandy: “So loud.”

Researcher: “Oh, they’ve got you right side by side?”

Brandy: “..and the band room, they are real, real loud.”

Researcher: “Well what about, I didn’t think about that...”

Shannon: “Mr. Brown.”

Researcher: “What about the lunch room now? Is that any different?”

Brandy: “It’s smaller!”

Space: Design features. Perceived decrease in lunchroom size. Several students concur.

Brad: “It’s small!”

Paul: “It’s too small! I like the old one so much better.”

Design features: Old versus new school. What effect will a smaller lunchroom have on student behavior?

Brandy: “It’s too little.”

*The students clearly had opinions on both positive and negative aspects of the physical space of the new school. Paul stated that he believed that while the classrooms are bigger, the lunchroom is smaller than that of the old school. Brandy and Brad reiterated Paul’s assessment of the lunch facilities as “too small.” As I continued the focus group process with other students, teachers, and administrators, I realized it would be interesting to see to what degree spatial designs were of concern, in particularly the size of the lunchroom.*

Queenie: “Mr. Parker be acting stupid about them chairs.”

(Several talking at once)

Brandy: “You have to fill in every single chair, no spaces, like you know we have two tables, and then if all those seats are filled then you go to that table but sometimes you don’t get to sit by your friends.”

Control and Isolation: How does the need for order in a school affect students’ needs for social time?

Paul: “Yeh.”

Queenie: “Yeh.”

Researcher: “So it’s too, it’s too restricted even there?”

Daphanie: “How he’s got us sitting.”

Researcher: “Did ya’ll get, I don’t remember at the old school, did ya’ll have to sit by team or did ya’ll get to sit by...?”

Paul: “By, by team.”

Queenie: “We had our own...”

Daphanie: “By team but...”

Paul: “But, I sat where I wanted too. Like he, I mean he...”

Resistance and “beating the system”.

Researcher: “He didn’t enforce it as much over there?”

Group: “No, no.”

Culture: Has there been a change in administrative culture following the move?

Queenie: “He was trying to write folks up for sitting in the wrong whatever.”

Control: Writing a student up refers to a discipline referral.

Andrew: “They took away our syrup for breakfast. I mean, what’s up with that?”

Hidden Curriculum: Shortly after moving into the new school, a student in the eighth grade poured syrup on a teachers computers and desk. The administrators decided to remove the syrup packets from breakfast. Does punishing a group, for the misbehavior of a few, foster student solidarity?

Queenie: “Yeh!”

(Group laughter)

Andrew: “Pancakes without syrup.”

Researcher: “They don’t even have syrup?”

Queenie: “Jelly too. We ain’t got no jelly.”

Shannon: “ They took all (Unintelligible mumbling). They took that too.”

*The student conversation shifted from a discussion of the physical characteristics of the new facility to a critique of control methods employed by administrators prior to and following the move to the new building. Paul introduced the concept of resistance to rule enforcement by saying, “I sat where I wanted to” when referring to lunchtime at the old school.*

Researcher: “What about, how has your day changed in terms of like, things like I don’t know, your lockers or the

halls, or anything?”

Brandy: “I can’t see anybody on team two or three, at all.”

Isolation: Students are divided by and confined to grade levels and academic teams.

Shannon: “Fa Show.”

Queenie: “Mrs. Tarpin be stalking everybody who be walking down there.”

Control: Interesting that this student compares one teachers approach to monitoring students as stalking.

(Several people begin talking at once, agreeing)

Researcher: “So ya’ll don’t have any interaction, social interaction...?”

Group: “No, no!”

Queenie: “Only time when we’ll talk to team two and three is when we are going to reading. That’s the only time we’ll talk to them.”

Isolation: How does the isolation of students contribute to school order?

Researcher: “That’s the only time you get to even see them?”

Queenie: “And they be rushing you into the classroom, so.”

Time: Being rushed from one academic class to the next.

Daphanie: “They need to give us like a five minute break between...so we can conversate with whoever we want to conversate with.”

Time and Freedom: This student desires free time for social interaction.

*As a means of controlling student interaction and maintaining order, contact with students in other grades and other academic teams, was reduced following the transfer to the new facility. In the new building, students have very little access to interaction with peers not assigned to their team and/or class. Brandy, Queenie, and Daphanie were especially vocal in expressing their discontent at being isolated from their peers and severely limited with regard to social time.*

Andrew: “And that green line needs to go.”

Symbol of Control: The green line or the “Green Mile”

Researcher: “You don’t like the green line?”

Group: “No, no!”

Shannon: “It’s like being in jail!”

Hidden Curriculum: Prison analogy used to describe the school. To what extent do students feel like prisoners?

Queenie: “Man, we are too old for the green line.”

Shannon: “We in the eighth grade now, they need to give us some respect!”

Hidden Curriculum and Student Culture: Students seem to view the green mile and many control measures at the school related to respect or the lack thereof.

Daphanie: “That’s for kindergarten through third grade.”

Shannon: “But we ain’t going to be here no more.”

Brad: “They might as well put chains and suits on us for crying out loud.”

Hidden Curriculum: Reference to the clothing and confinement of prisoners.

Researcher: “Would you think that they need to do away with the whole green line or just for sixth grade keep it?”

Queenie: “The whole, everything. The whole green line needs to go.”

Paul: “Because sixth grade...”

Queenie: “...the seventh grade is wild, but eight grade, we are mature adults, young adults.”

Student Culture: The student perceives her grade to be mature while seeing lower grades as needing more strict control.

Shannon: “And they should let us eat up in the classroom...”

Queenie: “Na!”

Paul: “That’s just too much.”

Two students seem to agree that some limitations on student freedom are necessary.

Researcher: “Let me ask you this...”

Paul: “I don’t think you could get rid of the whole line for sixth and seventh grade, because then the little people who are really immature would be running around, and then when they get up to eighth grade the teachers will just go crazy. But, if you keep the green line for them and they get up into the eighth grade they’ll probably forget about, or they’ll probably just, it will just become a habit.”

Student Culture: This student makes a distinction between the maturity of various grade levels and states that the green line’s use as a means to keep students under control during class changes may become a habit, even if it is no longer present.

*Prison comparisons and discussions of the appropriateness of the green line were used again by students to express discontent with their status within the school. Brad went so far as to sarcastically suggest that students might as well be wearing chains and suits. Amidst a plea for increased freedom, Queenie and Paul offered an interesting insight into the cultural perception of eighth grade students. While stating that they could handle additional freedom, both acknowledged the need for more strict control of the sixth and seventh grade students, who they considered immature.*

Researcher: "How do you think, as far as, how would you rate either your or your classmates behavior or academic performance in the new school as compared to the old school, did you do better or worse in those areas?"

Shannon: "Better."

Queenie: "Better."

Daphanie: "Our class is doing better."

Queenie: "There, there were fights and bomb threats and they don't even care."

Shannon: "...and I told you, it was cold, when we had bomb threats."

Researcher: "But you don't think there are as many discipline problems here?"

Paul: "No, there's not. I mean, you see people in ISS, students who are immature always snap back at teachers. But, there haven't been any, uh..."

Researcher: "So you feel safer?"

Paul: "I feel safer."

Researcher: "You feel safer in terms of physical stuff?"

Shannon: "I don't like the new school, you have to go all the way around the whole school..."

Queenie: "Yeh!"

Shannon: "Your mama drops you off and you have to walk around the whole school like it's a (unintelligible word)..."

Researcher: "Oh, I haven't thought about that. Getting here in the morning?"

Shannon: "Yeh, they lock the door. They say you have to walk around the whole school."

ISS refers to the In-School Suspension program. Conflicts and Culture: This student perceives a decrease in discipline problems following the move.

Design features: This student states that there is a problem with the procedure for entering in the morning.

The students may not realize that the drop-off procedures are temporary until the outside landscaping is complete.

Control and Order: When the tardy bell rings, the vice-principals lock the doors at the end of each wing, forcing students to check in at the front office.

Researcher: "Yeh, what's the deal there?"

Paul: "You see, if you get dropped off..."

Queenie: "You miss half your lesson."

Paul: "It locks."

Brandy: "...just a minute late."

Paul: "The door locks."

Shannon: "He locks it."

Researcher: "And it didn't used to do that?"

Paul: "No. But when I come up there, when the door locks and the bell rings, and I come up there, and knock on the door, he'll tell you to go around to the front."

Researcher: "And so then you are late for reading or home room, or something?"

Paul: "I get in the car and I leave."

Shannon: "He say don't nobody open that door."

Andrew: "I'll open the door for anybody. I don't care what he says."

Queenie: "He sure do have a nasty attitude, that dude."

Researcher: "But that's also stricter than in the old school as far as late, being late?"

Daphanie: "I don't see why you can't come in the door. They going to mark you tardy when the tardy bell rings anyway."

Queenie: "They're gone to mark you tardy, so what's the point of locking the door?"

Shannon: "When they had a bomb threat, they locked that door."

Conflicts: I have observed students becoming very agitated with the vice-principals when they have to walk around to the front.

Power Struggle: A conflict between students and administrators.

Resistance: This student indicates that his response would be to quietly protest by leaving.

Resistance: This student's response to a perceived injustice is to aid in the resistance of authority.

How many conflicts in a school are a result of the lack of student understanding of faculty responsibility?

Time: The new procedures are supposed to increase security and force parents and students to adhere to school time schedules, since schools are being graded on student attendance.

*In the old school building, enforcing tardy rules was nearly impossible because of the numerous entrances into the school. Since transferring into the new facility, administrators have the ability to restrict access into the school, forcing parents and students to adhere to late arrival procedures. Paul said he resisted the new procedures by leaving if the side door was locked. Andrew said, "I'll open the door for anybody. I don't care what he says" as an expression of his defiance of an administrator's enforcement of school rules.*

Researcher: "How's the drop off and pick up in the afternoon, is that better or different, I don't know?"

Paul: There's not a big outside..."

(Group noise)

Paul: "...to let out at the exact same time."

Andrew: "There's not enough space."

Researcher: "There's not enough room?"

Brandy: "And then they tell us to go into the heat. So you're sitting out there and then they make you sit down. So you're sitting down in the hot heat when there's all this shelter under there, why can't we just stand under there?"

Researcher: "In the afternoon?"

Andrew: "Yeh."

(Several students begin talking at once.)

Researcher: "You don't like it as well as the old school?"

Daphanie: "See, they had shade over there."

Queenie: "When our bus be late, he'll make us sit in the hot sun."

Shannon: "They make you sit on the concrete too."

Queenie: "He got told off a couple of times by a couple of students."

Andrew: "You can't walk on the grass, while leaving, you

Space: The exterior layout of the school is incomplete.

Order vs. Freedom: This student wants the freedom to sit where she wants in the afternoon.

Power: The students have a negative impression of the intentions of the vice principal. They seem to perceive his methods of control as hostile or inconsiderate.

Resistance: Getting "told off" refers to a student verbally lashing back at an authority figure.

can't walk on the grass."

Researcher: "You can't walk on the grass?"

Daphanie: "No."

Queenie: "It's fake anyway."

Andrew: "I walk on the grass anyway, I don't care."

Brandy: "Why do they make us go out even further? And they squash us together. So we're squashed together, it's hot, and the sun's beaming down and we can't even get in the shade."

Daphanie: "And they be in the shade, always talking."

Paul: "The traffic lanes, for coming and picking up kids in the afternoon, are too small."

Researcher: "Too small?"

Paul: "They need to have at least two more lanes."

Queenie: "They tried to copy J.L Newbern too much, but they just made it bigger. I think they should have had their own design for this school."

Researcher: "Oh, is this school a lot like J.L. Newbern?"

Queenie: "Yeh, it's just like it."

Researcher: "It's just a little bit bigger, you said?"

Queenie: "Um huh. Just bigger."

Shannon: "That's the only thing."

*Resistance to adult control was emerging as a major theme among students participating in the focus group. They appeared to defy adult enforcement of certain rules because they either perceived that a double standard of acceptable behavior was employed depending on one's status as a student or faculty member or they viewed the control measures as unfair infringements upon their freedom.*

Researcher: "See, I haven't even seen that. Let me ask you this. Let's just go around this way and we'll start with the

Resistance: This student expresses a lack of concern for school rules and regulations.

Hidden Curriculum: Does this student feel that administrators have no concern for their feelings or comfort?

Hidden Curriculum: Is there a double standard for teachers as opposed to students?

Space and Design features. This student feels the design is unoriginal and follows the architectural plans of the other system middle school too closely. How does the design of the building affect student perceptions of the school?

new school and just give me a complete-the-sentence of the new school is like...”

Robert: “It’s secure, we are safe here, but there are too many stipulations, that we have to do this and too many rules and regulations that we have to follow.”

Researcher: “Brandy. What would you say? The school is like a what?”

Brandy: “Prison.”

Researcher: “Like a prison? OK, Shannon?”

Shannon: “Hum. You’ll have to come back to me.”

Researcher: “OK. Daphanie?”

Daphanie: “A prison.”

Queenie: “It’s like prison to me too.”

Andrew: “Prison, but Mr. Parker, he’s like the warden.”

(Group begins laughing)

Andrew: “I’m serious. Ever since we got into this new school he’s been all up tight and all about the rules. He’s trippin’.”

Researcher: “Um huh, trippin’? Brad?”

Brad: “Like a prison. They ought to just slap on the chains and orange suits on us.”

Researcher: “That could be our new uniform?”

Paul: “No, no uniforms.”

Researcher: “Paul?”

Paul: “It’s a nice school , but I not going to go with what they said and say it’s like prison. I’m going to say something of my own. I think it’s like Greenleaf.”

(Group laughter.)

Control and Order: The student feels the new school is safer than the old one, but that there are now more rules and regulations. Has there been a shift in school and faculty culture with regard to rule enforcement?

Hidden Curriculum: Prison comparisons.

Culture: The student perceives a change in behavior and increased tension in their grade-level administrator. Trippin’ is slang for acting unreasonable or crazy.

Prison analogy with a colorful add-on.

Hidden Curriculum: Description, first, of the new school as nice then there is a shift. This student disagrees with the prison analogy and offers a different comparison. Greenleaf is a local mental health facility.

Paul: "We are like, locked up, in little spots. Well no actually the classrooms are pretty big, but we're locked up in our own little personal space. You can't do anything but just sit there."

Isolation and Freedom: The student refers to being locked up and forced to sit and do nothing.

Researcher: "You feel confined then?"

Paul: "Yeh."

Hannah: "Prison."

*When asked to complete the sentence, "The new school is like..." references to prison dominated the analogies. Robert felt there are too many rules and regulations in the new building, while Andrew described his grade level administrator as the warden. Paul offered a slightly different description of the new school with his comparison of the school to a local mental health clinic. At the core of Paul's rationale, for depicting his status in the new building as that of an institutionalized mental patient, was the idea that students are both isolated from peers and limited in their freedom.*

Researcher: "Prison? OK. What about the old school? You don't remember the old school (to Robert) because you came after and that's good because that gives us a different perspective."

Robert: "I don't like it. There are leaks in the ceiling."

Space: There have been physical problems in the new school.

(Group laughter)

Researcher: "The old school is like a big leak in the ceiling? Brandy?"

Brandy: "The old school, it was kind of run down and time for a new one, but it was kind of like home because we were there and you know, you feel more comfortable. You already knew everything that was around you. You didn't have to worry about getting lost."

Culture and Space: Although the old building is described as run down, the student uses the analogy of the old school as being like home.

Shannon: "Like home."

Researcher: "OK. Like home?"

Shannon: "Yeh, like home. I miss our old school. We used to have pep rallies. (Unintelligible talk)... and chill out there and eat candy and drink sodas."

Freedom: This student indicates they had more fun (pep rallies) and freedom (eating candy and drinking sodas) in the old building.

Researcher: "Oh, you got to eat candy and drink sodas? You don't get to do that at the new school?"

Shannon: "I still do."

Resistance

Researcher: "Daphanie, what about you? How would you describe the old school?"

Daphanie: "It was better than this. Freedom."

Freedom. Old versus the new school.

Researcher: "You had more freedom?"

Daphanie: "You know, chewing that chewing gum, there we could do that, but here, they act like we just going to throw it up to the ceiling and leave it there."

Hidden Curriculum: The student indicates that teachers and administrators are distrustful of the students.

Researcher: "If you wanted you could write on the boards?"

Daphanie: "Write on the boards, yeh."

Researcher: "What about you Queenie? How would you describe the old school?"

Queenie: "I was in there, I just came for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade or whatever, but it was cool because teachers weren't uptight on you or whatever. You had more freedom there and you could do a little bit of what you want, but you had to calm it down a little bit though. It was cool though. I liked it."

Tension and Culture: Were the teachers less tense at the old school?  
Freedom: Did students actually have more freedom in the old school?

Researcher: "Andrew?"

Andrew: "It was Ghetto."

(Group laughter)

Space: Description of the old school as ghetto (reference to a run down section of town).

Andrew: "I liked it that way because it was something you got used to and I was growing up in that neighborhood and it's just something I could relate to, uh, not this new technology crap."

Culture: This student liked the familiarity of the old school because he could "relate" to it. Technology as crap (interesting metaphor).

Researcher: "You didn't feel all nervous around it?"

Andrew: "No."

Researcher: "Ok. Ghetto, in the good sense. Brad?"

Brad: “I don’t know what to say. Freedom. You could almost get away with almost anything. You could do more than we can here. Teachers weren’t all uptight.”

Freedom: This student equates freedom with getting away with things.  
Culture and Tension: Once again, teachers are described as being uptight in the new school.

Researcher: “Paul?”

Paul: “Well like they said, you have more freedom, but the main thing I liked about the old school was the memories that I had back in the old school. But, to criticize on it, it was like a funnel, too many leaks. It was really raggedy and broke down. I wouldn’t want to stay in there the rest of the year because we had had too many leaks and everything. We had big trashcans in the hallway and we had to move the trashcan a little bit so we could catch two, you know. It was just worthless when it was pouring down.”

Freedom  
Culture: How important are memories of school to students?

Design issues: Problems with the old school in a vivid description of the roof leaks.

Researcher: “You had a good point, let me hear what she says and then there was something that you said that made me think of something. How would you describe the old school?”

Hannah: (Silence)

Researcher: “Can you think of anything?”

Hannah: “Most of what they said.”

*While comparisons of the new school to a prison seemed to dominate student perceptions, when asked to describe the old building, the descriptions were more varied and provided insight into the culture and hidden curriculum of a school in transition. Although some were critical of the physical condition of the old school, with references to leaks and decrepit conditions, students perceived increased freedom for students and decreased tension among adults at the old facility.*

Researcher: “Paul said that one thing he missed about the old school, he thought about the memories that he had at the school. Any of you have any memories of the old school? I know I do as, I’m not only a teacher, but I was a student there. I have certain memories of the old school. Are there any special memories or things you remember about that school that when you moved here you kind of thought about?”

Shannon: “My went to that school and my great, great

Culture: What are the cultural implications of an institution when multiple generations attend

Grandma.”

the same school?

Researcher: “So, several family members had been there?”

Shannon: “My auntie and my cousins.”

Researcher: “Ok. That’s good.”

Shannon: “And I wrote my mamas name on the wall.”

Culture: Putting one’s mark on the old school.

Researcher: “Ok. Well has anybody got any memories tied to the school?”

Andrew: “Teachers.”

Brandy: “I got threatened with my first pages.”

Control: Pages are assigned as a form of punishment. Students are required to write on issues related to a discipline problem they were involved in.

Researcher: “Your first pages at that school? All the way up to middle school before you got any pages? You didn’t get them, you got threatened with them right?”

Brandy: “I got threatened.”

Queenie: “Mine was like, when we be at lunch, our little section get crunk or whatever.”

Culture: Lunchtime memories. Crunk is slang for getting crazy or having a good time.

Andrew: “You know it!”

Researcher: “I heard about the peanuts the other day.”

Resistance: Several students were throwing peanuts during lunch the other day.

(Group laughter)

Paul: “I made friends with all the teachers and administrators, well almost all the administrators. I wouldn’t say every single one of them because like maybe probably you know a certain few people, but I’m not going to name any names.”

Culture: Friendships with faculty valued by this student.  
Resistance: Reference to one of the administrators with whom this student has had several unpleasant encounters.

(Group laughter)

Paul: “Mr. Parker.”

Daphanie: “Mr. Randall.”

Culture: This student perceives the principal, with whom he has very little direct contact, to be fair in contrast to the vice-principals, with whom he has daily contact. Does familiarity breed cultural conflict?

Paul: “No, I’ve never had a problem with Mr. Randall.”

Brandy: "I've never had a problem with Mr. Randall."

Queenie: "He's cool. He's cool."

Robert: "According to them, I think at the old school you had much freedom. But now I think that we have this Mr. Parker and he is like Sadaam Hussein of Iraq."

(Group laughter)

Researcher: "So are you going to call in the military to get rid of him?"

Brad: "I remember sitting in lunch, Larry had a big old speaker stuck in his jacket."

Paul: "I remember that."

Researcher: "Ok. I remember that. That was a good memory for me too."

Andrew: "The teachers, when my sister used to go here, she had you for a teacher and some of my 7<sup>th</sup> grade teachers, but now there all retired because they're getting old."

(Group laughter)

Paul: "I remember a kid in 6<sup>th</sup> grade who used the bathroom in the corner of the room."

(Group laughter)

Researcher: "In the room?"

Paul: "Yeh, in the corner of the room."

Researcher: "In his clothes or just in the side of the room?"

Paul: "No, he was like doing it because he was real juvenile."

Shannon: "I remember Mrs. Hall was, she would let us cheat on our tests. They were on the computers and my friend Brianna, she went to J.L. Newbern, she used to go

Resistance and Freedom: In the old school, earlier this year, one of the students carried a CD player and a big stereo speaker to lunch so that he and his friends could free-style rap.

Culture: How is the culture of a school shaped by the teachers? How does the retiring of old teachers affect the culture of an the school?

Hidden Curriculum: Often the things adults hope students will remember (such as the academic curriculum objectives) are not the most vivid images in their memories.

there and give us the answers and we'd make a (unintelligible word) and then she cheat on the test."

*As the descriptions and discussion of the old school continued, I was surprised to observe that academic issues were not at the core of student concerns or memories. What seemed to be of more significance to them was the relationships they formed with other students, teachers, and administrators. As an educator, I have been trained to analyze student actions in terms of curriculum. As an ethnographer, I have learned to also consider the implications of cultural relationships upon student life in schools.*

Researcher: "Are the rooms bigger or smaller or the same size."

Queenie: "No! These classrooms are smaller than the ones over there. See, I thought since, you know, ya'll paid all this money for this, ya'll would have bigger rooms. I don't why just the science rooms are bigger than your rooms."

Space and Design Features: This student perceives the new classrooms to be smaller than at the old school.

Researcher: "All the regular rooms are smaller?"

Paul: "Well, the rooms in the other school are bigger, but these are nicer."

Design features: Old school versus new school, size vs. niceness.

Queenie: "They ain't got chewing gum under the desks.

(Several members of the group talking at once)

Shannon: "Mr. Parker, he got real, real mad and he turned red. He got mad, he told her off. He got real, real mad."

Conflicts

Researcher: "Let me ask you this. As far as VMS, old and new school, how do you feel about your years, or year, or months or years here? Do you feel like it's been a good middle school experience?"

Paul: "It's been wasted."

(Group laughter)

Paul: "Naw. I've been taught a lot while I've been in this school. There's been a lot of time wasted because of the bomb threats and the (unintelligible word) and everybody jumps up and the teacher goes out in the hallway and you are just sitting there, you know, eating a bag of Fritos. Waiting for the prank to get over. Waiting to get back to your test or whatever."

Time and Distractions: Wasted time resulting from student misbehavior. How much of the wasted time and distractions are a result of expressions of resistance?

Queenie: "I don't think, well, my time ain't been wasted, because I've learned a lot here. Especially in your class because everybody looks forward to coming to your class."

Instruction and achievement: Do students learn more in classes they enjoy?

(Group expresses approval)

Queenie: "You are a laid back teacher and all them, they just crazy."

The students begin singing my praises, even the ones that I do not teach. While I am flattered and feel reassured as a teacher, I realize that the focus group is drifting off topic.

Daphanie: "All them."

Brad: "All teachers should be like Mr. Cole."

Queenie: "Yeh, Mr. Cole is off-da-chain."

"Off-da-chain" is slang for cool or excellent.

Paul: "Mr. Cole, I'm not even in your class. I came in here because Mr. Edwards wasn't here one day and I learned more in your class than I've learned in some of those classes all year."

Brandy: "I've heard a lot of people say that you actually teach them stuff..."

(Group responds affirmatively)

Brandy: "...and in a lot of my other classes, they tell you what to do and then you do it and you're like, I don't know what I'm doing and they're like, oh well, look in the book."

Instruction and Hidden Curriculum: The student questions teacher instructional-techniques and the relevance of material being taught.

Daphanie: "If you get in a class and it's boring, your mind don't be on what they doing. Your mind be on something, I'm ready to go home, ready to go home. That's what..."

Instruction: Do boring lessons equal lack of student attention?

Queenie: "You don't learn nothing!"

Paul: "They give us too much information and they don't tell us what to do with it."

Instruction: Issues of the relevance of information to a student's life.

*In an attempt to gain insight into curricular issues, I asked the students for their perspectives on their middle school experience. Paul and Queenie both began their commentary by expressing the belief that they had learned a lot both at the old and new buildings. They, along with Brandy and Daphanie, then shifted to criticisms of teachers who failed to inspire them to learn or made no relevant link of material being taught to their everyday lives.*

Researcher: “How would you, if you were a teacher in this new school, now that you are out of the old school and you’re in the new school, how would you do things...”

Paul: “Parties every Friday.”

(Group laughter)

Researcher: “To make it better for the students? What would you do to make, let’s say, the discipline and the academics and everything. How would you improve it? What are some ideas?”

Andrew: “I would give them more, uh, lee way. Like, if I were the principal, every Friday they’d have something special going to reward good behavior.”

Freedom and Time: Suggestions for improving student behavior and academic performance.

Researcher: “Not all work? Some play?”

Paul: “I think they should let us, uh (pause) I’ll get back to you.”

Shannon: “I’d let us have 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Day. I’d let us have pep rallies, every month, between Thursday and Friday.”

Culture and Rite of Passage: The student is referring to former school traditions that have slowly disappeared over the years.

Researcher: “Ok. Pep rallies. Ya’ll don’t have any pep rallies?”

Robert: “Take the cameras from the hallway and put them in the classroom. So that (unintelligible words) they can do anything they want, but in the classroom they have to be different.”

Control and Freedom: Interesting notion. The student wants less surveillance and more freedom in the halls and more monitoring in the classrooms.

Shannon: “They ought to have pool parties.”

Daphanie: “Now girl.”

Researcher: “Why do you think they just put them in the hallway and not in the classroom?”

Queenie: “Yeh?”

Daphanie: “Because more stuff happens in the hallway.”

Control and Order: Interesting that the student perceives more happening in the halls.

(Group noise)

Paul: "Because a teacher is in every classroom and they can monitor like, the teachers can monitor their own classroom, but a teacher can't always be looking out in the hall to see what students are doing."

Control and Order: Security issue and problems associated with monitoring students in the halls.

Robert: "... (unintelligible phrase) someone sitting in the corner chewing some gum."

Paul: "That's how Mrs. Tammy knows."

Brandy: "Some teachers watch you one time and won't say nothing, but they see you again and they got you."

Culture and Hidden Curriculum: How does teacher inconsistency in discipline affect the culture of a school? Do inconsistencies in adult behavior encourage student misbehavior or resistance?

Researcher: "What are some other things? What would you do as far as teaching?"

Paul: "Well, I'd ease up a little bit and I wouldn't be so ..."

Researcher: "Class-work? Homework?"

Paul: "Yeh, I wouldn't give out work every five seconds like every day. I'd ease up a little bit and give them a break and probably..."

Instruction: Homework and class work is perceived as too much.

Andrew: "Watch some history movies."

Paul: "Yeh, watch some history movies."

Queenie: "We watch a lot of those."

Researcher: "So ya'll feel over worked?"

(Group responds affirmatively)

Queenie: "I feel overworked in all my classes but this one. Half the time, when we be in here, you talk a lot, so you know, all that stuff you be talking about, when you give us our test we know what it is because you was talking about it. Half of them, not Mrs. Denton, she be talking about cows and stuff."

Instruction and Achievement: How much work is necessary for students to learn?

(Group laughter)

Brandy: "Like, with me, I'm more of an oral learner, like if someone's telling me I can remember, but if it's up to

Instruction: This student is aware that student-learning styles are

me to look it up myself, then try to remember it, then it's going to be harder. Plus, I don't think, uh, we are in middle school, we shouldn't have this much work. Well, in some classes you have tons of them. Mrs. Terry told us at the beginning of the year there's not going to be a day when Algebra won't have homework. So, we have homework every night. But, all our classes."

varied. She believes that having too much work in all her classes has a negative effect.

Paul: "...algebra hasn't gone home without homework."

Researcher: "Does that stress you out?"

Andrew: "I can't do the homework, but still, they give it too us. It's just too much."

Instruction and Hidden Curriculum: Do teachers equate more homework and class work with increased learning? If students are unable to do the work, is it productive to have them do more and more?

Robert: "The main thing, all teachers should not give pages to the students. I mean whatever, ten pages, twenty pages, a hundred pages."

Researcher: "Is that a deterrent?"

(Mixed group response)

Researcher: "That's a good question. If you were, say now that we are in the new school, if you were coming up with a new discipline plan or new way to discipline, what would be a new way to discipline?"

Paul: "Nose in the corner."

Seems like an "old time" remedy.

(Group laughter)

Shannon: "My discipline would be like, (Unintelligible talk)"

Paul: "Or you could sit up against the wall and you would have to balance yourself level and that hurts your legs."

Queenie: "No. I'd just give them work detention, because you know every body, in the morning, that's when everybody socializes with all they friends and they can't socialize with their friends if they are being bad or whatever. I'd have them doing stuff in the cafeteria or whatever."

Freedom and Time: This student suggests loss of socializing time and freedom as punishment.

Isolation as punishment.

Researcher: "Isolation in the cafeteria. Does that work?"

Does that deter people, when you get that?"

Paul: "Yeh, it does."

(Group chatter)

Paul: "We wouldn't have to worry about this place as much if teachers would just let up."

Culture, Order, and Tension: How does teacher behavior affect student misbehavior?

Queenie: "Yeh!"

Paul: "Instead of jumping on our back, following us around, and sniffing our ... to see what we are doing. I mean, I feel like Mrs. Terry is an undercover detective."

Culture and Hidden Curriculum: Teachers' behaviors compared to a detective. Do student feelings of paranoia foster deviant behavior?

Researcher: "So it's a little too serious? Ya'll would like it a little more laid back?"

Paul: "Well, not the way..."

Queenie: "A good example is..."

Paul: "If we were in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and all we did was lay back, then we wouldn't be prepared for that. I mean there has to be work to prepare us for high school."

Order and Achievement: This student recognizes the need for some order and discipline to accomplish academic goals.

Researcher: "Are the different administrators different? Ya'll have been under all three, or some of you under all three. Do they approach it differently?"

Paul: "Yeh, like Mrs. Cowart is nice. She won't really jump on you. Mr. Parker ..."

(Group noise interrupts)

(Group discussion shifts to the Track)

Researcher: "Ok. So the track...?"

Paul: "Actually."

Researcher: "People in the community are affected by the track?"

Paul: "The person that owns the mall actually had to open an hour early than most stores, just so they could have

Culture: The Valdosta Middle School track has been a recreational gathering place for

people walk around the whole mall for exercise.”

Robert: “Why don’t you want (Unintelligible word) principal (Unintelligible phrase). We would have a lot of fun.”

Queenie: “What did he say?”

Researcher: “He wants me to be principal for the next twenty days.”

Shannon: “You should be a principal.”

Brandy: “I don’t have a problem with Mr. Randall.”

Queenie: “Well, he’s alright. Like, they could pick a student, out of any class they’ll let them be the teacher for the day. They’ll pick another student for them to be a principal for the day or whatever. The teachers, they can either have the day off or they can come to school, you know and sit and watch the children teach.”

Shannon: “Mr. Cole, they should let us go to the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade hallway and pick out some of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students who we want to take to 8<sup>th</sup> grade day with us. They should let us.”

Researcher: “Let me get one last comment and then I’m going to need to send you on out. I really do appreciate this though. It’s going to help me out a lot. It helps me when I do my next group with the teachers and adults. Some of the things you’ve brought up, I’ll be able to say hey, I’ve heard about this now what do you think about that? So it gives me some ideas, things I haven’t even thought about.”

Robert: “The rules in this new school are too much. So I think (Unintelligible word).”

*I concluded the focus group by eliciting student suggestions of ways in which they would improve the day-to-day activities of the school. Students suggested they be afforded increased personal freedom, decreased work loads, consistent enforcement of school rules, more varied instructional styles, and diminished faculty/student tension levels.*

people in the community for many years. Its absence during the construction of the new school has angered many citizens. What impact does a school have on the culture of the community it serves?

Culture: How has the principal of this school contributed to the favorable impressions students have for his authority?

May 9, 2003:

For the past few days, several of the students who participated in the first student focus group have asked if they could come and be a part of the second student focus group session. They seemed to really enjoy the process and were very willing to tell me all they could about the old school, the new school, teachers, administrators, and their experiences as a student.

I have found the faculty less enthusiastic and more non-committal when it comes to meeting with me. Time seems to be their major concern. I have tried to be as flexible as possible on scheduling. I even suggested that we could meet during any planning time, since that is still during the workday and would not require them to give up personal time. I am finding that many of the teachers have doctor's appointments, lesson plans, parent conferences, and many other reasons why even meeting during planning may be perceived as impractical.

I had previously finalized a focus group for the principal and two vice principals, however, literally at last minute, the meeting was cancelled. After making several inter-school calls I discovered that one vice principal had a previously scheduled field trip and the other vice principal was absent. I will try to reschedule these participants for next week. I am learning that this is the most frustrating part of focus groups. Often times, participants will place other opportunities ahead of their commitment to attend a research focus group. To my surprise, the third assistant principal, who had until this point been noncommittal concerning availability to meet, showed up in my room. She expressed her willingness to discuss the topic either now or at a later time. Being unsure as to when and whether a later time would come to pass I asked her to talk with me then. I conducted an individual interview that proved to be very informative. I reflected on something that I had read concerning focus groups and qualitative research. Always be flexible.

*Administrator Interview: May 9, 2003*

Researcher: "Let's talk about this school and the old school, how things might have changed since we moved. I've got a few general questions that, I'm just going to throw out some ideas. I want you to tell me what's on your mind, as far as that goes."

Miriam: "Alright."

Researcher: "What do you think of the new school?"

Miriam: "Oh, I love the new facility. There are a lot of good, positive things about it. One, we have wide hallways and I like the green line, because it gives the students a focus of where they walk and where they don't walk, and again we have the wide hallways, we have lots of room for the students to all be out there at one time when they are changing classes or in their lockers. We

Control: The green line is described as a positive by this administrator, in terms of student needs.

Design features: Wide hallways.

have, well we have much better restroom facilities. Not only for the students, but for the faculty, there's more. The flow of the school allows for sixth grade to be sixth graders and not have to interrelate with the seventh graders or eighth graders. So each grade is separate and they are almost like in their own little school."

Design Features: This administrator views the new school bathrooms as better for students and faculty.  
Isolation and Control: Separation by grade level is depicted in positive terms.

Researcher: "I hadn't thought about that, but for a small sixth grader that might be less intimidating than having to see big eighth graders going by."

Miriam: "Right. Exactly. You know, where there are some things that may be going on, on the bus earlier in the school day, arriving, it will settle down during the day. You know, they don't have any way of contacting one another and they're not going to see each other. I like the fact that every student has been assigned a locker and that every student has the opportunity to put their books away, to have a chance to change classes."

Isolation and Order: The administrative reasons for isolating students relate to safety.

Researcher: "Is that something that is going to continue next year? I was wondering about that."

Miriam: "I don't know. That might be a question you'd like to give the principal, because that was his idea as a gift to the students. So, I don't know how he is going to handle that."

Assigning every student a free locker was the principal's idea to finish off the year, rather than re-assigning those who have paid. Will this be the case next year?

Researcher: "It seems to have worked quite well."

Miriam: "Right. Whereas, that is one of our money raising things. One of the ways we raise our local funds to have dances and things like that too. So, I like the fact that we have a camera everywhere. Even though we might not need that camera every time, to look at things. It does give us a better tracking of what's going on. Especially when you have things like marking on the wall, or damage to a material, or something like that. We can look at that tape and we can know, pin point it down to who was the one that did it. I just like having the new facility period. You've got, it seems to have given everybody a whole new breath of life. We didn't realize how dark it was in the old building until we got here and we had all this new lighting. We didn't realize how crowded we were until we came here."

Possible reason why the students will probably have to pay for locker rentals again next year: financial practicalities.  
Control and Order: Abrupt shift to cameras and uses in monitoring student behavior.

Design Features: The old building is described as "dark". How does lighting affect school culture, student behavior, and achievement?

Researcher: “I hadn’t thought about the separation of the grades now that kids, they have no need, an eighth grader has no need ever to be down the sixth grade wing and that gives a difference and stuff. It’s interesting that you mentioned the security cameras, because some of the comments that I had from students were they felt they were more watched, but on the reverse side, they felt a lot safer. They said, you know, the doors lock. People can’t come in from the outside and there’s cameras.”

When I was a student at the old school (1982-84) there were 400-500 more students with one less wing.

I wonder if the tight security of the exterior doors will remain next year?

Miriam: “And I do like the security. That is a really big point. Security. We are. The other building, they could come in any door in the whole place. This building, they cannot come in unless they are seen by somebody. There’s not going to be anybody wandering around unless they have gotten through that front door, because that is the only door that is open during the school day. Otherwise that is it.”

Control: Limiting unauthorized access to the building is a major security issue.

*The administrator described the new school building in terms of control features and seemed to equate isolation of students along grade levels as conducive to increased safety and order. She depicted security cameras and the limited access for those wishing to enter the building in decisively more positive terms than do students. What students view as oppressive limitations on their freedom, this administrator saw as necessary safety measures.*

Researcher: “Has discipline changed in your grade from the old to the new school or behavior of the children?”

Miriam: “For seventh graders it has not changed very much. The same behaviors are still occurring. It really had nothing to do with the building itself. It had more to do with themselves.”

Culture and Conflicts: The administrator does not think that the building has an impact on student behavior. Student behavior is linked to the culture of the students themselves.

Researcher: “What do you remember most about the old school?”

Miriam: “Well, for me, that was my first start in Valdosta City Schools so I have a lot of old memories. One of the things I do remember is that even though this is a big facility, that was a bigger, it was a more, what’s the, how do I want to put it? It was spread out. If you walked from one place, if you were down on the eighth grade wing and you had to get down to the sixth grade wing, there was no close way of going. You had to go out one end and come all the way down and it just seems like there was a lot of walking that occurred and I didn’t like that. I did like the

Culture: Her first experience teaching was at the old school. I can identify with her on this point. What impact does a building have on teacher culture?

Design features: She believes the old building was bigger or at least more spread out.

Culture: The school mascot, a stuffed tomcat, was kept in a glass

memories that the kids have created through the years like the old mascot being in place and you saw that every day. I liked the size of the lunchroom we had over there. We had a bigger lunchroom. I liked the size of it and I liked the stage that we had. It was closed off stage. More like where you could do performances and things like that. But, other than that, I liked it pretty evenly.”

Researcher: “You don’t miss the leaks, right?”

Miriam: “No.”

Researcher: “Have your days changed in any way since the move? The way you conduct your business? The way you move during the day and everything? Either for the better or worse? I don’t know.”

Miriam: “I’m trying to think.”

Researcher: “I mean, the walking could be one aspect.”

Miriam: “Well, I know this. If I have to go unlock doors for the entire school, I can do that here within fifteen minutes and at the other building it could take as long as a half an hour to get to every door in the building to unlock it and get ready to start the school day. Also, I don’t have to mop up any water in the floor because I might be here first thing in the morning. Here I can unlock and be done in just a few minutes. Also, lights. You know, you don’t have to worry about kids turning lights on and off, because there is only a master key to that. My school day is pretty much the same.”

Researcher: “Is it different being there, I know in the old school you were in an office just with you and another vice principal and the secretary. Now there’s all three vice principals in the same area. Has that changed anything? The interaction between or collaboration?”

Miriam: “Not really. I think it might for the next person that comes in. The three of us have worked as two and one for so long during this past five years that it’s an adjustment for us to think of working as three, to consult each other within that little office area. So it really has changed that much, but I think that when we have a new person it will be easier for that new person because they’ll

case in the front lobby.

Design features: The old lunchroom is perceived as bigger and the stage in the old building is described in more favorable terms. When it comes to school design, is bigger better?

Time: Less time is required in the new school to unlock or secure the building.

Space: Less physical problems at the new facility for administrators to deal with.

Design Features and Control: Student misbehavior decreased due to diminished access.

Culture: The administrator does not indicate she believes that her daily routine has changed significantly after the move.

Design features and Culture: Centralizing and consolidating all the vice-principals offices into one area may have an influence on the way administrators relate to one another and coordinate their efforts.

be right there with us and they can ask questions and they can get help and support right away. The others of us have sort of learned our own way and we've just gone on with it. So, it really doesn't make any difference whether we are in one office or two."

*When asked what she remembered most about the old school, the administrator began with nostalgic anecdotes of fond memories and the children she had taught in the old building. She made reference to the old facility as being bigger than the new building and how the increased size had both positive and negative implications. Although she felt that her duties during the day had changed little since the move, she indicated that there were fewer physical problems, specifically leaking, to deal with in the new building*

Researcher: "How would you, if you were to just come up with one word or simple words that describe, how would you describe the old school and how would you describe the new school? Like the old school is like and the new school is like?"

Miriam: "Well, the old school is like an old pair of jeans maybe. You know, you are familiar with them. You are comfortable with it. You felt like you could do just about anything like paint the walls or put posters on the walls. Those kinds of things. You were comfortable with it. You didn't really worry that you were going to harm something. The new school is like putting on a new dress or a new outfit and wanting to make sure that you take good care of it and it is almost like whenever you move into a new house and you know, you want to keep everything spotless and clean and pretty, although, our old school was very clean considering that it was an old facility. Our custodial staff always did a good job. That was something we could be really proud of. But it seems that maybe our attitude toward it maybe has changed. I'm in a different facility so I live up to the expectations of a new facility. I think we present ourselves as being a little bit more, I'm not sure what word I want, professional maybe. We were so, you know, routine."

Researcher: "I think the kids noticed that, because they said you know, at the old school it had gotten to the point where teachers weren't as strict about writing on the desks or the walls or gum, but here they are. I asked them why do you think that is? They said, it's like if you've got an old car, you don't mind if you spill soda in it, but if you

Culture: Analogy for the old school as like a pair of jeans. How does the age of a building affect the culture within it?  
Freedom and Culture: The administrator sees the freedom of adults to customize their environment as a positive feature of the old school.

Culture: Analogy of the new school as a new dress and of the teachers' desire to keep new things nice.

Culture: What expectations do teachers and administrators have in a new facility? Do students perceive the same expectations?

I feel more conversational pressure during an interview than in the course of a focus group. I suppose the nature of one-on-one interaction necessitates more commentary on the part of the researcher.

get a brand new one, your mama will whoop you pretty bad for that. I just have a few more questions. I really appreciate you sitting down and talking with me. I was kind of curious. Have your teachers said anything to you about positives or negatives about some of the implications on instruction on being in the new school? Do the computers or being in the new school, has that changed the way they teach, the way the kids perform? I was kind of curious about that.”

Miriam: “It is making a difference in the way they teach. Especially in their instructional strategies. Because they have computers, they can use more of the graphic organizers. They can do more group projects because they have the tools that they needed to do that with. Also, when you have carpeted rooms, you don’t mind putting your kids together in a group and working together on the floor to do that group project because they’re comfortable with that too. We had Read-All-Day the other day in seventh grade on one of the teams and the kids were really comfortable with you know, piling up in a corner and getting a book out and going to reading and they enjoyed that. Whereas, I don’t think I would have wanted them to sit on the old floor.”

Researcher: “I know one thing that is interesting with the technology is that, I’ve already talked to some of the kids and they said you know, now that we have more computers to work on, it used to be just the teachers computer, they are back there doing PowerPoints. We’ve even had some students design some phenomenal PowerPoints. They know how to use the program and so another teacher and I have had students, they did one of Vietnam. They did one on the Cold War and it has given us instructional materials to use in the future.”

Miriam: “I think it is empowering the teachers to get out there and try some new things that they had not been able to do before because they didn’t have enough of these things. You know, I mean there were some teachers that had one computer in their room that the students could use, but you can’t put thirty students back on one computer. Now you have four back here in your classroom and you can break them up into smaller groups and it makes it a little bit better when you are trying to do that whole idea. I think the teachers are stepping out now and

Technology and Instruction.

Graphic organizers are an instructional component of Max Thompson’s Learning Focus plan that our system and school have adopted.

Design features: The new school has carpeted rooms. What affect does comfort have on student behavior and achievement?

Technology: The administrator sees the effect of technology on a teacher’s instruction and behavior as positive. She introduces the idea that technology can be empowering for teachers.

Technology: The new school has more computers per class, one per class in the old school versus five per class in the new building. How does access and availability of technology affect its

trying some of their technology that they have been learning. We are going to have, well we have Print Shop on everybody's but we will soon have the Inspiration and Time Liner that everybody is going to be able to access. So that's going to give them one more tool to help them in the classroom with their technology. I think too, I also see that with some of their other instruction, they have less time that they have to waste in the hallway, waiting for a bathroom facility, because we are not sharing so many between grades. They now have more instructional time, right here in the classroom. Seventh grade is very fortunate to have the T-hallway. Because of that, a teacher can let a student go at a time, they are right there at the bathroom. There is nobody that is far away from the bathroom. Again, that cuts down on that time of being out in the hallway and taking the whole group to the bathroom. It does make a difference. I think because of that, they are letting them stretch a bit. We are still hanging some maps. Trying to get that done. You know, we've also got them television in front of us. If they have PowerPoint and they want to use it, through the television mode, the kids can make their own presentations as well."

Researcher: "Class presentations?"

Miriam: "Yes, exactly."

*Miriam alluded to several changes in the attitudes and actions of the faculty since the move to the new facility. She said she believed the teachers' pride in the new school was increasing professionalism. Miriam also stated that the availability of computer technology had empowered teachers to try new instructional strategies. She also felt teachers had less distractions due to wasted time waiting for the bathrooms.*

Researcher: "Do you think that the move has changed you in terms of your style? Have you become more strict, less strict, about the same, or have you even thought about that? I bring it up because some of the kids that I talked to said that they think teachers and administrators have become more strict since coming to the new school. That's the way they perceive it. There has been sort of a tightening down and they attributed it more to the move to the new school than the end of the year. Which was one thing that occurred to me. We do that every year."

Miriam: "That's true. We do, do that every year, but also when we moved over here, we spent time sitting down in

implementation?

Technology: Reference to teachers at VMS and throughout the state being required to take In-Tech training on implementing technology in the classroom.

Time and Design Features: Less wasted time due to delays caused by inadequate bathroom facilities. Time and Instruction: What affect does time have on instruction?

Design Features: Proximity to bathroom facilities and its effects.

Technology: Televisions and computers hooked together for instructional use.

Achievement: use of computers by students for alternative assessment of learning.

Culture: Tightening up at the end of the year as an annual feature of teacher and administrative

the hallway with them, talking about the lockers and the locker use. We talked about walking on the green line. We talked about no gum chewing and all these kinds of things and we emphasized that we were going to take care of this building and we are all more conscious of sliding down the wall way, leaning in the hallway, putting hands on the walls. Those kinds of things. We are more conscious of it because it is a new facility. But, I don't think that we are any stricter."

Researcher: "Do you think that we, teachers, administrators, and even students have had a part in kind of creating a different Valdosta Middle School in terms of the culture of the school? Like for instance, the green line? You know, new traditions being started?"

Miriam: "Definitely. I think I've already heard the kids calling it the Green Mile, in reference to the movie. They've already nicknamed some things around here and yes they have. They have taken it on as their own. I think there are a lot of the children in the school that really are proud of this facility and they are glad to be here and they can't wait for the moment when they get an opportunity to do something special in the school. They like the fact that they have a new lunchroom to have a dance in. It was a really different dance because this was the first time we didn't have decorations all over the wall because we are still waiting for that paint to season. So, we had a different kind of dance. They are really excited about the gym and I think next year when we have our first basketball game, or our first assembly, they are really going to have a lot of pride."

Researcher: "Get a sense of this is their new school, not the new school and the old school."

Miriam: "Last night was our first night we had a program in the gym and it was phenomenal. It was really, really nice. I mean, I don't think there is another school in the whole state of Georgia that could have said that they had any nicer honors program and had any better facility to have it in. To have a system, a mike system that you clearly understood every word that was said and nobody could misunderstand anything because it was clear and then to have matching colors and matching bleachers and a comfortable environment. The air conditioning was

behavior.

Control: Green line.

Culture and Control: Here, the administrator seems to indicate tighter enforcement of the rules at the new school compared to the old building. This appears to contradict her previous statement. Once again, she seems to contradict herself again, reverting to her claim that faculty are no stricter in the new school.

Culture: Nicknaming as an expression of student culture. She sees the move to the new school in terms of new experiences for the students. How is student school pride affected by the building itself?

Rite of Passage: School dances.

Culture: How important is pride in one's school to students?

Culture and Space: This administrator has a lot of pride in the new building.

Technology and Design Features: The gym is equipped with a new audio system and is said to be one of the nicest school gymnasiums in the state.

great. Almost every individual that attended could sit in the bleachers because you didn't have to worry about the size of the bleachers or the traveling up and down those bleachers as compared to the old one. I think we only had one individual that had to have a chair."

Researcher: "I thought it was interesting last night with Mr. Richards. I was always close to him as a student and just being really good friends with Todd. It was kind of interesting for me seeing the first award in his name, but in the new facility. It was kind of like the old school and the new school, bringing the traditions but forging a new one."

Miriam: "Tommy would have been proud of this facility. He would have loved it. He would have loved that new technology lab. He would have really been proud to have had that and would have been finding some kind of project to create a way to put all those trophies and things up that haven't been put out yet. His presence was really missed last night. It was a very touching dedication."

Culture: What influence do retired or deceased faculty members have to the long-term culture of a school?

*When asked whether their had been a change in teacher and/or administrator rule enforcement following the move, Miriam seemed to give contradictory replies. While she seemed to concur that faculty tighten up at the end of every school year, she also acknowledged a belief that after the move, teachers and administrators were more vigilant of misbehavior due to the newness of the building. She then ended by saying, "But, I don't think we are any stricter." I may have been too leading in my pursuit of cultural issues. However, Miriam's comments did drift away from my direct questioning to expression of pride in the new building and its technological innovations.*

Researcher: "I really appreciate you coming by today. Is there anything else you think of?"

Miriam: "I do want to say that I think that we have, when you talk about physical education, down there on that end of the hallway, you have one of the nicest weight rooms. It's not only going to help with our after school programs but it is also going to help all of our students with conditioning and good general health. Now they have a variety of things that they can do because we now have enough facility for them to work out all over."

Design features: The gym and physical education facilities are described as promoting "general health" of the students.

Researcher: "They're not standing all over each other."

Miriam: “Right. Exactly. It’s really good to see them out there and when we get that track back and we get the fields back, then they’ll have four or five domains in which they can work. It’s going to be great. I love the way that traffic moves through our school. I don’t know about you, but I really like the way we dismiss them in the afternoon. It’s a much better mode when dismissing. We’ve got safety at the top of the list.”

Design features: Track and exterior athletic fields.

Design features: How does the layout of the school impact student movement within the school and the dismissal of students in the afternoon?

Researcher: “It seems to be a lot less chaotic. A lot less directions. There are only one or two places they’re going and that’s it.”

Miriam: “Right. I like the fact that parents unload their children in the morning at each wing. Whatever wing they are in, that’s the way they go. I wish we could find a way to do that with our buses.”

Design features: Although she likes the current morning drop-off, this will not be the procedure next year. This is temporary until the front driveway is complete.

Researcher: “There again, that limits that contact, which you made an interesting point. Keeping the sixth and eighth grade and seventh grade separate that, there is a big difference in those ages and that’s one of the concerns that some people had, but now it’s almost like let’s say, three separate academies within one school.”

Miriam: “That might be a new concept that the kids might embrace.”

Researcher: “I sure do appreciate it.”

Miriam: “It’s been fun.”

Later in the day, right before afternoon dismissal, I walked up on an informal meeting, of three 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers and one 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher in the main hall. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers were asking the 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher how they changed classes for reading and academic classes. In the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the doors open and the kids just go. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher explained that when kids left their class for reading they all stayed single file to the right and began walking, only leaving the formation when they arrived at their class. Even if their next class was across the hall, they could not directly cross. The sixth grade teachers refer to this as “the Loop.” When changing classes within the team, they form a smaller loop and repeat the procedure. When asked about the monitoring responsibilities and time required to complete “the Loop,” the 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher said that it generally took just a few minutes and every teacher out in the hall monitoring. “The Loop” system was developed for implementation in the new school, by the 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers and their grade level administrator, prior to the move.

May 10, 2003:

I was reading a book today by Peter McLaren. It was a critical theorists' viewpoint of schools and society. As a result, I began to reflect on my years at Valdosta Junior High School and in the Valdosta City Schools as a student. When I was in school, the classroom and the manner in which we were expected to behave and perform was highly structured. Lunch, locker time, recess, restroom breaks, and the time before and after school, were less structured and constituted a large amount of free time for socializing. As I continued to read and reflect, several questions came to mind that might be worth exploring. In our new school students must adhere to silent halls, highly structured and restricted lunch periods, and guarded and supervised time periods before and after school time. Where is the social time for the kids? Are students more prone to disruption and misbehavior in the classrooms as a result of the more restrictive environment? Are teachers more or less strict in their discipline in the classrooms than in the past?

*Teacher Focus Group: May 12, 2003*

Researcher: "Well, I appreciate all of you for coming today to this focus group. The project title is the perceptions on moving from an old to a new school facility and I've got some very general questions for this group and like I was telling them, when I throw the question out, you know, whatever comes to mind, whatever answer you have, all I ask is that if you are talking they wait until you are through and then jump on in and stuff. I don't mind you building on each other's ideas, if someone says something that you know, you want to reiterate, say yeh, I agree with that, that's good, because that gives me more of a sense of what are the important themes and what are just casual comments. First thing that I'd like to ask you are your impressions or what do you think of the new school?"

Carl: "I'm well pleased with the design and function of it. It's clean, it's bright, and it's airy, and everything works. Compared to the school that we left."

Design features: The new school is clean, bright, and airy. Carl has taught at VMS for over twenty years.

Cheryl: "I think that everything is fine, my only complaint is the noise that we can hear from room to room. It's the insulation I guess."

Distractions

Researcher: "Compared to the old school?"

Cheryl: "Right. But the way that the school is set up and the size of the hall ways, all that is much better."

Space: Better layout and more spacious halls.

Ralph: “I would just go along with what they said that it’s a much nicer facility. It’s clean. It’s very functional. The equipment is of course in great condition because it’s new.”

Space: Nicer, clean, and functional.  
Technology: New.

Researcher: “Computers, desks, and everything?”

The teachers seem very official, reserved, careful, and almost nervous at the beginning of the focus group session, like they are scared of saying the wrong thing.  
Technology: Computers and phones, which are in the rooms to call parents (during planning) and for other school business (calls from the office or teacher to teacher calls)

Ralph: “Having student computers in the classrooms and phones when you need to get in touch with someone real quick. It’s nice.”

Researcher: “What do you remember most about the old school?”

Carl: “Dark! The hallways were very dark. My room didn’t have half of the lights working for the last several years and it really was like teaching in a dungeon and when you come into this building it’s so much brighter and nicer and it really makes a difference in the way you feel during the day. If you sit in a dreary dark room all day, you’ll have a pretty dreary outlook.”

Space: Poor lighting in the old school.  
Space: Analogy of the school as a dungeon.  
What effect does lighting have on teachers and students?

Researcher: “I think that I heard that comment from an administrator and the kids. That’s something that hadn’t really occurred to me except for what I had read. That was a consideration.”

Barbara: “The library was the only place that was light over there and the first few days (at the new school) when I’d go home, I’d go to the outside because, I thought, where have I been? I don’t have any lights. Now we don’t have any sky lights or regular lights.”

Design Features: The library at the old school had massive windows and skylights. In the new school, the media center is in the center of the school with no external lighting.

Researcher: “Right. So your environment has really changed?”

Barbara: “We are the opposite, and there are lower ceilings. You know, it was raised over there. But you know, it’s so clean and nice that we don’t care.”

Design Features: Ceilings lower in the new media center.

Ralph: “I think the hallways over there were so small, the kids, it was hard moving in between classes and over here they’re much wider and the ceilings are much higher, so.”

Space and Design Features: The hallways are wider and the ceiling is higher. What effects do wider halls in the new school have?

Researcher: “Do you think that has a better effect on discipline or...?”

Ralph: “I think there is less bumping and hitting.”

Barbara: “Un hum. And the leaks, did you already say that? The leaks and all that we had all the time.”

Carl: “And the smell.”

Cheryl: “The smell?”

Carl: “My room was moldy. All of it.”

*When asked what they thought of the new school, the teachers began by discussing changes to their physical surroundings rather than differences in their daily interactions with others. Perhaps they took my question more literally than the students did. There were several positive references to the cleanness and spaciousness of the new building, as well as, increased access to technology.*

Researcher: “Have your days changed as far as your classroom, I guess either your interaction with other teachers or in terms of the way your day goes as far as instruction and the behavior of kids and the performance of the kids? Has any of that changed on moving to the new school?”

Ralph: “I think it has improved. We’ve got more room to move around. We can do more things. I think they are a little better here, which makes less of a stressful day for me than being over there at the old building.”

Carl: “I have more kids working on independent projects on the computers because we have computers, which we didn’t have at the old school.”

Researcher: “Have they taken to that pretty well? Do they seem to enjoy working on it?”

Carl: “Yeh, they seem to enjoy it and they seem to want to do a good job with it and of course it’s some of the better students doing it so they don’t need a lot of direction. It’s nice to be able to not have to bother with them while they’re on self-directed learning and I don’t have to worry about the rest of the class.”

Design Features: Less physical contact and student misbehavior.  
Space: Leaks at the old school.

Space: Health issues. Mold in the old building. I had a chronic cough for seven months my second year teaching in the old building. My doctor said he believed that it was caused by a combination of chalk dust and poor ventilation in the old facility.

Space: What effect does working space have on stress levels?

Technology: Computer availability for students. Computers for alternative, self-directed projects.

Instruction, Technology, and Control: Self-directed learning, individualized instruction, and classroom control.

Cheryl: "I agree. Technology has really helped to have varied instruction. You know, I could be doing something with one group and I could have another group at the back. There is less whole group instruction, which is what I had to stick with at the old school, just the whole group at one time. You know, doing projects, alternate assessments with the computers. PowerPoint projects or something like that and going down to the computer lab, they love going down to the computer lab. I've done that, since we've been over here and that motivates them. They really like that."

Researcher: "They seem to take more to the technology than the traditional ways of doing things?"

Cheryl: "Yes."

Carl: "There's also a lot of time saving. At the old school we didn't have clocks. We had to manually setup the VCR, hook it up to the TV. If we wanted to move we had to move everything. We had different size carts. Sometimes it was a horror to do all that. And here everything's just networked and plugged together. It just saves a lot of time and effort. You don't mind doing some things because it doesn't require a lot of work."

Ralph: "You said the clocks. I think that helps a lot. Every clock in the whole school, in every room, every hall, lunchroom, media center, it's all on the same time. So you are not changing classes and thinking, oh gosh, I'm two minutes early because my watch is faster than their watch. I think that helps."

Cheryl: "I love the printers because sometimes you can just make copies in your room if you're just making one class set. Instead of having to go and wait in line at the copy machine in the teacher workroom. Mr. Randall says that it's just as cost effective."

Researcher: "Does that encourage you, this is just something that occurred to me, because since it's about as cheap to make copies, today does that encourage you to design your own assessments or activities, instead of just pulling one out of the book and running it off?"

Cheryl: "I've always had to make my own, so that hasn't

Technology and Instruction:  
Computers offer flexibility and varied instruction opportunities. Instruction can be individualized and alternative assessments can be employed.  
What are the motivational implications of computer technology on students?

Time: The new school has synchronized clocks in every room and throughout the building in the halls.

Time: Less time required to use technology. Each teacher has computers/TV/VCR unit all hooked up and ready to go.

Time: Synchronicity.  
At the old school no two clocks were the same and it was impossible to synchronize time. At the new school there are clocks everywhere, all synchronized.

Time: Less waiting in line for the copier. All teachers have a laser printer in their room, unlike the dot matrix printers at the old school.

really changed.”

Carl: “I’ve always made my own.”

*The teachers perceived changes in the day-to-day operations of their classrooms and their interactions with others. Following the move, Ralph believed his days were less stressful. Carl and Cheryl agreed that the increased availability of classroom computers offered them more flexibility in instruction and alternative assessment. Interestingly, time emerged as a topic of consideration. While Carl’s reference to time dealt with the speed at which technology was available, Ralph praised the school-wide synchronization of wall-mounted clocks.*

Researcher: “What are some of the similarities or major differences between the two schools?”

Carl: “I think the cafeteria failed at both schools. We had more seating at the old school, but not enough lines. This one has more than enough lines, but they crammed them all together and it’s still just as slow. I don’t think the cafeteria worked out the way they had expected it to work out.”

Space and Design Features: Physical problems associated with a lunchroom that is too small at the new school and not enough lines at the old building.

Researcher: “So it should have been larger perhaps in the seating arrangements?”

Carl: “And the lines should have been spaced better…”

Cheryl: “The serving area is real crowded.”

Space: Crowding.

Carl: “Yeh, it’s real crowded in the serving area and that’s what I thought they were going to change and to me, it’s worse than the old school.”

(Long pause)

Carl: “And the parking is terrible. The roads are terrible, but I know it’s not completed yet.”

Barbara: “The drop-off, is that good though? It seems to me to be. I don’t know.”

Carl: “We have a lot of late kids still. Tardies haven’t been impacted one way or the other. We still have, I think, the same amount.”

Time: Tardiness has not been reduced following the transfer to the new building.

Cheryl: “We are very isolated. You know, I rarely see

Isolation and Culture: This time among teachers. What effects does

another teacher other than an eighth grade teacher. You know, I don't see seventh or sixth grade, unless I make a special trip."

isolation have upon a faculty?

Researcher: "And that's more so than at the old school?"

Cheryl: "Yes."

Carl: "Yes!"

Cheryl: "I mean, I'll go days without seeing any other teachers unless I happen to see them when I'm signing in, but you know, we just don't see anybody."

Isolation and Culture: Teachers feel isolated from coworkers.

Researcher: "I guess the elective wing is set up so that you don't ever walk past those other..."

Cheryl: "Right. We walk down the elective hall, but not any of those other teachers."

In the old school, electives were spread out, so one may have to walk down sixth, seventh, or eighth grade wing.

Carl: "And, we only had two lounges in the old school, so you'd always meet people in passing, going to and from class change and now you don't go and you're stuck on your wing."

Isolation, Culture, and Design Feature: The new school facilitates confine students and teachers, by grade level, to separate wings of the school.

Cheryl: "I've noticed that. Isolation between the grades."

Isolation: Along grade levels.

*I found it interesting that a seemingly straightforward question, of comparison between the old and new schools, produced many of the same criticisms highlighted by administrators and students. Carl began by expressing his belief that the lunchroom at the new facility was too small. The conversation then drifted to the concept of isolation. Cheryl and Carl expressed concerns that since the move, they had become "stuck" on their academic wing.*

Researcher: "The kids made a comment about that, between grades and between teams. They felt a lot more isolated in the setup and stuff. If you were to do an analogy, the old school was like...Just kind of fill in the blank. Let's just go one at a time and see what kind of phrase you would put in there. The old school was like..."

Ralph: "The old school was like an old car. The new school is like a new, shiny bus. I mean it's huge and nice and clean and works. The old school, especially after

Space: Analogy of the school as a car. Interesting that the students typically drew a prison comparison here, where as the teachers speak in

being in this school and going back that last trip to get the final things you need, you get to looking around and think, this is really a dump but years ago it was state of the art, but just time passes you by.”

Barbara: “Just outdated.”

Carl: “Going from a tenement house to a penthouse apartment.”

Cheryl: “The old school is like my first apartment. You know, it was already furnished but with 1970 furniture. The new school is like my house now that I’m married. Anything I like, more custom designed.”

Barbara: “Our library is like going from a big 50’s house, downsizing. The library was downsized, but it’s like your nice, new downsized place. Retirement home or whatever. But it is compact and we kind of weren’t looking forward to moving at first and now it’s turned out to be great. It caused everybody to clean out and...”

Researcher: “Leave some stuff behind?”

Barbara: “Um, hum.”

Researcher: “Carl said something that was kind of interesting about, even with the move to the new school, it hasn’t changed absenteeism. Has it had any effect on the academic performance of any of the kids or the behavior? Is that anything? Have you noticed less incidents of let’s say gum chewing, pushing each other, or trying to skip class? Anything like that? Have you noticed any decrease?”

Ralph: “I would say some, because if they can’t behave, you know, I’m not going to let them go to the computers and I’m not going to let them get on the new equipment and stuff if they can’t behave sitting over at their desk or doing their work or if they’ve got gum. So, I’d say a little bit.”

Barbara: “In the beginning, they thought the teachers were being hard over here, which just means you were stricter with trying to follow through with your rules.”

terms of houses, apartments, and cars. Seems to be more of a long-term attachment than students have of their three-year duration in middle school.

Space: This teacher’s comment reminds me of the TV show the Jeffersons. “We are movin’ on up”.

Space and Tension: Apprehension of moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar. The transfer to a new building as a big “Spring Clean”.

Technology and Control: Denying the use of technology to students as punishment.

Culture: Did teachers actually become more diligent in enforcement of discipline following move?

Researcher: "Right. I think I heard some comments, that they felt there was a tightening up."

Carl: "The gum and candy and food in the classrooms. I think everybody has cracked down."

Barbara: "And walking down the halls straighter."

Carl: "Yeh."

Cheryl: "They do try to finish their class work. You know, anything that they have to complete before the end of class quicker, so that maybe they can get on the computer. I think their behavior is a little, well, our team is now separated from the other two teams so their behavior is better between moving, changing classes is much smoother than at the old school because we were all mixed in with another team and lockers kind of went over between another team and now we're just separated. That has been a lot smoother for us."

Instruction, Achievement, and Time: Completing work for reward of computer time. What effect does using computer time as a reward have on student learning? Are students rushing through work to get to the computers?  
Isolation and Order: Effect of isolating students, within a grade level, on student behavior and teachers' monitoring of students.

Carl: "That was our problem."

Researcher: "I know, that you all said that the computers were something that the kids enjoy doing. Has that changed, now that you are in the new school, with four or five computers in the back and all this new technology to hook up to the computers and everything, in the front of your room, has that changed the way that you either teach or plan to teach in the future?"

Carl: "Greatly. More reliance on technology. I wanted to do it at the old school but, like I said, they didn't have all the equipment to absolutely run it that way and now we do and even though, in the Social Studies department we had started on it years ago, it's starting to see the light now that it will be a powerful teaching tool. The presentations being both visual and audio."

Technology: Less usage linked not to efficacy but availability.

Technology and Instruction: Computers viewed as a valuable instructional tool.

Researcher: "You said that it gives you another way of assessing? An alternative assessment, perhaps at the old school, without the technology, that sort of was an unrealistic expectation?"

Cheryl: "Right."

*I found it interesting that both Ralph and Cheryl used access to technology, specifically computers, as a tool for rewarding good behavior and performance and as a punishment for students unwilling to comply with teacher expectations. I wondered what effects such an application of technology had on student behavior and learning. Could students be rushing through their work to play on the computers? Carl indicated that his increased use of computers in the new school as opposed to the old school was linked more to availability than efficacy.*

Researcher: “Is there anything else? Any other comments about the school that any of you can think of? Any things involved in the process of moving to the new school that you remember? Any memories from the old school or good memories or bad times or anything?”

Cheryl: “Well you would think that moving in the middle of the year would be a bad memory, but really it was a good time for us to tighten up. You know, sometimes you loose some of the kids the second semester and I think it gave us an opportunity to really get more strict because we had a reason to.”

Space: The midyear transfer was not as bad as this teacher had anticipated.

Culture and Control: The move seen as a chance to tighten up on discipline.

Researcher: “Almost like having two years?”

Cheryl: “Right. It was like the first day of school again.”

Carl: “And I think that moving in the middle of the year was better than in the summer because I had to come down to a decision of what I was going to take and what I was going to leave. Had we moved over the summer, everything would have gone and that would have just been a lot of junk, up here, that I’d still have to go through. We widowed it out before we moved which was probably a real good thing to do.”

Space: The mid-year move is described here as an opportunity to get rid of antiquated or useless instructional materials.

Ralph: “I think trying to move also helps, especially when you’re all there, being the middle of the year, everybody’s kind of excited and everybody’s kind of frustrated about having to move, but if you got a big project coming up, you kind of get a little excited about it and everybody’s, I know in a lot cases they helped each other, you know, getting things over and hauling things and putting things up. I’m like Cheryl, it’s almost like starting a new school year. We kind of get a fresh breath there for a while. That gets close to the time when you are really starting to drag.”

Space: Moving can be frustrating and exciting at the same time.

Carl: "The kids handled it well too!"

Barbara: "They did."

Carl: "It didn't seem to interrupt their schedule very much. I thought they handled the move real well. I think there were only one or two text books that were left behind out of the entire school."

Researcher: "So it was a pretty successful transition?"

(Group responds affirmatively)

Barbara: "The worst thing was being in limbo. You know everybody says when are you going to move and you don't know and it kept changing."

Cheryl: "We kept packing stuff up and then I'd have to get it out."

Barbara: "We'd pack up books and then we'd have to unpack them and carry them over here and back and forth."

Ralph: "And one of the negatives, I guess would be like, you pack up and then when we actually started moving, we had stuff over here and then we were delayed and so we had to come over here and get some stuff that we needed for that next chapter or whatever. But it's good to be here now."

Cheryl: "It sure is. It does make coming to work easier."

Researcher: "Well, I sure do appreciate your comments. You really did a lot to help fill up some gaps. Some of the people that I have talked to brought up similar things but there are some other things that they haven't brought up that will give me a couple of ideas for questioning in the future. So, I really do appreciate your time."

Carl: "Ok. When do we get our check?"

Space and Instruction: What impact did the mid-year move have on the students? This teacher feels the students did not experience much disruption to their education.

Time and Space: Waiting and delays. Teachers kept having to pack, unpack, and then repack.

Time and Instruction: What effects did the continuing delays have on instruction and achievement?

*The focus group ended with a discussion of the pros and cons of a mid-year transfer of facilities. Cheryl felt the move was not as bad as she had anticipated and that it gave faculty a reason to “get more strict.” Carl depicted the transitional timing as an opportunity to discard antiquated instructional materials. The group seemed to agree that the whole transitional process had been both frustrating, due to delays and distractions, and exciting at the same time.*

May 13, 2003:

At this juncture, I have completed one student focus group, one teacher focus group, and an administrator interview. This afternoon I will be holding an administrator focus group, which was previously scheduled but cancelled at the last minute. Today’s session will give me insights into the perceptions of three of the four VMS administrators.

I have begun the transcription process on the data collected thus far and am seeing some themes emerging that I had not originally viewed as being relevant. As I continue in the data gathering, I am sure I will see a continual refinement and clarification of ideas that are central to the perceptions of those involved in the transition to the new VMS building.

*Administrator Focus Group: May 13, 2003*

Researcher: “Let’s get started. I appreciate both of you coming here today. The topic we are looking at is the perceptions of students, faculty, and administrators of moving from an old to a new school facility. I have some general mapping questions that I’m going to be asking you and I want you to go wherever it takes you, whatever is on your mind, whatever you think was important in the process of moving from an old to a new school and dealing with the actual physical facilities themselves and whatever things come to mind. The first question that I have is what are your impressions or what do you think of the new school?”

Jane: “I think it’s beautiful. It’s large enough for all the students and I think the teachers have bigger classrooms, more room. The cafeteria is the thing that I think was really disappointing, because the room in the cafeteria, the way the cafeteria is designed, I don’t think it means I needs as administrators because the kids don’t have enough space.”

Space: Description of the new school as beautiful and more spacious.  
Design features, Space, and Control: Problem with the lunchroom being too small for administrators to monitor students during lunch.

Sam: “Yeh, I agree with Jane all the way. That’s been my, I guess I’ll go with disappointments or negatives first and that’s really basically the only negative of the physical facilities, the cafeteria compared to what we are used to. We are over here in a 12.5 million dollar building and all of a sudden we sitting here with much more stress involved due to the size, reduction

Design Features and Control

Space, Design Features, and Tension: The connection between space and order is made once again.

in size of the cafeteria compared to what we are used to in the old building. I mean they are just all over each other, the acoustics because of the size, it's just, and the way I see it, they didn't leave any room for any expansion or anything. So it's just, we are going to be living with that and we will be able to live with it, but it's just much smaller than what we are used to in the old building and space does matter, when they can just turn around and be all over each other at every table, you know, it's just so much monitoring to do. I guess the greatest thing, what Jane mentioned several things already, the neatest thing to me, I guess is the size of the halls. It makes a huge difference, like in the old building the halls were like three to four feet more narrow, smaller in every area, like between the lockers in the old building, from the lockers to the wall in the old building was seven, seven and a half feet, over here they are like ten, ten and a half, eleven feet. Same way in the main hall in the old building was like eleven feet at the widest point, over here they are fourteen and fifteen feet and that's what three feet, three to four feet, that's thirty to forty percent. It makes a huge difference as far as traffic patterns and so to me that's a wonderful thing, the halls and all and everything else. Technology, the rooms, classrooms but the cafeteria is the biggest disappointment."

Space and Design Features:  
No room for expansion is presented as a major problem.

Design features: Size of the halls has increased.

Looks like he has been measuring.

Technology

*Early in the discussion, both participants pointed to problems they perceived since moving into the new building. Their first complaint was that the lunchroom is too small. This comment was not surprising to me since the cafeteria is where administrators have the most direct and prolonged contact with students. Each vice-principal is responsible for monitoring lunch for his or her grade level. Sam seemed especially frustrated by the new situation. On a more positive note, both agreed that the classrooms and halls are more spacious and that the availability and quality of technology has greatly improved.*

Researcher: "That's been a common theme amongst administrators, teachers, and students. Even students mentioned that that was one thing that they felt the cafeteria was too crowded. I thought that was interesting that all three groups, that was the one area, they thought it's too small but, the hallways being wider and bigger and stuff were some things. Lighting was an issue that was brought up. Has your role as an administrator changed since you've come to the new school? Have you approached things differently or have you come up with new plans?"

Sam: "Now this is just me and I haven't necessarily shared it a lot. To me, the transition has been very stressful. Maybe it's because my expectations have changed a little bit. Maybe they

Tension: The process of moving as stressful.

shouldn't have but they, I had these visions of coming over here, you know, a beautiful facility and everything, but behavior hasn't necessarily changed you know, maybe I expected it to, you know to be just so much better in a lot of ways and so it's just been real stressful trying to monitor everything so closely because of the new building. You know, just being really on top of everything, which you should be on top of anywhere you go. I don't know, I just felt like I was going to come over here and really, really be on top of it and it's been very stressful to me. Very tense."

Culture: Expectations of better student behavior or a student culture shift.

Tension and Control: How much pressure do administrators feel to maintain order and control?

Jane: "I think the stress comes from student, us trying to control the students. You know they were so excited about coming over here. They thought that, you know, they didn't have to, they didn't know they were going to have to walk in a line or things like that and it's the stress of controlling and doing what we are expected, what's expected of us to have the control and keep them quiet and their resistance to that control. That's what happened, a lot of kids, students coming over here, especially 8<sup>th</sup> graders because I hear them talking. They want to resist that control. They feel like they shouldn't have to walk in a line in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, you know, they shouldn't have to be quiet in the hall ways like the other grades. I think that's where the real stress comes from."

Tension and Control: Stress caused by the struggle for control.

Green line as a symbol of adult authority.  
Control, Resistance, and Culture: This administrator views students as wanting to resist.  
Is resistance a major component of student culture?  
Tension

Sam: "I agree. Exactly. The word she used, resistance. The students, I speak for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, just like she said. I've heard it from all of them. You've heard it. They have bucked it all the way. I mean they. Because my expectations, like they say, I'm really monitoring it closely and you know, no talking at certain places and in line and they have made it very difficult. They haven't accepted the monitoring or whatever and it's been real tough because they are rebelling. I think they are finally soaking, it's sinking in a little bit, but it's been a tough few weeks."

Resistance: Students trying to resist the control of authorities.

Tension

Culture: The administrator indicates that he believes the acceptance of monitoring is "soaking in".

*When asked how their roles had changed since the transfer, both administrators said they felt more stress and tension since moving into the new building. Sam stated that the stress came from increased pressure he felt to monitor student behavior. Jane agreed and offered the further explanation that stress comes from "us trying to control the students." Finally, Jane and Sam both used the term resistance to describe students' reactions to adult authority.*

Researcher: "There were things, the way things were done administratively and for teachers and for students at the old school. When it came to the new school, did you want to start,

I guess the best word that I can think of is some new traditions as far as the way, I think you have already alluded to it with the walking to the side and the silence in the halls, did you, have you come up with some plans of how, what made me think of this is that I was talking with some 6th grade teachers the other day and they were mentioning the loop that you work in changing classes and I heard a number of 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers asking “Now explain how that works because we want to do that next year” and to me that’s almost, besides a control issue or discipline issue, it’s like setting up, for lack of a better word a cultural, a new tradition of the way things are going to be done.”

Jane: “Right. If it’s carried on, from grade to grade, when they get in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade they’ll be used to the loop. It was so, they wasn’t any order when we were changing for reading so we sat down together and we tried to decide what we are going to do to make, to do order. Now it takes about five minutes for them to loop, maybe four minutes, for them to loop the hall but it works. It keeps them in order and so the reading, the changing to reading, the teachers said well we want to do that during class changes. So they loop a little square. They’ll just loop, so it just keeps everything in order.”

Order: To what degree does the need for order in a school shape adult behavior?

Hidden Curriculum and Order: What messages are students receiving about the greater societal needs for order?

Researcher: “Yeh. That was one of the more interesting adaptations because the teachers had said well, we didn’t do it at the old school because we were on two separate halls and we didn’t have the space. I thought, that’s interesting how they came up with a simple innovation but it was impressive enough to where some 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers who had caught a glimpse said heh...”

Jane: “And so probably the kids will expect the loop when they get in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade and the loop when they get in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. They will loop the hall like that.”

Culture: Traditions and new school expectations.

Researcher: “What re some things that you remember about the old school? I know Sam was there for a number of years and you’ve been there for what, four or five I guess?”

Jane: “Prior to that I was there four years so, all together nine.”

Researcher: “What are some things you remember about the old school, either positive or negative, this short period after, you know, it hasn’t been that long since we’ve been gone?”

Are there any fond memories? I think you've already mentioned one, the lunchroom is one thing..."

Jane: "That's a fond memory."

Sam: "That's right. It served us well. I don't think that we realized that what we had could be so much better as far as the physical environment until you walked over in this building, because I remember going back, during the transition, walking back to the old building, you know, to bring a few more things over and it was just, it was almost hard to believe. It was like a dungeon over there almost, but at the time I didn't notice any of that that much. I mean, I didn't never complain."

Space: What are the positive effects of moving into a new facility?

Space: Dungeon analogy used for the old building.

Jane: "I think we thought, you know, the transition from there to here was just going to be a happy time, but then when I look back at the old building, it was kind of, it was a sad feeling, you know, to leave that old building. I enjoyed my, I mean it's different for me because I'm in a different place and I have a different role. I was over attendance. Now I'm in the APO office with everybody else, so I had to get used to not having a secretary for myself and that was something to get used to and not having anything to do with attendance. In the Attendance Office I got to meet all the parents and got to interact with everybody but I feel isolated up there where I am now."

Space: How does the move to a new facility affect people emotionally?

Isolation: Reversal of the perspectives of others. Now that she is no longer isolated from the other administrators she feels isolated from the students and parents.

Researcher: "It has been a big shift I know, from having two administrators in the middle of the old facility and one on the end and now isolated now in that one hub. Have you found that your grade levels seem more isolated? I know, some of the teachers said "I never see 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade teachers."

Jane: "Right."

Researcher: "It's almost like three separate schools. Have you thought of it in that manner?"

Jane: "It feels like three separate schools."

Sam: "They really don't cross paths that much or interact, which is a good thing in a lot of ways, but it's different."

Design Features and

Isolation: Three schools in one building.

Isolation: The separation of students by grade level can have positive implications. What are they?

Researcher: "Has it been easier for you to handle your individual grade and monitor without the worry of students from across grades there?"

Jane: “We had to work some things out like changing back from exploratory. Now the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and 6<sup>th</sup> grade, they don’t even see each other. During lunchtime, we were crossing 7<sup>th</sup> grade lunch, so we had to adjust times there, but now it’s like it’s three separate schools.”

Isolation: Progressive tweaking of the system to insure maximum separation of grade levels.

*When discussing their memories of the old building, Sam was much less nostalgic than Jane. Interestingly, Jane felt more isolated from her coworkers at the old facility, since her office was at the extreme end of the school, and more in touch with students and parents, a situation she apparently liked. Since moving to the new school, Jane is located in the same centrally located office as the other two vice-principals and felt her role had changed. Both Jane and Sam described the design of the new building favorably as being “three separate schools” in one.*

Researcher: “Have your school days changed markedly? I know you said it’s a little different for you being in this new office. Has your routine of the day changed as far as opening up and closing down or something else that takes place during the day? Can you think of anything?”

Jane: “Well, I had, we had specific doors to open in the old school, but here, whoever gets here first opens the front.”

Space and Control: Shift in responsibilities of administrators after the transfer.

Sam: “We key down our own halls, you know, the doors. We key them down and then lock them back in the mornings, after the tardy bell. It’s basically like our own little school. We are responsible for our own hall. That’s our major responsibility and the front’s just ever who gets here first. That parts pretty easy.”

Design Features: Each grade level is like a separate school.

Researcher: “Have you seen any decrease in, I think you kind of mentioned it, you haven’t seen any decrease in it, in discipline referrals or the types of discipline referrals?”

Jane: “No. They are the same.”

Culture: No perceived reduction in student misbehavior after the transition.

Researcher: “Same?”

Sam: “Yeh.”

Jane: “The same students.”

Sam: “That’s right. We taught the same clientele in the new building. The newness is over for them and a person’s going to behave where they are and you know, we have the same

Culture and Space: This administrator does not seem to perceive that the building has a major impact on student behavior.

people. Discipline is definitely an issue.”

*While both administrators perceived their roles and responsibilities had changed since transferring to the new school building, neither respondent seem to feel that the transition had positively affected student behavior. Sam said with exasperation, “The newness is over for them” insinuating a belief that the move to a new facility had, at best, given a momentary respite in student disciplinary infractions.*

Researcher: “Have you seen teachers, now that we have, I know one thing that was mentioned by several groups that I met with, was the difference not only in the rooms, you mentioned the size of the rooms and the newness of the rooms, but in technology, have you witnessed further implementation of technology? Are more students involved in technology?”

Jane: “I see that they sign up for the computer lab more. We have a computer lab now that the teachers, the academic teachers can use and I see that they are utilizing that. Yes, I see them using PowerPoint more in the classrooms, the internet, showing that.”

Technology: Computer lab usage has increased.  
Technology: PowerPoint and internet usage has increased in the classrooms.

Sam: “Yeh, the computers in the rooms. They have four computers. I think it is. It’s just so much more accessible and convenient for them so, it probably has picked up a little bit.”

Technology: Computer usage for instruction and assessment linked to access and availability.

Researcher: “I know one of our goals at this school, as at many schools in Georgia, is Focused Learning. Do you feel like the new facility, with the technology and the lab at the school will help in that aspect, with implementing it?”

Jane: “I think it will. They’ve got everything that they need right there at their fingertips. So, it’s just a matter of the teachers using it. I think that we’ve got everything that we need in the classroom to go ahead with the Learning Focused schools.”

Technology: Availability of computers in each classroom and effect on a teacher’s instruction.

*I may have been too eager to elicit responses geared toward curriculum issues at this juncture, although a brief reference to technology usage among teachers had previously been introduced. Jane and Sam both indicated that they have observed increases in media center lab sign-ups and computer-based instruction in the classrooms.*

Researcher: “I really like the idea of, some of the things you brought up, both of you mentioned that when you got here. It’s interesting because for some of the teachers and students they said that it really wasn’t that bad of a transition but for

some of the administrators it was a lot more stressful. I think that's obvious because when you're in charge of actually getting everybody there and getting everybody running, it's like the coach has a lot more stress than the individual athletes. But, as far as the transition move, now that we've made it and everything, I really thought it was interesting how this idea of getting some new traditions and new setups going. Let me ask you, just a few more questions or an analogy set up. If I was to ask you to make up an analogy or fill in the blank, the old school was like \_\_\_\_\_. What word or words would you put in that blank?"

Sam: "Are you talking about the physical facilities?"

Researcher: "Right. That would be something, or it could be the physical along with the cultural aspects. How would you do the analogy?"

Sam: "I don't know about the analogy, all I can say is the physical changes are vast, of course we already said all that, the actual physical plan is a hundred times better in most ways except for the cafeteria."

Researcher: "I'll give you an example. I had one teacher say that it was like an old mattress, the old school was like an old mattress and the new school was like a new mattress. The old mattress is good and worked in and it's grimy and it's got some holes in it but you feel comfortable with it. The new mattress is fresh and clean and you get kind of nervous about jumping on it, but once you get in it after a while, it starts to feel more comfortable. How would you...?"

Sam: "That sounds good to me. Really, what it's like, the newness is wearing off and just like over, before we moved over here, we were having the bomb threats and frequent bomb threats and things and now we are over here and we have the cameras and all, and that has probably helped but stress of coming over here and hoping that those bomb threats didn't continue, the stress was on the administrators. So all the bathroom breaks and everything has just been really, it's taken a lot of monitoring. Hopefully the teachers are doing their share, you know, monitoring the way it should be and of course we are ultimately responsible for all that."

Design Features: The physical design and layout of the new school is described as better than the old, except for the lunchroom (where the administrators have the most direct contact with students).

Distractions and Control: Bomb threats and cameras.

Tension and Control: This administrator perceives the majority of stress being thrust on the administrators.

*I found it interesting that even though classroom teachers have the most contact with students, in terms of time, and the most direct responsibility for monitoring and correcting student behavior, Sam's perception was that the paramount stress is on administrators and that ultimately he is being held accountable for the actions of students and teachers in his assigned grade level.*

Researcher: "Moving in the middle of the year. Better than moving at the start of a year? Better, worse, the same? What do you think?"

Jane: "Moving at the...?"

Researcher: "Say if we had moved at the start of the year. If you had moved over the summer."

Jane: "That would have been better. I think it would. Because our kids would get here with new rules. When you try to change something in the middle, you are always going to find it stressful. When they're used to one, something and you try to change their behavior and it's just not going to be easy to do. I think at the beginning of a year would have been better."

Tension and Control: Would a transfer at the beginning of a new school year have been smoother?

Sam: "I agree."

Researcher: "Is there anything else you can think to add? It doesn't necessarily have to be anything else that we have talked about. Any other impressions or things that you have thought about? Perhaps improvements that could be made if they were building another school or things that could be done as far as scheduling? Anything?"

Jane: "I think that if they were building another school, you know they should wait. I don't know why we were rushed into moving over here with things half working. I would like to move into a school when we have enough time and teachers are not rushed. I think it was during report card time, you know around that time and you get over here and you can't use the new computers to do report cards. It really didn't make any sense to me. I don't see why we couldn't wait and just move in so it's easier on the staff, the students, I knew the 8<sup>th</sup> graders were excited about getting here, until they got here. I think it would've been better on the staff and the students if they would just wait and make sure that everything is running, before they move over into a new building."

Time: This administrator not only felt rushed but also indicated they believed the new school was not fully operational.

Technology: Lack of a fully operational computer system at time of transfer.

Time: Wait until everything is operational and running properly.

Researcher: "Right. Well I sure do appreciate you coming by. That's kind of continued some themes and it's also given me some new insight and really a different perspective in some ways. Some things very similar and some things very different, but that's the kind of themes I'm looking for. I sure do appreciate you coming in."

*Both Jane and Sam agreed, that given hindsight, they would have preferred to delay the transfer to the new facility until the beginning of the following school year. Jane questioned the rationale of moving into a building that was not yet complete and not fully technologically operational. It will be interesting to compare the administrator views with those of students and teachers, both immediately following and one year after the transition into the new building.*

*Both Jane and Sam seemed to be in agreement that much of what they were feeling, in terms of increased stress and tension, had roots in an attempt to reestablish order following the transfer to the new building. I found it interesting that although teachers at VMS have the most direct contact with and responsibility for students, the administrators expressed more concern than teachers about regulating and monitoring behavior and enforcing the school discipline plan.*

*Jane pointed out one problem that was magnified by the timing of the move, how to approach nine weeks grade reporting. The move occurred as teachers were struggling to deal with the discontinuation of one grading program and the prospect of not having a new software package until the following year. The stresses of moving were further complicated by this enigmatic situation in which no guidance was forthcoming from the technology coordinators.*

May 15, 2003:

Today we had our first faculty meeting in the media center of the new building. The principal addressed key issues for the remainder of the school year.

"The agenda for the last day of school, make sure you are at your duty post for dismissal and have activities planned for the kids. Contain the kids."

"Don't plan any parties. No candy, etcetera. These kids are wound up and wild."

"Teachers, please be here these last few days. Teachers absences this year range from 0-36."

"Board members are asking for data on teacher absences and looking for patterns."

"Remember, teacher absences are a part of your yearly evaluation. Principals are developing a rubric for teacher evaluations."

The principal's concerns and comments seem to be anti-climatic, accusatorial, and somber for the end of the year.

"Students need to know how they will be graded. So do teachers. Accountability!"

May 19, 2003:

Later today I will conduct my second student focus group. I am feeling pressure at the end of the year to complete my focus groups and interviews before we break for summer. Scheduling has been difficult for everyone, as it always is at the end of the year.

Students have been the most receptive and most accommodating of the participants in my study thus far. I found the students in the first focus group very willing to share their perceptions and ideas on the transfer to a new building. They seemed very uninhibited in their expression of ideas.

I have begun the transcription process on some of the previous focus groups and have come to learn that it is a time consuming and cumbersome process. Data analysis is possible at this juncture only in a rudimentary form. I am, however, beginning to see certain themes, issues, and concerns emerging.

I found it interesting that when several of the students, who participated in my first student focus group, found out that I was conducting another student centered discussion group, they wanted to come and talk some more about the old and new schools.

One thing that I have learned thus far in the interview and focus group processes is that I must make a stronger and more conscious effort to avoid leading the conversation and discussions. I have found that this is perhaps the most difficult responsibility of a focus group moderator or interviewer. Due to conversational pressure, the need for rich and descriptive data, and the natural human desire to express one's feelings, there is often a temptation to drive the discussions of participants in particular and predetermined areas. As I embark on my second student and soon my second teacher focus group I will have to remind myself to do less talking and more listening, so that I can gather more of my participants perceptions and less of my own biases.

One of the most surprising things, that I have found thus far, is that the adult participants in my study are the least talkative and most reserved in their responses. While the students are very uninhibited, the teachers and administrators seem to gage each answer and offer very little elaboration on their ideas unless prodded by me. Despite my reassurances of anonymity, I feel that the adult participants are unnecessarily preoccupied with the prospect of repercussions associated with involvement in the focus group interviews.

I have found the process of conducting focus group interviews both enlightening and cumbersome. Although in theory conducting a focus group is simple, in actual practice balancing a hands-off approach of inquiry with a real-world need to prod respondents for information centered round specifics topics is quite daunting. I have found that listening to focus groups that I have already conducted, with a critical ear for my role in the process, forces me to revise my conversational style with regard to leading a group through a series of thought-provoking questions. It is not an easy task to be in control of a focus group while attempting to remain detached from the flow of the conversations and opinions generated as a result of questions that I have generated. Although I know in reality I can never truly remove myself from the conversations, I have come to believe that with continued practice and vigilance, I am refining my own skills as an ethnographer and increasing the validity of my research findings.

*Student Focus Group: May 19, 2003*

Researcher: "Alright, the purpose of this study is to find out what happened in the process of moving from an old to a new school facility and also to find out what you guys think about it. I'm looking at students, I'm looking at teachers, and I'm looking at administrators. So I just want to get some of your ideas. So I'm going to start off and give you some what are called prompts or questions that I want you to just kind of respond anyway, whatever comes to mind, that you think of. All I ask is that if Larry is talking, wait until he has finished his point and if you want to disagree or agree or add something to it, then that would be the point at which you talk. What do you think of the new school?"

Larry: "I think the new school, it's better than the old school, but our lunch room is smaller. A lot of things done changed like we got a lot of cameras and all like that."

Space: The size of the lunchroom is a major issue for teachers, students, and administrators.

Culture: This student perceives changes in the culture of the school.

Green line: Dislike among students for the symbolic green line.

Mary: "I don't like walking on the green line."

Researcher: "You don't like the green line?"

Mary: "No."

Alice: "Teachers changed."

Culture: This student perceives a change in the way teachers behave in the new school compared to the old school.

Researcher: "Teachers changed?"

Alice: "Yeh."

Researcher: "How so?"

Alice: "Because like, since we got over here, they're becoming more strict, especially Mr. Parker. He's like get over to your right. No talking in the hallway. Alright, go to I.S.S., no talking."

Culture and Control: The student quickly shifts to a discussion of the vice principal's behavior and enforcement of the rules rather than how teachers have changed.

Researcher: "And at the other school it wasn't as strict about that type of stuff?"

Alice: "No."

Nancy: "There's not roaches (mumbled word) that much."

Space: No roaches.

Researcher: "Ok, so that's a positive?"

(Group laughter)

Larry: "And a positive thing is that we don't interact, I mean a bad thing we don't interact with the 7<sup>th</sup> grade like we used to. Some of us used to have to go on the 7<sup>th</sup> grade hallway."

Mandy: "Our lockers are a lot smaller too. We can't fit everything in there any more."

Mary: "We're all crammed when we go to our lockers."

Researcher: "Ok. So, if the lockers are smaller and you said you don't even get to see 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade."

Larry: "You don't even see them."

Researcher: "Ok. So, it's more isolated than what it used to be?"

Larry: "It's like we're in jail. Like we can't do nothing and Mr. Parker, he takes his job too seriously. He walks around like this."

Mary: "Yeh, I thought part of middle school was to prep you for high school, but in high school they don't tell you to walk on the green line. You actually get to see some people."

Researcher: "Right. So you feel like it's even more restrictive than it used to be?"

Mary: "We got more freedom at West Gordon than we do here."

Alice: "People like contradict from J.L. Newbern to Valdosta Middle School, but when they really look at it, J.L. Newbern is like a better school to be at, because like..."

Larry: "There's more freedom."

Alice: "Yeh, there's more freedom and because like you don't have so many teachers looking always down on you"

Isolation: Earlier in the year at the old school, some 8<sup>th</sup> grade students would travel down 7<sup>th</sup> grade halls to reading or elective classes. There is no need for that now.

Design features and Space:  
Problem with lockers being too small.

Space

Hidden Curriculum: Prison comparison. Student makes a stern face imitating the vice principal.

Freedom: Loss of freedom to do what?

Culture: This student views the purpose of middle school as preparation for high school.  
Green line.

Freedom and Isolation

Freedom.

West Gordon is one of the system's schools for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

J.L. Newbern is the other middle school in the system. It was a new school in 1994. For several years it was so strict that students who transferred from there to VMS called it "Jail" Newbern.

Interesting to see that two students, who had been at both schools, view Newbern as more lenient.

Freedom, Hidden Curriculum,

and stuff like that. Telling you what to do.”

Culture, and Control

*When asked about their thoughts on the new school, the students were very forthcoming and opinionated. The initial responses seemed to me to be negative, with comments such as “the lunchroom is smaller”, “I don’t like walking on the green line”, “Teachers changed”, and “they’re becoming more strict”. Nancy attempted to shed a positive light on the move by stating she had not seen any roaches at the new facility was quickly overshadowed by discussions of inter-grade isolation, prison comparisons, and claims of lost freedom.*

Researcher: “So do you think there has been a big change mainly because of the move to the new building? Do you think it’s because we’re in a new building or do you think that their behavior has changed, in other words, because they’ve got a new start or because they’re trying to protect the new building?”

Group response: “Trying to protect the building.”

Researcher: “Ok. That’s what it boils down to then.”

Larry: “There’s about, Mrs. Denton, if we chew our tongues, uh, what you chewing? I ain’t chewing nothing. Don’t chew. We can’t even open our mouths the wrong way or she be talking about we chewing gum. Five pages.”

Pages are often assigned as a punishment. Students must write a class rule or rules over and over.

Researcher: “So it’s been a little more tense being over here?”

Alice: “And especially about breakfast, no syrup, no jelly.”

Researcher: “How did that happen?”

Alice: “Ok. They said it was because like, um, some 7<sup>th</sup> grader and 8<sup>th</sup> grader, team 2 students supposedly took some syrup out of the lunch room from breakfast and poured it on one of the team 2 teacher’s desk...”

Resistance: Students employ methods of resisting control through vandalism.

Larry: “Keyboard.”

Alice: “I mean keyboard and some on the computer and the chair, and (Unintelligible words) sticky.”

Mandy: “They can take away our syrup packs, but they

should at least put syrup on the side of our plates or something because those pancakes taste really bad without syrup.”

Larry: “And I believe, uh, that they shouldn’t punish everybody. They should just be like limit the amount of syrup, give everybody one and watch them. The children going out the door. Watch them real good in the breakfast room.”

Mary: “or (Unintelligible word) throw towels in the bathroom.”

Larry: “Oh, there’s no paper towels in the boys bathroom. We have too, I got my pants wet all in there.”

Researcher: “I’ve got a question. This is something that just occurred to me. Do you think that is more acting out or discipline problems now or in the old school?”

Group Response: “Now.”

Researcher: “And why do you think that is?”

Larry: “Because of the new facilities and like, then, in the old school, ya’ll wasn’t really worried too much about chewing gum. I mean, I could come into your class (student makes chewing motion). If it gets annoying to you, you’ll probably say spit it out. But now...”

Mary: “Like, kids want it more whenever they can’t have it, when they can’t have it. That’s like people fighting.”

Researcher: “Ok. So like the fact that it has become more strict has lead people to resist even more?”

Alice: “Yeh.”

Mary: “That’s like everybody’s tensing up. I mean, nobody really wants to come in here and be bad. But you know whenever a teacher’s like yelling at you the second you walk in the door. That’s like her and Mrs. Denton. (Motions to Alice) Mrs. Denton, she walks in the door and looks at Mrs. Denton and they start yelling at each other.”

Mandy: “It’s like as soon as you come in, the first thing

Hidden Curriculum: Punishing everybody for the misbehavior of a few. Does this foster increased resistance and subordinate culture solidarity?

Resistance: Students have carried on the tradition of throwing wet paper towels on the walls and ceilings in the new school bathrooms.

Control: administrators ordered 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers to carry paper towels to hand out to the boys during bathroom breaks because students were wasting towels.

Space and Culture: Changes in teacher behavior and discipline perceived as stricter due to transfer to the new school.

Culture and Resistance: Does an increase in enforcement of the rules and regulations precipitate resistance?

Tension: Resulting from the move.

Conflicts: Yelling at students.

the teacher says to you is like spit out your gum or something, like that, it's like to get you angry, so you act up more often."

Resistance: Bad behavior as a reaction to a teacher's handling of the rules.

Researcher: "Has there been any change as far as the teaching or your learning in the classroom?"

Group response: "Yes! Mrs. Denton! Mrs. Denton!"

Researcher: "How has it changed?"

Alice: "Ok, she came up with this word, we was doing this work (unintelligible word) and all of a sudden she started doing like, she was contradicting everything she done said."

Instruction: Seen by the students as confusing.

Mary: "Yeh, and she, I mean like, ok, the Thomas kids and Zach are, they just naturally want to talk back, want to, you say something they want to say something else. They're just smart. Well, Zach's in our reading class and Zach, well, everything that comes out of Mrs. Denton's mouth is no, this isn't right and Mrs. Denton gets so mad that she takes it out on the next class. She sits there and says that their class acts up so she takes it out on our class."

Hidden Curriculum: Are teachers and administrators always firm and consistent in their behavior or enforcement of the rules?

Alice: "She calls their class, she calls academic one the retarded class."

Hidden Curriculum: Insulting students. What are the effects of derogatory comments adults make to students?

Mary: "Yeh, she said it was her dumb class."

(Group laughter)

*As to changes since arriving in the new building, the students described scenarios in which they perceived faculty had become stricter, which in turn had precipitated student resistance of adult control in the form of vandalism. The students seemed to equate increased tension levels since the move with more faculty/student conflicts. Resistance was depicted by several students as being at least partly caused by adult mishandling of rule enforcement.*

Researcher: "Let me ask you this. Have you seen a difference in the way teachers teach, in terms of like, use of technology?"

Group response: "Yes."

Alice: "You."

Mary: "You. I love the PowerPoints."

Alice: "It keeps us from doing like bookwork and stuff by doing them PowerPoints, and then Mr. Edwards and the exam things we had to do on the PowerPoints."

Researcher: "You like that better, using the computers?"

Mary: "Mrs. Denton, she doesn't know how to use anything. Of her computers, she told us that they didn't work. She told us that we couldn't use them at all until a couple of weeks ago when we started doing our science projects, and that's in our reading class. She let our reading class."

Alice: "But that's because she's older and hasn't got used to the new technology yet."

Larry: "And um, Mr. Edwards, his teaching got better. I've got an 82, and 84 in his class now!"

Researcher: "Yeh. Are you doing better in the new school?"

Group response: "Yeh!"

Alice: "Me (Unintelligible phrase) and Mrs. Denton, because it's like, we keep bumping heads. When I walk into her classroom, I look at her and like one case was a piece of bubble gum. She said I had a piece of bubble gum but I didn't. She's paranoid about bubble gum."

Researcher: "Do you think, what is it about the new school that makes you maybe perform better, do better? Is it the computers? Is it the lighting? The air? What is it that might be, if you are doing better?"

May: "The classrooms are a lot more comfortable."

Researcher: "Ok. Classrooms."

Group response: "More space."

Alice: "And, the room temperature."

Technology and Instruction: PowerPoint multimedia presentations used for instruction and or assessment.

Many of the teachers have students review for tests, quizzes, exams, and standardized tests on the computer.

Technology and Instruction: After the move in to the new school, each teacher had to learn how to log on their class computers for student use. Many of the students learned how to do this before some teachers.

Technology: Interesting perception by student on teacher's inability to implement technology because of age.

Instruction and Achievement

Power and Resistance: Conflicts resulting from enforcement of school rules.

Space: Comfort. What effect does comfort have on achievement and or behavior?

Mary: “Yeh.”

Researcher: “The room temperature is better?”

Space: Temperature issues.

Mary: “Except for Mrs. Denton because she honestly does not know how to turn down the air and it’s cold in there.”

Researcher: “It’s kind of cold?”

Alice: “But in here it’s like perfect temperature, except right now I’m kind of hot.”

*Students perceived an increase in their teachers’ use of computer-based multi-media instruction, remediation, acceleration, and assessment strategies. Alice made an interesting assumption that one of her teacher’s reluctance, to use the new computers, is linked to age. The students indicated they believe they are doing better academically since the move and suggest the comfort of the new rooms, a perception of additional classroom space, and better room temperature regulation may be the most important factors.*

Researcher: “Yeh, I pushed it high so the noise wouldn’t bother you. What do you remember about the old school? We’ve been gone for about a month and a half now.”

Larry: “I remember a lot.”

Alice: “Over there, I loved the bathrooms, the way like the girl’s door would close. You had more privacy. And now we have like, it’s open and everybody be walking by.”

Space and Freedom: The old school girl’s bathroom had closing doors (the girls used to get in there and socialize). The new school bathrooms are open.

(Group mumbling)

Mandy: “The only part I don’t like about the old school bathrooms is that there was toilet tissue on the ceiling and it’s like one time this kid, she walked in and a piece of toilet paper just fell on her head.”

Larry: “Oh!”

(Group laughter)

Mary: “That was a big thing last year. They’d ball up toilet paper and get it real wet and stick it on the ceiling.”

Resistance: Students find many ways to show their aversion to adult supervision and control.

Researcher: “It’s cleaner here at least, then at the old

school?”

Mary: “I can’t open the stall doors though. Like the little thing, they won’t slide open easily.”

Mandy: “There’s a ton of bugs in the old school.”

Space: Issue of cleanliness concerning bugs.

Researcher: “Is there anything you miss about the old school? Old memories you have?”

Alice: “The bathrooms.”

Space: Bathrooms in the old school. Did the provide students a safe haven?

Researcher: “The bathrooms because that was a little safe place for you and your friends?”

Alice: “But now like no talking, over here you talk in the bathroom everybody can hear you.”

Freedom: Loss of privacy.

Researcher: “So there is no free time and no privacy? I heard Larry say it was almost like a...”

Mary: “A prison.”

Hidden Curriculum: Prison comparison.

*Bathrooms were of especial importance to students. Prior to conducting focus groups with students I would have never thought that this would be such a major issue. I have come to realize that for students bathroom time equals freedom. Given their limited opportunities to socialize and make their own scheduling decisions, students resisted attempts to curtail or over-regulate their havens from adult supervision.*

Researcher: “Like a prison. Well how have your days changed? Has anything as far as the routine and stuff like that?”

Alice: “It’s like, the locker times and stuff and Mrs. Terry just got on to me about it and she was like. She heard Brice was going through some little complications, whatever, Brice wanted to be hard headed, something like that, and I had getting my forms out of my locker and putting them in a notebook. I was standing there for a second (unintelligible phrase) and she going to be fussing at me for getting my notes out. And like, ok, whatever, and then she took up all that, for what, going to my locker?”

Control and Conflicts: How does the need for order in a school affect issues of control and conflict?

Researcher: “So, locker time is different from the old ...?”

Control: Students are assigned lockers based on homeroom so that all team students are localized at locker time for easier supervision.

(Group begins agreeing all at once)

Mary: “You are like bumping into everybody and there’s somebody trying to get below you and you have a top locker. Some one trying, and you can’t open the locker all the time. My combination, (unintelligible phrase) and you try to open it and it won’t open.”

Space: Crowding at lockers.

Researcher: “So it’s more frustrating for you to have a whole team in one area than if it was randomly spread out?”

Alice: “I don’t like being, our new schedule like, 11:43 the team 2 goes and 11:45.”

Isolation: Upon moving to the new school locker times were shifted to keep team 1 and team 2 from interacting and socializing in the halls.

Mary: “We never see them. At lunch, if you talk to, them you get in trouble.”

Freedom: Lack of the right of students to socialize with their peers freely.

Researcher: “Right, so you feel isolated from the other grades and the rest of the grade?”

Alice: “Yeh and they want you to be with your peers, but they keep separating us from our other peers. And then like on 8<sup>th</sup> grade day, that was just a waste of a day. Until 11:30 we had to do work, but in your class we had fun, had games but, in Mrs. Denton’s class, whew... ”

Culture and Isolation: How important is socializing to students?

Culture and Rite of Passage: 8<sup>th</sup> grade day used to be a free day for 8<sup>th</sup> graders to play games, socialize, and sign yearbooks in-doors. It was a celebration of the end of Junior High/Middle School. In recent years the activities and time for this has declined.

Mary: “She wouldn’t, she told us like in here all you can do is talk, but she was like, you can’t play cards and we all started playing cards and she didn’t really care and then more people came in there, I guess she just didn’t want a whole bunch of people in her class, because she kept trying, come on, I’ll give you a dollar if you leave. She was trying to get us all out of the class. She didn’t want anybody in there.”

Hidden Curriculum: The student perceives that the teacher wants to be rid of students.

Researcher: “Are you saying that, you’ve noticed at this level and at this school, that I notice that you’ve all said that you felt isolated from grades and that you feel isolated and controlled all the time. Is that it? You feel like there is no down time?”

Mandy: “ I mean, when you are in middle school it is supposed to be different from elementary school, you’re supposed to have more freedoms because you’re more

Freedom and Rite of Passage: Student’s expectation of being treated more as a young adult in middle school with more freedom and responsibility.

older and you are supposed to have more responsibility.”

Researcher: “But you feel like you are just getting more responsibility and rules?”

(Group mumbling)

Alice: “... elementary. They are supposed to be like preparing us for High School, but at the High School you don’t have teachers look down on you and look over you like don’t do this and don’t do that. Like if you do it, you do it on you own time and like if you be late coming to class at the high school you just get pages or tardy, therefore you have to go to the lunch room to write pages until that times up and stuff. But here, they be all up your back, hurry up, come on, don’t be late to my class, like that. They have to loosen up and give us a break and stuff like that. Everybody’s not perfect.”

Culture and Rite of Passage: The student views middle school as a transition to high school where they will receive more freedom and have more personal responsibility.

Researcher: “So you would almost like, when I was here there was a junior high model and our lockers were anywhere on the hall, I mean, they could have been on this wing or another wing and we moved, the bell rang and we had five minutes to change classes and you knew you had to be there, but you had a little bit more free time...”

Mary: “But here it’s like, you can’t, you know it’s like, ok now you can leave, ok, now get in my class. Ok, sit down, be quiet, do your work. Ok, now you can leave. I mean, that’s all it is.”

Control and Freedom: School is depicted in very authoritarian terms.

Larry: “I see what you are talking about. They try to give us a little freedom and somebody will mess it up, like the syrup. That’s how the syrup got taken away. Somebody messed with the syrup.”

Freedom and Hidden Curriculum: Loss of freedom for all resulting from the behaviors of a few. Interesting that the student is looking at the issue from an adult’s viewpoint with regard to the incident where a student took syrup from breakfast and poured it on a teacher’s desk and computer in the new school.

Researcher: “So what would be the solution? I hear most of you saying, and most of you are good students that generally do what you’re supposed to, you want more freedom, but like Larry says, one or two people mess it up. So what’s the solution, would you think?”

Alice: “Uh, if you know like, you know that every teacher knows who like, whoever like ...”

(Student interrupts)

Alice: "...and who's the outcast from the whole class. Then you know, like what you are going to do to keep that kid from doing uneducated stuff and then like. If you know those kids that has a attitude problem, or whatever like, (unintelligible phrase) a down mood or a down spirit or something, just look at them. Don't say hardly too much stuff because, you know because at any moment, they could pop at any moment."

Resistance: The student believes teachers are partially responsible for confronting students who are prone to resistance and could "pop at any moment".

Researcher: "You said that you think maybe giving more freedom to the group, but when someone does something like pouring syrup on a computer..."

Mary: "Yeh, not the whole class. That's like whenever there's two people talking and you sit here and you know, Mrs. Denton, ok, like one person can be talking and she'll like stop teaching altogether and yell at that person and then start yelling at the whole class and get off subject and forget what she was talking about."

Distractions, Instruction, and Hidden Curriculum: Is this an example of ways students have learned to interrupt instruction and delay the work they must do?

Researcher: "Right."

Mary: "Instead of taking them outside, talking to them, give us the work and ..."

Larry: "That's how all our grades moved up because we don't really do nothing in there. The tests don't even be as long as they used to be."

Distractions and Achievement: This student perceives an increase in student grades due to a teacher's mishandling of disruptive behavior.  
Distractions: Effect on student instruction and achievement.

Mandy: "And we wouldn't get a lot done in our class either, I mean, we start something and she'll be like, ok we didn't finish that's your fault."

*When asked how their days have changed since the move, the students began talking in terms of relationships with others and how their day-to-day interactions had changed. Alice and Mary were very vocal with their perceptions that they were more isolated from their peers and subject to increased levels of adult control since arriving in the new building. Mandy expressed concerns that she was getting less freedom in middle school than she did in elementary. Alice concurred, indicating that she believed she was not being prepared for the liberty she would be given upon entering high school. Larry tried to analyze the situation from an adult perspective, but eventually conceded to Alice's argument that adult mishandling of rule enforcement and classroom management were partly to blame.*

Researcher: "How was the whole process of moving? Did you, would it have been better to wait until next year?"

Group response: "Yes, yes."

Mandy: "That's what we were saying."

Mary: "Like, the whole 8<sup>th</sup> grade thinks that it was just a waste to move in the middle of the year when there was like what, three months left in school."

Researcher: "Right."

Mary: "It would have been a lot easier for just everybody to get a new start next year."

Alice: "Because if you stayed in that old school I don't feel like something actually would help you because if it hasn't happened from August to whatever, you know they did it because it's new computers and teachers screamed about their new computers, like don't touch it, don't get nothing on it and like at the old school, now they didn't care, but those computers they put in the back, you can't tell a child not to do it, automatically they're going to do it, because you told them not to do it."

Researcher: "Right, so it's almost like they pushed them into it by pointing it out?"

Alice: "Yeh."

Mary: "That's when everybody was just saying, I'll bring my own, You know and if somebody brings their own then they're going to get in trouble for bringing food."

Larry: "Right. That's what's happening now. Like, I went to the lunchroom. This boy had a whole Harvey's bag. He had jelly. He had syrup. He had a pancake box. I don't know he was doing with a pancake box."

Researcher: "He was going to make his own."

Larry: "And he was just sitting there pouring the syrup in front of Mr. Parker's face. Mr. Parker didn't say nothing until it got to be a problem. Everybody was wanting some syrup and he came over there and got the boy's syrup."

Time: Students would have opted to wait to move until next year.

Time: Apprehension on the part of the students about the need to move so late in the school year.

Technology: The student attributes the timing of the move to teachers' desires for new computers.

Resistance: This student has an interesting perspective for justifying a student's misbehavior as a reaction to being told what not to do.

Resistance: Reference back to the syrup incident.

Resistance: This is the student who took a stereo and CD player to lunch earlier in the year so that he and his buddies could rap.

Resistance and Hidden Curriculum: A write up is a discipline referral for a severe code of conduct infraction (in this case the use of profanity and

And he started fussing and cussing him out and he got wrote up.”

disrespect of a school employee).  
Would the administrator have acted if no disturbance had occurred?

Mary: “All this is over some syrup.”

Larry: “Instead of bringing one little packet for yourself.”

This sounds like a “sticky situation”.

Mandy: “If you take it away the kids will just bring their own stuff and that will just complicate problems.”

Resistance and Culture: Is resistance an inevitable reaction to the loss of freedom?

Researcher: “Did they ever find out who poured the syrup on the computers?”

Mary: “No.”

Larry: “They said ...”

Alice: “They know an idea but they don’t know exactly who did it. They know they was on team 2 and they know whose class it was in and like around what time it happened, but they don’t know exactly who did it because won’t nobody tell them who did it.”

Culture and Resistance: Code of Silence among students. Many students would rather face penalties rather than tell on another student.

Larry: “And that’s why we ain’t got freedom now because people are scared to tell.”

Freedom: Loss of freedom because of code of silence among students.

Mary: “Yeh. That’s like people are like, I’m not ratting out my friend, but if you don’t rat out your friend then you are going to get your freedom taken away.”

Culture and Hidden Curriculum: “Ratting out” is a slang term for telling on someone. This seems to be a no win situation for students.

Alice: “It’s like with me and Mary, one thing will happen and (Unintelligible phrase)”.

Mary: “And I took up for her and Mrs. Denton still yelled at her, but I did it, you know and it was my fault and (Unintelligible phrase) and Mrs. Denton, she just did not care. She was like, well because Paul landed on Alice, and I was like, no I was the one who took his papers. It was just a joke and she was like, you need to stop joking around and then she started back yelling at her.”

Conflicts and Hidden Curriculum: Do students feel that they are not trusted by adults in the school?

Alice: “And that’s when I yelled back at her because she was yelling at me. And my thing is, if I’m not yelling, raising my voice at you, don’t you do the same thing to me. Like if I’m sitting there raising my voice at you, then you have the authority to raise your voice at me. And my

Conflicts  
Control: This student sees verbal reprimands as acceptable only when she has raised her voice first.  
Culture: Questions of authority. How does the culture of the home

thing is, if I don't have my own mother raise her voice at me, ain't nobody going to do it either."

affect a student at school?

Mary: "That's like, my mother doesn't sit there and yell at my face. I don't expect to come to school and ..."

Culture: School versus the home.

Alice: "Somebody else going too."

Researcher: "Do you feel like that's part of the problem with teachers and administrators? They're just too angry?"

Mary: "Mr. Parker just gets really mad, really fast and then he makes people even more mad. That's like Paul. Paul and him cannot sit there and have a conversation because Mr. Parker will sit there and smile at him, like his smarter than him. Like he's the littlest kid in the whole world. He's sitting there like (Student smiles sarcastically) Paul's like, don't smile at me, just, you know, talk to me like I'm a person."

Culture: Students are quick to defend their classmates if they feel they have been wronged by authority figure.

Conflicts: How does an adult's demeanor in dealing with students affect the escalation or decline of a conflict?

Larry: "That's what Jarod got wrote up for. Mrs. Field wrote Jarod up, I mean Mr. Parker wrote Jarod up, and Jarod was like, ok, I'm fixin' to go to ISS, I'm fixin' to do what you told me to do. Then Mr. Phillips, I mean Mr. Whatcha Call it (Parker) started grinning. Then Jarod looked at him and he started grinning back and he said, you've got a grin on your face son and Jarod said so do you."

Resistance: Confronting authority with sarcasm and mockery.

(Group laughter)

Mary: "Mr. Parker just sits there and whenever he talks to somebody he smiles at them like ..."

(Group members join in agreeing with Mary)

Researcher: "Was he not that tense over at the old school?"

Alice: "He didn't care."

Mary: "He knows that when you're in trouble. He knows that he has every bit of power over you."

Power and Hidden Curriculum: Students feel they lack any power in dealing with adults at the school.

(Group chatter)

Mary: "That's like. He's like, I have the authority to kick you out of school right now. I could do it. You know, you can't even talk to him, because then he thinks, either you are getting smart with him and then he's like, well talk to me you know, and like you talk to him. No, you're getting smart. I mean you just..."

Power and Hidden Curriculum: Students appear to feel they have very little power or control over their situation in the school.

Researcher: "It's a communication problem?"

Mary: "Exactly."

Alice: "It's like, when you look at somebody, like talk to somebody, (Unintelligible words) look in your face. (Unintelligible phrase) you look at them and you see that they special, in their face, and that makes you ..."

Mary: "I cannot stare at somebody without laughing. If I do that to Mr. Parker, he would probably write me up so fast because he's think that I'm laughing at him."

Alice: "Mr. Parker, he sits in his office like looking like I'm crazy or something. (Unintelligible phrase) be looking and smiling. I can't stand that man, it kills me and I told my mama and my mama's like, just don't look at him, so I don't look at you and he's like look at me, look at my face. So I look at him, and I turn my eyes from him. I can not look at his face or I will start laughing or something."

Culture: "My mama told me too..." Often there contradictory messages being transmitted to students from the school and the home.  
Resistance, Conflicts, and Tension: Students often try to avoid interaction with adults in tense situations.

*As a group the students seemed to agree with the adults that they would have preferred to wait until the beginning of a school year to move. The group abruptly shifted from a discussion of the timing of the transition to a dialogue on resistance. The students attributed several recent incidents of student defiance of adult authority to adolescent aversion to being told what to do. The "syrup incident" exemplified a dilemma the students seemed to face. Student resistance of adult control led to loss of freedom. The loss of freedom led to increased tension between faculty and students. As a reaction to increased tension, students continued to resist. There appeared to be a constant power struggle between students and faculty, one in which students perceived themselves as relatively powerless.*

Researcher: "Well, let me ask you this. As far as between the two schools and everything. If you were going to make a statement, the old school was like, well how would you complete that? Let's just start with Larry and work our way. The old school was like, what?"

Larry: "The old school, we did have more freedom than

Freedom: Privacy concerns.

this and we had our own little private section in the lunch room and I believe you can watch people better that way instead of having us all in that little lunch room, bunched up together and (Unintelligible word) administrator.”

Researcher: “What would you say the old school was like?”

Mary: “The old school was a lot more fun. We had so much more freedom at the old school, I mean the 8<sup>th</sup> graders, we all been there since we were in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, we’re used it. Well she hasn’t (Looking at Alice who came from Newbern) but most of us have and we’re used to it and they just brought us over here and it’s like they threw all the rules out and the sixth graders, you walk down the sixth grade hall, I love the new school, I love it. But they haven’t been there for two years.”

Freedom and Culture: The student believes the sixth grades like the new school better because they had not been in the old school very long. Are there different cultures in a school along grade levels?

Researcher: “Right, so they didn’t have, you probably have more memories at the old school?”

Mary: “Yeh.”

Researcher: “What about you, how would you say? This is your, Alice, your first year at this school?”

Alice: “Well, January made it a year. It’s like (Unintelligible phrase) the old school was straight but we got here and I hated it. At the old school I (Unintelligible phrase)”.

Researcher: “How would you describe the old school?”

Nancy: “It was alright, but since we’ve been here it’s gotten more strict.”

Culture: Once again, a student perceives a tightening of the rules since the move.

Researcher: “So it represented more freedom, I guess? What about for you? The old school...”

Mandy: “The old school we had more freedom, we had more fun. There was, I think there were less discipline problems over there, so most of us didn’t get our privileges taken away, like the syrup and stuff like that and the new school, I mean it’s got perks and all but it’s just, like Larry said. You feel like you are in jail or something, because there’s just so many rules that they

Freedom: Student equates freedom to fun.  
Interesting assumption that there were less discipline problems at the old school.  
Hidden Curriculum: Do students feel they are incarcerated?  
Culture: How do student needs for

throw at you. It would be like, for example, one minute you're in your room and then you go down into the living room and your parents just start yelling at you for these new rules that and you feel all confused."

time to adapt to changes differ from adult needs?

Researcher: "So, switching in the year is almost like starting a completely new year?"

Mary: "Starting over, completely."

Researcher: "And it wasn't just starting over for some of you, you say it got a lot more strict?"

Larry: "I don't believe it was new rules. I believe they got strict on us. They were the same rules. Walk in a straight line. No gum. I mean they just got strict."

Culture and Control: This student does not perceive any new rules, just stricter enforcement of the preexisting ones.

Researcher: "At the old school, toward then end, people didn't ..."

Mary: "Nobody cared."

Larry: "I can go in Mrs. Denton's room and chew gum and (Unintelligible phrase) and I'm doing while she's looking at me talking."

Culture: Was there a slacking of discipline on the part of teachers and administrators prior to the move? Following the move, did the faculty readjust its behavior? Was there a transitional culture prior and during the move?

Marry: "And something else, our reading class was like, it was fun at the old school because we sit there and we'd like, it was more of a debate class, especially with the smart kids and the dumb kids. It was a lot of fun. And when we got to the new school it was like Mrs. Denton she just, I don't know, sometimes we can just walk in the room and she won't say anything to us. We barely, I mean we don't do the work or but she'll tell us like you have to read this book by this date and we'll have a test. You have to read this book by this date and you'll have a test. I mean that's just how she is."

Instruction: Change in classroom instruction after the move to the new school.

Instruction, Achievement, and Freedom: The student describes a loss of freedom to discuss ideas and diminished "fun" associated with the transfer to the new facility.

*To these students, the old school represented freedom, fun, and a less stressful environment. Whether true or not, the students perceived that at the old building they had more freedom to associate with their peers and had since lost many privileges that they once enjoyed. The students expressed beliefs that the faculty had become lax in their enforcement of school rules immediately preceding the move and that teachers and administrators had since, increased their vigilance.*

Researcher: "What would be ways, if you could, this is

just something that I didn't ask of the other groups, but if you were in charge, let's say, or you were some how the principal or the super intendant, or the teachers, what would be some suggestions you would have, now that we are in the new school, starting next year, what would be some suggestions for improving perhaps the atmosphere, the culture of the school, the behavior of the kids, even the teaching? Are there any suggestions?"

Mary: "Paint over the Green Mile"

Control: The symbolic green line.

Mandy: "They need to, teachers just need to loosen up all together, besides you, Mr. Cole, because everybody likes your class. You've got all the good kids here and you don't have a problem with any of the students because you let us have freedom, you know. It's like, most teachers need to loosen up."

Freedom  
Tension: The student feels teachers need to "loosen up".

Larry: "When you get on his bad side he ..."

(Group noise)

Researcher: "What you're saying, there needs to be a relaxing of the tense nature of the ..."

Mandy: "I mean, you guys don't need to be so tense, just like (Unintelligible phrase) you know, get out of my face kind of thing."

Tension

Mary: "Yeh."

Alice: "My thing is you cannot, ok, like with a baby, it takes them like a couple of months before they start walking, and then..."

Culture: It's interesting how the student uses an analogy of students as babies learning how to walk to describe or justify their peers' behavior.

Researcher: "A couple of months? What kind of babies are they?"

(Laughter)

Alice: "Ok, a couple of years to walk and whatever, like crawl and then walk, and you don't expect them to like, they're used to everything, like being all laid back. It seems like you switched places and like everything just, ok, like everything just started combining. You don't expect a kid, especially our age, like just forget. Say, one

Culture and Time: Inability of students to handle change as

day it's like, we could chew gum, just not that much, but at VMS they are like no chewing gum, five pages."

rapidly as adults.

Mary: "Yeh."

Researcher: "It's inconsistent?"

Alice: "First of all, you can't expect a kid to just do something over night, just to change over night. You've got to get used to doing it. You should have a couple of days for them to really get used to it and get the hang of it."

Time and Culture: How much time do students need to adjust to changes in environment and the enforcement of rules?

Larry: "That's like with my gold fishes. I had took them out of their old container, where they had some castles they could hide in and I just put them in with some rocks and one little tree, in a new container, and they were laying down in the rocks. They wasn't acting right. Then one of them came up to the top. Then he ain't come to the top no more. Then I knew they was dead, so."

Interesting comparison of students to dead gold fish.

(Group laughter)

Researcher: "Do you feel like that that would be, that would perhaps deter some bad behavior and maybe increase academic achievement or something? If kids had a little more freedom do you think they would be less likely to, do you, in other words do you think some of your classmates, not necessarily you, but some of their behavior's a reaction against the...?"

(Group response): "Yes, yes."

Alice: "Cambell. He's crazy."

Mary: "You know, Cambell wasn't the perfect kid in the whole school, but he wasn't, but like when he was with Mrs. Terry, he ..."

Alice: "Oh, Lord have mercy."

Researcher: "It's almost like a stand off?"

Mary: "I mean, treating kids like we're really all like three years old (Unintelligible phrase). Like we are three years old. I mean, that's not going to get anything."

Resistance: Description of a student/teacher interaction as a standoff.

Culture and Conflicts: Student's perception of treating middle school students as little children as absurd.

*When asked about suggestions that they would make to improve the environment of the new school, the students were not bashful about offering their views. The first suggestion, "Paint over the Green Mile," alluded to the green tile line's emergence as a detested symbol of adult control. Other student suggestions included teachers "loosening up," allowing more student freedom, exhibiting more patience, and becoming more consistent in applying discipline. It was interesting that all the student suggestions for improvements were reliant upon adult modifications to their current behaviors.*

Researcher: "Ok, so you feel like, I think some of you said, you felt like you had more freedom in fourth and fifth grade..."

(Group response): "We did!"

Alice: "Like, I was at Southeast and (Unintelligible phrase) at like fourth and fifth grade, whatever, and like yeh, it was kind of strict but you get used to it, then you have more freedom and stuff like that and then I was at J. L. Newbern, I loved it, that used to, that was my favorite school like, you go there, they teach you whatever, but if you don't learn it that's your decision. Because like they teach, but if you don't get it they give you the work so you can do it at home, if you don't get it, and then it's like, when I got here it was like, ok, (Unintelligible phrase) they teach you everything, they give you a little bit of it, now go when I get home, I don't do much work in the classroom, that's the time when I associate with my other peers and when I get home, I be in the house (Unintelligible word). School is my only time talk with other people my age."

Freedom: Loss of freedom associated with advancing in grades.

Achievement: This student places the responsibility for a student's learning and achievement on the student.

Culture: School is depicted as an institution for socialization. She expresses feelings of isolation from peers away from school and views school as the only place for social interaction with her friends.

Mary: "That's like you don't come to school to socialize. I mean, my mama's not just sending me to school to get an education and go home, get an education. I mean all my friends are here. If my all friends weren't here, I wouldn't be here, I'd drop out when I turned sixteen."

Culture: This student is an A student. For her to say that without the social component of school she would drop out is interesting. There seems to be a desperate tone in her voice.

Researcher: "Right. So that's part of the, for a student at least, part of the attraction of school is, it's not just my future, it's seeing people now. Ya'll feel like when you get here, you're put in a room, told don't breathe except if we tell you, don't look down the hall?"

Mandy: "It's like we are ruled by dictators."

Freedom: Oppressive conditions in the student's view.

*Both Alice and Mary indicated that from their perspectives the social aspects of school, such as conversing with their peers and interacting with other children their age, superseded adult educational agendas. For middle school students, the freedom to socialize appeared to be of supreme importance.*

Researcher: "So you are being taught democracy in my class, but you are not experiencing it?"

Mary: "Your class is cool though. I like when you show us videos, I mean we talk, you're not stupid, you know we talk, but you don't sit there, ok, shut up or five pages."

Larry: "You just don't let us get out of hand."

Mary: "Exactly!"

Mandy: "It's like, look at the movie occasionally and then you can go back to talking."

Alice: "It's like me and Christian. I'll bother him. He bothers me, and you'll tell us to watch the movie."

Researcher: "So you think you learn better in a relaxed environment than in a strict one?"

Mary: "That's why everybody is making such good grades in your class. More people are failing Mrs. Denton's class and Mrs. Tarpin's class, and (Unintelligible phrase) than anyone is in here. It's like the enrichment class. They are learning the same stuff. The exact same stuff and they're making twice worse grades, and why, because she's uptight. You're not."

Alice: "You had us like, a lot of free time."

Larry: "Yeh, like we know when you are having bad days, you just come in, wait, wait, wait. Ya'll just hush. We ain't going to talk today. We'll talk tomorrow. Ya'll are getting too loud. Don't get too loud. Watch the movie."

Mary: "And you go over more stuff with us. Whenever you go over something, you call on each of us."

Researcher: "What would you suggest to the teachers at the school, besides the lightening up and relaxing, what

Tension and Achievement:  
Enrichment is the gifted program. At VMS students are served in gifted through Social Studies. How does teacher temperament affect a student's learning and achievement?

Time: What are the effects of free time?  
Interesting perceptions, since I rarely leave the students any free time. Usually, as a result of my use of PowerPoint and multimedia instruction, my classes are busy right until the end of class, but that's not how they perceive it.

could they do to improve their teaching? More group activities? More computers? What?”

Alice: “Ok, there’s only four or five computers in each classroom and you have close to twenty kids in one classroom. It’s not every day that you have different (Unintelligible words) so like you can do work like other classes, like, (Mumbling to herself) but like, say you’re on the internet and look up English...”

Researcher: “I forgot about the computer lab. Have ya’ll been able to use that?”

Mandy: “We’ve used it.”

Researcher: “Is that better than the old school? Did we even have a computer lab at the old school?”

Mary: “In the seventh grade we used Mrs. Davis’ room.”

Alice: “I go to her for reading in the morning, it’s like, she lets us get on the computer, but like everybody knows not to get on those pornographic sites. She lets us like, once we do our workbook and we go over and check it, we have free time. Like her academic classes. Once you do your work, have free time.”

The corrective reading program (SAR) is a school wide program held during first period each day. Technology: Computer usage as a reward for completing assignments. Freedom and Time: Free time seems very important to the students.

Researcher: “Do ya’ll work better and quicker?”

Alice: “Yeh. Right, but some student that was in her class in the afternoon, I won’t use no name, cause you can’t say it, they went on pulling up nasty sites. She was saying, no, no, something’s going to pop up, but you don’t want to see it (Unintelligible phrase). Some kids, sitting there researching, they go up under, just keep looking and (Unintelligible phrase) the pictures that have some nudity, and you’re just looking at the ones that (Unintelligible phrase) and cut the computer off. I don’t do like, look up nasty pictures, but my mind don’t work that way.”

Culture: Code of Silence.

Researcher: “Once you see it you X out, but you feel like now you might loose that privilege?”

Alice: “We done lost it!”

Technology and Control: Group punishment. Loss of computer privileges as punishment.

Researcher: “Oh. Because one person...”

Larry: “The computers, the internet thing, because she had to take all the computers and get them cleaned out. Now she can’t be stopping us from getting on the internet. She can’t beat the system.”

Technology and Resistance: How do students employ technology to resist the control of adults?

Alice: “We beat her, beating the system.”

Resistance: “Beating the System”.

Larry: “We showed her how to do it. But she says she cannot stop it. She can’t block it. The only way she can block it is to take the cord.”

Resistance: The students have figured out how to get past the security blocks on the computers.

Alice: “We can get on the computer, but we can’t get on the internet, because we don’t have the internet thing on our screen in the morning. And like, if you try to go in the back and hook it up, she’ll see you and like sit down. So like, you can’t go on the internet no matter what. We used to go on PowerPoint, like hit online pictures and stuff. Then go on internet, the (Unintelligible phrase) on internet.”

Researcher: “Beating the system?”

Alice: “Right. Then go on Word. Do the say thing. Go on the internet. But now if you do, try to do it, she’ll just press ...”

*In a previous teacher focus group, there were references to access of computers being granted or denied based on student behavior. Until then, I had never considered access to technology as a behavioral control mechanism. Larry and Alice had introduced an entirely new paradigm of the concept of computer access, the idea of “beating the system” or circumventing adult attempts to restrict student usage of various technologies. I’m not sure what to call this, perhaps Digital Resistance?*

Researcher: “That covers most of my questions. Is there anything else you can think of tell me about? Maybe the old or new school or the process of the move?”

Mandy: “Well it was kind of like they said earlier. It was kind of useless for them to move in the middle of the year. Because we had to carry all our stuff. We had to walk from the old school, all the way to the front gate of the new school and just go around and everything. And I was like, we’ve got all our academic books. They’ve got two books for Mrs. De Spain and we’ve stuff in our bag. Some

Time: Once again, the students feel waiting until the beginning of a new year to move into the new building might have been better.

people had actually had to carry all their books.”

Researcher: “You think it would have been better just to wait?”

Group response: “Yeh.”

Mary: “Everybody already took. Like next year. People will have all they got in the new school. They don’t have any books to carry. It would have been much easier to say, ok, get out all your stuff. Clean out your lockers.”

Researcher: “Would Ya’ll rather have just finished the year out in the old school and kind of sent it off with a bang?”

Alice: “I think that 8<sup>th</sup> grade day would have been a lot better, because over here it’s like get in the classroom, one classroom. Over there, ya’ll wouldn’t have cared.”

Rite of Passage and Isolation: Although no longer an official end of the year day, 8<sup>th</sup> grade day has become an unofficial rite of passage or tradition at VMS.

Researcher: “Ya’ll could have busted the walls down.”

Alice: “They was rushing to like, finish this school so they could move into the school...”

Time: Interesting that some students felt the rushed into the new school. Some of the teachers had the same impression.

(Group agrees)

Mary: “I know. They weren’t even finished building the school.”

Alice: “You can hear them up there (Pointing to the roof were workers are walking around and hammering).”

Design Features and Time: Was the new school ready at the move on date?

Mandy: “This school is built cheaply, I mean things were breaking the first day we moved in.”

(Group noise)

Researcher: “Already?”

Mary: “Already.”

Alice: “And it’s like, I’m not (Unintelligible phrase). It was funny to (Unintelligible phrase) it took her quarter off the desk.”

Mary: "It was hilarious."

Researcher: "You mean stuff started breaking in the new school?"

Mandy: "The sewage line broke."

Mary: "The air did not work in the gym for like three weeks."

Researcher: "So when we moved in there was still stuff, it wasn't fully ...?"

Mandy: "There were wet spots all over the ceiling and then they said that the sewage line broke when they were trying to build the new school. The toilets turned colors and junk like that, for one day."

Space: For weeks after the move there were construction workers in the building making finishing touches and repairs and there were leaks from the roof.

Mary: "Ewe!"

Alice: "The walls, the school walls, between classes and what, it was built up, so you don't hear the other classes, but now, they were in such a rush to get up here, (Unintelligible phrase) but if a teacher be yelling in one class, like you can hear her yelling."

Design Features and Distractions: The walls were not built as high as those at the old facility and sound travels easier between classes.

Mary: "You can hear Mrs. Denton."

Larry: "We can hear that ruler."

Researcher: "It's a lot more distracting?"

Mary: "Yeh, like in Mrs. Tarpin's room, the teacher, the math teacher on team 2, oh man, you hear her yelling and if you don't hear her yelling..."

Distractions

Alice: "you hear the kids yelling."

(Group agrees)

Mary: "And then in the chorus room..."

Larry: "The chorus room and the band room."

Mary: "You don't hear anything but noise. Bom, bom, bom."

Researcher: “You can’t even hear yourself think?”

Distractions: Noise between classes.

Mary: “You can’t even hear yourself think. I mean...”

Researcher: “They positioned them right beside each other didn’t they?”

Mary: “I mean, you can’t even hear yourself. All you hear is the band. And they’re like, we can’t hear ya’ll. No wonder, we can hear ya’ll.”

(Group noise)

Mary: “Then Mr. White has to yell and he gets in a bad mood when he has to yell.”

Distractions: What effects do unwanted noises have on classroom activities?

Researcher: “Someone told me that when it rains on that end of the building you can hear it.”

(Group response): “It’s like (Mimicking of rain beating on a roof).”

Researcher: “In technology and stuff? They say that’s all you can hear.”

Mandy: “Our old school it lasted, I don’t know for how many years, a really long time. Probably a whole guys lifetime. Well, let’s just say. That lasted a really long time. Ok, so it’s kind of beat up, but we can still. This school probably won’t even last half as long. I mean, it seemed like they just rushed through, I mean, you can hear everything. The roof leaks. The lights even went out on the third day we were here.”

Design Features: This student describes the old school as more durable than the new facility, which they perceive to be hastily constructed.

*The students seemed to concur with previous groups that the timing of the move, during the middle of a school year, was less than desirable. They expressed concerns that everyone was rushed and that perhaps the new building was not ready for inhabitants. Distractions figured prominently in their discussion. They seemed to feel the walls were either too thin or not high enough to prevent excessive amounts of noise between classes. I have noticed similar problems with inter-class noise myself and wonder what the long-term implications will be.*

Researcher: “Alright. I think that’s about all I had to ask.”

Nancy: “The only thing, about the new school, we didn’t

Resistance: Bomb threat

have any more bomb threats.”

Researcher: “No more bomb threats. Because it’s easier, probably to catch people?”

Mandy: “Yeh.”

Researcher: “But how long do you think it will be before someone figures a way around that?”

Mary: “Next year.”

Larry: “I’ve already figured out that the camera in the, what’s it called?”

Alice: “It don’t work. The camera in the computer lab does not work. It’s just there to scare people. It’s like, some of the cameras, I heard that some teacher (Unintelligible phrase) that we students did something that, these two young people’s doing intercourse in one of the bathrooms and whatever, and she was like, ok who was it, and she was like I don’t know, look on the camera. The camera wasn’t working.”

Larry: “And then 8<sup>th</sup> grade day, the camera on the main hallway wasn’t even working. Mr. Parker came out, why isn’t the camera on?”

Researcher: “There’s all these glitches in the system?”

Mary: “Exactly. We walked in the front office. Nobody is watching the cameras. Not a sole is watching the cameras. They are always talking to somebody or whatever.”

Alice: “Even a food fight. First of all if someone throws something at you, you’re going to throw it back at them. If someone throws stuff just keep throwing it back at them, but there’s only two cameras in the lunchroom and those two cameras cannot watch every corner of the lunchroom.”

Mary: “Someone’s going to eventually learn how to beat the system.”

Larry: “Out the door. Mr. What you call it already done told us. Coach McIntosh, he said ya’ll get over here before

reference. This was the first time she had spoken in quite a while. The other four students talked freely the entire time.

Resistance: These students have already figured ways to “beat the system” with regard to the security cameras.

Control and Order: I am not sure this is a verifiable story. I believe this was a rumor started several weeks back when some students over heard only part of a conversation over administrator walkie-talkies.

No one really needs to watch them. They are digitally recording at all times.

Resistance: “Myth of Coercion”. How effective are the security cameras if students do not believe they are working?

Resistance: “Beating the System”.

the camera...”

Mary: “Exactly!”

Larry: “Ya’ll come over here so the camera won’t get it. There’s like a spot. Over here, the camera can’t get it.”

Resistance: Are there places in the school that are hidden from adult supervision and control?

Researcher: “Blind spots?”

Mary: “Coach Smyth finally started checking over there, but most people, they stand back so nobody can see them and then they head straight to the band room.”

Researcher: “I thought I had seen some kids up against the wall out there and I thought what are they doing?”

Mandy: “I mean, if you are going to get cameras you should at least use them. If they weren’t ever going to use them or they were cheap or glitches, we could have used that to fix some of the other problems.”

Alice: “They should have had cameras at J. L. Newbern. My thing is that if they had had the cameras like at J. L. Newbern and they treated us like that, cause we don’t be used to it. When I was out there, I was out there, you know, a while, and I got the run of the school. It was like, I loved that school, everything. All the teachers knew me.”

Freedom: Student equates freedom with lack of supervision and the “run of the school”.

Researcher: “How is that old school holding up, because it was built by the same people that built this one and it’s about nine years old now? Is it holding up ok?”

Alice: “It’s in good health.”

Larry: “It’s just like this.”

Alice: “It’s exactly the same.”

Mary: “It’s like W. G. Nunn or ...?”

Researcher: “Sallas Mahone.”

Mary: “Sallas Mahone. The one out by the Boy’s Club. My mom’s friend is a teacher out there and she was like she couldn’t believe how much smaller the lunchroom was compared to theirs. Their gym is like twice as big as this

Space: Lunchroom size issue.

one.”

Alice: “J. L. Newbern. Our gym is like, sort of the same but at J. L. Newbern (Unintelligible noise).”

(It begins raining outside and the audio becomes unintelligible)

Researchers: “Are things more relaxed over there? Because I know when Newbern was first built, one of the things that I heard about it, from a lot of the students and teachers was that it was extremely strict. So do you think that perhaps, maybe in the next few years, when this school has been here a while that maybe people will ease up?”

Alice: “Not Mr. Parker. I think that Mr. Randall would do very fine without Mr. Parker. Because Mr. Parker, he acts like he’s the head principal, and he’s nothing but an assistant principal.”

Power and Resistance:  
Questioning of authority by describing the vice principal as “nothing but an assistant principal”.

Mary: “People are twice as scared of Mr. Parker as they are with Mr. Randall. People would rather sit there and talk to Mr. Randall than even have to look at Mr. Parker.”

Researcher: “So that administrator has kind of changed the whole dimension there?”

(Group noise)

Researcher: “Did your sixth and seventh grade administrators, were they different in their approaches to discipline?”

Mary: “Mrs. Andrews was really, I mean she was kind of strict, but she was cool to me. Last year Mr. Parker was more involved.”

Researcher: “Oh that’s right. He did discipline for all the grades last year.”

Alice: “Ooh. Last year. Lord have mercy. Last year I had got wrote up for fighting, I was like (Unintelligible phrase). If you’re talking to me, don’t sit there laughing because you’re going to get hit.”

Resistance: This student indicates they viewed violence as acceptable when they felt ridiculed.

Mary: "He thinks everything is so funny."

Researcher: "So you feel like he's too stern and too strict. Never, lenient."

Mandy: "He guards us like we're about to go kill someone."

(Rain coming down heavy and obscuring the conversation.)

Alice: "I know a bunch of little kids, they stay on the east side, they don't take no crap for nothing. They don't care who you are. They don't take crap from their own mama. One of them fought their mama. They actually got into a physical fight. They picked their mama up and slammed their mama on her head. They don't care."

Hidden Curriculum: Does the organization of power within the school set vice principals up as the bad guy in the eyes of the students?

I hope I don't get these kids.

Researcher: "I better close this off because I have to send you back to class. I really appreciate it. Ya'll gave me a lot of stuff that I haven't heard before and that's really going to help out.

*The students launched into an impromptu discussion of ways they believe they have discovered to "Beat the System" of the security cameras in the new school. I am amazed at their candor since I am a teacher, but guess that during the course of the focus group they have come to either view me as an objective researcher or perceive that I will grant them immunity for anything they say. The conversation digressed into a series of complaints about their grade level administrator. I wonder, does familiarity breed conflict?*

May 26, 2003:

Today, during my planning period, I will conduct the last of my focus groups and interviews for the school year. Upon completion, I will have two student and two teacher focus groups, one administrator focus group, and one administrator interview. I believe this will not only give me some rich data to analyze this summer, but will give me more than enough busy work, by way of transcribing, to keep me out of any trouble.

I found the teachers to be the most difficult to schedule and noncommittal of all three participant groups. I thought at the onset of my study that teachers would be the most enthusiastic of the three groups when it came to aiding in educational research. I also had originally believed that the students would be my least cooperative group. Those perceptions have turned out to be just the opposite of what I imagined.

*Teacher Focus Group: May 26, 2003*

Researcher: “Ok, the topic is the transfer from an old to a new school facility and we had a unique experience this year going from the old school, which most of us had spent quite a while in, into a new school. So, I’d like to start out with the general question, what are your impressions of or what do you think of the new school? Anyone can chime in and when they’re through someone else can start up.”

Hal: “The four student computers, in each room, lend a lot of flexibility. Instead of four students at one computer you’ve got one computer at four students. You just give them a few minutes on each one, then rotate around, and you can get the whole class rotated around.”

Technology and Instruction: Four student computers per classroom create flexibility.

Intercom message interrupts Hal’s response briefly

Hal: “The storage room is another big deal.”

Researcher: “You are a science teacher.”

Design Features: Improvement of a larger storage room in science rooms.

Hal: “Yes.”

Researcher: “So you’ve got bigger rooms and more storage capabilities?”

Hal: “Yes. We’ve got a big closet plus the shelf space and the room in general.”

Space: Bigger rooms and closets.

Researcher: “How about you Donna? What have you noticed?”

Donna: “The transition from the old to the new school in terms of the computers is ridiculous. We don’t have the Integrate program because it won’t work on our new machines.”

Technology: This teacher addresses a problem in the new school. New computers will not run our old grading program (Integrate) and we will not have the new program until next year.

Researcher: “So that’s been a problem with the grading?”

Donna: “Yes. So I’ve done most of my grades at home instead of here because of the lack of computers that are available to do your grades on.”

Researcher: “What about you Tom? What about the new

school? What do you think of the new school?"

Tom: "I think it's a fine facility but I just wish they had water..."

Researcher: "A water fountain?"

Tom: "In the class."

Researcher: "Oh in the science rooms. That's right they don't have..."

Tom: "Yeh."

Researcher: "They have the little portable thing that you have to hook up to a little tub of..."

Hal: "Well, it's got the containers in the storage area."

Researcher: "I think that was something that I had noticed had changed between the two."

Tom: "And the restrooms, they used to be on wing B and now we have restrooms."

Researcher: "Oh, that's right. So. They seem to have more stalls in there."

Terry: "Faculty restrooms."

Researcher: "Faculty restrooms better?"

Terry: "Yes."

Researcher: "So we don't have to share? I know we had to go to a converted one. It was an old student one."

Donna: "We also did not hire extra janitorial staff to adequately keep the bathrooms clean. Mrs. Roberts has to run herself ragged going from bathroom to bathroom. I think she said there were eighteen at this school. Compared to six or seven at the old school."

Researcher: "Has that been a problem as far as the children? I know at the old school they would throw toilet paper up against the wall and kind of wreck the place and

Design Features: The science rooms in the old school had a water faucet and sink. The new rooms have a movable sink with a water tank and water line.

Design Features: 2/3 of the seventh grade classes were on wing B in the old school and they had no restrooms. They had to go to wing C.

Design Features: Improvement of more faculty restrooms.

We had only two faculty restrooms at the old school.

Design Features: I have heard this complaint from some of the janitorial staff in passing. Actually there were about nineteen at the old school and are twenty-five at the new school.

stuff. Have ya'll had any problems? I know in the eighth grade we've had some, but in the seventh or elective wings have ya'll had any problems?"

Hal: "We've kept the bathrooms checked, regularly. So we haven't had much of that."

Terry: "There's a lot more responsibility in a larger facility than in a smaller one. There are things that you didn't necessarily have to do in the old facility but that you have to do here. Especially the up-keep. I made a joke, I said, you know, why upgrade to a new facility from an old one, let's just move them from a newer facility, you know to a newer facility from the old one, and then we upgrade every year. Until we finally get to the new one. That way there will be a little bit bigger train and you won't have to worry about them as much, destroying your property."

Design Features: What problems are associated with a newer and larger facility?

Researcher: "Right."

Terry: "They have no clue about how much this building cost and all the things that went in to make it what it is, the children don't, and some of the adults even."

Culture: This teacher believes students have no regard for the expense of the new facility.

Researcher: "How about you Phillip?"

Phillip: "Actually, having taught school for thirty-four years in dilapidated, antiquated buildings, it is pure joy in having a clean building to come to every day."

Culture and Design Features: How does the age and condition of a school building affect teacher moral and performance?

Donna: "Although the new building leaks."

Space: Leaks in the new school.

Phillip: "I haven't had that problem in my classroom, so therefore, having had so many other problems before, you know since I'm having none what so ever, I really don't care about those people who are having ..."

Phillip has a very dry sense of humor. Often you don't know when he is being serious or joking.

Laughter erupts among the group.

Phillip: "You know, I'm sort of self centered and I'm sure you people have problems but right now I'm not worried about your problems."

Donna: "Are you going to Jennifer's baby shower this afternoon?"

Culture: How is the school used as a center for the social activities of teachers and administrators?

Phillip: “No.”

Donna: “Well then you won’t have to worry about that. They turned off the air-conditioning because it’s leaking and they are afraid of a fire. Because it’s leaking in the Home Economics room.”

Phillip: “The air conditioning is leaking?”

Donna: “Something’s leaking there the way they said shut it off because they are worried about the air conditioning unit.”

Phillip: “Well, I’m not worried about that.”

(Laughter)

*Just as in the previous teacher focus group, responses concerning the new school elicited responses centered round the physical features of the new building. The increases in student computers, storage cabinetry and closets, and faculty restrooms were offered as positive examples of improvements since the transfer into the new school.*

Hal: “One other thing. I picked up a duty post because of the extra demands for lunch duty.”

Control and Order: Increased duty as a result of the move to a new building.

Researcher: “Oh, you didn’t have that before?”

Hal: “ I didn’t have that before. My duty post is on our wing in the seventh grade.”

Researcher: “This is during lunch, you have duty now?”

Hal. “ Not during lunch.”

Researcher: “Oh, during the mornings?”

Hal: “Before they let into school and go to homeroom.

Control and Order: This is a change from the old school where students waited outside in the morning. Now they all enter and sit in the hall.

Researcher: “Yeh, like you said...”

Control and Order: Increased responsibility resulting from the transfer to the new building.

Terry: “More responsibility.”

Researcher: “More responsibility as far as since it’s a bigger facility and there are more strict regulations.”

Hal: "Coach Mac was doing duty for us and he's up there during lunch duty."

Phillip: "Well, that means you are actually on extended day and you will get paid extended day pay for that. I would think that administration would certainly address that since you are extending your day."

Hal: "They told me the bonus check was in the mail."

(Laughter)

Phillip: "Well, I'm serious when I say this. I'm not joking. I think maybe you should contact your local teacher's union and have them address this since they are asking you to do extra work, you ought to get paid for it. I mean we're not in this, this is a business so therefore they should pay us..."

Culture: How do teachers view their job? As a business? As a calling?

Hal: "Well, I kind of enjoy it because I get to be real mean to them."

(Laughter)

Phillip: "You can do that and get paid for it."

Hal: "Oh, OK."

Researcher: "What do you remember most about the old school, now that we've left it and they're disassembling it and fixing to demolish it? What do you remember most, because I know some of you spent quite a few years at the school?"

Hal: "Well, the termites and the leaks."

(Laughter)

Donna: "The ants. The moldy walls and ceiling and carpeting."

Space: Many of the rooms and halls in the old school leaked and at times there were termites. One of the rooms on wing A had a swarm come from the air-conditioning unit.  
Space: Ants and mold.

Hal: "And not having enough faculty bathrooms. Especially if you are a female, then you were in a real jam."

Problems in old school: Lack of bathroom facilities for faculty.

Researcher: “In terms of your classroom technology, I think you’ve already said that you have better systems now with computers and PowerPoint hook-up. Has that changed the way you’ve been teaching? Have you been, have the kids been using the computers more?”

Hal: “Yeh. It’s just like I said. Instead of four gathered around one computer, we’ve got a computer that one person for each computer, you know we can just cycle around and get most of them in, in one period.”

Technology: More access to computers for the students.

Researcher: “I know now we have, I’ve been using it for a while, but everybody has the PowerPoint hooked up to a television and there is a program called Movie Maker on there that you can drop stuff in, pictures and things and make your own little movies and stuff and there’s even, I don’t know if you’ve gotten to this, there’s even a way to train the computer to recognize you voice so you can dictate to it.”

Phillip: “Have you done that?”

Researcher: “I was working on it today. Carl told me. I knew there were programs, I didn’t know they had it built in as a feature on this computer and stuff.”

Phillip: “Man!”

Researcher: “You can go to your control panel and microphone, there is a picture of a microphone and you click on that and it will have you read these little paragraphs for about ten minutes of so and it will train it to your voice and your speech patterns. So there are some possibilities. Any positive memories from the old school?”

Phillip: “ Being isolated, since I was in an outside building, I was isolated from many of the things that went on in the regular building and now I’m exposed to those things. Being isolated over there was a plus to me because I didn’t get involved in all the things the kids were doing in the regular hallways and now I get to see almost every child who comes down from each grade level as they go to a Connections classroom. In the other building we may see, oh, sixty kids each period, now I see three hundred children.”

Isolation: Opposite of what most people observed. Phillip felt more isolated in the old building and liked it.

Researcher: “Yours is the opposite of most people.”

Donna: “Right.”

Researcher: “Most of the people said they feel more isolated and yours is less.”

The rest of the group agrees

Researcher: “So you are more isolated where you are?”

Terry: “I got a chance to see everybody.”

Researcher: “In the old school?”

Terry: “Yes.”

Donna: “Now I ask somebody if they come by if they still work here.”

Terry: “I didn’t think you worked here.” (to Donna)

(Laughter)

Phillip: “You and I could swap rooms and that way we wouldn’t have that problem. I will be isolated.”

Researcher: “Is that your experience, feeling a little more isolated on your grade level?”

Hal: “Definitely. Because, you know, the responsibilities isolate us and then, in the long haul, we’re all stuck way out there.”

*These teachers had very vivid memories of the old school, from termites and leaky roofs to a lack of faculty restrooms and classroom computers. Once again the theme of isolation in the new school emerged, this time with a somewhat humorous twist as Terry exclaimed to Donna, “I didn’t think you worked here.”*

Researcher: “Have you seen any change in the children’s behavior or grade performance, their academic performance on switching from the old to the new school?”

Hal: “The only change is this. We’ve got a definable area

Design Features and Isolation: Most teachers perceived the design and layout of the new school as more isolating.

Isolation and Culture: Interesting that some teachers at our school do not know other teachers in different grade levels or other parts of the building. I wonder if this will be a more prevalent problem in the coming years.

Isolation: Resulting from responsibilities of monitoring students and teaching.

where they need to walk during the change of class and going to lunch and all this. At the old school, you know, we just had to use a lot of judgment. But now days, if they are not on that green, we know they're not on the green. So there's no judgment to it."

Control: The green line as providing a definite judgment for student compliance with class changing procedures.

Terry: "No difference. Their behavior is still the same and grades stills the same."

Culture: No perceived change in student behavior or academic performance following the transfer to the new school.

Phillip: "I thought when we came to a new building we'd have a new attitude and new clientele, but that hasn't changed what so ever. I have not noticed their attitudes change, especially when you come to class work and maybe some work that they should do at home. I didn't notice any change in the grades what so ever."

Researcher: "Do you think that there has been a change in your teaching style or your day, the way that you do things, or have you seen that in your co-workers, administrators, I guess I'm getting at are they more strict or less strict, or about the same? Either ..."

Hal: "About the same."

Culture: This teacher does not feel there has been a change in the way teachers and administrators carry out their duties. This seems to contradict the perceptions of the students.

Researcher: "About the same? Administrators? Teachers?"

Power and Control: This teacher expresses a feeling of powerlessness.

Hal: "I mean, our hands are tied. Everybody's hands are tied."

Phillip: "I don't agree with that. I don't think our hands are tied. I think that we have all the rules and regulations that we need. I just don't think that people are willing to take a step forward to get these kids and make them do what they are told."

Power and Control: This teacher feels the rules are not the problem, just the enforcement or lack there of by teachers and administrators.

Hal: "If you are going to do that, two pages."

Terry: "I think you had something before. You asked us some questions before. Two years ago, maybe a year ago about ISS and out of school suspension, and basically I don't believe in reformation especially trying to reform mankind, because basically they are going to do what they want to do no matter what setting they are in. You can move them from the ghetto and put them in a mansion. As long as their state of mind stays the same, they are going

He is referring to a previous study that I did on In-School Suspension effectiveness

Culture: Interesting perspective of student and human behavior for an educator. What is the purpose of education?

to do the same thing before they moved. So you really have to change the mind set and the way they think. You can't really reform them by isolating them, the flesh part. You got to go into (pointing to head) up here and do some reforming. Everybody knows that but I don't think they get it, they don't understand."

Isolation: Is isolation an effective method of discipline? Control? Reform?

*Since the move to the new school, the teachers have not perceived any noticeable change for the better in student behavior. Hal indicated that he felt powerless, as if his hands were tied. Interestingly, Phillip did not equate discipline problems with lack of power, just lack of will, on the part of some adults, to wield their authority.*

Researcher: "So you think, in terms of the school, the new building might help, but it's going to be a change in the environment or culture of the school that's going to have to..."

Terry: "Exactly."

Researcher: "...be a new culture established where certain things are just not allowed, there not permitted, that's just not the way things are done here."

How does one shape the culture within an institution?

Terry: "Internally, not externally."

Researcher: "Right, internally. Among teachers and administrators. I think Hal already mentioned the green line, which in eighth grade they call it the "Green Mile", all the kids, after the movie. But, there was some resistance early on but now they know when they leave this wing and go down the main hall, and, it's been a struggle sometimes but perhaps after a few years it will just be an established thing to stay to the right. Which we all know that, I mean I explain to kids, and get in the car and where do you go? You go to the right side of the road. I mean, no one's trying to take your freedom away, it's just order. I like that though. It's something that I hadn't thought about that the physical surroundings may have an impact but it's establishing a new culture of the school. How would you describe, in terms of, if you were to give me a word to describe, I'll start right here and work my way over, the old school is like? What word would you put in that blank?"

Phillip: "Dilapidated."

Space: Description of the old school as dilapidated.

Researcher: "OK. Terry. The old school is like..."

Terry: "Obsolete."

Space: Description of the old school as obsolete.

Researcher: "Obsolete. Tom?"

Tom: "I'm trying to think of a word to describe what I'm thinking. I want to say complacent, you know, you've gotten used to it. So, what do you think I need to say here?"

Culture and Space: Does the age and condition of a school create complacency among teachers and administrators?

Researcher: "Complacency seems good. People had gotten so used to it, what do they say of some jobs, put in your eight and hit the gate? You thought it had gotten that way for a lot of people? It was just kind of run down and they just kind of let it go or whatever?"

Tom: "Yeh."

Researcher: "What about you Hal?"

Hal: "I think I agree with Terry. It was obsolete and small compared to this. The halls are a lot wider over here and of course with the technology and all that stuff."

Space: Regardless of actual dimensions there is a perception that this school is much larger.  
Technology: New technology seems to be one of the major features of the new school as compared to the old building. Interesting that her comment is against the flow of the group.

Researcher: "It's a big plus? What about you Donna?"

Donna: "A cherished memory. Gone but not forgotten."

Researcher: "You spent how many years teaching at this school?"

Donna: "About twenty-five."

Researcher: "Hal you, fifteen or sixteen?"

Hal: "Twenty."

Researcher: "Tom, you probably have the record right?"

Donna: "Yes he does."

Researcher: "Over thirty?"

Tom: "Yes."

Researcher: "So you've seen when it was not so old of a facility to ..."

Tom: "Yes. It changed. I can remember back when it didn't leak and it wasn't so dilapidated."

Terry: "State of the Art."

(Laughter)

Tom: "No, it wasn't State of the Art."

Donna: "Do you remember when there were no air conditioners?"

Tom: "Oh, yes."

Donna: "And no ceiling tiles."

Researcher: "You just had to crack the windows open back then."

Hal: "Yeh."

*The old school was described as dilapidated, obsolete, and then suddenly, "a cherished memory." I wondered what were the effects that a building itself has upon school, student, and faculty culture. It was interesting to hear some of these teachers speak of the old school when it was fairly new.*

Researcher: "That's how it was when I went to school there. What's a word, Phillip, for the new school? The new school is like..."

Phillip: "Bright."

Researcher: "Bright? Better light?"

Phillip: "A bright place to go to. It's a shining light."

Researcher: "OK. Terry?"

Terry: "Refreshing."

Researcher: "Refreshing, I like that."

Tom: "Spacious."

Culture: Memories of when the old building was not so old. How do ones memories of a place affect one's current perceptions of it?

Culture: The teachers begin reminiscing about the condition of the old school when they were new teachers back in the 1960's and 1970's.

Space: Description of the new school as bright and a shining light.

Space: Description of the new building as spacious.

Researcher: "Spacious."

Hal: "Next to State of the Art. It's not State of the Art, but close to being State of the Art."

Researcher: "Pretty close?"

Donna: "Overwhelming to an antiquated teacher."

Researcher: "Overwhelming. Is there anything else that you can think of. Any other comments about the transfer. Was it an easy process? A difficult process?"

Terry: "Difficult."

Donna: "My back says it was difficult."

Terry: "Yeh, you were anticipating all year and the year before that. Moving, I think that's very stressful. I think that's probably why people have said this has been a real difficult year. Moving was easy, but anticipation was the key thing. You didn't know when you were moving. No body had any idea."

Donna: "It made you anxious."

Researcher: "Would it have been better to wait?"

Donna: Yes."

Researcher: "To start a new year in the new school?"

Terry: "Possibly, but people were so eager to get in so it didn't matter."

Phillip: "I still can't figure out why, with all the educated minds we supposedly have in this community, why they kept pushing to come into a building that wasn't ready, and I will never be able to understand that. I have had a few people that I've asked about it and I've never gotten an answer. You know they kept saying that we are going to be in this date and that date. I tell, anyone who would walk up and look at the building last year at this time and they were telling us that you are going to be in there by August. I mean if you had one iota of brain you knew

Technology and Design Features:  
The new school as nearly state-of-the-art.

Culture: Interesting that this teacher described themselves as antiquated and the new building as overwhelming. How does a teacher's age affect their perceptions of the new school and new technology?

Tension and Time: Anticipation and stress brought about by the whole process of building and moving and the uncertainty of when the move would occur.

Tension: Anxiety brought on by the move.

Time: Perception that waiting until the beginning of the new school year to move might have been better.

Time: Problems of moving into a newly constructed building. Questions concerning the readiness of the new facility.

Time: Delays in construction and moving.

there is no roof on that building. There's nothing there but a piece of steel. How are we going to move into that thing in August? It was impossible. For them to keep saying, well, it's going to be there, it's going to be there, and then to move into a building that was completely, I mean we were walking in mud. We were dragging stuff over here with children, which was completely against the law, because if anybody had gotten hurt, it would have fallen on the back of the teacher. Asking a child to do it, the administration tells you to do it, I still can't believe that. I think it would have been far better, and this is my personal opinion, and I have my opinion, just wait until the building is finished. Until everything was accepted. There are still people in this building right now who have classrooms where they are having problems. I was in the cafeteria on Thursday and there was a gentleman there with an engineering firm and he was holding up a piece of equipment to the vents where the air conditioning was coming out of and he was measuring the amount of force coming through the air vent and he said that, the worker that was with him said that some of these vents are putting out 290 feet or inches of air of volume over so many minutes, you know, and the others and doing 290 and some of them are doing 10. I said what's the difference and they some of them are doing what they are supposed to and the other isn't. I said, "They're just finding that out now?" and they said whoever came and checked the building they didn't check anything, they just penciled it off. It was things like that and tile coming up in different areas, I've seen these people pulling up tiles and putting new tiles down and all these things are construction problems that somebody has to worry about. I haven't had any problems and I'm lucky, but I've heard it from numerous people, you know, they've had problems. I'm just wondering, with the level of stress that teachers go through in the classroom dealing with normal things, then you have to, hey, we are going to move this building, move all your stuff and get someone to help you and blah, blah, blah. Why not wait?"

Donna: "It has made a difference to me physically. I've had to go to the doctor for stress this year."

Phillip: "You know, I wondering if we had so many days, alleged days, sick where we were, our staff can take days off for illness, At a faculty meeting we had yesterday, I

Tension and Time: Stress associated with transporting materials to the new building and getting students to help in the process.

What was the rush?

Tension, Time, and Space: The new building is still being worked on even after the transfer has taken place.

Space: Tiles in the elective wing are already damaged after a few months in the new building.

Phillip said earlier everything was great and he wasn't concerned about the new school, which is a very different perspective from here. Apparently he does have some concerns.

Tension: Does a move to a new facility have detrimental effects on the health of those involved?

Power, Control, and Culture: At a faculty meeting the day before, administrators said they are documenting and checking on

was wondering how many of those days that were taken off were due to stress upon the body and the body breaking down. It would be interesting to know if we had a banner year of people taking days off, if a lot of those days were because we were affected by dragging stuff over here, the conditions of dragging it over here, getting wet, coming into a building that was completely filled with dust and goodness knows what else. I wonder if that would have happened if we had come in here with the building ready rather than the building not ready?"

Donna: "I'll tell you right now it's true. I missed the most number of days that I have missed in my entire teaching career. I missed twenty five days this year."

Phillip: "Well you didn't get the record. Somebody missed..."

Donna: "Thirty six."

Phillip: "Thirty six."

Donna: "I went to the principal and told him what was going on."

Researcher: "I know there were some teachers that were having difficulty because they had been told to move stuff over and then we were going to move and a couple of weeks later we hadn't and they had to come over here and dig through all their stuff and find some more stuff because they had sent over their instructional supplies, so. Yeh, that was a comment that I had gotten from a number of people including students. I had some eighth graders that said they would have rather gone out the rest of the year at the old school."

Donna: "Asked to work over a holiday weekend, when you could have used to time to rest."

Researcher: "A lot of them said that they wish they could have just stayed there and written on the walls and they would have helped tear down the building."

Terry: "Gratification basically. Somebody has to be proud, somewhere and they have to do it, not then, but now. Because something on the inside of them says it has to be

teacher absences.

Good question: What are the effects of stress brought on by the process of moving?

Tension: Process of moving and effects on the stress on faculty absences.

Time and Power: Theory as to why the move took place when it did.

now or never. It can't wait or people are going to forget that I had something to do with this and so we have to do this now."

Researcher: "There's a lot of politics involved?"

Terry: "Exactly. So, we don't care about people's health and we don't care about stress that they have to endure, moving from one place to another in the middle of the year. We're not worried about that. We just want to make sure that our name is a part of this and our face is attached to the name and we want to do this now."

Conspiracy Theory?

Donna: "Are you trying to tell us that our administration might change?"

Terry: "Maybe."

Donna: "Meaning, Mr. Randall had to go ahead and get this done, so he could have his name on it? Is he going somewhere next year?"

Terry: "No, no, no. That's not what I mean."

Researcher: "He's talking about people in the community?"

Terry: "I don't think he had too much say so in it, to be honest."

Researcher: "It was people above him?"

Terry: "Yeh, right. So it's another milestone that I have up under my cap."

Power: This teacher sees the new building as a political achievement or feather in someone's cap.

Researcher: "Well, I appreciate you coming. This has taken a different direction than some of my other groups. It's good because the purpose of me conducting a number of different focus groups with different people is to develop themes that are coming out and this has been really good because in the past two or three, there were certain themes that really came out. There are things that were more prominent in this discussion that had shown up earlier, but that I hadn't thought of as being that significant, because not many people had mentioned it."

Donna: "If I could retire this year I would. That's how exhausted I am. This is my twenty-ninth year teaching and if I could go out after this year I would."

Terry: "I've never been this tired, but I'm young."

Phillip: "It was always next week, next week. Then when I was told get your kids to move stuff over, I've always been scared of getting kids to do anything."

Researcher: "Yeh. I didn't do any of that because I just wasn't comfortable with that situation."

Phillip: "I got in that situation because they said they were going to come and move the stuff and of course they didn't come so, I had to use the class, but I made sure I was covered and I documented that I was told by the administration to move. So, if anything was going to happen..."

Researcher: "Well, I appreciate it."

Tom: "It's a nice building and nice facilities and all that."

Terry: "Anytime, that anything is not relevant to you then you are subject to take it for granted. Any time you don't have to experience it first hand. Civil Rights has no relevance to me. Slavery has no relevance to me. I can understand it to a certain point, but after that."

Culture: This teacher describes relevance as a prerequisite for appreciation of something, whether it is a concept or a building.

Researcher: "Perhaps some of these kids, I mean, we are discussing it in so much detail, perhaps, it would be interesting to see in the next few years, once the schools not new any more, like an automobile that's not new any more, if some of the same problems we are experiencing, like writing on the walls, and defacing property, drawing on the desks. It will be interesting to see how the kids respond to that and how teachers respond. I think there has been more of an awareness among teachers to say, hey what are you doing there. But after a few years it would be interesting to see."

Culture: This teacher indicates a shift in teacher behavior and awareness due to the newness of the building and situation. How long will the newness last? How will the culture of the new school evolve as the newness wears off?

Hal: "That's just the natural thing. We've been acutely aware because it's a new school, a new situation, and we want to keep the new on it. By next year, the youngins, this is just Valdosta Middle School."

Researcher: “It will be interesting to see if the administration and the teachers, if these changes that have come about, some of the changes for the positive can be maintained and a new tradition or culture. I think there was a culture of the old school. The way things were done. We’ll just see if it can carry on.”

Phillip: “You can do a second dissertation on that.”

Hal: “I’ll tell you what could create a new culture in this school, would be to double or possibly triple the size of the alternative school. That would help create a new culture for this school.”

Culture: This teacher suggests a better culture could be created in the new building by removing problem students.

Terry: “And a new attitude.”

Researcher: “That would be interesting with all the money that has been spent recently on building new schools and make sure that some of it was funneled to a different type of school. Well, I appreciate it and the time you gave me.”

*As to whether the process of moving to a new facility in the middle of a school year was a good experience, this focus group of teachers seemed to overwhelmingly agree that waiting until the beginning of the next school year would have been better. Their reasons for suggesting the transition should have been delayed focused on the undue stress that in their view was placed on faculty. Likewise, many in the group questioned whether the building was structurally and technologically ready for inhabitants at the time of the transfer.*

## Chapter IV

### ONE YEAR LATER

February 5, 2003:

I have spent the last eight months refining and defending my proposal, transcribing and analyzing five focus groups and one individual interview, and reading educational research literature that is applicable to emerging themes of my ethnographic study. Within the next two weeks, our school will mark the one-year anniversary of the transition to the new building. I have decided to conduct follow-up focus groups with teachers and students, who experienced the mid-year transfer to the new VMS facility, but who have not previously been questioned on the move. My hopes are that I will be able to identify changes in the culture of the school that are both short-term (resulting from the move but which gradually changed) and long-term (alterations to the culture of the school that have endured).

*Student Focus Group: February 5, 2004*

Researcher: "The topic today is, and the reason you were selected is I randomly picked some people who had been to the old school and to the new school, that were in the old Valdosta Middle School and are now in the new one. I'm going to ask some general questions and I just want to get your thoughts. I mean it's nothing extremely profound or anything but I just want, I've been asking teachers, students, and administrators and whatever is important to you is what I want to hear. You don't necessarily have to say, well what is he looking for, just tell me what comes to mind with you. What do you think of the new school? Someone can just start and when they are through you can get on in. Any thoughts? What do you think of the new school?"

Chrissy: "Too strict."

Power and Control

Researcher: "Too strict?"

Chrissy: "Plain."

Space and Design Features:  
Description of the new school as plain.

Researcher: "Plain?"

Sandy: "I like the new school's classrooms."

Design Features: The new classrooms are better than the rooms at the old school.

Researcher: "The classrooms are better?"

Chrissy: "The carpet."

Researcher: "The carpet?"

Tad: "I think if this is really like, Valdosta City Schools they should have a little more black and gold in it, instead of having like the green line down the hall. That's not, I don't think that's any close to..."

Culture: The student is not opposed to the purpose of the green line, just the color. Our school colors are black and gold.

Researcher: "Kind of what Chrissy was saying, it's so plain?"

Sandy: "One part I like about the school, you know in the front where it says VMS in the bushes. I like that. I like the gym, but the gym kind of small."

Design Features and Culture: The bushes on the slope by the track are arranged in the school initials, VMS. How important are school colors, names, and traditions to school and student culture?

Researcher: "The gym's kind of small but you like it better? Do ya'll remember the old gym?"

Space: The gym in the new school is perceived to be smaller than at the old building.

Group response: "Yes."

Researcher: "They tore that down when ya'll were in the sixth grade. After sixth grade."

Tad: "It's a good facility. It's a lot better than the old school."

Space: The new building is better.

Carnie: "It's a cleaner facility and all, but it is a different type of school."

Space and Design Features: Cleaner facility. How is the new school a different type of facility?

Ked: "You don't have the same broken in feel here. At the other one you felt more like school and here you just feel like..."

*Although Chrissy began a discussion of the new school in more negative terms, by describing the new school as too strict and plain, Sandy placed a more positive spin on the new surroundings. Just as there seemed to be a shift to positive statements, Sandy reversed her demeanor and made a harsh criticism of the new facility that highlighted a power struggle within.*

Sandy: "Jail!"

Hidden Curriculum: Prison comparison remains one year after the move.

Researcher: "Like what? You feel like you are in jail?"

Tad: "First, we gotta walk on the green line. Then they are going to come up with, I know some people were throwing batteries or something, and now we gotta walk on the green line going to everything."

Control: The green line  
Control, Order, and Resistance: New rotation changing classes to reading because of congestion and student misbehavior. "The Loop"

Sandy: "I know that's wrong."

Ked: "I understand the thing about the green line, but I think some people take it too seriously. Like some people say you can walk right by it and one foot on the green line. Like, all the teachers have different regulations."

Control and Order: The student perceives inconsistencies in application of rules and regulations.

Researcher: "Right. It's more defined and you still don't know what teachers expect? You said you feel like jail?"

Sandy: "There's too many cameras."

Researcher: "The cameras. Do they make you nervous?"

Control and Hidden Curriculum: What messages does the presence of security cameras send to students?

Group response: "Yes."

Researcher: "As opposed to, there were none in the old school were there?"

Tad: "I think there were some, two in the lunchroom. I know they worked sometimes because when I went up to the office and called, I saw them."

Design Features: Old school cameras vs. new school.

Chrissy: "Now I like it at lunch. It's alright at lunch."

*Students continued to describe the new school as a jail a year after the transition. Once again, the animosity toward the green line had diminished very little. Ked made a comment on what he perceived as inconsistencies in teacher applications and enforcement of school rules. Finally, the students expressed their dislike for the multitude of security cameras that monitor student behavior throughout the school.*

Researcher: "How is the lunchroom compared to the old school? Do you like it better?"

Carnie: "A lot better."

Chrissy: "I like the little, where we get the food. It's smaller."

Time: Lunch depicted by this student as improved compared to the old school.  
Design Features: Smaller lunchroom in the new building.

Anita: "I like that we have seats with a back."

Researcher: "Seats with a back and you said the food area, where you get the food's good, but it's smaller?"

Carnie: "It's more crowded and louder."

Researcher: "It's louder? Do you think that's because it's actually smaller?"

Carnie: "Yes."

Tad: "I think it only feels small because it has that other little area other area in the old school."

Researcher: "The add on?"

Tad: "Yeh, the add on."

Researcher: "And they had a higher ceiling. That might make a difference."

Sandy: "And we don't have a Tomcat Den."

Researcher: "You don't have a what?"

Sandy: "A Tomcat Den at this school."

Researcher: "What was the Tomcat Den? Is that in the guidance?"

Group response: "Yes."

Carnie: "It was a big conference room for meetings."

Researcher: "Oh. They don't have any room up there like that up there?"

Tad: "Oh yeh I remember that."

Carnie: "They have conference rooms but they aren't really huge."

Researcher: "They aren't as big as the..."

Distractions: The lunchroom is described as crowded and noisy.

Design Features: The Tomcat Den was a group discussion room behind guidance office in the old building.

## Mumbling

Researcher: “What else about the new school do you like or dislike? It could be something you dislike. I know you mentioned the green line.”

Tad: “The food.”

Researcher: “You don’t like the food?”

Tad: “Sometimes.”

Sandy: “They be giving us the same food over and over.”

Problems with the new school:  
Food at lunch. This is probably a universal complaint among students.

Tad: “I talked to one of the ladies that goes to my school (he meant church) I talked to her about it and she said that chicken that has, we call it the grease bucket, and then the next day they give us chicken with barbeque sauce on it. So it looks like the same thing. They just put barbeque on it. She said no, they make some more. But the cookies, you can like, pick them up hit the table, they are hard as you can be, as they can be.”

Carnie: “I broke some of my braces off eating French fries that were as hard as a rock.”

Sandy: “It’s real clean though. The bathrooms ...”

Space: Cleanliness as a positive feature of the new school. How important is the cleanliness of a school?

Researcher: “You talking about here at the new school?”

Sandy: “Yes.”

Carnie: “The thing is we’re fixing to go to the high school next year and we’re still treated like little third graders, having to walk in a straight line.”

Culture and Control: Abrupt shift in the conversation to a complaint of teacher and administrator behavior and rules and regulations.

Ked: “In third grade you had more freedom because we stayed in one classroom. In kindergarten they herded us around to like breakfast and back and electives and all that stuff. To me the foods a little better. Well, not really better, actually it’s the same. It never really tasted good.”

Freedom: Students perceive a loss of freedom in middle school.

*The students agreed with previous groups with regard to the deficiencies of the new lunchroom in terms of size, although their overall impression of the new facility was positive. Not surprisingly, lunchtime seemed to be a major topic of interest among the students. What was more interesting was the way that Carnie and Ked used a conversation about the cafeteria to address complaints of loss of freedom.*

Researcher: "What about in the classrooms? Are the classrooms better? With technology and stuff like that?"

Carnie: "They have all the computers in each classroom."

Researcher: "Do a lot of the teachers, what about the computer hook up and the PowerPoint? Do a lot of teachers use that now?"

Group: "Yes."

Instruction: More use of technology by teachers in the new school.

Researcher: "What about in the old school? Did they use them that much?"

Tad: "I don't think they ever used it. They used the overhead."

Technology and Instruction: A shift from old technology (overhead projectors) in the old building to new technology (computers and PowerPoint) in the new building. Instructional changes resulting from the transfer and the availability and easy access.

Carnie: "It was more complicated because they had to get a T.V. into the classroom and hook it up with the wires."

Sandy: "Yep. We had to go to the library."

Anita: "The digital clocks are (Unintelligible) because some teachers didn't have clocks in their classrooms and it's a lot easier."

Technology and Time: Digital clocks make for more synchronized day.

Researcher: "So everybody knows, and I think they are all the same time throughout the school, so there is no question about that?"

Sandy: "I think reading (Unintelligible)"

Researcher: "You like the reading class? We had the reading at the old school but this school, you don't have as many places to go, do you? Didn't at the old school, some people go all the way out to the IA building and some went down this wing? Most of the time you stay on this wing?"

Anita: "I like that it's all indoor now."

Design Features: Enclosed school facility with very little need for students to leave the building and less distances to walk.

Carnie: "There is a lot less walking I think because it's smaller."

Ked: "I don't like the way the halls are designed because like in a real fire drill, people in the back can't get out in time. It's like, if a bomb was about to explode in like ten minutes, by the time we'd be getting out the door it would blow up."

Resistance: Bomb threats are a perennial problem but I question as to whether this concern of an actual explosion is valid.

Chrissy: "I don't see why we can't just go out the door, if we are in a science class, why we can't just go out the door?"

Design Features: Science classes have doors that exit to the outside.

Researcher: "Oh. For evacuating and stuff?"

Chrissy: "Yeh."

Researcher: "Well you said something, one of you, about everything is kind of on one hall. Do you like it better? Like in the old school, sometimes you had to go down to wing B or C. Do you like better being on one?"

Sandy: "I don't like it better like that. You don't get to see nobody."

Isolation

(Mumbling)

Carnie: "I had a class where I had to go all the way from the sixth grade hall to the eighth grade hall and that was like a ten minute walk and I had to walk it every day and I didn't like it."

Design Features: The old school was more spread out and there is less movement required of the students in the new building.

Anita: "Even if you tried to walk from the seventh grade hall to the eighth grade hall, (Mumbling) and I was always late."

*One noticeable change in the school faculty since the transition appeared to be in the application of technology. The students indicated that teachers were using computer technology for classroom instruction to a greater degree than at the old school. Tad indicated a transition from old technology (overhead projectors) to new technology (computers) since the move. Carnie made a connection related to computer usage that several teachers had previously noted, the accessibility of technology when she referred to the process of using computers at the old school as "complicated." Once again, the theme of isolation surfaced as Sandy expressed discontent at the current school structure where, "You don't get to see nobody."*

Researcher: “So ya’ll didn’t like that. Well, what about the old school? What do you remember about the old school? I mean, it’s been like a year.”

Carnie: “Dirty.”

Space: Description of the old school as dirty.

Researcher: “The teachers? You said dirty?”

Anita: “No mirrors in the bathroom.”

Space: Many bathrooms in the old school had no mirrors.

Researcher: “No mirrors in the bathroom?”

Carnie: “There was like rarely ever any toilet paper.”

Researcher: “So it was kind of run down?”

Carnie: “Yeh.”

Researcher: “It’s been about, it’s been almost a year since we’ve been over there right? We moved in March last year?”

Group: “February.”

Researcher: “February?”

Carnie: “Valentine’s Day.”

Researcher: “Oh. We moved on Valentine’s Day? You said something about it was more spread out over there than it is here?”

Carnie: “There was more walking.”

Researcher: “So you don’t miss it or you do miss it?”

Tad: “I miss it.”

Researcher: “What do you miss about it? Evidently not the bubble gum and the bugs and stuff.”

Carnie: “Freedom. They’re so much more stricter here because it’s a new facility and you have to treat it right.”

Freedom, Control, and Space:  
Loss of freedom at the new school associated with protection of the new facility.

Researcher: “Give me an example of some of the freedoms you are talking about, like, what did teachers or administrators do over there that was different?”

Tad: “We didn’t have a line to walk on.”

Carnie: “They were a little more lenient about...”

Sandy: “Yeh we used to walk through the school.”

Carnie: “Some teachers allowed you to eat in class.”

Control: The green line as a symbol of loss of freedom.  
Culture: Teacher and administrator behavior perceived as more lenient at the old school. Has there been a shift in teacher enforcement of the rules? Did teachers slack off with regard to the rules of the school prior to the move and then tighten up?

*When asked about the old school, the students’ first reaction was to address many negative physical aspects of the old school. The old building was described as dirty and decrepit. After Tad responded that he missed the old school, I asked what seemed to be a logical follow-up question. The response I received confirmed the enduring nature of certain student perceptions. Carnie said she missed “Freedom” that she believed she had lost since coming to the new facility. The implications centered around the perceptions that teachers were more lenient at the old building and had become stricter since the move.*

Researcher: “Oh really? Just toward the end there, before we moved, or the whole year? Sixth grade and seventh grade?”

Carnie: “Towards the end. Like sixth grade was nothing like that, seventh grade was.”

Tad: “They let us bring like, just water. No sodas or nothing.”

Researcher: “Do you think that was because they didn’t have as many computers or they didn’t have, it wasn’t a new school?”

Carnie: “I think it was because they knew they were moving.”

Researcher: “So they didn’t care if you wrote on the desks and walls?”

Control and Culture: This student sees a relaxation of the rules and regulations prior to the move as a realization that a move to the new school was eminent.

Tad: “The last day that we were there we had, just boys brought a football we were just throwing it in the room.”

Freedom: To play.

Researcher: “But in sixth grade, since ya’ll have been here for several years, most of you, in sixth grade was it a little

bit stricter than the year we moved do you think?"

Ked: "Not really."

Carnie: "Well it was different because there was so much pressure moving, that we didn't have time to do the testing and stuff and we didn't accomplish like, anything because we were so busy with packing and getting ready to move and then unpacking."

Instruction, Achievement, and Distractions: This student perceived a lack of learning associated with the process of moving.

Researcher: "Was that stressful to you? Moving during the year? Would you have rather started the year in the new school or..."

Group response: "Yeh."

Anita: "That's the thing about not having a gym to play basketball. Like everyday, we had to drive like to Lomax-Pinevale or whatever and we always had away games and all that."

Culture and Space: Lomax-Pinevale is another really old school in the system. The student expresses concern that they were unable to play basketball games at home. How important are extracurricular activities to student culture?

Carnie: "And like during the sixth grade there was so much loud commotion and noise, because of the building of the new school."

Distractions: Problems with noise from the construction. What was the effect on teacher instruction and student achievement?

Researcher: "Oh yeh. I didn't think about that. Ya'll were down on that end of the wing weren't you? See, I was on the eighth grade wing, so I never heard any noise. But ya'll had the ground movers and all that stuff?"

Group: "Yeh."

Tad: "We'll be sitting here doing our work and we'll start shaking like that."

Distractions

Carnie: "And you look out the window and they're putting up part of the gym."

Distractions.

Ked: "I don't remember much about the sixth grade except throwing paper."

"Goofing off": Interesting that throwing paper is this student's only memory of the sixth grade.

*With regard to the period immediately proceeding and following the move, the students perceived a shift in faculty application and enforcement of school rules. The students seemed to feel the teachers and administrators were more lenient prior to the transitional process and only re-established adherence to school rules following the move. These students were sixth graders when the new building was being constructed and were closest to the noises of the building crews.*

Researcher: “Well have you noticed any differences in the move to the new school as far as like administrators, teachers, activities in the classrooms? Do your days go differently in other words?”

Carnie: “They’re more technologically advanced.”

Technology and Instruction: What are the effects of technology?

Researcher: “OK. Your teachers are using a lot more technology than they did before?”

Tad: “I feel I’m learning more since we’ve got in the new school. Than I did in the old school.”

Achievement: Perception of increased learning.

Researcher: “Because of the technology or better lighting? Well I mean, what aspects?”

Carnie: “Less distraction, because like before, there’s nothing here to look at.”

Achievement and Distractions: Interesting design observation. Do sterile school designs equal increased learning?

Researcher: “Right. Nothing on the walls?”

Carnie: “Nothing on the walls. Nothing to do.”

Researcher: “Originally you know, we couldn’t put, when we first got in, they didn’t want us to put anything on the walls because it takes like six months for the paint to settle in. So that was the reason they told us not to put anything on the walls. Not that I did before anyway, but, OK, less distractions and more technology that seems to be something. Have the administrators changed any? Mr. Randall? The vice principals? Oh, you don’t really know How they acted toward other people, but...”

Ked: “Everybody’s uptight about their...”

Tension

Researcher: “More tense?”

Group response: “Yeh.”

Anita: “I know our teachers are a little more strict.”

Culture and Control: Are teachers stricter in the new building?

Carnie: “Yeh. They are a lot more intense about the rules.”

Culture and Control: Students appear to view a shift I teacher culture and enforcement of the rules since the move.

Researcher: “You had a lot more freedom in the sixth and the seventh grade?”

Group response: “Yeh.”

Ked: “Everything just got a lot more boring, more tense, and more aggravating, and more, I’m staying home today.”

(Laughter)

Researcher: “That’s why you took a personal day yesterday? I liked that.”

Carnie: “During the middle of the year we had to learn a whole new route and it was like starting a new school year. It was hard to learn it.”

*When asked if their days had changed since moving to the new building, the students responded in many different ways. While Carnie felt the instruction she was receiving was more “technologically advanced,” she also indicated that she was more focused because of the plainness of the new classrooms. Ked abruptly shifted the conversation to the concept of tension. The other students seemed poised to add their perspective of ways teachers had become stricter since the transition.*

Researcher: “Did the days change any? When you left the old school and came to the new one, did the way your day flowed...?”

Carnie: “It went faster.”

Researcher: “In the new school it went faster?”

Tad: “In the old school it seemed like it took for ever to get out of the class.”

Ked: “It was really at the end of the year so, everything goes faster.”

Researcher: “Yeh. It was an unusual time really to break down. Well, things would you say that this school are similar to the old school? Is there any way that the two of them are similar?”

Carnie: “The desks. They are like the same type of desks just not the same desks.”

Ked: “They both have walls and roofs.”

Tension: What effects does tension have on students? What effects does boredom have on students and learning?  
Resistance and “Goofing off”:  
This student was absent yesterday. I asked him why and his response was that he needed a personal day off.

Distractions: Problems for students in learning new ways of adjusting to the new environment.

Time: The student perceives a change in the time flow of the school day following the move.

Researcher: “Is that it? I mean they’re pretty different as far as you are concerned?”

Ked: “Well the design, the blue prints are different, but the whole education is the same. It just hasn’t been broken in yet.”

Design Features and Instruction:  
No perceived differences in the educational process following the move by this student.

Carnie: “All of the equipment like, all of the stuff for connections, every bit of that was brought over here. There is nothing new. Like all of it is the same.”

Researcher: “Everything’s brand new? Do you like the newness?”

Ked: “It smells funny.”

Chrissy: “No.”

Researcher: “Do you feel nervous about being in a new school? Have you felt like teachers, administrators, or students, do ya’ll feel like we are going to break something? Apparently you weren’t nervous in the old school.”

Ked: “It’s too quiet.”

Researcher: “What?”

Ked: “It’s too quiet. Everything’s like all quiet and like just...”

Distractions: This student feels the new school is too quiet. This is different from past comments by students and teachers. Can silence be as equally distracting as noise?

Carnie: “The walls are too thin. You can hear everything another teacher says. Word for word.”

Distractions: Thin walls in the new school blamed for noise.

Researcher: “And that wasn’t the way in the old school?”

Group: “No.”

Tad: “But now, if someone is watching T.V. you can hear it, almost blasting in the next room.”

Distractions: Televisions from one room can be heard easily in other rooms.

Researcher: “What about the exterior of the school? Like the track, the leaving in the morning, coming in the morning. Has that changed any? Do you like it better?”

Anita: “When we first moved here last year, when we had

to go around, I think picking up took a lot longer than it did in the old school, because you had to wait in line and they only let one person go at a time.”

Time: Dismissal at the end of the day slower than at the old school.

Researcher: “Do ya’ll like being inside in the morning waiting to go to class? Didn’t ya’ll used to go outside at the old school?”

Group: “No.”

Researcher: “Never did? Oh, because they were building? Oh, so you never had a chance to do that? But, as far as the exterior of the school, you like it better than the old one?”

Carnie: “I’m not much for the car riding pickup, because if it rains there is no shelter to go to except for this postage stamp size area where you have to huddle under.”

Design Features: Problem with lack of shelter on rainy days? I don’t think this is a real issue anymore since on rainy days, students wait for their rides in the lunchroom.

Sandy: “Heck yeh, when it be raining they still make us, we have to walk all the way home in the rain.”

I’m not sure what this student expects the school to do for walkers on rainy days.

Carnie: “But if it’s drizzling, like, you have to stand out there. I have a friend who go a cold because she had to stand in the rain.”

Researcher: “Do you feel like you are performing better at the new school than you were, I mean academically or behavior wise? Are you behaving better?”

Tad: “When we were in the old school I was making like fifties and sixties. But now that I’ve gotten in this school I’ve been making B’s.”

Achievement: Increase in achievement and or grades at the new school.

Researcher: “Do you think it’s because it’s cleaner and brighter or have you grown up?”

Tad: “It was dark in the old school. Walking down the hallway.”

Researcher: “Why do you think the change? I’m speaking specifically to you. What made the change? Is it because you are in a new facility? You feel better about learning? I’m just kind of curious? Have any of you, the rest of you? Are you doing better here or focusing better? ”

Anita: "I think it's a better learning atmosphere."

Carnie: "I think the teachers, also the pressure was kind of put on them too and we have new materials."

Researcher: "What about behavior? Have you felt like you or your classmates, you can speak on behalf of your classmates, has behavior changed any?"

Group: "No."

Ked: "In a way."

Carnie: "Not as much stealing in the hallways."

Researcher: "Because of the cameras? What about the bathrooms? Is there less...?"

Ked: "The bathrooms are thankfully a lot cleaner although, I still wouldn't sit on the seat. And the behavior, everybody's pretty much good except, for sometimes, you know, everyone's cooped up in the school all the time, you know, a lot of people act up in class."

Researcher: "Do you feel kind of trapped sometimes being in here?"

Group: "Yes."

Researcher: "You said being cooped up in the school. At the old school did you ever have an opportunity to get outside?"

Tad: "Some places we had to go like Career Connections."

Researcher: "Oh, that exterior building?"

Tad: "You got to walk out."

Researcher: "At the end of the day?"

Tad: "Yeh. That's about it."

Researcher: "I guess ya'll didn't get to go out at P.E. in seventh grade? Outside?"

Space and Achievement: What is a learning atmosphere and how does it effect achievement?  
Tension and Culture: Student perception of pressure that is placed on teachers for student achievement.

Control and Order: The group concurs with many statements by teachers and administrators that there has not been a decrease in student misbehavior.

Space: Bathrooms cleaner in the new school.  
Resistance and Space: A relationship between student misbehavior and students being "cooped up" is proposed.

Tad: "When we were about to change and they locked up the gym, we had to either do work in class or either go outside."

Group: "We went to the park."

Carnie: "I didn't like it at all. You had to wear your regular street clothes and run around this thing and you get hot and sweaty."

*I asked basically the same question once again, concerning any differences in the flow of the school day since the move. What was interesting is that the second time through I received more detailed and varied responses. Carnie, Tad, and Ked concurred that time seemed to move faster in the new building. Despite the newer classrooms and technology, some of the students indicated that the educational processes had changed very little. Ked indicated that he believed the new school was too quiet, which contradicts most of the other assessments of the acoustical properties of the new classrooms. Carnie and Tad disagreed with Ked's assessment and felt the inter-classroom sounds were more distracting than at the old school. The students did perceive improvements in student behavior following the transition, although Ked did attribute the fact that occasionally "a lot of people act up in class" to being "cooped up in the school all the time."*

Researcher: "Do ya'll like it better this year, now that we have the break time after lunch? Get out and get some fresh air?"

Anita: "I liked it better before where we got to talk to the other team."

Carnie: "Now it's separated."

Ked: "Now it's like segregation."

Researcher: "Segregation?"

Carnie: "That was the only time that we got to see our friends."

Researcher: "So you feel like you are separated from other eighth graders?"

Group: "Yeh."

Researcher: "Do ya'll ever see any kids on other grade levels? Sixth grade or seventh grade?"

Control and Isolation: This is the first year since I've been teaching at VMS that students have had a break time after lunch. At the beginning of the year, students could mingle with students from other teams. This has since been changed for various reasons associated with monitoring students.

Isolation: Interesting that this student describes the new break time procedures as segregation. Freedom: To associate with one's peers.

Group: “No.”

Researcher: “So basically the only people you get to see is on your team?”

Group: “Yeh.”

Researcher: “And it wasn’t like that at the old school?”

Tad: “The old school, they would have to like, well, sixth grade when they got dropped off they would have to walk by the eighth grade and seventh grade and walk all the way down to the other side. Seventh graders had (Unintelligible) ways to go.”

Isolation: In the old school students had more opportunities to see and socialize with students of other grades.

Researcher: “So you had to see people from other grade levels? Which do you like better? This way, the new school with the way we do it, or the old school?”

Group: “The old school.”

Ked: “Everything was more open. This is more enclosed and solitary.”

Design Features and Isolation: The new school is described as more enclosed and solitary.

Carnie: “I would like for the fire drills, like he said, the doors, they close automatically. If somebody is in the main part of the building, they can’t get out.”

Design Features: Security doors that close in the event of a fire, bomb threat, etc.

Tad: “I was with, when we were about to go to lunch, you remember me, Brett, and I think Luke, we walked out, and you told us to stop, but when we turned around to come back the fire drill came on and the doors shut and they were locked. So, we couldn’t...”

Researcher: “And you got stuck?”

Tad: “We got stuck. It was weird because like one minute it went one and all of a sudden you looked around and all the doors are shut. They got this side door right there, that’s the only door you got to get out of.”

*The themes of control and isolation have not diminished in the year since the move. Even with increased social time allotted after lunch, the students felt unduly “separated” from their friends and limited in the freedom to associate with their peers. Ked went so far as to describe the students’ predicament as “segregation.” The new school was presented as being more enclosed and solitary, perhaps exacerbating prison comparisons.*

Researcher: “What would you have done differently if you had been in charge of building the new school? Is there anything you would have done differently?”

Ked: “They should have more exits and like separate it out like instead of having one hallway, have two hallways. Like exits so you can all go out.”

Design Features: Are more exits needed?

Tad: “Or like they did in the seventh grade. Have a T.”

Researcher: “They have a T over here in the seventh grade now, I think. You think that would be good for each grade?”

(Mumbling)

Carnie: “The gym’s really small. It won’t accommodate the students.”

Design Features and Space: Once again the gym is described as being too small.

Researcher: “They can’t fit everybody in there?”

Carnie: “They can’t fit all the students in there so we can’t have a pep rally.”

Design Features and “Rite of Passage”: Problem of no pep rallies associated with the gym’s size. Is this the primary reason there have been no pep rallies this year?

Researcher: “They don’t have enough room to fit everybody in there for an assembly?”

Tad: “I think they do, but...”

Carnie: “Mr. Randall said that there wasn’t enough room for all the students.”

Researcher: “That’s kind of unusual. I didn’t realize that they had built a gym that couldn’t handle the student’s because the old school, you could fit everybody in there and you had some extra room.”

Sandy: “The old school was better.”

Space: Shift to comment about the old school versus the new school.

Researcher: “So you said that you feel like you don’t get to do anything but...”

Sandy: “No field trips, nothing.”

Freedom and “Rite of Passage”: Why have field trips decreased?  
Instruction: This student perceives a financial cutback in instructional materials such as run off

Carnie: “I mean the year that we were moving we had to write every single thing down because paper cost so much.

Like we didn't get any run offs."

Researcher: "Oh, really? So you've got a nicer school but you are having, they can't print out things for you? Well how would you describe, if you could just pick one word for me, to say the old school was like what? We'll start over here and work our way around. Just pick a word that would describe the old school."

Ked: "Free."

Researcher: "Free? OK."

Chrissy: "I have to think."

Researcher: "It doesn't have to be positive like his."

Tad: "Uh."

Anita: "It's hard."

Tad: "Like he said, free."

Researcher: "You could describe it as something."

Chrissy: "I felt warm at the old school."

Carnie: "Dirty."

Researcher: "Dirty? What about the new school? What would be a word that you would say for the new school?"

Ked: "Entrapment."

Researcher: "Entrapment, OK."

Tad: "Clean, probably."

Researcher: "Clean."

Sandy: "Jail."

Researcher: "Jail. OK, we've got a clean jail so far."

Chrissy: "Strict."

worksheets. In recent years, the money allotted each teacher for copies and paper has decreased, however, the money for building the new school was from a local sales tax and did not directly affect instructional funds.

Freedom: The old school as free.

Freedom

Space: Description of the old school as warm.

Space: Description of the old school as dirty.

Hidden Curriculum: Do students feel like prisoners in schools?

Space: Description of the new school as clean.

Hidden Curriculum: Prison comparison seems to still dominate student descriptions of the new school.

Control: Description of the new school as strict.

Researcher: "Strict."

Carnie: "Lines."

Design Features: The green line

Researcher: "Lines."

Anita: "Clean, too."

Researcher: "Clean."

Ked: "Can I change mine to boring."

Culture: Can the design of a school or the actions of the faculty create a culture of boredom?

Researcher: "Boring. Now the line, some people have mentioned the line. You talking about the green line? What was it the kids were calling it? They had a nickname for it? Last year? I think they called it the Green Mile. Have ya'll ever seen that movie?"

Laughter

Researcher: "Ya'll don't like that? That's something that you've said. Would it be better if it were black and gold tile Tad?"

Tad: "Probably."

Researcher: "Or is it jus the fact that there is a line there?"

Carnie: "I think when they were building the school, the school board didn't know that the green line was going to be used for that and that they wouldn't have approved it, if it was going to be used for children to walk on."

Power, Control, and Design Features: Interesting perception of the school board's possible motivations and intentions.

Researcher: "But now it has become this issue?"

Carnie: "Stay on the green line."

Researcher: "And you don't like it, not necessarily because you have to walk to the right but because what?"

Carnie: "It's like we are treated like children."

Anita: "Because when we go to the high school, they aren't going to..."

Culture: Treating students as children. How do students perceive their roles in the school?

Mumbling

Researcher: “But you feel like you’d rather learn those skills here than, do you feel nervous about going to the high school, like you don’t know what to expect?”

Tad: “Kind of, but...”

Researcher: “But you are ready for it?”

Group: “Yes.”

Researcher: “So you feel a lot more restricted here don’t you?”

Group: “Yes.”

Tad: “I understand walking on the line going to lunch or something, but the line, I just don’t like the line.”

Researcher: “Do you feel like, because one thing I seem to be hearing, that you don’t feel like you get any time with people on other teams, do you feel like you don’t have enough social time? Do you feel like it’s always work, work, work?”

(Silence)

Researcher: “Or do you feel like you don’t get enough work? I’m just trying to figure out.”

Tad: “First of all we go outside and we have to split up like team, team, team. But were really talking to the people we see ...”

Isolation

Group: “Every day.”

Researcher: “Well thank you for your time.”

*Two opposite schemas emerged as the students described the old and new schools. They described the old building as “dirty”, but affording them more freedom. Their perceptions of the new school were the exact opposite, as they used words such as clean, entrapment, and jail to depict their current surroundings. The emergence of loss of freedom along with the movement into a new facility had become a dominant student theme throughout the transitional process. One academic year has done little to alter the perceptions of the students that they have been forced to unknowingly sacrifice much of their freedom in exchange for a newer building. I will be interested to see how teachers address the same issues.*

*Teacher Focus Group: February 10, 2004*

Researcher: “The purpose of this study is looking at the transition from the old school that we were in last year to the new school and the mid-year transition. I’ve just got a few general questions that I am going to ask and you can just chime in with your answers, whatever is most important. I’m not looking for anything specific. I’m more interested in what it is that you remember or have to say. First question is, what are your impressions or what do you think of the new school?”

Gerry: “I think it’s beautiful.”

Design Features and Space:  
Description of the new school as beautiful.  
Positive impressions of the new school.

Rosy: “I think it’s an absolutely fantastic situation here. Definitely number one.”

Dora: “Well planned, well constructed, well thought out, and aesthetically pleasing.”

Design Features

Natalie: “Wow! I agree. I think it is beautiful. Yeh, I think the design was great. You can tell that the lines in the hall, everything has been thought through all the way down to pretty much every detail, except maybe the (unintelligible)”

Design Features: This teacher describes the school as well planned.

Dora: “Is there a question that deals with problems?”

This teacher is ready to get to negative aspects of the new school.

Researcher: “You could address that here. It doesn’t all have to be positive.”

Dora: “One of the issues that I feel like was overlooked is the insulation in the ceiling wasn’t low enough to stop sound travel is my feeling.”

Design Features and Distractions:  
Problems with noise and its distractive aspects.

Researcher: “Compared to the old school?”

Dora: “Right. That was something that wasn’t addressed. I don’t know if they realize what goes on in classrooms?”

Design Features: Perceived problem of those designing the new building and their ignorance of daily activities in the classrooms.

Rosy: “Sound traveling is a problem. I didn’t realize it was a ceiling situation. I was going to say the walls were lacking in sound proofing because I seem to be much more aware of the activity in other...”

Dora: "There's nothing there. At the old school the blocks went all the way up. It was a cost cutting measure."

Design Features and Distractions:  
Problem of noise associated with financial issues (cost cutting).

Gerry: "I think we have a problem with being too crowded on this campus for our facility. We have no room for expansion."

Design Features and Space:  
Concerns about the lack of room for future expansion.

Researcher: "Ok. In terms of adding, not just athletics, but you are talking about additional building?"

Gerry: "We don't have any more room. We have a smaller lunchroom for this campus than we did on the old campus."

Design Features and Space:  
Problem with the lunchroom in the new school being smaller than in the old building.

Dora: "But we are also more than two hundred students away from maxing out this building. I mean we are not at maximum capacity here and we've not grown by two hundred students. I mean we've lost two hundred. We've gained two hundred but we've lost as many as we've gained."

Space and Design Features:  
Disagreement as to whether the new building should have been designed for future expansion.

Natalie: "We are evening out."

Dora: "We are not at max capacity."

Researcher: "At this point it's not a problem but you feel like it might be in the future?"

Gerry: "Could be."

Researcher: "What about the classrooms themselves, or the technology, or the lunchroom, or the hallways, or the media center? What do you think, what are your new impressions in the new school of that?"

Natalie: "I think the cafeteria is a little small. It seems very crowded with all the students in there and we really still don't necessarily have a place where all our students can go. Maybe the gym? You think they all could fit in there? Can they all fit in there? That's probably the only place they could go where they could all go. If we were having a speaker we'd definitely have to do it by grades."

Design Features and Space:  
Problems with size of the lunchroom and perhaps the gym. This teacher perceives a need for a place that the entire student body could assemble.

Researcher: "I'm unsure about that because some of the kids told me that they were told, and I don't know who

told them this, there wasn't enough room, seating in the gym, for everybody."

Natalie: "Right. So unless there's, there's definitely not enough seating in the cafeteria or the media center for a speaker or even a grade in the library. You couldn't have a whole grade in there."

Dora: "Our media center is just barely, the little that I got involved with the media side when I was involved in my program, we barely meet state standards. We are at the bare bones minimum."

Design Features: Problems with the size of the media center. Does it comply with state regulations?

Natalie: "Now the computer lab is great."

Technology: The computer lab.

Researcher: "Have ya'll been able to make use of that? Has everybody used that so far?"

Dora: "I make use of it occasionally. It's tough to get in there."

Technology: Access of the computer lab is limited due to increased usage by teachers in the new building.

Natalie: "Right. It's full."

Instruction and Technology: Increased use of the computer lab for instructional purposes since transfer to new building.

Rosy: "People are definitely using it more."

*When asked what they thought of the new school, the teachers began with positive comments, but quickly transitioned to criticisms of the deficiencies of the new building. At the core of their complaints was the actual size of certain portions of the school and the inter-classroom noise levels. Gerry was especially concerned that the design and planning of the grounds of the campus left little to no room for expansion. Although the teachers were generally pleased with the overall layout of the new school, they concurred with earlier assessments that the cafeteria, gym, and media center were too small for current and/or future needs.*

Researcher: "What about the old school? Your impressions of the old school or memories of the old school? Has it been too long?"

Dora: "I felt that our A wing, being a newer, I was at the newer end, my classroom was actually bigger than my current classroom, as far the physical size and one thing that I miss, from the old school, is having the ability to use all four walls. In the new school, one wall is technology and cabinetry and in the old school you had all four walls."

Space: This teacher felt she had more room at the old school and more wall space to make use of.

Researcher: “Now did you have carpet in the rooms down there?”

Dora: “I had carpet in my room.”

Researcher: “Because I know at our end we didn’t.”

Gerry: “I had carpet in mine.”

Natalie: “We love our built ins.”

Dora: “Oh, I do too.”

Natalie: “And your old one had all that stuff, but I didn’t.”

Researcher: “Are the classrooms here bigger than the regular classrooms?”

Gerry: “At this building yes, but my classroom over there was huge. I had an extended room. It used to be the old computer lab. So I had another half of a classroom in the back of my class that I could do whatever.”

Space: Some of the wings at the old school had newer rooms and carpet, which were added many years after the original construction.

Space: How important is classroom size to teachers?

Researcher: “Did you like that better than your class here?”

Gerry: “Yes. I mean, I had a counter top that did a u-shape on the whole backside of my room and I had four areas. Just put them in groups, go to your area.”

Space

Natalie: “I see what’s nice about this school is science teachers have huge closets.”

Space and Design Features: Large storage facilities in the science rooms at the new school.

Gerry: “Oh, yeh.”

Natalie: “Which is unfortunate that everybody doesn’t, because we could all use it. We have a huge closet.”

Researcher: “Comparing the two, would you say that you are happier to be here or would you prefer the...?”

Natalie: “Oh, I’m happier.”

Dora: “Sure. It just wasn’t a bad situation in the other building.”

Natalie: “Right.”

Dora: “Except when, obviously there were parts that where the rain would leak. The sixth grade hall had big problems. When you look at a holistic picture, oh, we are in a nicer...”

Space: Leaking roofs in old school.

Gerry: “The bathrooms...”

Researcher: “How are the bathrooms? How have they changed?”

Dora: “They are much nicer.”

Design Features: Bathrooms.

Natalie: “These are much nicer.”

Gerry: “Very cold dungeons.”

Space: Dungeon analogy for bathrooms at the old school.

Dora: “At the old building they were.”

Natalie: “But I liked the old building because I was next to it and I could, they were convenient and close.”

Space: Proximity to bathroom facilities.

*When asked about the old school, the teachers commented more on the physical aspects of the building rather than the relationships they had with the students. The teachers seemed more concerned with classroom size, proximity of bathrooms, and absence of structural problems, such as leaking roofs, than with discussing their recollections of interpersonal interaction with others. Perhaps, they took my questions concerning the old school too literally and restrained their responses to discussions of the physical aspects of the old building.*

Researcher: “Have your days changed in any way? The way your days operate, your classroom schedule? Your working with other teachers? Has anything changed at this school opposed to the other one?”

Natalie: “I think we all worked really well together.”

Gerry: “You can put more kids in the bathroom at one time.”

Time: How much of a distraction are restroom breaks?

Dora: “No. I had no major changes.”

Researcher: “Do you feel, one comment that I got from some of the, not just teachers but kids and other people,

was feeling isolated. Do you feel isolated from other teachers and other grade levels?"

Natalie: "Not any more."

Gerry: "I feel very isolated because I was at the end of wing A."

Isolation: Teachers feeling isolated from their coworkers.

Dora: "I do. I think that we are very isolated. I think that we are, you know, other places, the common areas were closer to where we were and we actually saw people. Since common areas are really far away, from everybody, I do think we are more isolated."

Isolation and Culture: Importance of "common areas". What effects does isolation of teachers have on teacher and school culture?

Researcher: "I know the kids said, they never see anybody. If they have a brother or a sister in another grade level they never see them and I had some teachers that mentioned that. Which I think it was by design."

Gerry: "Yeh, that's the way they designed it."

Design Features: Isolation of grade levels.  
Isolation: Questions concerning whether there is more isolation at the new building or not.

Natalie: "But I don't know if, do you feel like we saw them more over there?"

Dora: "Yeh. Because the office was right on our wing."

Natalie: "Maybe at the office, but I don't know about other teachers..."

Rosy: "As far as offices, our office is much more centrally located for all of us."

Design Features: Centrally located offices.

Dora: "Oh, yeh."

Rosy: "I like that aspect. Where we were, on the eighth grade wing, if we had to go to the attendance office, my word."

Design Features: Positive aspect of the design of the new school: centralized offices.

*Some changes in the school day noted by the teachers were less time needed for restroom breaks, more isolation along grade levels, and less opportunities to associate with their colleagues. I found it especially interesting to note that many teachers felt many of the same restraining forces being exerted on their freedom by the design and daily routines of the new facility.*

Researcher: "Do you feel like this school is more secure as far as safety features? Well planned?"

Natalie: “Uh, huh.”

Rosy: “Yeh.”

Gerry: “Yeh.”

Rosy: “I think security was definitely a major concern.”

Design Features and Control:  
Problems in the old school with  
too many individuals having keys  
and access to parts of the old  
building.

Gerry: “Especially in the old gym because everybody and  
their brother has a key or had a key.”

Researcher: “Do you feel like, one thing that I got from  
some teachers and especially from some students, is they  
felt that when we first came over to the new school that  
there was sort of a tightening up. They felt that teachers  
and administrators got a lot stricter. Do you feel like  
we’ve become stricter as teachers or the administrators  
have become more strict since we’ve come?”

Dora: “In general?”

Researcher: “In general or in the hallways, do you feel  
there is a difference in the way we discipline between the  
old school and the new school?”

Gerry: “Yeh, especially moving with the whole grade  
level. Leaving your class, follow the line wherever you go.  
You know, remain silent in the hallways as much as  
possible.”

Culture and Control: This teacher  
perceives changes resulting from  
the move.

Researcher: “What do you think about the line for  
instance? The green line?”

Gerry: “I like it.”

Natalie: “It is not easy to stay inside the line as opposed to  
move over, move over. Stay against the wall. I mean I  
would always say shoulder on the wall.”

Control: How practical is the line  
for keeping students in order?  
This teacher feels that it is more  
difficult with the green line.  
Resistance and Control: Increase  
in monitoring and enforcement of  
rules as a result of student  
misbehavior rather than a shift in  
culture of teachers or  
administrators.

Rosy: “One of the reason that some of the students, some  
of the people might perceive this as being stricter is  
because just before we moved over here, we had that huge  
rash of those bomb threats and just to the point that I think  
every one got kind of bonkers about coming here. For a  
while we had to keep the surveys on who we were letting

out of class and you know that kind of concern. Check the restrooms before we went in and when we finished. I think that that was in a direct response to the situation over there, rather than just, new building, more strict.”

Researcher: “So you don’t feel like because it was a new building maybe administration or teachers were, did you feel like you were maybe, any more strict? Did you feel like when you were leaving the old school that the last few weeks you just let it go?”

Dora: “See, I don’t. I don’t feel I did that at all.”

Natalie: “I don’t think we let go, as far as discipline goes, but I think that when we came here we wanted to monitor closely, we wanted to keep it nice looking. It’s a brand new facility. We wanted to keep it clean. Keep it that way. Not that we trashed the other one, but you know, a mark on the wall is so much more evident here than there.”

Researcher: “Some of the perceptions, some of the people were saying that they thought it was because we were in a new building and I heard some students and teachers say it was because it was toward the end of the year and one of the teachers said, well, we always do that.”

Natalie: “Yeh.”

Researcher “We always tighten back up.”

Natalie: “That’s true too.”

Researcher: “I was curious as to whether people thought it was...”

Dora: “I think the kids were proud to be in a new building and I think when they saw how nice it looked that they were more apt, and still we don’t have trash in the hallways as much as we’ve had in the past, and they still. We still have trash in the hallways, but nothing, I think we are still kind of proud to be in a good-looking building. What people look like and what you have is important to them, at their age. They are still kind of proud. The security, I don’t know that we would tighten up. Having cameras watching every hallway, you know, you felt like you had another pair of eyes watching. So it was, if

Culture, Control, and Space:  
These teachers do not agree with the student perceptions that there was a relaxation of the rules prior to the move. They view the increase in supervision as a necessary measure for protecting the new building.

Culture and Control: There is a consensus among teachers and administrators that there must be a tightening up at the end of each school year.

Culture: Teacher perceptions of adolescent opinions of the new building and student culture.

Design Features and Control:  
Cameras as an extra pair of eyes

anything, you wouldn't tighten up. You'd feel like you could get a little more lax in common areas because you know you had another pair of eyes watching. Recording."

for monitoring students. This teacher feels that increased security measures may decrease teacher vigilance.

*There seemed to be less agreement and consistency concerning the topic of changes in teacher and administrator enforcement of rules prior to and following the move. While students perceived a tightening of discipline after the transition, which they associated with faculty desires to protect the new school, teachers attributed any change in their behavior to a tightening up at the end of every year or as a reaction to a "rash of bomb threats" initiated by students prior to the move. Interestingly, Dora insinuated that increased security measures at the new school such as surveillance cameras may have decreased adult vigilance in supervising students.*

Researcher: "What about the move at the end of the year, or toward the end of the year, in the last few months? Did you like the way we did it? Would you have preferred to wait, have waited until over the summer and started a brand new year? Did you think that was good, in other words a good transition, going ahead and moving last year?"

Rosy: "I have to comment about the fact that, I believe it was the superintendent made the comment that we barely got out of the other building in time before the other roof just about caved in. So in terms of that, probably fortunate that we came on as far as the major expenses of trying to prolong a semester."

Space and Time: Positive view of mid-year move. Getting out just in time.

Natalie: "I think it was exciting for those students, especially the eighth graders that were going to move on, that they had a chance to be in the new school. I like the way that we kind of did all one day, ok, eight grade go. We all came over together, you know. Togetherness."

Time: These teachers seem to have a different and more positive perspective of the mid-year move than teachers had at the end of last year.

Dora: "I think it would have been a shame for this building to sit empty, from February to August and sometimes the only way to work the kinks out are to get in here, to be in here, and to find out what's not right. You don't know what needs to be done until you are in there."

Time: Moving in before everything is completely done viewed as an advantage rather than a liability. Uncovering problems while there is still an obligation on the part of the builder to correct mistakes.

Researcher: "Right. And waiting six months and then figuring out the kinks..."

Dora: "That would have been..."

Rosy: “You know you are right about that, because there were a lot of things that we had to turn in information about your cabinetry, and this, and locks, and...”

Time and Space: Practical reasons for moving in during the year.

Dora: “That would have been very foolish.”

Rosy: “I’d never made a major move like that. That was kind of exciting.”

Time: Moving into a new building described as exciting which is very different from the descriptions offered by teachers last spring.

Gerry: “I enjoyed having the kids help us, because I know I would load up a truck full or two during planning period, before we moved and the kids that were just, you wouldn’t have anything to do with were the ones that wanted to help you because they wanted to do that type of work. So you got to see kids work in different ways. Whereas in the classroom, they may have been useless. Whereas loading boxes, stacking them and moving them all that stuff, they’re very useful.”

Time: Interesting comment compared to a teacher last year concerning liability issues.  
Hidden Curriculum: Interesting perception that some kids who were “useless” in the classroom were quite productive when it came to moving. Are students who are more hands-on than academically inclined made to feel useless?

*One year later, the general attitude of teachers concerning the timing of the move seems to have changed. Immediately following the transition, the teachers and administrators expressed reservations concerning the need to “rush” into a facility that was not fully operational. These teachers had different perceptions and memories of the process. They described positive aspects associated with the mid-year move such as, saving money that would have been used to continually repair the old school, affording faculty opportunities to uncover problems in the new school that would otherwise go unnoticed for months, and providing students and faculty with an exciting opportunity to be a part of a rare event, the opening of a new educational building.*

Researcher: “If you were to give me a phrase or a word to describe the old school, like the old school was like, what would it be? You could put a word or a phrase in there.”

Rosy: “How about traditional.”

Space: Description of the old school as traditional.

Natalie: “I don’t know if I say traditional, home.”

Space: Description of the old school as home.

Rosy: “I’m thinking about all the windows, which we don’t have that problem here.”

Natalie: “For my children it was kind of sentimental. I know my daughter came over and got a brick. She said, mama, I got a brick from Sallas Mahone and a brick from the junior high.”

Culture: Getting mementos of an old school building.

Researcher: “Had she gone to the old Sallas Mahone too?”

Natalie: "Yes she did."

Researcher: "Because I know..."

Natalie: "She got a brick from both."

Researcher: "Because someone told me the other day, I ran into a guy that I graduated high school with and he said you know you are getting old when they are tearing down all the schools that you went to. That's been my experience. How would you describe the old school?"

Gerry: "I don't know if I could sum it up in one word. The Bathrooms were cold. Dungeon. It was just worn out."

Space: Prison comparison.

Rosy: "It's time had come."

Dora: "it served it's purpose."

Researcher: "What about the new school? How would you, what would be a word or phrase you'd put in there. The new school is like...?"

Gerry: "Immaculate."

Space: Description of the new school in very favorable terms.  
Space and Design Features: The new school as the future.

Dora: "The future."

Rosy: "Technology. Technologically first rate."

Technology

Natalie: "I'd say the center of education, I mean this is it. This is the center of our community. It's the gathering place for our students, there families, everything. When you see people walking on the track, Relay for Life is going to be back here again. It's really drawing the community back. We missed that, when the track wasn't there. I think the community missed it. Now there all back and it's back to the center again."

Culture: The new building and school as the "center of the community". How important is a school to the culture of the community it serves?

Researcher: "That's kind of different. I had some of the kids say it was like an old car and a new car. Whereas you can get attached, I was attached to my beat up old blue truck, but the day that I sent it to my wife's cousin, parked it in his front yard and got the Yukon, I never wanted to go back. Well, is there anything else that, are there any other things on your mind about the old and the new

school that you'd like to tell me about? Anything that changed? Anything about, maybe administration, have they changed? Lunch schedule, athletics, anything that you can think of?"

Gerry: "We are moving in a direction, you know, at one time our program was combined in most all the sports and now we've definitely got splits in football and basketball. So far that is it. So in the future we may be solely split from J.L. Newbern to have our own identity."

Researcher: "Do you like that better?"

Gerry: "It's a long story."

Researcher: "That's a another research project?"

Gerry: "A whole other."

*The teachers expressed less reservation about moving from an old to a new school facility. Whereas, the students associated the transition with a loss of freedom, the teachers regarded the move an upgrade of physical surroundings and universally perceived the transfer as an improvement. The teachers, many of whom had spent a number of years teaching in the old school building, were much less nostalgic than were the students.*

Researcher: "Anything else? Any comments? Has administration changed any? About the same?"

Gerry: "I think they focus more on keeping things in order. Trying to keep things clean and neat."

Control and Order: Administrative behavior described in terms of keeping order.

Researcher: "If you had a suggestion, if some other school was going through the same type transition, what would you suggest to them or would you suggest anything different from the way we did things?"

Gerry: "Build on another site. Don't build on the same site."

Design Features and Distractions: Problems associated with building a new school on the same campus. Inconvenience during the building phases.

Rosy: "But that was only because of the inconvenience for that particular time right?"

Gerry: "Well, we are still landlocked. For us to grow any, we are not going to be able to."

Space: Lack of room for expansion is seen as a major problem.

Researcher: "I think there were political reasons for that."

Natalie: “Part of it is what I said. This is the center. Valdosta people, they wanted this to be the place to come and it still is.”

Gerry: “The track. I always thought that they should have put the bus barn, central office, alternative school, transitional center, whatever, in the old school and build this somewhere else.”

Researcher: “You said you’d build on a different site?”

Dora: “I would also, I would recommend to that you have some alternative key personnel and I think there is a media specialist. I just don’t think in the planning stage that they were really consulted and if they are unaware, if our media specialists didn’t feel comfortable then they need to go outside the box to find some experts because, our media center, we are going to out grow that media center. It is, I really, that is one thing that I miss from our old school. We had a very large facility with room to grow and we have no room. There’s no storage room. The AV room is very limited even though it has very nice and it’s certainly adequate, you know cabinetry and what’s in there is wonderful, it really, there are some technical difficulties that will be when it comes to encyclopedia storage. We like to think it’s all going to be on disk, but it’s not.”

Design Features: Suggestions for future building projects. This teacher perceives a need for more faculty input in the planning phases.

Researcher: “Gerry said the important thing is, not just with the classrooms, but the lunchroom for instance, the way it’s been designed there is not a lot of room for expansion, a lot of exterior. I think that’s true for the media center. In the old place we could have knocked a wall down and gone out, but we really don’t have that option here.”

Dora: “And the lunchroom, at the old school, that was one of the last old, big, full stages and I would recommend thinking about if you could incorporate a stage. We miss that stage. There are a lot of things that could have been done in the lunchroom with that stage. You just don’t have, we’ve got that small platform, but...”

Design Features and Space: Problem of stage in the new lunchroom being much smaller than in the old building.

Natalie: “It’s not a stage for drama!”

Dora: “I kind of feel like that has cut out one of our options by not having that available like we used to. So, I miss the stage. You know, the facility is wonderful, but there is still some things that you miss from the old times.”

Researcher: “Traffic outside better? Dismissal? Arrival?”

Dora: “Much better.”

Gerry: “Seven o’clock in the morning, there is no one around. It doesn’t matter.”

Dora: “(Unintelligible phrase) The transition was difficult. Now you can four hundred students out and in cars and out of the parking lot within fifteen minutes, fifteen to seventeen minutes.”

Time: The move was difficult at first but better after adjustment time.

Researcher: “Well I appreciate you coming in. Is there anything else that anyone would like to add? I know that your time is very limited.”

Rosy: “I’m not sure that there is a place for this, but I’m terribly concerned about the fact that we’ve got that tremendous Home Economics facility here and apparently no way to use it. I guess that’s a curriculum kind of problem.”

Dora: “It all depends on if they open that area back up for a connections class.”

Researcher: “I think the last news we heard from the governor was cut back thirty minutes off academics and have more time for electives so that may be a possibility.”

Gerry: “Cut back teachers, to get that one. Going back to one three man team.”

Researcher: “Well, I appreciate you coming in. Your comments will be very helpful to me.”

*The focus group concluded with several suggestions on how the process of building a new school and transferring to the facility could have been improved. One suggestion was to build on a different site from the old school. A second suggestion was that more faculty input should have been included in the planning process.*

## Chapter V

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### *Introduction to Discussion and Conclusions*

Ethnographic studies are emergent in nature. Issues and themes, indeed the focus of the study itself, may not be fully formed until the researcher begins a detailed analysis of comments, observations, and archival data collected during the entirety of the research. I found this aspect of ethnographic research to be both nerve racking and exciting, much like a child trying to piece together a massive jig-saw puzzle with only a vague concept of what the completed picture would look like.

In order to alleviate the anxiety of uncovering the elusive characteristics of the culture of a school in transition with the excitement of presenting one's research findings, I found comfort in McLaren's (2003) statement of purpose in his landmark study, *Life in Schools*, when he proclaimed that his objective was to "add some flesh and blood to what are essentially abstract theoretical formulations" (p. 183). In a sense, McLaren viewed his role as an author breathing life into his experiences and observations within a school setting. It was with this encouragement that I set out to reconstruct the story of the transition of a school faculty and students into a new building.

I began to view my primary obligation, as both an ethnographer and an educator, as the narrator of an epic story played out in the confines of a social institution which while familiar to many has been scrutinized by very few. I looked to LeCompte and Schensul (1999) for the paramount goal of the presentation of my research findings by committing

to produce an ethnographic account that, “paints a picture of people going about their daily lives as they happen over a relatively representative period of time. The content of an ethnography can address some or all of the following: beliefs; attitudes; perceptions; emotions; verbal and nonverbal means of communication; social networks; behaviors of the group of individuals with friends, family, associates, fellow workers, and colleagues; use of tools; technology and manufacture of materials and artifacts; and patterned use of space and time” (p. 4). It is not just my story, although like most ethnographers, I am inescapably entwined within it. It is primarily the story of VMS during the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 school years, as told by those who experienced unusual circumstances that made a familiar setting suddenly unfamiliar.

Throughout the process, I have struggled to reconcile the duality of my roles as ethnographer and teacher at VMS. McLaren (2003) provided some guidance when explaining his purpose in *Life in Schools* as trying to “illustrate the contradictions embodied in the teaching process itself and to chart out the tension between the perspectives held by the beginning teacher, who is trying to find a larger purpose in the day-to-day practice of teaching, and the social theorist, who presumably has a better theoretical grasp of what should be done” (p. 183-184). As a result, I have accepted the merging of educational theory with real-world practical implications as a major goal of my research presentation. Since teachers and administrators are my primary audience, providing insight into the potential applications of my research findings is of considerable importance.

I have given heed to warnings to temper the inclination to approach educational research from purely extremist, authoritarian, or adult-centered perspectives as well. By

providing an account of student perspectives, I hoped to present valuable insight into the “voice” of those being educated. As Giroux (1988) stated:

Despite their differences, radical and conservatives alike have ignored John Dewey’s vision of public schools as democratic spheres, as places where the skills of democracy can be practiced, debated, and analyzed. Similarly, both share a disturbing indifference to the ways in which students, from different class, gender, and ethnic locations mediate and express their sense of place, time, and history, and their contradictory, uncertain, and incomplete interactions with each other and with the dynamics of schooling. In other words, both radical and conservative ideologies generally fail to engage the politics of voice and representation – the forms of narrative and dialogue – around which students make sense of their lives and schools. (p. 114)

I have also presented the voice of those responsible for education itself, the teachers and administrators, as a necessary juxtaposition to student perspectives, in hopes of presenting a more comprehensive view of what goes on in schools.

In the course of the study, I have uncovered two educational theories that I had not originally conceived as being relevant to my study but which have emerged as instrumental in the analysis of data that I have collected: Critical Theory and Resistance Theory. “Critical theorists see schooling as a form of cultural politics; schooling always represents an introduction to, preparation for, and legitimization of particular forms of social life. It is always implicated in relations of power, social practices, and the favoring of forms of knowledge that support a specific vision of past, present, and future”

(McLaren, 2003, p. 186-187). Critical theory becomes significant within the context of my study through its relation to power and curriculum. McLaren(2003) stated: “Critical pedagogy is fundamentally concerned with understanding the relationship between power and knowledge. The dominant curriculum separates knowledge from the issue of power and treats it in an unabashedly technical manner; knowledge is seen in overwhelmingly instrumental terms as something to be mastered. That knowledge is always an ideological construction linked to particular interests and social relations generally receives little consideration in educational programs” (p. 208-209). McLaren (2003) argued that schools are often unknowing disseminators of a hidden curriculum when he states, “From the perspective of critical educational theorists, the curriculum represents much more than a program of study, a classroom text, or a course syllabus” (p. 211).

While Critical Theory is well documented, with regard to its potential applications to educational research, Resistance Theory has received considerably less attention in school-based research. Aronowitz and Giroux (1993) asserted:

The concept of resistance is relatively new in educational theory. The reasons behind this theoretical neglect can be traced partly to the failings of both conservative and radical approaches to schooling. Conservative educators analyzed oppositional behavior primarily through psychological categories that served to define such behavior not only as deviant, but more importantly, as disruptive and inferior – a failing on the part of the individuals and social groups that exhibited it. Radical educators, on the other hand, have generally ignored the internal workings of the school and have tended to treat the schools as ‘black

boxes'. Beneath a discourse primarily concerned with notions of domination, class conflict, and hegemony, there has been a structured silence regarding how teacher, students, and others live out their daily lives in school. (p. 90-91)

It was my intention to break the silence that has been imposed on students, teachers, and administrators concerning the existence and importance of resistance in public schools. One of the major aspects of Resistance Theory is its inescapable link to the culture of an institution. McLaren (2003) concurred by saying, "Theories of resistance generally draw upon an understanding of the complexities of culture to define the relationship between schools and the dominant society" (p. 215).

#### *Power, Control, and Order*

Early in the data analysis phase of my research I began to uncover cultural themes linked to Critical Theory, to which I had given little initial thought at the inception of the study. Perhaps being a classroom teacher for nearly a decade had clouded my view of the dynamics of VMS as they were routinely played out before me. Equally possible is the downplaying of Critical Theory among many educators as Neo-Marxist and too radical for application within American schools. According to critical pedagogy, the concept of power is fundamentally linked to what occurs in schools. What is taught and what is omitted? What freedoms and responsibilities do students, teachers, and administrators have? Who is in control and of what? All these questions can be addressed through an examination of the power structures within a school.

At VMS two topics in which power became manifest during the transition from the old to the new facility were control and order. Teachers and administrators at VMS

concluded with Jackson's conclusion in *People in Schools* (1981) that "Obviously, some kinds of controls are necessary if the school's goals are to be reached and social chaos averted" (p. 11). In the months leading up to the move, during the immediate aftermath, and one calendar year after the move, faculty at VMS demonstrated an overriding concern for their need to exercise control methods that would insure acceptable levels of order within the classroom, hallways, and exterior campus of the school. For teachers and administrators the problems of control and its relation to order, within classrooms specifically, were complicated by the precarious nature of schools. Metz (1978) expressed a similar conclusion by stating, "Classroom order is fragile. One child intent upon his own purposes can easily destroy the concentration of thirty-six others" (p. 121). Students, both immediately after and one year following the move, expressed their perceptions that the faculty at VMS employed control measures, for the maintenance of order in the new school, that were excessive and overly strict. Of all the control measures at the new facility, students were most critical of the green line or "Green Mile" that served as a visual reference to walk to the right and the security cameras, which they viewed as intrusive and unnecessary.

At VMS two factors that influenced the need for and struggle to establish and maintain order were space and freedom. For Metz (1978), "The most basic problem of order in school is the result of placing large numbers of active young people in very small places" (p. 148). Where and when students were placed for instruction and other daily activities was only one dimension of the impact of space on order. For both adults and children at VMS, who decides when and where students may learn and socialize was perceived to be a debatable issue. While teachers and administrators commented on

issues of control and order primarily in relation to discipline and academic concerns, students expressed more interest in discussing freedom and the social aspects of their schooling experiences. Metz (1978) addressed this dilemma by stating, “For schools the most difficult instrumental goal is the maintenance of order among a student body which is only half socialized, comes and remains by legal compulsion, and frequently includes persons with radically different educational and social expectations” (p. 17). She further expresses concern that “Public schools have a paradox at their very heart. They exist to educate children, but they must also keep order” (Metz, 1978, p. 243). What is the optimal balance between enlightened educational practices and realistic order maintenance?

In *Classrooms and Corridors*, based on research conducted in several racially and economically mixed schools, Metz (1978) expressed a potential dilemma of control issues in the schools she studied when she stated, “The problem of maintaining order among a diverse and skeptical set of students was preoccupying in one form or another for the staff at all the schools” (p. 18). At VMS after the move and a year later students expressed concerns that for administrators and teachers the maintenance of adult control and order within the school had become paramount to issues of student academic and social needs. Students espoused a view of their position within the school’s power structure as that of a prisoner in a jail. Student concerns echoed Jackson’s (1981) claim that “One of the earliest lessons a child must learn is how to comply with the wishes of others” (p. 19). In effect, students at VMS felt pressured to leave much of their personal freedom at the front door.

In order to exercise control and maintain order in a school or a classroom, adults must have effective mechanisms for addressing student misbehavior and deviance. Although no specific questions were asked concerning ways faculty at VMS discipline, teachers, administrators, and students all perceived it to be a major topic of relevance. What resources for control and order maintenance do the faculty of a public school have at their disposal? “When outsiders think of school ‘discipline’ in a commonsense way, normally all these forms of power recede before an image of coercion. But in fact, the teacher’s coercive resources are sharply limited. This is especially the case with classes which engage in punishable activities most often, so that the children develop a familiarity with, and an immunity to, the teacher’s arsenal” (Metz, 1978, p. 100).

At VMS, teachers and administrators have a variety of coercive methods at their disposal for the enforcement of control and maintenance of order. Students may be assigned disciplinary written assignments, lunch detention, in-school suspension, or out-of-school suspension. These potential punishments are communicated to students, in written form in the school’s code of conduct and in verbal form, at the beginning of each year by administrators and teachers. Responses by each participant group at VMS draw into question the degree of effectiveness of these coercive methods as deterrents to student misbehavior and avenues for institution stability. In particular, students seemed less likely to view these coercive discipline measures as legitimate when they perceived them to be haphazard, inconsistent, and resulting from personality conflicts rather than as a redress of misbehavior. A possible explanation for this phenomenon might be found in Metz’s (1978) description of a control process she labeled the “Myth of Coercion” (p. 156) in which she claimed: “Coercion can very rarely be the routine mainstay of

successful control in an organization. However, if coercive sanctions are used consistently and swiftly against all offenders, it soon becomes unnecessary actually to use coercion, for the threat of coercion becomes credible and this threat is a far more efficient tool of control than actual usage of coercion” (Metz, 1978, p. 155).

One point on which the faculty at VMS and Metz (1978) agree is “To establish such a credible threat of coercion in a school, with its constant turnover of students and its fresh start with each new school year, coercion must be used at the beginning of the year, early in the careers of the new and returning students” (p. 155). In addition, teachers and administrators at VMS not only expressed a perennial need to strictly enforce the rules and regulations of the school at the beginning, but also indicated a need to “tighten up” at the end of each school year. With regard to the transition into the new school building, the faculty at VMS attributed any perceived increase in control measures to what they have always done at the end of a school year as well as the need to protect the new building from vandalism. To the contrary, student interpretations of the motivations for increased discipline enforcement centered solely on the perception that teachers and administrators were preoccupied with maintaining the physical integrity of the new facility.

Given the questionable effectiveness of traditional and institutionalized methods for maintaining control and order (i.e., pages, detention, in-school suspension, and out-of-school suspension) administrators and teachers at VMS have opted to use isolation on a school wide scale to limit student movement and interaction. The design of the new facility has afforded adults at VMS with a school layout that facilitates instruction and movement of students in small numbers and with limited interaction between or among

other grade level groupings. Administrators and teachers viewed student isolation as an effective way to monitor students and maintain order. Students expressed concerns both following the move to the new building and one year later that these control measures abridged their ability to interact with the peers of their choosing. It was their contention that they were in effect prisoners in the school, with little say in when or with whom they interact. Metz (1978) contends, "Every school therefore faces the problem of striking some balance between the healthy needs of the children to use their physical and social capacities and the needs of the organization to move people efficiently from place to place and to protect the health and safety of all persons on the premises" (p. 149). In the estimation of students at VMS, the adult needs for order and control have eliminated most opportunities they once had to interact with their peers and represent an unfair abridgement of their freedoms.

Perhaps more surprising was the claim by teachers that the transfer to and design of the new building had isolated them from other faculty at VMS. When comparing their interaction with other grade level and elective teachers prior to and following the move, many of the faculty felt that they too had been unduly secluded as a result of the control measures instituted at the new facility. Although they stopped short of describing themselves as prisoners, like the student respondents, teachers expressed reservations concerning the extent to which their ability to socialize had been altered following the transition to the new VMS building. This was especially enlightening given the fact that teachers, along with administrators, are the principle isolators within the school. It appears that in a quest for acceptable levels of control and order, teachers have given up, perhaps unknowingly, many of their own personal freedoms.

### *Tension, Conflicts, and Resistance*

The increased need for order at VMS upon moving into the new building has precipitated control measures and power dynamics that have begun to shape a new school culture. The question then arises concerning the effects of such changes on the relationships and interactions between adults and children at VMS. In *Classrooms and Corridors*, Metz (1978) described a need for continual faculty alertness coupled with the goals of institutional order when she explained, “But with a myth of coercion, constant regimentation and constant vigilance by the staff are necessary” (p. 157). She further espoused the belief that as a result of increased faculty control “an air of tension and opposition between students and staff pervades the atmosphere” (p. 157). At VMS, students, teachers, and administrators alluded to such an increase in stress, following the transfer to the new facility. Likewise, each group attributed increased tension levels to the varied requirements and methods for the maintenance of order within the school building. While the students viewed the adult behaviors as overbearing and conducive to a stress-ridden environment, teachers and administrators attributed increased tension levels to student resistance of control measures that they had chosen or were required to implement as professional educators. To a lesser extent, the transitional process itself, specifically the delays and difficulties physically transporting materials, caused stress to administrators and teachers.

At VMS the increased tension levels fostered by the school environment often manifested themselves in various forms of conflict. These conflicts, which arose from the clashing of interests and goals of students and faculty, surfaced after the transitional process and remained a year following the move. Everhart (1983) offers little comfort for

those seeking to eliminate or alleviate such discord from the culture of any particular educational institution when he stated “the structure of the school reinforces the existence and continuation of conflict” (p. 168). Metz (1978) identified what she perceived to be a major source of conflicts between students and faculty within a school in interpersonal terms when she concluded, “Adults and students differ over appropriate goals and means in the treatment of decorum and safety within the whole school, just as they differ over issues within the classroom” (p. 147).

The paramount cause for an increase in tension and conflicts at VMS, in the views of students, was their perceived loss of freedom upon moving into the new facility. For students, the issues of personal and student group freedom seemed to transcend all other concerns with relation to adult/child interaction and school culture. According to students, the transfer to a new building was inescapably linked to their loss of self-determination concerning with whom and when they might socialize and the absence of choice concerning their movement within the school. From an adult perspective, this dilemma is complicated by an intrinsic predicament faced by all educators. In *Classroom and Corridors*, Metz (1978) explained, “Every school therefore faces the problem of striking some balance between the healthy needs of the children to use their physical and social capacities and the needs of the organization to move people efficiently from place to place and to protect the health and safety of all persons on the premises” (p. 149). She subsequently concluded that “The choice in this dilemma seems to be most frequently weighted toward considerations of maintaining the maximum order possible rather than giving the maximum freedom possible” (p. 150). At VMS, students, teachers, and administrators all expressed perceptions that very limited avenues existed for students to

express self-determination and the exercise of freedom. Why is this the case? Why do adults at VMS feel the need to exert such levels of control over students in their school? Once again, Metz (1978) provides insight into the difficulty of striking a universally accepted balance between the adult need for order and the student desire for freedom when she proposed, “Thus the negative effects of erring on the side of caution in preventing disorder are far less tangible than the negative effects which are feared as possible from erring on the side of granting freedom” (p. 150). So perhaps it is the fear of the unknown that is fostering an undue restraint on student freedom at VMS. It is possible that teachers and administrators, fearing the unwanted consequences of granting too much leeway, have unknowingly curtailed many of the choices students view as their rights. Just as Jackson (1981) noted in his observation of classroom life, “The things the teacher does as he works within the physical, temporal, and social limits of the classroom have a constraining effect upon the events that might occur there if individual impulse were allowed free reign” (p. 11), the actions of faculty at VMS, throughout the new facility and during the entirety of the school day, seem to hinder student exercise of freedom.

Growing, from the tension and conflict emanating from faculty struggle for control and order maintenance at VMS and its effects on student freedom, is resistance in which students struggle to adjust their desires to adult expectations. “Adaptation as resistance may be evidence of the pliability of the human will and the tendency for human beings to oppose, in whatever form they are able, curtailments of human freedom” (Everhart, 1983, p. 250). In his landmark work *Life in Schools*, McLaren (2003) asserts, “the major drama of resistance in schools is an effort on the part of students to bring their street-corner culture into the classroom. Students reject the culture of classroom learning because, for

the most part, it is delibidinalized (eros-denying) and is infused with a cultural capital to which subordinate groups have little legitimate access” (p. 216). While agreeing with the basic premise of McLaren’s claim that resistance in schools is often linked to cultural conflict within the school setting, Aronowitz and Giroux (1993) further extend the analysis of resistance at a societal level by stating, “Resistance theories have gone too far in viewing schools as institutions characterized exclusively by forms of ideological domination. Lost from this view is an insight provided by theorists who deal with the hegemonic-state reproduction model: the notion that schools are also repressive institutions that use various coercive state agencies, including the police and the courts, to enforce involuntary school attendance” (p. 95). With regard to students at VMS, students, teachers, and administrators alluded to a variety of methods students use to resist adult control and exercise their personal will (e.g., bomb threats, disrupting class, vandalism, disrespect of authority, etc.). While some theorists attribute such forms of resistance to students’ desires to defy curtailments of their freedom, others present resistance as a reaction to the stress brought on by the daily life of an institution. Based on his findings in *Reading, Writing, and Resistance*, Everhart (1983) concluded, “I have come to believe that much student ‘resistance’, rather than constituting a revolt against the perceived unfairness of lack of significant regard which the school structure generates, merely is an escape from its anxieties” (p. 250).

Student resistance at VMS can be grouped according to two categories as identified by Everhart (1983) under the moniker “Beating the System” (p. 211). Everhart classified resistance as either legitimate, that which is defiant but unlikely to produce significant negative consequences (e.g., throwing things, writing notes, changing the topic, taking

advantage of substitutes, etc.) or illegitimate, that which is clearly against school rules and decorum and likely to bring serious consequences (e.g., cheating, fighting, skipping class, bomb threats, vandalism, etc.). While teachers and administrators focused on illegitimate forms of student resistance as causes of tension and conflicts and justification for their order maintenance control strategies, student, teachers, and administrators alike indicated legitimate avenues for “beating the system” are perhaps more frequently employed by students at VMS. Following the transition to the new building, students engaged in such activities as bunching up in the hall, finding ways around internet censoring, throwing wet paper towels in the bathroom, and “goofing off” (Everhart 1983) in class, at lunch, and in the hallways as techniques of resistance. Everhart (1983) espoused the belief that various legitimate forms of resistance have cultural implications when manifested in a school setting by stating, “Goofing off resembles a shared speech community wherein collective interpretations of the relationship of the student to the productive process demanded by the school gives rise to collective actions” (p. 176). Whether legitimate or illegitimate, student resistance to adult authority at VMS has a distracting impact on student and faculty relations, school order, classroom instruction, student achievement, and ultimately draws into question exactly what are students learning about their role in society.

### *Instruction, Achievement, and the Hidden Curriculum*

Schools exist primarily to educate students. VMS exists to educate its students. How they are taught (instruction), what curricular objectives they master (achievement), and why they often internalize unintended behaviors and beliefs (The Hidden Curriculum) are of especial relevance to the transition from an old to a new facility at VMS. In the midst

of struggles for power, control, and order and the rise of tension, conflicts, and resistance, much of what I observed and heard, with regard to the move from an old to a new building, centered around issues linked to curriculum. Before engaging in a discussion of the hidden curriculum and its manifestation at VMS, I will first endeavor to present issues of instruction and achievement in more overt curricular terms. So what are the overt curriculum goals of a school such as VMS? Metz (1978) painted a picture of the daunting task that all schools must face in their duties of educating the youth of America when she stated, "Public schools should give every child a sound grasp of the three R's, foster creativity, impart a thorough knowledge of our world history, literature, and art, train minds in the scientific method or inquiry, offer vocational training, develop problem-solving ability, foster imagination, develop independence, impart skills of social interaction with adults and peers, and support good moral character" (p. 3).

Students at VMS expressed beliefs that the transfer of buildings brought about changes in instruction, specifically with regard to the use of computer technology. According to students, increased availability of computers in the new school has encouraged teachers to employ new technology-based avenues for whole group and individual instruction, assessment, and remediation. Students perceived a willingness on the part of many of their teachers to explore possibilities of multimedia-based instruction (PowerPoint presentations, on-line video clips, etc.), alternative assessments (computer-assisted research projects), and review and remediation (practice quizzes and test questions). Although some students attributed the absence of such methods to the limited proficiency of some of their teachers, the newness and availability of computer technology at the new school appeared most relevant. Teachers and administrators

expressed similar conclusions concerning the impact of new computer availability both in the individual classrooms as well as media center labs. They expressed the beliefs that newer technology, more student computers, and the multimedia TV-VCR/computer centers afforded faculty with much of the instructional flexibility they lacked in the old school.

Computer technology and its practical usage in schools are at the center of a paradox which modern educators face. Metz (1978) stated of teacher responsibilities, "It is important to have children master a good deal of specific information and to teach children to follow instructions, but it is also important to stimulate their curiosity and teach them to follow out their own lines of questioning. In a given course or a given class those goals will frequently conflict. Consequently, in simply 'educating' the children the public schools are usually seeking multiple and pragmatically contradictory ends" (p. 16-17). So how do faculty at VMS address the quandary of balancing student self-determined exploration and teacher-led instruction and behavioral modification? Since the transfer to a new building, teachers perceive that they have been employing the in-class and lab computers as a tool for facilitating student initiated learning and self-motivated cognitive exploration.

Access to computers highlighted a shift in student focus that had been relatively absent at the old building: the idea of computer time as a reward for the completion of assignments or good behavior. Students routinely noted that teachers allowed computer access to those who complied with classroom objectives and denied access to those who resisted. Their observations were confirmed by teachers, who linked their personal allocation of computer usage to students they viewed as diligent and expedient in their

completion of required tasks. The concept of access or denial of technology as a behavioral-control mechanism was regarded as both legitimate and effective given the perception, of adults and children at VMS, that students enjoyed computer time. I was not particularly surprised to find that students equated computers with fun. What was more interesting, from a curricular perspective, was the absence of teacher and student concern that such control measures might actually encourage students to rush through work to engage in what they perceive as fun, and not necessarily productive endeavors. Have computers created a new and perhaps less offensive format for student “goofing off?” In an effort to merge student self-directed learning and computer-based instruction, are teachers at VMS facilitating academic acceleration or ill-conceived technocratic behavior modification? Might the increased availability computers create, in some classrooms, potential distractions for students eager to avoid mundane work and engage in what they perceive as fun activities?

Instruction at any school, and VMS is no exception, can be derailed by distractions in various forms. Jackson (1981) noted, “During group sessions, irrelevant comments, misbehavior, and outside visitors bearing messages often disrupt the continuity of the lesson” (p. 13). Students, teachers, and administrators perceived no marked increase or decrease in incidents of student-initiated disruptions prior to, during, or following the move to the new building. However, distractions did figure prominently into the transitional process and its aftermath. Students and faculty made explicit references to the distractive impact of the construction of the new school on instruction at the old school. The vibrations of earth movers and noise generated by the processes of constructing a new building in close proximity to the old facility had, in the estimation of all involved,

created a distracting scenario that detrimentally affected curriculum progress for much of the transitional period. Following the completion and move to the new school, instructional distractions remained in a variant form that was linked to the structural design of the facility. Teachers and students made numerous references to a perceived increase in inter-classroom noise when comparing the old and new schools. Both groups attributed the distractions to thinner walls, although the absence of wall extensions above the ceiling tiles in the new building is a more likely culprit. Contrary to the situation at the old building, all classrooms at the new school are equipped with wall mounted VCR-TV combinations and usage of audio-visual equipment appears to have increased in volume and frequency. This, coupled with student and teacher complaints that they are no longer immune to unanticipated and unwanted outbursts in adjoining classrooms, illustrates detrimental instructional impacts of the new building itself.

Instruction is only the first component of the curriculum triad that I will address concerning the transfer from one VMS building to another. The second area, achievement, is a debated issue with regard to its application in a middle school environment. What objectives are students expected to master and how can they be assessed? Metz (1978) expresses the innate problems teachers face in both creating instructional technologies and assessing student achievement when she stated, “They are faced with the task of creating changes in diverse raw material through processes which are poorly understood, in the absence of any universally effective means, and without any trustworthy way of measuring the success or failure of whatever methods they finally apply” (p. 20). Why are the measurement of student achievement and the analysis of instructional plans that bring desired objective obtainment such an imprecise science?

Metz (1978) attributes much of the confusion to the isolation that many teachers and students face in modern public schools by stating of instructional environments, “A single teacher works alone with a group of children for a whole school year. He works out of the sight and hearing of other adults and needs to co-ordinate his efforts with those of other teachers only in minimal ways. Each teacher has a comprehensive task in teaching the whole of a subject to a constant group of children for a year and he is free to use his intuition and his personality as he goes about it” (p. 22). Students and teachers at VMS expressed concerns that at the new facility they felt increasingly more isolated. Although, much of their focus was on the social implications of isolation, instructional and achievement effects of seclusion may have a deeper impact. Have schools’ needs for order created a situation in which accurate assessment of student achievement and instructional factors associated with that achievement is unobtainable?

In the absence of precise and verifiable quantitative methods of evaluating instruction and achievement, a more qualitative look at the perceptions of students and teachers may enlighten curricular changes resulting from transition to a new building. While teachers at VMS offered no indication that significant increases in student achievement had occurred in the immediate aftermath or during the year following the move, students believed they were performing better and achieving at higher academic levels since moving into the new facility. Students attributed much of their perceived increases in achievement to a cleaner, newer, and less distracting physical environment, more student access to computers, and teacher willingness to explore new methods of instruction and assessment.

The third component of the triad at VMS is the most illusive of the three curricular areas. “The hidden curriculum refers to the unintended outcomes of the schooling process” (McLaren, 2003, p. 212). McLaren further explains that, “The hidden curriculum deals with the tacit ways in which knowledge and behavior get constructed, outside the usual course materials and formally scheduled lessons” (p. 212). What unintended or unrealized lessons are students at VMS learning about their place in school and in the broader society? Johnson (1985) asserts of schools, “In a variety of ways, public schools orient and condition children to adhere to particular habits of mind and behaviors instrumental to their eventual participation in the wider society and culture” (p. 25). If true, what effects has the collective action of faculty in the new facility had on students with regard to their place in society? Following the move into the new building, students expressed concerns that they were prisoners within the school. They equated isolating control measures of the faculty and their perceived subsequent loss of freedom with a power struggle in which they, the students, occupied a subordinate and often powerless role. Students expressed concerns that not only did they have little say in what, where, how, and with whom they learned, but also that there was little opportunity for them to exercise their socializing needs. Most notable, was a class-consciousness that developed as students espoused the belief that they would be punished as a group for the resistance or misbehavior of a few.

How do schools attempt to indoctrinate students into the broader society, of which they are emerging members? Johnson (1985) argues that this process is woven into the very fabric of schools by claiming, “The Euro-American notion of time, space, and reality as particular and sequential is manifested in public school spaces and

architecture...” (p. 24). The layout of the building and the schedule upon which daily activities are conducted silently instruct children in the dos-and-don’ts of the regional and national cultures into which they have been born. Local and ethnic variations in acceptable behavior are given little consideration when weighed against the unspoken objective of cultural homogenization. Johnson’s revelation of the impact a hidden curriculum could potentially have on students at VMS is quite profound, especially when paired with McLaren’s (2003) belief that, “The school system is mostly geared to the interests, skills, and attitudes of the middle-class child” (p. 178). McLaren (2003) extends his argument of the cultural applications of a critical theory approach to the unseen sides of school life stating, “In general, critical educational theorists are concerned with how descriptions, discussions, and representations in textbooks, curriculum materials, course content, and social relations embodied in classroom practices benefit dominant groups and exclude subordinate ones. In this regard, they often refer to the hidden curriculum” (p. 212). Given that a many of the students at VMS are of neither a Euro-American or middle-class background and all students, by virtue of their age, occupy a subordinate status in the school, how is the hidden curriculum at VMS exacerbating or perhaps creating cultural conflict?

The fact that many adults and students at VMS express no direct knowledge of the existence or impact of a hidden curriculum should not be viewed as a lack of its reality. Everhart (1983) makes a strong argument for the elusive nature of the hidden curriculum when he asserts, “The minimization of a rigid, all-consuming system of instruction where learning is under the close and conscious domination of instructional agents should not be taken to mean that a deep system of cognitive and cultural development is not ongoing

here, nor that there does not exist a steady signal consistently but interminably sent out and received, albeit in almost a subconscious fashion” (p. 85). At VMS, student perceptions of their daily lives prior to, during, and in the year following the move into a new building, allude to a extra-curricular body of knowledge that shapes the actions and beliefs of students and faculty and the very culture of the school itself. McLaren (2003) paints a daunting picture of the potential impact of a hidden curriculum through his conclusion: “Often, the hidden curriculum displaces the professed educational ideals and goals of the classroom teacher or school” (p. 212).

### *Culture, Space, and Time*

Given the concept, at the inception of my study, that culture is at the center of ethnographic research, I knew that I would be observing, journaling about, and interviewing participants in the transitional process from an old VMS building into a new facility with a keen eye for “what they spend their time doing, why they engage in some activities rather than others, with what people they associate and why, the consequences of their actions, how they view their experiences, and the factors that affect why they believe what they do” (Everhart, 1983, p. 16). Metz (1978) identified multiple cultures (student culture, faculty culture, and school culture) existing within the same school setting and believed each culture had a symbiotic relationship with and effect on the others. Through a detailed presentation of their perceptions, as revealed in individual and focus group interviews, I hoped to present the reader with the story of the cultures of VMS as seen by students, teachers, and administrators. I have likewise provided a chronological journal of my personal reflections, throughout the transitional process, as juxtaposed to their cultural descriptions and interpretations.

One of the most surprising findings, with relation to student culture at VMS, was that for students academic concerns were secondary to their individual and group needs and/or desires for social interaction with their peers. In *Reading, Writing, and Resistance*, Everhart (1983) expressed similar findings when he stated, “For learning, as I have pointed out, both for good students as well as poor, simply was not an issue over which groups concerned themselves. This is true because academic learning is not the central precipitator for the formation of groups and coalitions of students. The basis for group formation is more social than academic, and involves the interests and perspectives of people as they interpret their place in the organizational matrix of the school” (p. 123-124). Questions concerning perceptions of the old school, the new building, the transitional process, and their daily lives in the new facility all yielded detailed and lengthy descriptions with primarily social and cultural rather than academic implications. How students acted and why they believed they engaged in certain behaviors highlights a separate student culture that is constantly struggling to define and redefine its characteristics in a quest for freedom and control. Everhart (1983) offers an explanation of this ongoing cultural power struggle by stating, “That the school does not legitimate the presence of student culture is clear by the fact that it establishes no formal mechanisms for collective expression and/or control by students. Recognizing this, students initiate expression and control through self-generated, interpretive dimensions that provide what appears to be some modicum of control over some dimensions of their role as members of the school proletariat” (p. 128). Admittedly, Everhart paints a cultural picture in schools with regard to students on a primarily neo-Marxist canvas. Nonetheless, student and faculty revelations of culture at VMS reveal inconsistencies and

questions concerning the actual impact that faculty and school culture have on student culture. These findings seem to confirm Everhart's (1983) claims in *Reading, Writing, and Resistance*: "Quite simply, the school does not have that extent of domination over students – their time or their attention – to serve in a fashion so as to grind out stamped pieces of machinery that conveniently fit into some societal assemblage. Rather, it is the very student culture itself – the totality of action and beliefs about those actions – that serves as a productive force" (p. 251). While Johnson (1985) argues that "As a society, school people share a common language and set of customs to which children are expected to adhere" (p. 6), at VMS the student culture has, as a primary aspect of its nature, the active and passive resistance of the broader and more dominant faculty and school cultures. While the students at VMS understand adult expectations, they choose to directly (e.g., cheating, fighting, or "telling a faculty member off") or indirectly (e.g., skipping school, wasting time, refusing to do work) resist control measures they view as oppressive or illegitimate.

With regard to the faculty culture at VMS, students perceived a change in the ways in which teachers and administrators interacted with them following the move to the new building, despite little acknowledgement of such a transformation by the faculty members themselves. Students felt the teachers and administrators were more tense and consequently stricter with regard to their enforcement of school rules and discipline procedures after the transfer to the new facility. Teachers and administrators consistently affirmed the belief that, as a group, their collective actions and motivations had changed very little during the transitional process. However, when asked to elaborate on how they functioned following the move, many of these same faculty respondents seemed to

confirm student perceptions of changes through references to increased stress levels and newly employed methods associated with maintaining order in and the physical integrity of the new building. However subtle, the transition that occurred at VMS seemed to confirm Metz's (1978) findings that a relationship exists in schools in which student order affects the very nature of faculty culture and that in turn, faculty culture (i.e. faculty beliefs and actions) has an equal and often opposite effect on issues of student order.

Johnson (1985) asserts, "Public schooling is mass initiation and rite of passage adapted to the educational requirements of stratified, multicultural, nation-state societies" (p. 9). If true, the culture of a school, if it is to be successful in terms of student assimilation into the broader society into which they are born, must aid students in developing and demonstrating the internalization of the essential objectives for their academic and social development. Students must feel that they are being given more adult freedoms and self-determination as well as increasing responsibilities.

Unfortunately, students at VMS felt that many of the rites of passage they had come to associate with middle school (e.g., pep rallies, the right to sit where they want to at lunch, the freedom to change classes without the constant scrutiny of faculty, etc.) have been diminished or lost completely following the transition into the new school building. The students made reference to being "treated like children" and remarked that in their estimation, they were not being prepared for the high school. The lack of personal freedom dominated the student perceptions of ways in which the school culture was failing to meet their immediate and future needs. If there is merit to student claims that in an effort to maintain order, teachers and administrators have paternalistically removed some of the rites of passage that children have traditionally depended on to learn and

exercise the essentials of self motivation and self regulation, what are the potential effects of such a shift in school culture? McLaren (2003) offers a harsh criticism of the dangers of failing to properly socialize youth by stating of America, “Our culture in general (and that includes schools, the media, and our social institutions) has helped educate students to acquire a veritable passion for ignorance” (p. 217). Are cultural changes, which according to students have occurred at VMS following the move, aiding in the learned cultural helplessness of many children?

Space, specifically with regard to design features and physical layout of the new facility, figured prominently in the comments of students, teachers, and administrators. There was little debate on the improvements at VMS resulting from the transition into a new building. All respondents expressed belief that the classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, and exterior of the school were dramatically improved when comparing the physical condition and spatial elements of the old and new facilities. The old school was often described as being decrepit, run-down, and full of leaks. The new school was most often associated with being clean, bright, and state-of-the art. One area in which all participants agreed that the new building was lacking, although for different reasons, was the lunchroom, which they all regarded as too small. Students felt crowded in the new lunch facility and believed that they had less freedom to sit where they chose following the transition. Administrators and teachers, while concurring with the idea that the lunchroom was deficient in size, felt the area created more control problems for adults than limits on student rights. One major concern of the faculty, which did not become apparent until a year following the move, is the perception that there is little to no room for future expansion of the school building. Although, VMS is not currently in danger of

exceeding its occupancy limits, the teachers and administrators were concerned that such a potential future problem should have been anticipated and figured into the design process.

Time, or at least the interpretation and perception of it, was transformed following the move to the new building. The new facility contains synchronized clocks throughout, and students, teachers, and administrators felt their presence eliminates much of the wasted time and inconsistent class changes that typified a day at the old building. However, the synchronization of clocks itself cannot entirely insure a harmonious existence or achievement of goals for students, teachers, and administrators at VMS. The fact, that a middle school “operates on a fairly rigid schedule of timed classes that permits little variation, moves students from one experience to another in large groups or ‘bunches,’ and is so organized as to assume that students realize the authority of the teacher as the fundamental source of knowledge and be willing to abide by that” (Everhart, 1983, p. 121-122), alludes to more deeply rooted problems with naively equating time efficiency with improvements. Time maintenance and scheduling are only two components among many that affect the order and achievement of a school. Jackson (1981) highlights this dilemma when he concludes, “Adherence to a time schedule requires that activities often begin before interest is aroused and terminate before interest disappears” (p. 13). For teachers and administrators, time is the parameter by which they gauge instruction and order maintenance. For students, time, especially free time, appeared to be most significant.

Another dimension of time, with regard to the transition to a new facility, was the process of and actual timing of the move. In the immediate aftermath of the transfer,

students, teachers, and administrators each expressed perceptions that they were rushed into the new building and that the facility itself was not complete and fully operational. Interestingly, one year later, at least among the faculty this perception had changed. The end of the year move, when viewed in retrospect a year later, was described as an opportunity to work out problems while the builder was still obligated under warranty to make repairs.

### *Recommendations for Practice and Suggestions for Further Research*

At the onset of the study, I believed the potential for the proposed study was multidimensional and multifaceted. From a financial perspective alone, there was a need to qualitatively assess phenomena associated with the building of and transfer to a new facility. In human terms, I expected an exploration of the perceptions that students, teachers, and administrators held of the move from an old to a new school building to be enlightening and thought provoking. Finally, from an educational research point of view, there was the potential to uncover rich qualitative data that would provide a detailed and descriptive story of a middle school in transition and cultural aspects of that school that would inform those involved with similar moves in the future.

One of the central themes that emerged in my research was the precarious nature of the institutionalized need for order and adult desires for control in a school setting. Student expectations of freedom were in direct opposition to a formal power structure, established by the faculty. What is the optimal balance between school order and student freedom? How might student safety and behavior management concerns potentially subvert the educational process? How does the design of a school building affect the cultures within? What affects do new technology and a new facility have on instruction

and achievement? What beliefs and actions are most important within a school setting? These were the questions that were answered in part by analyzing the perceptions of those involved in the move, the students, teachers, and administrators. With regard to the last question, I am reminded of and challenged by Marx's (1977) claim, "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force" (p. 176). Whether teaching in a new, state-of-the-art facility or a fifty year-old building, an understanding of student cultural perspectives is essential for an educator to reach their full potential. Only through an examination of the Hidden Curriculum within an institution can achievement of the stated educational goals be reached. I believe similar ethnographic studies could and should be conducted in new and old elementary, middle, and high schools to examine cultural dynamics that often go unrecognized.

What have I learned about school design and culture? The most obvious answer is that peoples' perceptions of their surroundings have an impact on their view of the relationship they have to the environment they find themselves in and those with whom they interact daily. The more structured and confining a school design and operation is, the less free the students and faculty believe themselves to be. In a day and age when safety is often equated with the abridgement of personal freedom, a detailed account of the impact of an institution upon its inhabitants seems especially relevant.

Most troubling of my findings were the student comparisons of school and prison. Following the move to the newer building, some students perceived an increase in rules, surveillance, and discipline enforcement and the subsequent loss of freedom. These perceptions overshadowed discussions of advancements in classroom technology and

improvements in instruction and achievement following the transition. Participant students expressed perceptions that they had in effect traded a run-down school for a shiny, new prison cell. Despite noble intentions, it appears that the students, for whom schools primarily exist, see themselves as pawns in a game over which they little to no control. The design and control measures of the new VMS seems to have inadvertently moved one step closer to Jeremy Betham's concept of the Panopticon as depicted by Foucault (1977) when he states, "All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker, or a school boy" (p. 200). For many students, security cameras and isolating daily schedules have trapped them in an Orwellian nightmare.

How might this dissertation potentially aid in school designs and/or transitions in the future? New school buildings are envisioned by school boards, planned by architects, and built by contractors. While such processes expedite the construction of new facilities, they overlook the crucial input of the primary occupants, the students, teachers, and administrators. Only through asking questions to and analyzing the responses of these key informants, can future schools be designed, built, and moved into with the needs and wants of the educators and educated receiving equal consideration with the practical, financial, and social concerns of those external to the culture of the school itself. In addition to conducting a needs assessment of all stakeholders (parents, students, teachers, etc.), school planners should articulate clearly their purposes and goals for and of education and ensure that the design of the building matches those purposes and goals. Paramount consideration should be given to the impact spatial design has on student and

faculty cultures both intended (e.g., security and control) as well as unintended (e.g., peer relations, personal accountability, student learning, and democratic processes).

I intend to conduct follow-up research at an elementary school within our system that will soon be undergoing a similar building transfer. I also hope to present an executive summary of my findings to the Valdosta City School Board and the VMS faculty.

## REFERENCES

- Agar, M. H. (1980). *The professional stranger: An informal introduction to ethnography*. New York: Academic Press.
- Aronowitz, S., & Giroux, H.A. (1993). *Education: Still under siege*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Westport: Bergin & Garvey.
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1998). *Qualitative research for education. An introduction to theory and methods*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Charon, J. (1986). *Sociology: A conceptual approach*. Newton, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Everhart, R.B. (1983). *Reading, writing, and resistance: Adolescence and labor in a junior high school* (M.W. Apple, Ed.). Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Fiske, S.T. (1995). Social cognition. In A. Tesser, *Advanced Social Psychology* (pp.149-193). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, Inc.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). New York: Pantheon Books.
- Frazier, L. M. (1993). Deteriorating school facilities and student learning. Clearing House on Educational Management, College of Education: University of Oregon. (ERIC Digest 82 May 1993).
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. U.S.A.: BasicBooks.
- Giroux, H.A. (1988). *Schooling and the struggle for public life: Critical pedagogy in the modern age*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Goodlad, J. I., Klein, M. F., & Associates. (1970). *Behind the classroom door*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc.

- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (1983). *Ethnography: principles in practice*. London: Tavistock.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (1995). *Ethnography: principles in practice*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Routledge.
- Henry, J. (1963). *Culture against man*. New York: Random House.
- Henry, J. (1965). *Culture against man*. New York: Vintage Press.
- Holloway, J. H. (2000). Research link: Healthy buildings, successful students. *Educational Leadership*, 57(6), 88-89. Retrieved on 7/26/02 from <http://www.ascd.org/readingroom/edlead/0003/holloway.html>
- Jackson, P. W. (1968). *Life in the classrooms*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc.
- Jackson, P. W. (1981). Life in the classrooms. In B.E. Mercer & S.C. Hey (Eds.), *People in schools: A reader in the sociology of learning and teaching* (pp.9-20). Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Company, Inc.
- Johnson, N. B. (1985). *West Haven: Classroom culture and society in a rural elementary school*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.
- LeCompte, M.D., & Schensul, J. J. (1999a). *Analyzing and interpreting ethnographic data: Ethnographer's toolkit 5*. Altamira Press, Walnut Creek, CA.
- LeCompte, M.D., & Schensul, J. J. (1999b). *Designing and conducting ethnographic research: Ethnographer's toolkit 1*. Altamira Press, Walnut Creek, CA.
- Levine, J. M., & Moreland, R. L. (1995). Group Processes. In A. Tesser, *Advanced Social Psychology*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

- Lewis, M. (2000). Where children learn: facilities conditions and student test performance in milwaukee public schools. *The Council of Educational Facility Planners International: Issuetrak, December 2000.*
- Lyons, J. B. (2001). Do school facilities really impact a child's education? *The Council of Educational Facility Planners International: Issuetrak, November 2001.*
- Marx, K. (1977). *Selected writings* (D. McLellan, Ed.), pp.129-191. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Maxwell, J. A. (1996). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- McLaren, P. (1986). *Schooling as a ritual performance: Towards a political economy of educational symbols and gestures* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Routledge.
- McLaren, P. (1998). *Life in Schools: An introduction to critical pedagogy in the foundations of education* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Longman.
- McLaren, P. (2003). *Life in schools: An introduction to critical pedagogy in the foundations of education* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Metz, M. H. (1978). *Classrooms and corridors: The crisis of authority in desegregated secondary schools*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Miles, M.B., & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Moore, D. P., & Warner, E. (1998). Where children learn. The effect of facilities on student achievement. Retrieved on 7/26/02 from <http://www.cefpi.org/issue8.html>
- Morgan, D. F. (1988). *Focus groups as qualitative research: Qualitative research methods*, Vol. 16. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE publications.

- Nair, P. (2002). But are they learning? Based on a paper presented at the International Workshop on Educational Infrastructure. Retrieved on 7/26/02 from [http://www.designshare.com/Research/Nair/Are\\_They\\_Learning.htm](http://www.designshare.com/Research/Nair/Are_They_Learning.htm)
- Patten, M. Q. (1997). *Qualitative evaluation methods*. Newberry Park, CA: Sage.
- Peshkin, A. (2000). The nature of interpretation in qualitative research. *Educational Researcher*, 29(9), 5-9.
- Punch, K. F. (1998). *Introduction to social research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches*. London: Sage.
- Schensul, J.J., LeCompte, M.D., Nastasi, B. K., & Borgatti, S.P. (1999a). *Enhanced ethnographic methods: Ethnographer's toolkit, Vol 3*. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.
- Schensul, S. L., Schensul, J. J., & LeCompte, M. D. (1999b). *Essential ethnographic methods: Ethnographer's toolkit volume 2*. Alta Mira Press: Walnut Creek, CA.
- Wolcott, H. F. (1999). *Ethnography: A way of seeing*. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH BOARD APPROVAL



## APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORMS

## Informed Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a project conducted through Valdosta State University. The University in accordance with its policy regarding the Protection of Human Research subjects asks that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project after you have been fully informed about the project and agree to participate.

The principal investigator, David Cole, has explained to you in detail the purpose of the project, the procedures to be used, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. Please ask David Cole any questions you have to help you understand this research project. A basic explanation of the research is given below. Please read this explanation and discuss with the researcher any questions you may have with David Cole.

The title of this project is "Perceptions of a Middle School in Transition" and is being conducted by student researcher, David Cole, as a dissertation for completion of the Curriculum and Instructional Technology Department's Ed. D. program.

This project will take place between May 2003 and May 2004. The Project will include participant observation of the school environment and informal and formal individual and focus group interviews with middle school teachers, administrators, and students.

There are no known or anticipated risks and/or discomforts to participants of this study. However, there are counseling services available at Valdosta Middle School should they be needed.

Participants are assured of confidentiality of data. Any interview transcripts and/or observational notes will be locked in a secure place during the entirety of the study and subsequently destroyed following the completion of the dissertation.

Anyone asked to participate in the study will have the opportunity to refuse to participate and/or stop participation at any time within the study. No one involved will be discriminated against in any way.

This project, IRB- 01245-2003, has been reviewed by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board. Questions regarding the conduct of this research may be directed to Dr. Mary H. Watson, IRB Administrator, (229)-333-7837.

The student researcher, David Cole, can be reached at (229)-333-8555.

Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University. Should you agree to participate in this study and you decide later that you wish to withdraw, you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. If you do agree to participate at this time please sign and date this statement in the presence of a witness. You will receive a copy of this consent form for

your records. Thank you very much for your willingness to participate in this research project.

Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Witness/Researcher Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Parental/ Guardian Consent Form

Your child is being asked to participate in a project conducted through Valdosta State University. The University in accordance with its policy regarding the Protection of Human Research subjects asks that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project after you have been fully informed about the project and agree to participate.

The principal investigator, David Cole, has explained to you in detail the purpose of the project, the procedures to be used, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. Please ask David Cole any questions you have to help you understand this research project. A basic explanation of the research is given below. Please read this explanation and discuss with the researcher any questions you may have with David Cole.

The title of this project is "Perceptions of a Middle School in Transition" and is being conducted by student researcher, David Cole, as a dissertation for completion of the Curriculum and Instructional Technology Department's Ed. D. program.

This project will take place between May 2003 and May 2004. The Project will include participant observation of the school environment and informal and formal individual and focus group interviews with middle school teachers, administrators, and students.

There are no known or anticipated risks and/or discomforts to participants of this study. However, there are counseling services available at Valdosta Middle School should they be needed.

Participants are assured of confidentiality of data. Any interview transcripts and/or observational notes will be locked in a secure place during the entirety of the study and subsequently destroyed following the completion of the dissertation.

Anyone asked to participate in the study will have the opportunity to refuse to participate and/or stop participation at any time within the study. No one involved will be discriminated against in any way.

This project, IRB-01245-2003, has been reviewed by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board. Questions regarding the conduct of this research may be directed to Dr. Mary H. Watson, IRB Administrator, (229)-333-7837.

The student researcher, David Cole, can be reached at (229)-333-8555.

Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you or your child may be entitled to from the University. Should you agree to your child's participation in this study and you or your child decide later that you wish to withdraw, you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. If you do agree to the stipulations of participation at this time please sign and date this statement. You will

receive a copy of this consent form for your records if you wish. Thank you very much for your willingness to participate in this research project.

Name of Participating Child \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Child/Minor Assent Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand that my parents have given permission for me to take part in a project about the move from the old to new Valdosta Middle School building under the direction of Mr. David Cole. I am taking part because I want to. I have been informed that I can stop at any time I want and nothing will happen to me if I want to stop.

## APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS



ADMINISTRATOR & TEACHER DEMOGRAPHICS

<b>Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Subject/Job</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Years of Experience</b>
Miriam	Female	White	Sp.Ed./Admin.	7 <sup>th</sup>	20+
Carl	Male	White	Soc. Stud.	8 <sup>th</sup>	25+
Ralph	Male	White	Science	8 <sup>th</sup>	20+
Cheryl	Female	White	Math	8 <sup>th</sup>	5-10
Barbara	Female	White	Media	6 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup>	30+
Jane	Female	Black	Admin.	6 <sup>th</sup>	20+
Sam	Male	White	Admin.	8 <sup>th</sup>	25+
Tom	Male	Black	Science	7 <sup>th</sup>	30+
Hal	Male	White	Science	7 <sup>th</sup>	25+
Phillip	Male	White	Connections	6 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup>	35+
Terry	Male	Black	Connections	6 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup>	10+
Donna	Female	White	Math	8 <sup>th</sup>	25+
Gerry	Male	White	Science	8 <sup>th</sup>	5-10
Rosy	Female	White	Lang. Arts	8 <sup>th</sup>	25+
Dora	Female	White	Lang. Arts	8 <sup>th</sup>	5-10
Natalie	Female	White	Science	8 <sup>th</sup>	25+

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

<b>Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>
Brad	Male	White
Andrew	Male	White
Hannah	Female	White
Shannon	Female	Black
Robert	Male	Asian
Brandy	Female	Black
Paul	Male	White
Queenie	Female	Black
Daphanie	Female	Black
Larry	Male	Black
Mary	Female	White
Alice	Female	Black
Nancy	Female	Black
Mandy	Female	Asian
Kedrick	Male	White
Chrissy	Female	Black
Anita	Female	Asian
Carnie	Female	White
Sandy	Female	Black
Tad	Male	White

