

2007

Boys acting differently: choice, engagement and learning

Craig Deed

La Trobe University, c.deed@latrobe.edu.au

Chris Campbell

University of Notre Dame Australia, ccampbell1@nd.edu.au

Follow this and additional works at: https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/edu_article



Part of the Education Commons

This article was originally published as:

Deed, C., & Campbell, C. (2007). Boys acting differently: choice, engagement and learning. *The International Journal of Learning*, 14 (2), 149-158.

This article is posted on ResearchOnline@ND at https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/edu_article/18. For more information, please contact researchonline@nd.edu.au.



Introduction

This paper considers the rationalisations students have for choosing to resist or participate in classroom learning. This question is examined from a sociological perspective using the concept of agency.

Imagine, if you can, a classroom where one or more students break the rules, resist involvement in learning, seem to lack any motivation to learn, and continually ask the teacher what to do next. Teachers may refer to such students as *disengaged* from learning. If these students are choosing to disengage from learning, what could they tell us about their reasons for doing so? What could we learn from these students? Understanding the reasoning of students for their choices can inform teacher action to redress a significant contemporary issue – the educational disengagement of young adolescents (Smyth, McInerney & Hattam, 2003).

Disengagement can be conceptualised as intentional student resistance to a perceived lack of control over their own learning (Munns & McFadden, 2000; Powell, McIntyre & Rightmyer, 2006). Teachers may attempt to influence student resistant behaviours and school disengagement through the use of alternative pedagogical approaches (Ainley, 2004; Deed, 2006; Riordan, 2006; Skinner, Pappas & Davis, 2005). Learner-centred teaching is an example of a pedagogical approach that provides opportunities for students to actively take control of their learning (Smyth, 2006).

However, pedagogical strategies that give students more autonomy seem to assume that disengaged students are able to move from a pattern of resistance to a new role of engagement. It is this assumption that is examined here.

Student agency and learning theory

Giddens' (1984) stratification model of the agent is a key theoretical reference lens to view the issues considered in this paper. Agency is the capacity of individuals to take action (Giddens). Agency refers to doing and is concerned with moments when the agent makes a choice about how they will act. The decisions that students make, according to

Giddens, have consequences that are unintended, but which form the context for further action. An agent's rationalisation or 'theoretical understanding' for action is made up of both discursive reasons and implicit understandings about 'going on' in certain social situations (Giddens).

Bandura (1989) argues that examination of learning agency must consider the influence of self-efficacy. In particular, self-perceived inefficacy can prevent individuals from attempting a task that potentially could provide positive outcomes. In the case of the study reported in this paper; self-efficacy is likely to impact on a student's decisions about "what challenges to undertake, how much effort to expend ... and how long to persevere" (Bandura, 1989, p. 1180). Even if students perceive that they are able to successfully complete classroom tasks they still make choices about effort and perseverance (Skinner, Pappas & Davis, 2005).

A number of differing perspectives on agency require acknowledgement. Thompson (1989) claimed that in institutions such as schools certain individuals have restricted opportunities for action. Conversely, King (2000) suggested that structural constraints were understandings, loosely agreed upon by individuals, which allow a broad range of possible practices. King (2000) argued that an action would be appropriate if it was regarded by others as meaningful, rather than if it followed a rule or social routine.

These views imply that consideration of the contexts where the disengaged students make choices about resistance or participation are an essential component of the analysis (Greener, 2002). Any agent does not operate as completely autonomous individuals, but are influenced by their context. In the case of students this context includes the classroom, teacher and other students. Within this context students are conceptualised as having power to make choices about resisting or participating in classroom tasks. Perhaps if students had no agency then the overt problem of disengagement would not exist.

Research Methodology

Research design

A case study method in the manner described by Stake (1995) was used at one school site to study an instance of student disengagement. Case study data has the advantage of being strong in reality, and allowing attention to focus on the contextually unique features (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000).

Data collection used a mixed method approach: interviews with teachers and students and classroom observation; and student online journal entries requiring mini-surveys to be completed for each new entry. The focus was on exploring 6th grade male student responses to teaching strategies that emphasized student choice in task content, presentation and assessment.

One school was used in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the issue of student disengagement, and thus data represents a snapshot of a specific time and place. Limited contextual data was gathered, such as parental interviews, or consideration of historical factors at the school.

Interviewing young adolescents about their perceptions of learning is problematic, as they were initially unable to articulate any considered conceptualisation of this abstract concept. To counter this, data from the interviews was considered against observational records and online journal entries.

Despite some potential criticisms about the generalizability of this research, this study provides an insight into the perspective of disengaged males about learning and contributes to greater understanding of this pervasive issue in schools.

Study context

The school used in this study is located in the central part of Victoria and draws its student cohort from a local population of approximately 2000 people. The major local industry is agriculture and related services. The Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) index figure for the school's postcode was in the 50% percentile for Victoria (ABS, 2001). The local area is therefore likely to have a

higher proportion of individuals on low incomes and more employees in unskilled occupations.

The cluster of local schools in the surrounding area commenced a project in 2006 to increase the achievement level of boys in the middle years. This project was based on the findings of the Australian Government initiative Boys' Education Lighthouse Schools Stage One (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2003). The Lighthouse Schools report identified several guiding principles for educating boys including consideration of boys' learning style, involving students in learning activities, and being prepared to negotiate and discuss teaching and learning with students. The two Grade 5/6 female teachers, both experienced staff members at the school, were asked to implement strategies based on these findings, with a specific focus on giving the boys choice over content, approach and assessment. The data collection then focused on the boys' responses to being given increased autonomy and choice in the classroom.

Participants

Eleven 6th grade male students participated in this research project. These students were drawn from the two Grade 5/6 coeducational classes in a small elementary school in regional Victoria, Australia. This sample represents all 6th grade males enrolled at the school.

The elementary school, which has approximately 150 students, was selected based on state-wide statistical data from the Attitude to School Survey that showed these male students ranked in the bottom tenth percentile across schools in the State of Victoria in 2006 in terms of school connectedness, student motivation and learning confidence (Department of Education, 2006). The 6th grade male students participating in this study were percentage ranked 4th from the lowest score across all elementary schools in Victoria on the category of school motivation. This compares to the 6th grade female students from the same class who were percentage ranked 84th for the same category.

Data collection and analysis procedure

Data collection occurred during 2006 and involved multiple interviews with 6th grade male students and their teachers; classroom observation and an innovative online journal kept by each of the student participants (Campbell & Deed, 2007).

Student participants were asked to use the online journal to recall and talk about recent classroom activities and tasks. The guiding questions for the student interviews focused on learning tasks, learning preferences, responses to classroom tasks, and their perceptions of being in control of their learning. Three interviews were conducted over several months, with one consequence being the building of a good relationship with the students. Interview questions were related to actual work being completed in the classroom.

Twenty days of classroom observation were conducted over eight months in 2006. Detailed notes were made about the tasks being completed by the students including specific comments about pedagogy and student autonomy and choice. Each student participant was described in terms of behaviour, such as participation, task focus, willingness to exert effort and rule-breaking; emotional reaction to tasks, teacher and peers; and cognitive investment, such as asking questions, taking responsibility for learning, choices made about content, task or assessment, concentration and reaction to difficulty or failure.

The data analysis involved a thematic analysis of the online journal, observation and interview data. The analysis was focused on the following themes identified from the research literature: student perceptions about learning and being in control of learning; student experience of making choices about learning; and student choices about resisting or participating tasks. NVivo was used to code for recurrent themes.

The student participant responses to online journal engagement questions were coded and entered into a spreadsheet. Two of the engagement questions asked students to rank, using a Likert scale, statements about their behaviour during the task. A third question asked them to select yes/no from a set of options. Average and standard

deviation figures were calculated for a subset of student responses dealing with being in control of learning.

Results

Both teachers regularly used a number of strategies that emphasised student autonomy and choice. Tasks often involved students making choices about content, process or assessment options. Students usually made choices from a number of options presented by the teacher, and decisions were informed by the purpose of the task and assessment criteria being stated. Students were also encouraged to negotiate with the teacher. The teachers monitored student progress and tried to direct students into a challenging depth of learning.

Before examining student participant reasoning for their choices, it is pertinent to consider what choices they were observed making. Two observed activities are described below that were typical of participant behaviour.

Example 1: A day in the life of an athlete

During the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games, students had to write a descriptive piece on a day in the life of an athlete. A draft copy was to be checked by the teacher prior to the final copy being typed.

Dan tried to get the task over and done with quickly. He screamed and shouted at others who tried to look at his work or make any comments about his writing ability. Dan initially wanted the teacher to do most of the revision work, such as fixing spelling errors. Dan was directed by the teacher to try looking in the dictionary, which he did attempt. Even though the bell rang he wanted his piece of work looked at again by the teacher to see if it was completed correctly.

Another student, Fred, appeared to intensely dislike this task. He stared, apparently bored, into space for ten minutes and then slowly started. He refused to let anyone get near him or look at his work, yelling "It's not worth it, it's a load of crap anyway" and "I don't care, I hate writing, I don't know how to do it". When the teacher eventually

convinced Fred to let her look at his work he showed no interest in taking up her suggestions.

Later that day Fred commented on his piece of writing in his online journal. In contrast to his overtly negative behaviour, Fred indicated that he was interested, put in a big effort, completed the task, did what he was supposed to do, understood what he had to do, concentrated hard, thought of a good idea, did not want to stop, and kept trying even though it was hard. Fred also signaled that he felt in control, clever, happy and successful. Clearly there was a disparity between Fred's observed behaviour and his reasoning and approach to this task. It is possible that Fred's online journal entry was, on this occasion, contrived. However, the researchers always found Fred to be an articulate interviewee who was brutally honest about his behaviour and the choices that he made in the classroom. Fred said that he often considered whether:

I am going to be stupid or not... Sometimes I just think should I do the work or should I distract everyone ... Or should I just sit there and do nothing and that happens sometimes.

After all students had submitted their work, Fred's piece was awarded the highest mark and published in the school newsletter. While Fred's observed behaviour would be categorised as disengaged, he was evidently cognitively engaged with this task.

Example 2: Estimation

This activity created a lot of excitement among the student participants. The teacher used different shaped containers that were filled with varying amounts of water. Students had to estimate the percentage of water in each container. Estimations were compared to the actual percentage and the error rate graphed. The purpose was for the error rates to decline during the activity.

After the correct measurement was read out for each container, there was a lot of whooping and yelling 'yes' and 'no'. Students were then completely silent and focused when water was being poured into the next container. Students demonstrated high levels

of concentration and effort to produce clear and accurate graphs to show their declining error rate.

The students enthusiastically questioned the strategies they were using and were eager to try different techniques to improve their accuracy. In their keenness to reduce their error rate, some students decided to sit close to the front of the room so they could read the measurements on the side of the containers. This persisted after the teacher told them this was cheating and would only affect their own learning.

Four students commented on this task using the online journal. The student comments were coherent with their observed behaviour.

I enjoyed it. It was fun doing it... I now love maths. It was cool and exciting. (Dan)

Today we did maths. It was very interesting and fun. We did maths on percentages and I did not want to stop. (Raff)

Although the students agreed it was a fun and enjoyable activity, two commented that it was an easy task.

Today we did maths percentages it was fun I really like maths except I thought was a bit easy. (Billy)

Today in maths we did percentages I really enjoyed doing this kind of activity. It wasn't very hard we had to guess the percentages it was fun.
(Roy)

Being in control

Student participants' reasoning for their choices was examined by asking them about how they acted during tasks where they were given some autonomy; if they knew what being in control of their learning meant; and if they were ever in control of their learning.

One section of the online journal required students to rank aspects of their behavioural, affective and cognitive responses to a recent classroom task. Of the eighty-one journal entries from the data collection period, twenty-three had a positive response to the item 'Today I felt in control'. Four of these journal entries were excluded from the

data analysis because the students had ticked every possible item. The remaining nineteen journal entries were then collated and average rankings determined for all other items. These average rankings are shown in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1. Student ranking of behaviours associated with being in control

Today I ...	Average ranking ^a	Standard Deviation
Understood what I had to do	4.58	0.69
Did what I was supposed to do	4.11	1.37
Completed the task	4.11	1.41
Put in a big effort	3.74	1.24
Was interested	3.74	1.34
Did my own thing	2.47	1.68
Interfered with others' work	1.63	1.07
Got into trouble	1.42	0.90
Argued with the teacher	1.37	1.07

Note. n = 19.

^a1 = Not at all, 5 = Very strongly.

Table 1 shows that the participants associated understanding what to do, doing what you are supposed to do, and completing the task with being in control. Conversely, behaviours including interfering with others' work, getting into trouble and arguing with the teacher, had a low correlation with being in control.

Being in control was also associated with feeling of success, happiness, cleverness and importance (Table 2). Feelings such as anger, frustration and anxiety had a low correlation with being in control.

Learning behaviours associated with being in control (Table 3) were concentrating hard, making my own decisions, learning something important, trying even though it was hard and thinking of a good idea.

Table 2. Student ranking of emotions associated with being in control

Today I felt ...	Average ranking ^a
In control	1
Successful	0.95
Happy	0.84
Clever	0.79
Important	0.68
Supported	0.37
Liked	0.32
Frustrated	0.26
Anxious	0.21
Curious	0.21
Crazy	0.21
Angry	0.05

Note. n = 19.

^a0 = No, 1 = Yes.

Table 3. Student ranking of learning behaviours associated with being in control

When I was working I ...	Average ranking ^a	Standard Deviation
Concentrated hard	4.42	0.69
Made my own decisions	4.21	0.92
Learnt something important	4.16	0.96
Kept trying even though it was hard	3.95	1.58
Thought of a good idea	3.84	1.26
Was responsible for my own learning	3.74	1.33
Did not want to stop	3.53	1.54
Asked questions	3.11	1.32

Helped another student	3.00	1.37
Took part in discussions	2.89	1.29
Wasted time	2.05	1.08
Did what I wanted to do	1.84	1.38

Note. n = 19.

^a1 = Not at all, 5 = Very strongly.

Student participants appeared to reject autonomous learning behaviour in favour of compliance with teacher direction and getting it right. For instance, behaviours such as 'did my own thing' (Average ranking of 2.47), and 'did what I wanted to do' (0.84) had a low correlation with being in control.

The student interview data showed coherence with the online journal data. Being in control was clearly associated with doing work that was understood and could be completed as required.

Like to me it means that ... you knew exactly what to do. (Tim)

Being in control you just know everything. (Raff)

When I am in maths ... I know what to do and I am good at it so like I am in control. (Nick)

The student participants also preferred to be in control because this meant that they were not being told what to do by the teacher.

I prefer it when I am in control because you can't force someone to do something how you want it. (Fred)

I like to be able to do it myself without someone telling me everything to do. (Billy)

I like it better than just getting told to do something. (Tim)

Discussion

Student participants: (a) had a limited view of learning; which (b) informed the rationalisation for their learning choices.

A limited view of learning

The student participants liked being in control, meaning they preferred classroom situations where they knew what to do and how to do it correctly. Where students perceived they were not in control, they often handed responsibility for learning back to the teacher. For some students perceptions of being out of control resulted in feelings of anger, frustration and anxiety; and disruptive behaviour including interfering with others' work, getting into trouble and arguing with the teacher.

Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004) examined the concept of school engagement, and an overview of their findings is shown in Table 4. The behaviour of the student participants contrasts with many of these aspects of school engagement. Specifically in relation to learning, there was little evidence that the student participants used any self-regulation strategies; or that their motivation reflected an intrinsic or mastery orientation. This indicates that important elements of learning are missing from the student participants' construction of learning. Carnell (2005, p. 282) identified a similar perspective among Year 8 students who often spoke "about their 'work' rather than their learning".

Table 4. School engagement

Aspect	Description
Behavioural	Positive conduct: adherence to classroom rules and routines
	Involvement in learning: effort, persistence, concentration and asking questions
Emotional	Affective reactions in the classroom: interest, boredom, anger, sadness and anxiety
	Connectedness with school: sense of belonging
	Task value: enjoyment, importance of doing well, importance of task to future goals, and cost
Cognitive	Investment in learning: preference for challenge, positive coping in face of failure and commitment to understanding work
	Motivation to learn: intrinsic, mastery approach

Note. Based on Fredricks et al. 2004

Watkins, Carnell, Lodge, Wagner and Whalley (as cited in Carnell, 2005, p. 282) made the point that effective learning is driven by learner agency that is informed by meta-learning. In the case of the student participants, their learning agency is seemingly informed by a limited view of learning. The students were more likely to participate in a task where they understood what to do and they believed they had the capacity to complete it successfully.

The student participants' rationalisation for being in control of learning also included behaviours such as concentrating hard, making my own decisions, learning something important, trying even though it was hard and thinking of a good idea. This probably reflects the students' tacit understanding of appropriate ways to learn in the classroom. This knowledge appeared to be moderated, when it came to 'doing', by a perceived need to be successful. This was evident in the observational example of the mathematics estimation task. The students were engaged in this task, although some acknowledged it was relatively simple. Despite this, there were students who tried to cheat in order to improve their accuracy. In this instance, being successful appeared to be more important than learning.

These findings are consistent with prior research linking student beliefs about their efficacy to complete a task to academic disengagement (Legault, Green-Demers & Pelletier, 2006). The crucial aspect of these findings is that they show that disengaged students are making choices about participation in classroom tasks based on a limited view about learning. This does not imply that disengaged students always make ineffective choices about their learning. It does however signal that a limited view of learning is an influential variable in sustaining a general pattern of disengagement.

Student rationalisation for learning choices

Giddens' (1984) stratification model of the agent is useful in interpreting these findings. The student participants in this study were able to provide reasons for their actions, and also demonstrated an understanding of the context of these actions. Giddens makes clear that agents operate with a 'theoretical understanding' of the reasons for their activity, and reflexively monitor their competence against this knowledge. The strength of Giddens model is its emphasis on agents being responsive to their understandings of the routines and structures of the context for action.

The student participants were competent in that they were knowledgeable about an appropriate, albeit limited, way to act in their classroom interactions. Being compliant with teacher direction and wanting to get work correct, or being willing to 'play the game', is a sound basis for engagement and persistence with school (Knesting & Waldron, 2006). However, the student participants used this pragmatic, although limited, knowledge as the basis for making choices about engaging and disengaging from classroom tasks and interactions.

Learning was thus rationalised by the students as mainly concerned with compliance and achievement. Tasks perceived by students as either boring or challenging led to behaviours including anger, frustration, arguing with teacher, getting into trouble or wasting time. Prior studies have shown that teachers may respond by using pedagogical strategies that they estimate will lead to less aggressive resistance (Powell et al. 2006). This is consistent with Haberman's contention (as cited in Smyth, 2006, p. 295) that students influence the behaviour of teachers. "Students reward teachers by complying. They punish by resisting." Resisting difficult tasks implies that the students are not accepting any responsibility for their learning.

Explicit disengaged behaviour in the classroom, such as the expression of anger, appeared to be broadly accepted by other students. The general pattern of disengagement among all the 6th grade males implies that they were "orienting themselves to other individuals given their mutual self-understandings" (King, 2000, p. 372). The consequence of these shared practices of disengagement is a context where

tasks are responded to within a habitual cycle of resistance. Disengaged students are more likely to draw on current understandings about resistant practices to inform responses to new tasks (King, 2000). The student participants expected, and were expected, to behaviourally disengage at some stage during a classroom task. Academic engagement is thus a choice informed by context; even if students' perceive they could complete the task successfully (Skinner, Pappas & Davis, 2005).

Being able to complete a task successfully means that a student could choose to appear behaviourally disengaged while simultaneously being cognitively engaged. This was demonstrated in the writing task about a day in the life of an athlete. Dan and Fred were both behaviourally disruptive, yet they wanted to correctly complete the task. These two students' task participation was masked by overt resistance informed by the contextual pattern of disengagement within that classroom.

It seems that the pedagogical structure of the classroom was *loose* enough to allow the students to choose to act in a number of different ways. Disengaged behaviour may become a legitimate behaviour if the action is validated by peers (King, 2000). The meaningful interactions of the male students were with their peers. An issue not directly examined in this paper is whether the teacher also validated disruptive behaviour by tolerating, or even accepting it, as a part of normalised response to set tasks.

The actions of disengaged students can never be absolutely determined and represents an "imaginative ... response to the specific contexts within which action unfolds" (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 1004). Disengaged students have a capacity to engage and disengage that is informed by their limited view of learning and influenced by their tacit understanding of the classroom context. A moment that illustrates this point was during a relatively simple mathematics estimation task where some students chose to cheat in order to increase their probability of success.

Conclusion

This paper examined the choices made by a group of 6th grade males to either resist or participate in learning. These choices were responsive to the perceived characteristics

of the task, and the students' understanding of the routines of their local context, specifically their habitual disengaged behaviours. The basis for their reasoning was a reflexive view of learning that was largely bounded by their perceptions about the possibility of being successful.

The student participants were neither fully disengaged nor engaged, yet the overall pattern was one of disengagement. Consistent with prior research, student perceptions about being in control of learning were a key influence in their academic engagement (Munns & McFadden, 2000; Powell et al. 2006).

It has been suggested that pedagogical strategies that emphasise student-centred learning may be a technique to reengage resistant students (Ainley, 2004; Riordan, 2006; Skinner et al. 2005; Smyth, 2006). This paper presents an argument that the use of approaches that emphasise choice and agency need to be complimented by strategies that address the student's limited ideas about learning. An important starting point is asking students for their views about learning (Riley, Ellis, Weinstock, Tarrant, & Hallmond, 2006).

Disengagement is a complex phenomenon, and this paper has provided one limited snapshot of a group of male students. It is clear that the in-depth examination of classroom culture and context does reveal some important clues for teachers to use in tackling this significant classroom problem.

References

- Ainley, M. (2004). *What do we know about student motivation and engagement?* Paper presented at Australian Association for Research in Education 2004 Conference. Retrieved February 17, 2006, from <http://www.aare.edu.au/04pap/>.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001) Census of Population and Housing: Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia – Data Cube only 2001 [Data file] Available from Australian Bureau of Statistics Web site <http://www.abs.gov.au>.
- Bandura, A. (1989). Human agency in social cognitive theory. *American Psychologist*, 44, 1175-1184.
- Campbell, C. & Deed, C. (2007). Using an online journaling tool to collect rich self reflection data with elementary school children. In C. Crawford et al. (Eds.), *Proceedings of Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education International Conference 2007* (pp. 1926-1930). Chesapeake, VA: AACE.
- Carnell, E. (2005). Understanding and enriching young people's learning: Issues, complexities and challenges. *Improving Schools*, 8, 269-284.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research Methods in Education* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge-Falmer.
- Deed, C. (2006). Teacher perspectives on early intervention for students at-risk of educational disengagement. *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences*, 1, 45-51.
- Department of Education (2006). [Attitudes to school survey for 'X' Primary School Year 5/6 data] Unpublished raw data.
- Department of Education, Science and Training (2003). *Meeting the Challenge Final Report: Guiding Principles for Success from the Boys' Education Lighthouse Schools Programme Stage One*. Canberra: DEST.
- Emirbayer, M. & Mische, A. (1998). What is agency? *The American Journal of Sociology*, 103, 962-1023.
- Fredricks, J.A., Blumenfeld, P.C., & Paris, A.H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 74, 59-96.
- Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Giddens, A. (1989). A reply to my critics. In D. Held & J.B. Thompson (Eds.), *Social theory of modern societies: Anthony Giddens and his critics* (pp. 249-301). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Giddens, A. & Pierson, C. (1998). *Conversations with Anthony Giddens: Making sense of modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Greener, I. (2002). Agency, social theory and social policy. *Critical Social Policy*, 22, 688-705.
- King, A. (2000). The accidental derogation of the lay actor: A critique of Giddens's concept of structure. *Philosophy for the Social Sciences*, 30, 362-383.
- Knesting, K. & Waldron, N. (2006). Willing to play the game: How at-risk students persist in school. *Psychology in the Schools*, 43, 599-611.

Legault, L., Green-Demers, I. & Pelletier, L. (2006). Why do high school students lack motivation in the classroom? Towards an understanding of academic amotivation and the role of social support. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 98*, 567-582.

Munns, G. & McFadden, M. (2000). First chance, second chance or last chance? Resistance and response to education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 21*, 59-75.

Powell, R., McIntyre, E. & Rightmyer, E. (2006). Johnny won't read, and Susie won't either: Reading instruction and student resistance. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy, 6*, 5-31.

Riley, K., Ellis, S., Weinstock, W., Tarrant, J. & Hallmond, S. (2006) Re-engaging disaffected pupils in learning: Insights for policy and practice. *Improving Schools, 9*, 17-31.

Riordan, G. (2006). Reducing student 'suspension rates' and engaging students in learning: Principal and teacher approaches that work. *Improving Schools, 9*, 239-250.

Skinner, C.H., Pappas, D.N. & Davis, K.A. (2005). Enhancing academic engagement: Providing opportunities for responding and influencing students to choose to respond. *Psychology in the Schools, 42*, 389-403.

Smyth, J. (2006). 'When students have power': Student engagement, student voice, and the possibilities for school reform around 'dropping out' of school. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 9*, 285-298.

Smyth, J, McInerney, P. & Hattam, R. (2003). Tackling school leaving at its source: A case of reform in the middle years of schooling. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 24*, 177-193.

Stake, R. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Thompson, J. B. (1989). The theory of structuration. In D. Held & J.B. Thompson (Eds.), *Social theory of modern societies: Anthony Giddens and his critics* (pp. 56-76). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.