Blind people: A social constructivist analysis of New Zealand education policy and practice.

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Abstract

This thesis explored the educational experiences in New Zealand of ten blind people of various ages. It submits that the social constructivism position developed by Lev Vygotsky allows the researcher to explore personal and social constructions as part of scholarly discussions and theorising about disability. Vygotsky's notions of social dislocation and blind people are also shown to be of value in this research area. The research arose from a query to blind people themselves who suggested that the study examine the effect of educational policy and practice on a blind person's life. From participant observation and interviews with seven blind adults, three blind children, five parents of blind children, and eighteen professionals, this thesis discusses the different meanings which have been constructed about blindness in the participants' lives and within their educational experiences. A discussion group of two blind people and one parent of a blind child was also formed to help the researcher negotiate meaning within the study.

The blind participants in this study first learned about social dislocation when they attended the special school where they were segregated and under the control and surveillance of others. It occurred when the participants were at regular schools where the prevailing education policy and practice did not include or acknowledge the educational needs and rights of blind students. There were issues about the availability and the type of literacy and movement instruction which they received. They also had problems accessing other curriculum areas which were competitive, visual, or considered too difficult for blind people. They had few friends but some participants felt a bond with and supported by other blind people. Despite these obstacles, the participants resisted social constructions which were barriers to their inclusion and transgressed their assigned identities through their purposeful rebellion, achievement, political action, or withdrawal.

When the participants felt that they had a social place in their families, schools, and communities, they felt understood and valued. The meaning of blindness in these instances was constructed as one facet of their humanness. It was not an overwhelming disaster and they were like anyone else. All of the participants stated that inclusion was the goal to which the New Zealand education system should aspire. However, a climate of mistrust has formed within the education system, and the participants stated that they did not believe that the Ministry of Education was concerned about blind children. It is suggested that the Ministry of Education needs to make a commitment to change and to inclusive education where all children can have a social place.

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Chapter One

Introduction

This study began on my journey to New Zealand, although at the time I was unaware of this beginning. I was on the plane, heading to my new job as an instructor at the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind (RNZFB) in 1988, and I started talking to the woman seated next to me. It turned out that she had a vision impairment. I couldn't believe the coincidence and she stated that yes, it was true and that she had her papers to prove it. I asked "Her papers? What do you mean?" She stated that she had her membership card to the RNZFB with her picture on it. I then imagined that every blind New Zealander had to carry around their papers and wondered what I had gotten myself into. Later my fears were allayed when I found that not every RNZFB member carried these papers and that the papers were simply a travel pass for blind people so that they could receive discounted fares. However, my imagination did not steer me too far from the thesis of this study that blindness in New Zealand is about social dislocation.

Vygotsky (1993/?) wrote that in order to understand blindness researchers should not just study blindness but study it in association with its past and future. This thesis explores how blind people over the past sixty years in New Zealand have experienced blindness in the education system. Vygotsky also stated that blindness was about social dislocation and it was important to look at how blindness brought about personal changes which combined and interacted to compensate for this social dislocation. Social dislocation begins at birth and is also related to the social and cultural instruction which occurs in the classroom (Vygotsky, 1993/?). Such instruction and its underlying beliefs must be studied in order to understand the social learning which occurs (Goodnow, 1993; Trent et al; Wagner-Lampl & Oliver, 1994; Wertsch, 1995).

It is my intention through this Ph.D. thesis to make a contribution to the literature by exploring through a social constructivist perspective the meaning of blindness in New Zealand, with particular reference to educational policy and practice. This thesis argues that Lev Vygotsky's notions about social constructivism and blindness can contribute to study in the area of disability. Recently, the social model of disability has been criticised for not acknowledging the experiences of the individual. However, social constructivism does include these experiences. This thesis suggests that blindness in New Zealand has been socially constructed around exclusionary discourses and ideology and that this contributes to the social dislocation experienced by blind people. Blind people have been prevented from learning about and participating in their community. Such dislocation takes root during childhood when the New Zealand compulsory education system or the RNZFB was, and perhaps is, first encountered. The individual blind people within this study may be seen to have had their own unique experiences of blindness and have made personal changes to accommodate these experiences in accordance with how they each viewed the meaning of blindness in their lives.

The educational experiences of ten blind people are presented in this study to identify the meanings of blindness and how these were experienced. The social, economic, political, and educational factors contributing to these meanings and issues, relating to different constructions of blindness, are also presented. As part of this investigation, the rhetoric of integration policy and the reality of attempts to fully include blind people in the mainstream educational environment were considered. It is suggested that the difficulties in achieving inclusion and in meeting the needs of blind children may be partly due to the limitations and hidden agendas which lie behind present education policy and practice, and to the prevailing attitudes which define blind students as very different from other students. Also problematic is the lack of understanding about, or acknowledgement of, the unique effects of blindness.

At face value, this thesis appears to be organised in a traditional manner in that the chapters follow the usual sequence of presenting the theory, literature review, methodology, results, and discussion in order. This was a helpful structural device around which to organise this research. However, the results and discussion chapter divert from positivist tradition and is instead a part of qualitative tradition in that the data in the results chapter has already been interpreted through the development of themes and through its writing. They have also been written and woven with the hope that the reader will be able to read into them the issues that have been brought to the fore in the theory and the literature review chapters. The discussion chapter follows from this and presents important aspects of the theory, literature, methodology, and the results of this study that support this thesis.

The theory chapter, chapter two, looks at how social constructivism includes discussions about the body, mind and the social. In contrast, some previous discussions within disability theory have not synthesised these elements, but centre on one element only. The medical model of disability only refers primarily to ideas around the impaired body. Social construction models of disability note that disability has been socially constructed through literature, cultural imagery and beliefs, language, and capitalism. This thesis suggests, however, that it is important to acknowledge the personal experiences and differences of disabled people. For example, disabled women have different experiences of their impairment than men. Introducing the personal component is achieved through Maturana's, Varela's, Foucault's, and especially Vygotsky's writings in social constructivism which state that we have active unique minds which construct meanings through social learning in our environments.

The third chapter, the first review of the literature about the meaning of blindness, introduces Vygotsky's writings on defectology. Vygotsky's defectology writings (1993) have been recently published and there is a dearth of literature about them. He posited that blind children were essentially the same as sighted children but that blindness brought about social difficulties in that a blind child's social location and position was not the same as sighted children's. He also argued that special schools contributed to blind children's social exclusion and that blind children should be taught at regular schools. The meaning of blindness in history and folklore is presented which has helped to form the negative stereotypes and attitudes of sighted people. Also presented in this chapter is the educational history of blind people and children in New Zealand which began, like other places in the world, with segregation. However, New Zealand does have a unique Act of Parliament which legally established the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind to take responsibility for educating blind children. This chapter also describes a number of studies and exposes which have challenged the status quo, special schools, special education, and professionalism. Inclusion is seen as hindered by a lack of policy statements and a lack of resource allocation. Also, New Zealand's neo-liberal education policy and ideology emphasises competition and choice. Inclusion, however, is about social life, justice, and fairness.

The next literature review chapter, which is chapter four in this thesis, presents successful strategies for inclusion. This includes acknowledging that teachers are at the forefront of school change; that teachers need to understand the rationale for inclusive education; and that they need to be supported in their use of teaching approaches which are consistent with the inclusion of all children. Principals are the leaders of schools and need to be approachable and have a commitment to inclusion. They also can create an inclusive environment through inclusive language and environmental design. Parents, caregivers, disabled children and their classmates and friends are also crucial members of an inclusive education team and need to be heard and encouraged. This chapter describes the educational history of blind children in regular schools and the small number of studies which speak about inclusive education for blind children. It also discusses the identified developmental issues which are associated with blindness. These include movement development, concept development, language, literacy, and social competence. Finally, a description of the various professionals who work in the field of blindness in New Zealand and elsewhere is presented along with a call for research to document the actual educational experiences of blind people.

Chapter five of this thesis is the methodology chapter. This chapter discusses the significance of this study for blind people. It outlines the importance of case studies in helping us explore the richness, uniqueness and complexity in lived experiences. This chapter also talks about how I found the participants for this study;

informed the participants about the study; formed the research interview questions; conducted and transcribed the interviews; and involved blind people, themselves, in the study through the establishment of an advisory discussion group. I also describe what I considered when analysing the data from the participants' interviews and how they were coded and categorised into emerging themes. The chapter concludes with a description of how I have attempted to make this thesis acceptable to blind people and people with vision impairments themselves.

Chapter six, seven, and eight form the results chapters of this study. The first chapter, chapter six, presents the data from my first three participants, Tom, Anne, and Hine who grew up in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s and resisted their segregation at the Foundation for the Blind. Tom, the oldest participant, stated that he lost his family and strived to leave the Institute for the Blind, later named the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind, throughout his life. Anne, the next participant, on the other hand, was able to be with her family for some of her education. She felt included in her family, but, at times, felt that she was not a part of the sighted community or was there on false pretences. She strived to achieve and change the social position of blind people by working for the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind. She, like Hine, the next participant, did not have confidence, though, in their abilities to have children because they thought vision was necessary to provide spontaneous information and learning activities for their children. Hine, who is Maori, also stated that she lost her culture as well as her family through her segregation at the school for the blind. As an adult, though, she found a bond with other blind people and other Maori blind people.

The second results chapter, chapter seven, is about William, Sue, Stuart, and Joe who attempted to find a place for themselves at regular schools in the 1970s, 1980s and part of the 1990s but whom found instead acceptance only from their blind peers and their families. William was a day student at the special school and then attended his local high school which was also the high school that Homai students attended. He felt that he was excluded from fully participating in his high school because of the subsequent non-inclusive langauage and teaching practices. He had a close relationship with his family and felt part of the community. He, like Anne, strived to improve the social position of blind people through his political activities. He believed that blind people had a special bond which was a result of their common experiences. Stuart, on the other hand, who only attended the special school for a year, argued that blindness did not bond people but was simply one facet of an individual's uniqueness. He was quite close to his family, but his regular school experiences were mostly about striving to receive an appropriate education and thus be included. Sue, who went to the special school during primary school, also did not feel included at the regular schools which she attended. She found solace in her blind friends and quietly worked at improving her life in the sighted community.

The third results chapter, chapter eight, is about the youngest participants in the study, Davania, Xena, and Blair who were at primary school in 1996. Davania attended the special school where she found one close friend. She had a supportive family life which involved sporting activities and many cousins. Her family hoped that she would soon be able to attend a regular school and would also be able to lead a regular life within the community. Davania's educational experience was quite different from that of Xena who was of a similar age and attended a regular school. Davania spent more time in activities which did not seem to be age appropriate. For example, she sang rhyming songs along with her younger classmates. Xena participated in the academic lessons at her school and also attend many after school activities. However, Xena did not seem to have any after school friends. She also stated that she would prefer to see and to not be blind. She had learned that sighted children could read faster, see pictures and the colours of their dogs, and help other people whereas she could not. Blair, the last and youngest participant, attended his local primary school. However, he spent half of his school hours alone or in a separate room with his teacher aide. His regular teacher and principal, despite their wish to include Blair, felt unsupported and his teacher aide felt that she had too much responsibility for his education. Blair's mother felt that she needed to constantly fight for Blair's education. In the end, it is interesting to note that Blair's next year at school was spent at the special school where resources were readily available.

The next chapter of this thesis further discusses through social constructivist theory the specific elements which have contributed to the experiences and feelings of social dislocation by the participants in this study. It documents how the unique personal experiences and constructions of disabled people can contribute to discussions about disability. It further develops the themes in the results chapter by linking them to social constructivist theory and social dislocation. The research literature is also discussed along with the participant's experiences and this discussion supports most of Vygotsky's thoughts about social dislocation. However, this study suggests that blind children have a social place within their family, and are not socially dislocated at birth as Vygotsky has suggested. The blind people in this study experienced social dislocation when they attended the special school and then when they were at regular schools where the prevailing education policy and practice did not include or acknowledge the educational needs of all students. They also had difficulty finding a social place among their peers in regular schools. However, the participants resisted the social constructions which were barriers to their inclusion. When they felt that they had a social place in their families, schools, and communities, they felt understood and valued. The meaning of blindness was constructed as one facet of their humanness and not as an overwhelming disaster.

The last chapter concludes this thesis by providing recommendations which may help to construct a social place in New Zealand for blind people. It acknowledges and presents the thoughts of the participants about education policy and practice which overwhelmingly support the concept of inclusion, but which also reflect the mistrust toward policy makers that has perhaps developed as a result of recent neo-liberal reforms in New Zealand. Education change is thus necessary to restore justice and trust. The Ministry of Education may need to take more active steps to create an inclusive, whole, and responsive education system and thus eliminate the need for special safety valves. Such steps may already have begun to occur with the advent of the Wylie (2000) report, which recommends that all educational services be part of the Ministry of Education structure. All children have a right to an inclusive education where they can learn about their culture and about the complete, challenging, and meaningful social places which are available to them in the community.

Chapter Two

Journey To A Paradigm

The World as a Construction

At the beginning of this study about the meaning of blindness, I was asked, "What is your paradigm?" I did not completely understand this question at the time, nor did I know the answer. I returned to my desk and embarked on a journey to discover 'my paradigm' and this journey is still continuing. I went to *The Handbook of Qualitative Research (1994)* in which Guba and Lincoln laid out my choices which were positivism, postpositivism, critical theory, and constructivism. Constructivism seemed to me to be the most compatible with my feelings, thoughts, and personal beliefs. Realities were "multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature, . . . and dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). This paradigm fitted my study which was about individual New Zealander's experiences of the construction of blindness. Also the goal of constructivism is to extract the essence of a consensus construction which "is more informed and sophisticated" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111) than previous constructions. This again seemed reasonable to me and fitted with my desire to find out more about the social meaning of blindness. I thus began to research the differences and similarities between two paradigms which specifically recognised social influences upon meaning construction: the social constructionist and social constructivist paradigms.

Social Construction

Gergen (1985) in his seminal work argued that social constructionism should be accepted as a metatheory of knowledge. He noted that social constructionism was primarily concerned with studying the way people come to account for, describe, or explain their world. Empirical science needed to be challenged as a metatheory because it relied on words which were embedded in a linguistic, social, historical and cultural context and because it relied on observational categories which limited full understanding, e.g. gender is not just determined by the male and female body. Social constructionists focus on the "collective generation of meaning as shaped by conventions of language and other social processes" (Schwandt, 1994, p. 127). Personal relationships within cultural contexts are central to this process. They are necessary in meeting human basic needs and subsequently in achieving health and life satisfaction (Davis & Roberts, 1985). These needs have been listed as "physical health; safety and security; self esteem and worth; love and affection; agency and autonomy; adequacy and competence; identity; belonging and acceptance; disengagement; order and understanding; personal and social legitimacy; meaning, hope and significance; and extension of self" (Davis & Roberts, 1985, p. 158).

Social construction, itself, is part of a sociology of knowledge that is rooted in Marx's proposition that "man's consciousness is determined by his social being" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 17). Berger and Luckmann (1967) in *The Social Construction of Reality* presented a sociology of knowledge which has helped to shape present day thoughts about social construction (Gergen, 1985; Sarbin & Kitsuse, 1994; Schwandt, 1994). In this work, they traced the sociology of knowledge through Marx's idea that human thought is located in human activities and in social relations; through Dilthey's insistence that no history could be analysed except on its own terms and in its own social location; and through Scheler's emphases on human knowledge in society as an antecedent to, and ordering factor in, individual experience. Finally, Berger and Luckmann attributed the formulation of the sociology of knowledge to Mannheim who saw society as "determining not only the appearance but also the content of human ideation" (p. 21).

Berger and Luckman believed that the sociology of knowledge was concerned with the sum of every aspect of knowledge , which includes not only theory, ideas, and ordering factors, but also what everyday people know as reality. They argue that the world is socially constructed and in their work theorise about the process of social construction. This process hinges on language which allows the individual to objectify and typify her/his subjective experience; to transcend the here and now; and to build up meanings and a social stock of knowledge which is distributed and passed from generation to generation. Language thus apprehends and produces the world and conversation is the tool used to maintain this world. Conversation in written or oral forms helps to legitimate societal institutions which are dialectically formed to control individuals and which also, through the socialisation process, provide individuals with roles and identities that maintain society (Berger & Luckman, 1967). Shotter and Gergen (1993) further noted that within conversations between people "everything of intellectual importance both originates and is judged as worthy or not of further attention" (p. 4).

Social construction has included theatrical metaphors of the mind which gives primary importance to text or dialogue (Ernest, 1995). Goffman in the 1960s contributed to social construction theory through his interactionalist analyses (Sarbin & Kitsuse, 1994). Human interaction in social encounters were dramatised by Goffman who saw individuals as social actors playing roles and masquerading (Gerber, 1990). He was particularly interested in situations where the individual was not qualified for full social acceptance because of their stigma. Stigma deeply discredited the individual so that there was a rift between their virtual and actual social identity. He believed that first appearances enabled the social actor to anticipate the categories and attributes of other actors. Encounters were thus filled with expectations and demands which were righteously presented (Goffman, 1990). In social constructionism meaning and knowledge in such encounters are negotiated between the actors. Knowledge is not an individual possession (Gergen, 1994a).

Partly central to a social constructionist's view of knowledge are the suppositions that the terms accounting for the world are not determined by the object of the account; that accounts are social artefacts which take on meaning within relationships; that accounts are sustained over time; and change with variations in social relationships, not in response to perturbations in the world (Gergen, 1994a). Narratives within our lives also function to give meaning and understanding to our lives (Anderson & Goolishan, 1992; Bruner, 1994; Gergen; 1996). Therefore, if there are difficulties or negative stories within our lives, they exist in language and in our narratives. They can be transformed into positive stories and take on new meanings within language (Anderson & Goolishan, 1992; Coelho de Amorim & Cavalcante, 1992; Cronen, Pearce, & Tomm, 1985; Freedman & Combs, 1996; Gergen, 1996; Gergen & Kaye, 1992). Social construction thus offers the individual agency and change through language and social relationships. Meaning is negotiated in interaction and shared between the actors (Anderson & Gollishan, 1992; Gergen, 1985; Gergen & Raye, 1992). Gergen and Kaye (1992) noted that within a therapeutic and conversational situation the client's narrative was an opportunity for the creative generation of new meaning between the therapist and client. However, they further posited that narratives are language games which include words, situated social interchange, and action. For example, anger is not anger just because someone says they are angry. They must also display what Gergen and Kaye called 'the cultural dance' of anger such as gritting one's teeth. Different narratives are created by exploring the cultural dance as well as the text.

Morss (1996) noted that this emphasis on interaction and meaning negotiation results in the person being storied into being. Social construction refutes the idea that there is a primary psychological interior (Gergen, 1995; Gergen, 1996). From such a perspective, Olssen (1991) points out that "what individuals like to think of as their attitudes, their values, their actions are in fact public rule systems or codes which define all possible modes of thought and action" (p. 204). The centred self, the 'I", and having an essential identity are eroding within a socially and communication saturated world (Gergen, 1994a; Gergen, 1996; McNamee, 1996; Shotter, 1993). Gergen (1996) has thus suggested that a theoretical investigation of a human being which is primarily relational and external is better suited to this time.

Being Socially Constructed

Within this paradigm of social constructionism, a number of scholars have presented works and studies which have contributed to the argument that the world and the self are socially constructed. Younnis (1983) noted that George Sullivan in

1953 suggested that the individual could only be understood through their relationships within their social group. Along with Mead, Sullivan proposed that the self was a social construction (Youniss, 1983). Harre (1985) said that the self is a state of self consciousness which, itself, is the ability to "play a certain language game" (p. 260) and to own our mental states. Shweder and Miller (1985) proposed that the category of person was socially constructed by arguing that a person meant different things in different cultures and was related to moral orders. In rights-based societies the individual is paramount and his/her passions can be pursued. In duty-based societies the organisation of social roles is natural and real. Suffering is linked to deviations from one's role. For example, a Hindu woman whose husband died, who became blind a year later, and then whose daughter died stated that all of this occurred because "I have done something wrong in one of my births. All the sins are gathered near me" (p. 44).

Bruner (1994) proposed that the self begins beyond its birth and memory, and back to the culture and language which formed it. Remembering was noted to be not a psychological activity but that which is shaped within a culture and through a social process in that, for example, when a friend asks you to recount what was done last night, it would probably be inappropriate to say that you moved your feet as you walked and would be more appropriate, perhaps, to talk about going to dinner (Gergen, 1994b). The past, itself, has also been the subject of social construction study and has been viewed as a crucial element for subjugation, resistance, and domination (Bond & Gilliam, 1994). For example, the science of archaeology has come under scrutiny because there are gaps in archaeological explanations which ascertain which sites are explored and what kinds of artefacts legitimate archaeological knowledge (Rowlands,1994). Potter (1996) presented an analysis about how facts about the world are socially constructed through discourse and rhetoric. Concepts about ethnicity, for example, have changed with changing discourses over time but which have continued to negate the history of an oppressed people's culture (Mullings, 1994). Indians in Brazil were viewed by Europeans at first as innocent, and then as savages when competition for resources emerged (Ramos, 1994). African Americans were first thought of as biologically inferior and then culturally inferior (Mullings, 1994).

Emotions are also said to be socially constructed despite the fact that they have also been associated with primal or biological responses (Averil, 1985; Hallam, 1994; Silver & Sabini, 1985). Averill (1985), for example, argued that love was associated with societal theory about how we arrange our relationships and abstract concepts such as honour and God. He noted that love was an emotional syndrome. The major components of love were: 1) the idealisation of another; 2) how quickly this idealisation occurred; 3) physiological arousal which is defined by specific factors such as a romantic setting, feelings such as happiness, and expectations such as romance; and 4) the commitment to the other person which can be defined by social rules (Averill, 1985). Depression has also been described as a social construction (Wiener & Marcus, 1994). Weiner and Marcus (1994) linked depression to narrative scripts within families. For example, a 'helpless-helpful' script is one in which the family is overly protective and this encourages a child to become helpless. Another depressive script is the 'hopeless' script which may arise if a child's actions are not allowed to affect their environment. A 'worthless' script can occur if a family focuses on perfect conduct from their children. These scripts may then become patterns after the child leaves the family because others whom they encounter will respond with complementary behaviour that encourages the pattern. For example, others will give praise to someone who is criticising themselves in the worthless pattern by stating their worthy achievements (Wiener & Marcus, 1994).

Another contributor to the social construction of the self today is the media (Grodin & Lindlof, 1996). Television, films, self help books, and advertising all help to form the dominant discourse about the self and it is now possible to experiment with plural identities via the internet (Grodin & Lindlof, 1996). Urwin (1985) noted how motherhood was partially constructed by books and pamphlets. In her interviews with forty mothers Urwin found that most new mothers read as much child care literature as they could about motherhood in order to check that their babies were "doing the right thing" (p. 187) and developing 'normally'. These books also reinforced the mother's contribution to their child's development by emphasising its importance in the early years. They appealed to the women's feelings or fantasies by providing them with the message that motherhood would complete them. However, Urwin argued they also encouraged comparisons to an ill defined norm which could also cause stress and anxiety if the infant, and by implication the mother, did not perform 'normally'. One woman thought it was her fault that her baby did not sit up at the 'correct' time. Some books also conflated the women's identity with her baby's in that they stated that their needs were identical and not independent. They also encouraged mothers to not work outside the home as the most important work was with their baby.

It has been found that parents also contributed to the social construction of the child by anticipating the natural course of the child's development (Gergen, Gloger-Tipelt, & Berkowitz, 1990). Also, Gergen, Gloger-Tippelt, and Berkowitz (1990) suggested that the child does not possess an essential nature, and that child development occurred along with particular child rearing practices and particular cultural discourses. Knowledge and information is passed to the child through interaction and meaning negotiation within language (Robinson, 1988). For example, Robinson (1988) in her cross cultural study about meaning negotiation within language noted how Western white middle class parents engage their children in conversation and participate in meaning negotiation activities. For example, Australian mothers specified the play behaviour which was culturally appropriate by saying such things as "Dolls is girls' stuff, isn't they?" (p. 162). Within the Kaluli culture in Papau New Guinea, young children were taught to speak through the modelling of an older person and are not encouraged to base what they said on their own emotions or thoughts. For the Malitbog children in the Philippines meaning negotiation occurred mostly within peer groups because adults expected children not to dispute what they say. The Qalandar people in Pakistan whose society is egalitarian and nomadic, on the other hand, were all equally involved in meaning negotiation activities with children who were viewed as competent and were expected to be precocious and part of their economic activities (Robinson, 1988).

Gender and race have also come under scrutiny as social constructions

(Frankenberg, 1993; Lorber & Farrell, 1991). According to Frankenberg (1993) in her study of thirty white women she found that her participants were shaped by their race as were people of colour. Whiteness was considered to be an advantaged position, a specific lens for looking at the world, and a set of cultural practices. She also posited that there were three moments in which the societal racist discourse shifted which were all related to difference and similarity. The first shift, which Frankenberg defines as essentialist racism, was when race difference was understood as biological inequality. Then, discourse shifted to become colour blind or evasive in that it was believed that all people are the same under the skin; that cultures are converging; and that people have the same chance for success. The third moment of cultural cognisance involved people of colour insisting on difference which they articulate and define for their own cultural autonomy and values.

Dugger (1991) wrote that for black women, gender and race combined to create a specific social space, not necessarily a double oppression, and that this social place is perhaps dependent upon reproduction and production. Slavery and societal discourse about black women has seen them constructed as strong and able to partake in physical and productive labour. Whereas, white women have been seen as dainty and economically dependent. Black women have been constructed as being able to do the housework as well as paid work, and studies have found that they are more likely to reject the dominant white American cultural view which places women primarily in the home.

A number of scholars in Lorber and Farrell's 1991 book about the social construction of gender presented various analyses about how gender was created. It argued that gender was 'done' through the continuous, methodical, and routine achievements which verified claims to a sex category (West & Zimmerman, 1991). For example, within conversations women had to initiate more and use more attention seeking initiations in order to be heard (Fishman, 1978 (as cited in West & Zimmerman, 1991)). 'Doing' gender also meant constructing non-essential differences between men and women, such as the interior designs of toilets or organised segregated sports. West and Zimmerman (1991) noted that scholars had found that some sporting activities were thought to be more appropriate to men and emphasised competition and strength. In early studies of sports, sports taught boys how to be men (Messner, 1991). Further to this, it has been suggested that sport is a way to achieve a respected male identity. Sports serve the interests of certain types of men to help them control public life. Lower status men or those who are not white, heterosexual, or middle class, however, must strive to achieve masculine status through sports, and usually this status is temporary. Masculinity, itself, is hierarchical and constructed in relation to femininity and subordinated masculinities. Men do not equally share the power within society. (Messner, 1991)

Labour has been differentiated according to gender (Lorber & Farrell, 1991). Household labour is assigned to women and wives (Berk, 1985 (as cited in West & Zimmerman, 1991)). However, women's work is valued in some societies more than others. For example, in parts of Africa where women are responsible for gathering food (Sudarkasa, 1986 (as cited in Lorber & Farrell, 1991)). Within Western societies women's work is less valued, and women are paid less because, it has been argued, men have to support families and need a family wage (Lorber & Farrell, 1991). Acker (1991) noted that there are no job descriptions which are gender neutral because jobs are filled by real workers who mostly need to be men. Such factors as these result in the feminisation of poverty which is also dependent upon class and race position (Brenner, 1991).

The feminisation of poverty has also been sustained by societal insistence that the male bread-winner needs to be restored and not substituted so that women remain dependent upon men (Brenner, 1991; Fraser & Gordon, 1994). The notion of dependency has also been socially constructed through societal, labour, and legislative changes (Fraser & Gordon, 1994). Fraser and Gordon (1994) in their genealogy of dependency traced the meaning of dependency. At first, the pre-industrial construct held that anyone who relied on another for support, e.g. colonies, employees, and servants, were 'dependent', and those with independent means were not. Most people were dependent and it was not considered deviant to be dependent. With the rise of capitalism independence meant being a citizen and being able to participate through labouring within society. Dependency carried a stigma for some, but for women and people of other races it was deemed natural. Later in the 20th century, those who were dependent were divided into two categories: 1) those who were naturally dependent (disabled people, the temporarily unemployed, married women, and children), and 2) those who were deemed deviant and undeserving (unemployed men and single women). (Fraser & Gordon, 1994)

Welfare policy in the United States reflected this categorisation and divided social benefits into two tracks. The first track included unemployment benefits and social security benefits which seemed to offer aid which the beneficiaries had put in through government taxes. The second track included Aid to Families with Dependent Children which appeared to offer assistance to people who were "getting something for nothing" (Fraser & Gordon, 1994, p. 91) and who needed to endure home visits, moral testing, means testing and low benefits. Fraser and Gordon (1994) also argued that at present because of globalisation and the disappearing hegemony that families can live on a family wage obtained by men, all forms of dependency are suspect. Economic, as well as emotional, independence are expected of every individual. Dependency is associated with drug addicts and personality disorders. Socialist feminists have called for the adoption of interdependence as a replacement for the independence and dependence duality (Brenner, 1991; Fraser & Gordon, 1994; Lorber & Farrell, 1991). Interdependence acknowledges that each person is social and both dependent and independent. Interdependence would also legitimate the claim that every person has a right to meet their labour, sustenance, emotional, and social recognition needs (Brenner, 1991).

Social Constructivism: Including the Body, the Mind, and the Social

Social constructivism differs from a social constructionist perspective whose focus is on the social alone (Ernest, 1995). Social constructivism combines the personal and the social within its theoretical discussions and this thesis argues that it can contribute to disability theory because social constructivists regard individual development and the social environment as interconnected. Ernest (1995) in his research about the differences and similarities between constructivist theories explained that social constructivists link social constructionism with individual experience in that individuals develop through their own individual processes as well as through interaction with others. Like social constructionism, social constructivism considers persons to be in continual conversation. The world is also thus socially constructed (Ernest, 1995). Social constructivism, also like social constructionism, accepts knowledge as being lived, socially accepted, changing, and not certain (Ernest, 1995).

Social constructivists believe that there is an active mind (Prawat & Floden, 1994), whereas social constructionists believe that the mind is entirely a social creation (Ernest, 1995). The social constructionist mind could be visualised as an open entity with wavy lines which constantly move and change as they encounter the social world and negotiate common meanings through language. Social constructivists believe that the individual mind does adapt through contact with the social as well but remains a closed, and therefore personal, entity (Mathews, 1995; Morss, 1996). Knowledge within the social constructivist perspective is thus still a social product (Prawat & Floden, 1994). Ernest noted that some of the significant implications for educational pedagogy from social constructivist theory included the requirement that research be more reflexive "because there is no 'royal road' to truth or near truth" (p. 485). The focus of pedagogy was not on just the learner's cognition but also their own and their teacher's beliefs and conceptions. Also, it needed to be acknowledged that others have an independent changing reality which we need to understand, and that there should be a pedagogical emphasis on collaboration and discussion (Ernest, 1995).

Two of the recent theoretical contributors to social constructivism have been Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela who have presented a theory based in biology about human development through their work in structural determinism

(Prawat & Floden, 1994). Maturana's and Varela's 1992 textbook, *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding,* explained that all living systems are inherently closed, autonomous and operate as a function of how they are built. They survive by fitting with one another and their environment by changing their structure or behaviour (Efran & Lukens, 1985; Maturana & Varela, 1992). This change, adaptation, or 'structural coupling', however, is not determined by the environment or the other organism, but only triggered. The trigger occurs when there are recurrent interactions and a perturbance (Maturna & Varela, 1992). Evolution is not about survival of the fittest, or more able, but about a natural drift in that there are an undetermined variety of ways which organisms can adapt (Maturana & Varela, 1992):

> Evolution is somewhat like a sculptor with wanderlust: he goes through the world collecting a thread here, a hunk of tin there, a piece of wood here, and he combines them in a way that their structure and circumstances allow, with no reason other than that he is able to combine them. And so . . . intricate forms are being produced; they are composed of harmoniously interconnected parts that are product not of design but of a natural drift. . . . With no law other than the conservation of an identity and the capacity to reproduce, we have all emerged. It is what interconnects us to all things in what is fundamental to us: to the five-petal rose, to the shrimp in the bay, or to the executive in New York City (Maturana & Varela, 1992).

Maturana, in an interview which was documented by Simon (1985) said that knowledge is "adequate action in a domain specified by a questioner" (p. 37) and is thus social. He gave the example of being asked as a biologist to "perform biology" and if his performance was adequate in the eyes of the questioner then he would be attributed with biology knowledge (Simon, 1985). Maturana and Varela (1992) also posited that knowledge is not certain and essentially a reflection of the observer through language. There are thus as many realities as there are "domains of explanations the observer may propose" (Ruiz, 1996). However, some explanations were more accepted than others because the observer has been granted through their social system more authority, e.g. psychologists, or because the people interacting want to coexist with the consequences of a particular reality, and agreement is thus reached through 'structural coupling' (Mendez, Coddou, & Maturana, 1988).

Maturana in an interview about knowledge illustrated this point:

> Maturana: We are in a conversation and to be in a conversation means to be in a situation of recurrent interaction until we enter into a domain of complete coordination of conduct and then we separate. In that process, our ongoing structural changes will follow a congruent course as drifts contingent to our interactions. And, if in these courses of structural change, you change in a manner such that we remain in congruent behaviours but you stop asking me questions in relation to this subject. Then I shall say that you understood what I said. (Q. so you would replace the notion that I am gaining knowledge with the idea that my structure is transformed in some way. . .) Maturana: Mine too. (Simon, 1985, p. 40-41)

Dell (1985) explained that Maturana's belief that people are closed autonomous but always dynamic systems leads to the belief that individuals receive different information from the same event. Each person is structured differently so will thus respond differently to the same information. It is thus the individual's structural system which will determine how an individual will behave not the information or the environment. Also, the structure of an individual will determine what is considered an environmental interaction and perturbation. So what is considered important enough to trigger a change in one person will not in another. Dell (1985) explained that a lecture will not cause students to have an identical understanding, but it assisted the student in selecting a certain response. "Selecting is akin to pushing the Sprite button on a Coke machine. Pushing the button selects the response of the machine . . ., but it does not determine that the machine gives Sprite" (Dell, 1985, p. 8). In order to effectively teach a child a teacher must discover what methods fit the child's structure so that adaptation can occur in both persons.

Lev Vygotsky's Contribution to Social Constructivism

Lev Vygotsky who lived between 1894 and 1934 was a seminal contributor to social constructivist theory (Ernest, 1995; Mallory & New, 1994; Morss, 1996). He wrote that human development was subject to both biological and social influences (Vygotsky, 1994/1929). Vygtosky lived in Russia during the 1920s which were turbulent years after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution because the structures of the new socialist Soviet society were just developing (Morss, 1996). He was thus strongly influenced by Marx and Engels and has been called a Marxist Psychologist (Blanck, 1990).

Werstch (1985) noted that Vygotsky was guided by the Marxist notion that the environment and social context needed to be understood in order to understand the individual. His theories also fitted the prevailing political climate in that he posited that thinking was a type of labour which involved purposely interacting with the world (Blanck, 1990; Morss, 1996; Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991). He also argued that different types of social systems, such as capitalism, produced different types of individuals as well as poverty and undeveloped human potential:

> Marx frequently dwells on the subject of corruption of the human personality which is brought about by the growth of capitalist industrial society. On one extreme end of society, the division between intellectual and physical labour, the separation between town and country, the ruthless exploitation of child and female labour, poverty and the impossibility of a free and full development of full human potential, and on the other extreme, idleness and luxury; not only does all this result in the single human type becoming differentiated and fragmented into several separate social class types . . . but also in the corruption and distortion of the human personality and its subjection to unsuitable, one-sided development within all these different variants of the human type. (Vygotsky, 1994/1930, p. 176)

Vygotsky (1994/1930) looked forward to a new social order after the end of capitalism. This new society would bring about new individuals who would combine physical and intellectual work for their own benefit and would form new social relations which would also change ideas, behaviour, human interests, and human personalities.

Vygotsky believed that education was central to the liberation and transformation of people and described human development as historically and socially driven but it was also influenced by biology (Vygotsky, 1994/1930). However, Vygotsky felt that ultimately human development would lead to biological changes:

> This change . . . must inevitably lead to further evolution of man and to the alternation of the biological type of man. Having mastered the processes which determine his own nature, man who is struggling with old age and diseases, undoubtedly will rise to a higher level and transform the very biological organisation of human beings. (Vygtosky, 1994/1930. p. 182-183)

It is interesting to note that Vygotsky had a close connection with disability. He had a debilitating illness, tuberculosis, which plagued him for the majority of his life. A notable psychologist, he wrote much of his work in the field of 'defectology' which was integral to his theoretical approach (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991). He had regular visits to hospitals and in fact began his 1926 work about the crisis in Psychology from his uncomfortable hospital bed (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991):

> I have already been here a week - in large rooms for six severely ill patients, (there is) noise, shouting, no table, etc. The beds are ranged next to each other without any space between them, like in barracks. Added to this I feel physically in agony, morally crushed, and depressed. (Vygotsky in a letter to Sakharov, dated February 15, 1926, (as cited in Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991, p. 13).

This work which argued for a world view within psychology has been called the prelude to his cultural-historical theory (Van de Veer & Valsiner, 1991).

Vygotsky argued that learning was naturally social and was biological in the sense that individuals adapted as they transmitted their culture to each other (Morss, 1996). These laws are summarised by Knox and Stevens (1993) as:

> 1. There are two lines of development: the natural, physiological, or biological and the historical, cultural. The cultural-historical line is internalised through the use of psychological tools, the most important of which is language. . . . The (biological) is not replaced by (the historical-cultural) but is . . . embedded in the structure of the personality as a whole.
> 2. Interfunctional dynamics is at all times present in human development; therefore neither intelligence nor personality can be reduced to a quantitative listing of various individual functions. . . .
> 3. The interaction and association among the various higher and lower functions play a paramount role, particularly when one biological function fails. . . . the second line of development (with the help of numerous

> sociocultural tools) can enlist other biological functions to circumvent the weak point and build a psychological superstructure over it. In this way, a by-pass is created so that a defect does not result in an overall defective or abnormal personality. (p. 12-13)

Cultural-historical theory was based on the theory that biological and cultural influences intertwined and formed the basis for development (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991). It was based on the Marxist image of humans as rational beings who could take control of their destiny and emancipate themselves from nature's restrictions (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991).

A child mastered through social interaction a cultural tool, such as counting her fingers when adding numbers, and then discarded this tool when she mastered a more effective tool, e.g. writing and adding numbers on paper. Language was considered a cultural tool and development was dependent upon whether the child could master words. Thus, Vygotsky emphasised that by learning cultural signs and tools which could lead from lower concrete, or primitive psychological functions, to higher abstract psychological functions disabled children could more actively participate in a social life (Vygotsky, 1993/1931).

The development of higher psychological functions which Vygotsky (1993/1931) lists as being "thinking in concepts, reasoning, speech, logical memory, voluntary attention and so on" (p. 192) arose with and in collective human life. He argued that every higher psychological function appeared at first socially as a result of co-operation and social accommodation, and then as an inner process and as a means of individual adaptation (Vygotsky, 1978; Vygotsky, 1993/1931). These functions were also triggered by some type of conflict or obstacle within the child's activities (Vygtosky, 1978). For example, he cited the more active egocentric speech, or the thinking aloud, of pre-schoolers which accompanied their drawing activities when their pencil breaks (Vygtosky, 1993/1931). Another example was children's arguments which brought about reflective thought as they attempt to justify and prove their position (Vygotsky, 1993/1931). The higher psychological function of voluntary attention came about with the subordination of spontaneous behaviour in order to follow the rules of games with peers (Vygtosky, 1978).

Lower psychological functions were primarily sensory-motor operations which were limited to the immediate situation, and were not dependent upon uniting elements of past experience (Vygotsky, 1978). Impairments were organic 'defects' in the lower psychological planes where direct sensory motor perception occurred. Blind children, for example, were "immediately deprived of visual perceptions of visual forms" (Vygotsky, 1993/1931, p. 202) and vision, itself, could not be qualitatively replaced by the other senses. However, compensation could occur at the higher psychological planes. This compensation did not replace the lower functions but superseded them, and when higher functions were trimmed down, the lower functions would be found at the nucleus which could not be altered (Kozulin, 1986; Vygotsky, 1993/1931).

Thus, Vygotsky argued it was not a productive use of educational time to attempt to teach disabled children at the lower psychological levels, e.g. teaching children with an intellectual disability how to distinguish among smells or sounds, when they would benefit more in a collective of children which brought about abstract thought (Vygotsky, 1993/1931). He posited that this collective was also best made up of natural social combinations of children with mixed abilities where dynamic development could occur through contact with other children at different levels (Vygotsky, 1993/1931). This concept is a reflection of Vygtosky's zone of proximal development concept in learning which posited that learning occurred best in the zone between the child's independent developmental level and the level of development which was reached in collaboration with adults or more competent peers (Van der Veer, 1991; Vygtosky, 1978).

In Vygotsky's later period of writings between 1932-1934 he became interested in clinical psychology, concept formation, and the study of word meanings (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991). He wrote about concepts and meanings in his 1934 book, *Myshelenie i rech' (Thought and Language)*, which appeared in English in 1962 and awakened a Western interest in his work (Van der Veer &

Valsiner, 1991; Vygotsky, 1986). In this, he postulated that thought and speech were not separate or the same, but interacting functions which dynamically affected each other (Vygotsky, 1986). Words had two functions, meaning and sense. The meaning of words reflected socialised discourse and generalised concepts. Concepts were made up of different "geological layers", each of which could be activated at different times (Kozulin, 1986; Vygtosky, 1986). Real communication was dependent upon word meanings which Vygotsky noted was achieved "through generalisation and (the) conceptual designation of (personal) experience" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 8). The sense of a word was "the sum of all the psychological events aroused in a person's consciousness by the word" (Kozulin, 1986, p. xxxvii). Internal speech was the interface between cultural systems and private language, and was a mechanism for making new symbols and word senses which could be included in cultural meanings (Kozulin, 1986; Newman & Holzman, 1993). Thus, the individual was not just the passive recipient of language and discourse, but could also contribute and change discourse in regards to word meanings (Newman & Holzman, 1993). This provides the individual agency in that the individual can change social meanings through language, but it differs from social construction in that this agency stems from an inner psychological self.

Word meanings or concepts are formed differently at different times in our lives. Words had different meanings depending upon the development of certain generalisations and the environment (Vygotsky, 1994/1935). For example, the words in the world of an infant may be the same as those in the world when she is an adult but they have different layers of meaning. Also, he postulated that our experience of environments changes with age and it influences us through our emotional experiences. He (1994/1935) cited the example of three boys from the same family in which their drunken mother beats them. The youngest child was fearful and helpless. The middle child possessed a 'mother-witch' complex in that he was attached to his mother and at the same time hated her. The oldest child was mature beyond his years in that he pitied his mother for being ill, recognised when his siblings were in danger, and protected them. He said, "one can easily see that the same environmental situation and the same environmental events can influence various people's development in different ways, depending at what age they happen to find them" (Vygotsky, 1994/1935, p. 341).

Vygotsky thus felt that development could not be "determined by adding X units of heredity to Y units of environment" (Vygotsky, 1993/1935, p. 281) because an individual's development was also dependent upon the individual's past developmental history. Development, he argued, should be considered a self-limited process which synthesises environmental and biological influences (Vygotsky, 1993/1935). However, Vygotsky did not fall into the trap of rampant relativism (Olssen, 1996) because he optimistically still believed that the environment could be consciously altered (Vygotsky, 1993/1924) to bring about more fulfilled and developed persons through different education, social relations, and ideological systems:

> Along with the withering away of the capitalist order, all the forces which oppress man and which cause him to become enslaved by machines and which interfere with his free development will also fall away, disappear and be destroyed. Along with the liberation of many millions of human beings from suppression, will come the liberation of the human personality from its fetters which curb its development. This is the first source - the liberation of man. The second source . . . resides in fact that at the same time as the old fetters disappear, an enormous positive potential present in large scale industry, the ever growing power of humans over nature, will be liberated and become operative. . . .. Finally, the third source . . .. is change in the very social relationships between persons. If the relationships between people undergo a change, then along with them the ideas, standards of behaviour, requirements and tastes are bound to change. . . . It is education which should play the central role in the transformation of man - this road of conscious social formation of new generations. (Vygotsky, 1994/1930, p. 181)

Vygotsky's work at the end of his life in 1930s was under scrutiny by the Stalinist government which was tightening party control over science and culture (Kozulin, 1986; Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991). His work was considered bourgeois and idealist in that he emphasised cross-cultural studies, Gestalt theory, and language (Morss, 1996; Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991). It did not emphasise a practical and a socialist theory but a general theory of child development (Morss, 1996). His work fell out of favour with the party, and a 1936 decree was issued after his death in 1934 condemning his work (Kozulin, 1986). However, in the 1950s his works were reprinted in Russia with de-Stalinization of the time and through the efforts of Alexander Luria, who was his colleague in the 1920s and 30s (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1994). Vygotsky's book, *Thought and Language,* was internationally published originally in 1962, *The Psychology of Art* in 1971, and *Mind and Society* in 1978. His collected works which included his writings about 'defectology' were not published in English until 1993. Although as Van der Veer and Valsiner (1994) have noted, little has been written about his work in the area of disability.

The Social Meanings of Disability

Disability has been seen and constructed primarily as a medical issue (Barnes & Mercer, 1996; Branson & Miller, 1989; Bury, 1996; Oliver, 1996; Oliver, 1990). This is evident in The World Health Organisation threefold definition of impairment, disability and handicap in 1981. Impairment is "any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function" (as cited in Harris, 1995, p. 345). Disability is "any restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being" (as cited in Harris, 1995, p. 345). Handicap is the "disadvantage for a given individual resulting from an impairment or a disability, that limits or prevents the fulfilment of a role that is normal" (as cited in Harris, 1995, p. 345). Oliver (1990) criticised such definitions as they tended to see the difficulties of disability from the perspective of medical treatment with the disabled person becoming a passive recipient of intervention, treatment, and rehabilitation. Such constructs did not acknowledge that there were social dimensions to disability and that the social causes of disability came from the environment not from the individual's handicap. The Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation proposed an alternative definition. They defined impairment as "lacking limb, organism, or mechanism of the body" (as cited in Oliver, 1990, p. 11) and disability as

> the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from the mainstream of social activities. (as cited in Oliver, 1990, p. 11)

Barnes and Mercer (1996) have noted that there are increasing numbers of people who have an impairment or a chronic illness and the impact of disablement has generated research, self help groups, and the political mobilisation of disabled people. There is also an increasing divide between disability theory and medical theory (Barnes & Mercer, 1996). Medical theory or sociology assumes that there are natural consequences to disability such as illness, stigma, loss of self esteem, and dependency. There is little discussion about disability being the consequence of negative and exclusive societal structures and discourse. Thus there have been calls to portray positive experiences of disabled people who have achieved strong identities (Barnes & Shardlow, 1996; Shakespeare, 1996). One such story is that of Patrick Worth who reclaimed his name and gave away the label 'retarded' with the help of friends and their formation of the People First Group in Canada (Worth, 1996).

In a study by Edgerton of one hundred deinstitutionalized 'mentally retarded' adults, Gerber (1990) posited that Edgerton accepted without question the social construction of 'mental retardation' by medical experts which was rooted in historical and socio-economic contexts. Thus, his social interactionist analysis of denial, passing, and fear of self betrayal in this participant group was fraught with contradictions. These contradictions were: 1. since passing is a complex learned behaviour Gerber wondered how those labelled mentally retarded mastered such behaviour; 2. participants in the study had not denied their disability, but instead analysed it through descriptions of social oppression; and 3. participants had not sought 'normal benevolent conspirators' for their passing but sought personal and friendly relationships. Gerber thus encouraged researchers to focus on differences not as defects but as social constructions.

The media has also contributed to the social construction of disability (Gartner & Joe, 1987; Vlachou, 1995). Kriegal (1987) noted that the 'cripple' was depicted in literature as demonic and needing charity. It has also been noted that within mystery books that only men were at risk of becoming disabled because of something which they have done, and women, children and older people become disabled "because of who they are" (Zola, 1992, p. 239). Deborah Kent (1987) as a young disabled adolescent searched books for role models and for a "woman (she) might some day hope to become" (p. 47). In this literature she found that disabled women's friendships with other women were based on pity, mothering, or charity. Males did not see disabled women as potential partners and responded with revulsion, avoidance, or platonic friendship. Men also saw disabled women as dependent children, unable to manage a family, or only as a disability. Disabled couples in the books which she read lived within the boundaries of a disabled community except for a blind couple in the *Face of the Deep.* However, each yearned for a sighted mate who would epitomise societal acceptance and saw the other as lacking. Vlachou (1995) noted how visual images presented disabled people as disfigured which caused fear and rejection. Disabled people were not included in popular imagery such as fashion, and were subsequently rendered invisible.

Quicke (1985) reviewed a selection of children's fiction in order to develop a list of suitable material to enhance the inclusion of disabled children in regular schools. He found both books which facilitated inclusion and those which did not. Some books emphasised the 'horror' of having a disability while others were compassionate and sensitive and 'told it like it is' with humour. Some books portrayed how the adults in disabled children's lives were disabling. However, a number of books depicted friendships which were ordinary and reciprocal between non-disabled and disabled children. Some also explored how everyone made mistakes and how prejudices could be eliminated. However, love and sexuality within his book reviews was rarely openly discussed. Disabled adults within this literature were seen as pathetic, dark, and fearsome. Although, some of these characters are discovered to be warm and friendly by the end of the book. Books with disabled characters for younger children did not have much of a plot and sometimes assumed that disabled children went to special schools. Quicke thus suggested that when choosing a book for children that adults should examine whether the book is optimistic; whether the disabled character is stereotypical; whether labels are used; whether they challenge the status quo; and whether they focus on human relationships versus the impairment. Hume (1982) has also called for literary justice which will contribute to social change so that children will not be taught prejudice.

Shakespeare also (1994) explored cultural imagery and found that disabled people were objectified, considered passive, absent, animals, demeaned, and pitied. He noted that they were considered to be 'other' and were gazed upon by society. This gaze involved looking at fundraising advertisements which exaggerated the impairment, and by the public invading disabled people's privacy in public through stares and condescension. Shakespeare suggested that this gaze is about power which contributes to the construction of 'otherness'. His concept of other is derived from De Beauvoir's work, *The Second Sex*, which argued that the gaze upon women denied their individuality, objectified them, and placed them in opposition to the masculine human type. Males then were able to use the 'other' to help construct ideas about themselves. He believed that disabled people were also regarded as other because they were connected to nature, were evidence of the body's limitations, and were continual reminders of our mortality and vulnerability. Disabled people thus become a threat to able bodied people and are subjected to prejudice.

In the past, before capitalism, there was also evidence that disabled people were thought of as inferior (Barnes, 1996; Scheer & Groce, 1988). Barnes (1996) documented the treatment of disabled people before industrialisation, explaining that children who were deemed weak in Ancient Greece were left out in the elements to die. This society which was the forerunner of civilisation was preoccupied with physical and intellectual fitness and perfection. The ancient Romans were concerned with militarism and they also practised infanticide by drowning disabled children in the Tiber river. The Jewish ancient culture thought that impairments were the repercussions of wrongdoing but they emphasised caring for others. Martin Luther "saw the Devil in the disabled child; he recommended killing them" (Barnes, 1996, p. 55). Within the British Isles, disabled people between the thirteenth and seventeenth century were cared for in small Christian medieval hospitals. In 1601 the first Poor Law was passed which acknowledged the deserving poor as needing support (Barnes, 1996).

It is interesting to note though that Scheer and Groce (1988) argued that within societies which were small and in which regular interpersonal contact was made with disabled people that impairments did not determine social identity. For example, evidence existed that infanticide was not commonly practised around the world in traditional societies. However, there was a widespread belief in these societies that there was a link between "evil spirits and/or parental misconduct and the birth of a disabled new-born" (Scheer & Groce, 1988, p. 28). Begging also seemed to be the predominant occupational role in these societies. For example, Moslems are obligated to give to disabled people. However, in societies where there was a high incidence of a particular disability strong cultural traditions emerged to support disabled people's participation within the society. For example, in the San Blas Islands albinism was prevalent within the fishing population of Cunan Indians. The affected men were still fishermen, but they fished at night and were celebrated in myth and folklore.

Recently, Kingi and Bray (2000) found that Maori people in New Zealand are likely to see the meaning of disability as being related to their colonisation, their loss of land, their traditional food, and their loss of language. For example, one person in their study said:

> It's a disability to have your land taken off you, it's a disability to have your family dissolved and shifted into an urban environment, where you've never been before. (p. 8)

Another said:

> Maoris are being brainwashed into doing things the Pakeha (European) way - that's disability - it's got to be done the Pakeha way - brainwashed. (p. 8)

Europeans also brought to New Zealand in the late 1700s alchohol and tobacco which Kingi and Bray's participants noted were directly related to the present difficulties of Maori people:

> Alcohol and drug offending - it's pretty high up there. . . .Let's not destroy our whakapapa (cultural identity) but we'll go and sit outside our marae (meeting house) and fag up, drink up and smoke drugs until they are coming out our ears. (p. 13)

Their participants, however, felt that Maori people would go "the extra mile" (p. 10) to help their families but there also needed to be culturally sensitive and separate support services within health and education for disabled Maori people. They noted that disabled Maori people were accepted and respected no matter how disability was defined because they were still part of their families and their culture.

The social status of disabled people within Western complex societies is dramatically different. Sheer and Groce (1988) believed that institutionalisation has become the "traditional way of dealing with disabled people" (p. 32) and impairments classify an individual's identity. Luborsky (1994) found that having a physical disability brought about cultural consequences that included a challenge to the individual's essential identity as a complete person. Full personhood in American society meant earning through competence the adult role of "being a responsible and (re)productive worker, spouse, family and community member" (Luborsky, 1994, p. 240). If an individual is not as independent as their neighbour in that they may need more support in their daily activities or in their mobility then they are considered to have a diminished capacity and 'personhood'. For example, one woman in Luborsky's study felt that she had lost her future when she had to use a wheel chair instead of a cane and leg braces on account of post-polio syndrome.

Language also helps to shape culturally negative attitudes and perceptions of disabled people (Corbett, 1994; Corbett, 1996; French, 1989). Disabled people are dehumanised by being described by their impairment, e.g. "she is a cripple". They are grouped together and homogenised by language as well, e.g. "the blind", "the disabled" (French, 1989, p. 29). Words which have described disabled people have also been abusive words, e.g. mongol, feeble, imbecile, lame duck, short sighted (Corbett, 1994; French, 1989). However, French (1989) noted that some terms were being reclaimed as positive terms. For example, the deaf community used the term 'the deaf' to display their solidarity and pride. Similarly she suggested that the term 'disabled' could be used as a descriptive adjective instead of using it as an unchangeable noun, 'disability'. So the phrase 'person with a disability' becomes 'disabled person'. Oliver (1990) also argued that it was nonsensical to separate the terms 'people' and 'disability' because society did not do this in its social construction of disability and so it was best to identify 'disabled people' as who they are, and thus as people who are demanding acceptance. Corbett (1994) traced the changes in language usage within special education towards politically correct words. However, some disabled people find that these new terms do not reflect reality as they are too inclusive and gimmicky, e.g. 'differently abled', 'physically challenged', and Corbett argued that the true challenge is to change actions and not just the words (Corbett, 1994).

Finkelstein (1991) found it logical that disabled people would reject the label, 'disabled', so that they would have more control over their lives. He noted that there were also more employment prospects with 'normality' and economic independence, so disabled people may distance themselves from other groups whom they perceived as more disabled than themselves. Sally French, a researcher with partial sight, noted that she was convinced that she succeeded in employment because she denied her disability and minimised the effect of her impairment (French, 1993a). Goffman (1990) posited that stigmatised individuals experienced shame or tried to 'fix' themselves by mastering activities which were felt to be closed to them, e. g. blind people skiing, and thus tried to pass as 'normal'. They also tried to avoid interactions with unfamiliar people because they felt that they were on stage and were unsure of the reactions of others. He posited that 'normals' were likely in such interactions to employ categories that did not fit and invade the privacy of the other. The public at large was thus an informal part of the social control of disabled people. Goffman believed that formal social control was handled by a "circle of functionaries employed to scan . . . for the presence of identifiable individuals whose record and reputation make them suspect" (p. 89). The medical profession was thus called upon to inform the "infirm who he (was) going to have to be" (Goffman, 1990, p. 49). Goffman, however, did not fully explain the larger political, economic, social, and ideological contexts of human behaviour, and he also 'took little interest in power relations, competing interests and social inequities (Gerber, 1990, p. 12).

In addition, Goffman did not explore the unique experiences of disabled people. For example, his theory does not include Sally French's determination as a child to protect the adults in her life by trying to 'pass':

> As well as denying the reality of their disabilities, disabled children are frequently forced to deny painful feelings associated with their experience because their parents and other adults simply cannot cope with them. Protecting the feelings of the adults we cared about became an arduous responsibility which we exercised with care. (French, 1993a, p. 72)

His theory also does not account for Corbett's (1994a) call for disabled people to 'come out' and thus pave the way for others to celebrate the whole self and shared pride. Allan (1999) (1999a) more successfully used Foucualt's theories to explore the unique experiences of disabled children and how they transgressed their assigned disabled identities in regular schools. In her 1999 study, Allan described how disabled children used their sense of humour to make others feel at ease around them. Their teachers though did not see their transgressions as positive affirmations of their individual selves, but as threats to the student's independence. For example, the teachers felt one of their students with a vision impairment, Laura, needed to be at the front of the class so that she could better read print on the board. Whereas Laura felt that her teachers were unnecessarily constructing her as different:

> sometimes they always move you to the front of the class when you don't want to and you don't even need to be at the front sometimes (Laura). (p. 73)

Bogdan and Taylor (1992) believed that non-disabled people who interacted with disabled people hold a range of perceptions about disabled people. These perspectives included clinical views, dehumanising views, and humanising views. They argued that a sociology of exclusion is only part of the story and that a sociology of acceptance must be included and explained in research as accepting alliances. In their study, *The Social Construction of Humanness,* they looked at how non-disabled people formed humanising definitions and constructions. They stated that there were four dimensions to definitions of humanness. The first humanising dimension was being able to attribute thinking to the other person. Secondly, it was also important to see individuality in the other person by acknowledging their distinct qualities and personality, their motives and feelings, and their life history or individual identity. Thirdly, in order for someone to be thought of as a full participant in a human relationship, they needed to be seen as being able to reciprocate in the relationship through a valued equal contribution. The last attributing dimension to a humanising definition was the ability to define a social place for the other person. They believed that a social place was not only playing a social role, but also being an integral part of a group or the social network of the definer. They found that when non-disabled participants included disabled people as part of their social network and part of the routines and rituals of their social unit, then disabled people were recognised as "someone like me" (p. 291) and disability was viewed as "secondary to the person's humanness" (p. 291).

The Social Model of Disability

A number of scholars have applied a sociological perspective to disability in an attempt to produce an overall social model of disability (Barnes & Mercer, 1996; Barton, 1996; Oliver, 1990; Sullivan, 1991). Oliver (1990) in his work, *The Politics of Disablement,* was at the forefront of this movement. He contended that impairments were not randomly distributed in the world, but were culturally produced by standards of living. Blindness, for example, is more prevalent in poor countries, and heart conditions are more common in industrial societies (Oliver, 1990). Therefore, the notion that impairments were chance events that happened to unfortunate individuals, or the personal tragedy theory of disability, was challenged. He argued that different cultures responded in different ways to disabled people.

For example, he cited Gwaltney's (1970) study of people with severe vision impairments in a Mexican village where since the villagers believed that blindness was a consequence of unexplainable divine intervention, they developed an elaborate system of social mechanisms, such as child guides, to enable the full participation of people with severe vision impairments in the community. Statements such as "God clouded his eyes" (Gwaltney, 1970, p. 103) were common in the village. Blindness was natural, expected, and caused by onchocerciasis, or river blindness, which is spread by black flies near the swift streams endemic to the area. Sighted villagers were accepting but both they and blind persons saw blindness as a tragedy:

> Expressions of pity are, in many circumstances, quite in order and blind persons themselves are expected to enlarge upon the disadvantages of their handicap. . . . Many informants of both sexes were moved to tears by their narration of their own autobiographies. Though blind and sighted villagers make guarded, private accusations of undue parsimony and excessive mendicancy, no sighted Yoleno ever complained about the demands of their blind paisanos upon their time and empathy. (p. 114)

Generally blindness was associated with dependency, extreme poverty, incapacity, and divine protection. Blind adults went on begging expeditions away from the village, and such trips were adventurous and educational for their child guides. The relationship between the blind adults and their guides were mutually beneficial, and the villagers also said that "the children walk with the blind out of love" (p. 114).

Another example of cultural difference which Oliver mentioned was Groce's 1992 study of an Island community in America where there was a high incidence of deafness from the seventeenth century to the early twentieth century and where everyone knew sign language. Deaf people were not disabled in this community. Deaf people were part of their community and actively participated in community activities:

> Sign language was also used in larger groups. One man told me: " they would come to prayer meetings; most all of them were regular church people you know. They would come when people offered testimonials, and they would get up in front of the audience and stand there and give a whole lecture in sign. No one translated it to the audience because everyone knew what they were saying. And if there was anyone who missed something, somewhere, somebody sitting near them would be able to tell them about it. . . . The only concession to deafness at the prayer meetings was that the deaf church members were permitted to stand at the front of the room so the audience could better see their confessions. (Groce, 1992, p. 15)

The hearing members of this community were also so accustomed to using sign language that they even used it when no deaf people were present. It was also documented that both deaf and hearing citizens used sign language along with binoculars to talk to each other from their back doors across great distances in the nineteenth century. Deafness in this community did not mean poverty or misfortune. Deaf people were fishermen and farmers and were not considered a distinct social group. (Groce, 1992)

Oliver (1990) attributed these cultural differences to modes of production and to modes of thought. He stated that historical materialism could be used to provide an evolutionary perspective to human history as work environments, living conditions, and relationships between individuals, groups and institutions were all connected to socio-economic structures. Oliver builds on Finkelstein's historical materialist model of disability which outlined three phases of evolution. These phases were the feudal phase which allowed the flexible participation of disabled people in small scale industry and agriculture in their own communities; industrialisation and the emergence of capitalism which excluded disabled people from work because of regimented production norms in fast moving factories; and finally the move again towards integration through the use of new technology.

Oliver believed that these phases were too optimistic and simplistic in that they did not take fully into account the social perceptions of disability which were woven into the fabric of production modes.

According to Oliver (1990), the rise of capitalism brought changes in traditional social and family relations and problems for social control. Institutions such as hospitals, asylums, workhouses, industrial schools and prisons sprung up as ideological control mechanisms which separated through medical classification people who could or would not conform to the new order. Medicine became powerful and was successful in establishing itself as a well organised professional group which was interconnected with the capitalist ruling class (Oliver, 1989). The capitalist ideologies of individualism and specifically the private able-bodied individual as a commodity for sale and not as a part of a large social group also became central to the construct of disability. Similarly, Branson and Miller (1989), when they applied a Marxist approach to deconstructing integration policy, found that the construction of disability was at the heart of capitalism because disabled people were the antithesis of 'normal' and 'able' workers who were considered productive. Disabled people were 'unnatural' and were not considered for employment. This exclusion also left disabled people on the margins:

> In the discursive constitution of the normal body the 'disabled' are discarded. Their normality and . . . their sexuality denied. They are desexed, degendered and thus dehumanized. . . . The 'disabled' offer no immediate, tangible gratification, nothing that the able bodied want - no pleasure, no labour. . . . They are an ideological necessity in a humanist world based on normality. . . . They are there reinforcing the social cultural normality of others: maintaining the illusion . . . of nature viewed mechanistically as ordered, bounded, tangible.. (Branson & Miller, 1989, p. 160).

Oliver (1989) also argued that disability has been socially created through social policy and institutional practices which created dependency. Economically, dependency was created by focusing on changing the supply side of the labour market, or the disabled person, instead of on changing the demand side of the market, or the employer and workplace. French (1993), for example, suggested that major changes to societal and employer attitudes were necessary because employers really would need to pay disabled people, who perhaps worked slower, the same as other workers in order to reduce disabilities and achieve equity. It is interesting to note though that in Britain during the second world war when labour was unavailable this shortage was solved by employing disabled people and women. Within four years approximately half a million disabled women and men who were previously categorised as unemployable were trained and gainfully employed in the community. However, at the end of the war, disabled people were again pushed back into segregated workshops (Humphries & Gordon, 1992).

Evidence from a number of studies suggest that disabled people today also have low employment rates and, if employed, are likely to be in poorly paid and low status jobs (Beadles, McDaniel, & Waters, S., 2000; Beatson, 1981; Gillies, Knight, & Baglioni, 1998; Lunt & Newbold, 1987; Thornton, 1994). Lunt and Thornton (1994) argued that employment policy was dominated by a discourse of individuality in that the disabled individual was viewed as a deficient economic unit and the employer thus required compensation in order to employ a disabled person. Also, the employer will not change the working environment unless a disabled individual was to be employed. There exists no recognition of the fact that disability is a natural part of our social fabric. Lunt and Thornton suggested that if disability was accepted as created by the environment then workplaces could become 'user friendly'. For example, the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Australian Discrimination Act emphasised that discrimination against disabled people would not occur if reasonable accommodation enabled the person to be employed. Whereas, wage subsidies for hiring disabled people emphasise lost productivity because of individual workers. On the other hand, grants which help to create accessible employment environments regardless of whether or not disabled people work in the environment acknowledged the social construction of disability.

Politically, Oliver (1989) stated that disability was created through legislation which viewed disability as a professional or administrative issue instead of a human rights issue. It was created professionally through the types of and availability of services which were offered and through professional gate keeping practices. Also it was created within the individual because disabled children were brought up to believe when they were taken from their classes for medical or para-medical intervention that they were ill or had a personal tragedy (Oliver, 1988). Further to Oliver's discussion, Finkelstein (1991) demonstrated how disabled people encountered professionals who exercised power in all aspects of their lives. For example, community health professionals provided advice on the type of house and modern equipment disabled people needed and counselling about intimacy and relationships. Professionals thus saw "the lives of disabled people . . . (as) problems to be solved" (Finkelstein, 1991, p. 270) and their role was to provide solutions.

Other scholars and disabled people have also made contributions to the literature in regards to the social construction of disability and together these have been called the social theory or social model of disability (Barnes & Mercer, 1996; Shakespeare, 1996; Sullivan, 1991; Swain, Finkelstein, French, & Oliver, 1993). Abberley (1987) argued that social theories of disability needed to show that disabled people are oppressed in that they are in an inferior social position in society, that others benefit from this unnatural oppression, and that this oppression can be dialectically linked to ideologies which justify it. Other scholars have noted that social policy does consider disabled people to be inferior and does not change in order to facilitate the inclusion of disabled people, but instead aims to change disabled people (Barton, 1992; Shakespeare, 1996; Sullivan, 1991;). Disability has been identified as a socio-political issue which utilises analyses which highlight subjectivity, power, equity and struggles for social justice for disadvantaged groups (Ballard, 1992; Barton, 1992; Fulcher, 1989). Barton (1992) noted that having an impairment and a subsequent disability meant having economic, social, and emotional hardships. He called for political action in order to change the status quo.

Disabled people have struggled and have been prevented from fully participating in society (Driedger, 1989). Schneider and Ingram (1993) identified disabled people as a socially constructed group which had little effect on social policy. Disabled people have been constructed as dependants who were burdens upon society and had little power (Schneider & Ingram, 1993; Symonds, 1998). However, Driedger (1989) was able to trace the distinctive history of Disabled People's International (DPI) which was an organisation for disabled people who were united and "determined to speak for themselves" (p. 10) after the second world war. DPI's achievements were vast. It was able to influence the United Nations which called on governments to contribute to the United Nations Fund for the Decade of Disabled Persons (1982-1992) and began to investigate human rights violations against disabled people. Also, increasingly disabled people are beginning to view themselves as a minority group which has had its civil liberties broken (Funk, 1987; Hahn, 1983; Hahn, 1987). These liberties included the right to go to school, to work, to vote, to marry and to have children (Funk, 1987). Oliver (1992) argued that a politics of personal identity was needed to change educational segregation and that differences needed to be celebrated and valued.

A disability rights movement has thus sprung up whose goal is "the freedom to choose, to belong, to participate, to have dignity, and the opportunity to achieve" (Funk , 1987, p. 24). Asch and Fine (1988) suggested that a Lewinian/minority-group analysis of disability could provide a better understanding of the social construction of disability because it considered power, discrimination, and group identity. They applied Dworkin and Dworkin's (1976) definition of a minority group which required "identifiability, differential power, differential and pejorative treatment, and group awareness" (p. viii as cited in Asch & Fine, 1988). They noted that in the past sociological research had made the following incomplete assumptions: 1.) that disability was biological and an independent variable; 2.) that the impairment always caused the problems which disabled people encountered; 3.) that disabled people were victims; 4.) that disabled people's self concept, social networks and comparison groups were primarily linked to their disability; and 5.) that disability was synonymous with dependence. These assumptions have reinforced the belief that disabled people were not human. Researchers have also promulgated this belief by not focusing on the experiences and lives of disabled people.

Bringing the 'Personal' and 'Body' Back

Sally French (1993), who has a vision impairment, stated that although she agreed that the social model of disability was the way forward for disabled people, it also needed to be developed further to include the subtle aspects of disability and the different complex personal experiences of those with impairments. She cited her experience of her vision impairment to argue that social solutions may not be possible or able to eliminate her disability. For example, she stated that her social interactions with sighted people were uncomfortable because of her difficulty in reading non-verbal communication cues which affected the normality of her own responses and also because of others' responses to her and their natural inclusion of subtle non-verbal communication clues which verbal communication could not replace. These difficulties were thus not easily modified by social or environmental manipulation.

Similarly, feminist researchers have also criticised social theories of disability which do not take into account personal experiences of impairment. For example, Crow (1996), a disabled researcher, wrote that at first the social model of disability confirmed that "it wasn't (her) body that was responsible for all (her) difficulties. It was external factors, the barriers constructed by society." (p. 206) However, later she noted that she had been silenced by the social model, and that her impairment did have an impact on her life. Impairments were not constantly neutral, positive, or irrelevant in that they could bring fatigue, pain, and depression. Also, certain groups experienced impairment differently than others. For example, women were more likely to experience the pain of arthritis than men and that this needed to be talked about within any social model of disability (Crow, 1996). Duckett (1998) argued that the disability movement has privileged white men with spinal cord injuries and must be wary of oppressing others. There have thus been calls for a theory of disability which includes learning from disabled people's personal experiences (Crow, 1996; Peters, 1996; Pinder, 1996).

Feminists have been at the forefront of bringing the personal experiences of disabled women to light. Jenny Morris in her 1991 book, *Pride agaist prejudice: Transforming attitudes to disability,* noted that the social model of disability was not complete:

> Disability acitivists have . . . developed a social model of disability, arguing that it is environmental barriers and social attitudes which disable us. . . . Such a perspective is a crucial part of our demand for our needs to be treated as a civil rights issue. However, there is a tendency within the social model of disability to deny the experience of our own bodies, insisting that our physical differences and restrictions are entirely socially created. While environmental barriers and social attitudes are a crucial part of our experience of disability and do indeed disable us-to suggest that this is all there is to it is to deny the personal experience of physical or intellectual restriction, of illness, and of the fear of dying. (p. 9)

She suggested that by exploring the personal experiences and words of eight women that expression could be given to the issues which concern disabled people. Her exploration led to the following concerns: 1.) that there was prejudice against disabled people who were seen as different; 2.) that disabled people's lives were viewed as not worth living; 3.) that individualism and genetic screening has thrown into question whether disabled people should exist; 4.) that the cultural representation of disabled people was inaccurate and promotes the interests of non-disabled people; 5.) that residential care has led to unequal power relationships between disabled people and non-disabled people; and 6.) that feminist research has not included disabled people.

Morris concluded her book by arguing that the frailty of the human body needed to be included in discussions about disability, as well as the positive experiences of disability so that

> we can celebrate, and take pride in, our physical and intellectual differences, asserting the value of our lives. and while confronting the very real difficulties that physical and intellectual differences involve, we can fight against discrimination and insist that the needs created by those differences are met in a way which enhances the quality, and our control, of our lives. (p. 189)

Ruth Pinder (1996) also wrote that the social model of disability needed to take a broader view by including discussions about the body and impairments. She argued that the "body is embedded in a wider nexus of structures which render a view of disability as social oppression alone over-simplistic" (p. 136) because the mind, the body, and society were invariably interlinked. She cited the experiences of two disabled participants who had rheumatoid arthritis to illustrate the health difficulties which people with long-term deteriorating conditions possess and the link between the body and the wider social domain. They struggled to find an identity which fitted their situation because they felt, at different times, disabled, ill, and sick.

French (1993) noted that differences between disabled people must be acknowledged and researched otherwise social solutions for the majority may become disabling for others. For example, one study on corner kerb ramps found that thirty five percent of the time, blind travellers were unable to detect the corner and mistakenly walked onto the street even though there was traffic on the street fifty nine percent of those times (Bentzen & Barlow, 1995). Georgeson (1994) a disabled researcher in New Zealand stated that difference within the disabled community created tension which made the community vulnerable to divisive tactics. However, she also believed that differences should be appreciated, and celebrated so that disabled people can ultimately join together to resist societal domination.

This emphasis on difference within the disability movement can be compared to the history within the feminist movements. Fraser (1997) noted that feminists at first argued that there were no gender differences just oppression from a patriarchal society against women. However, a second wave of feminism argued that there were differences between men and women which needed to be celebrated as Georgeson (1994) does. These differences could also lead to a more just society instead of assimilation into a monogendered one. However, lately in the 1980s and 1990s "the focus on gender difference (have given) way to a focus on differences among women" (Fraser, 1997, p. 178) so that all women could be included and not just white, heterosexual, and middle-class women who dominated the movement. It has been pointed out, for example, that disabled women had been excluded from feminist theory and discussions (Asch & Fine, 1988a; Kallianes and Rubenfeld, 1997; Morris, 1993). Fine and Asch (1988), however, did edit one volume of work devoted to including disabled women's voices within a socialist-feminist framework and suggested as well that gender differences needed to be discussed within disability theory.

In this book, Asch and Fine (1988a) pointed out that disabled women were more likely than disabled men to not participate in the workforce, and the wages of disabled women were far below those of disabled men. Also, black, disabled women received the lowest income of any other race, gender, and disability category. Disabled women are also more likely than disabled men to live in poverty and to be denied vocational rehabilitation. However, at the same time, Asch and Fine (1988a) noted that disabled women are also likely to be excluded from the traditional responsibilities of women in the home in that they are less likely to be married than disabled men and non-disabled women. Disabled women were not seen as attractive and that a women's beauty is a "reflection of a male's social status" (p. 16). Also, they contended that males also do not see disabled women as being able to perform the nurturing labour of mothering, housekeeping, cleaning, cooking, and sewing. Disabled women were not viewed as being able to emotionally only think of others and her male partner instead of herself. When a disabled woman did have a partner, the partner was thought to be a 'saint'. They thought that disabled men avoided relationships with disabled women and cited one study in which blind men sought sighted wives to confer upon them a normal and successful status and another study which found that disabled male scientists reported that a major strategy for success was the acquisition of a non-disabled wife.

Disabled women were also considered to be asexual and unfit mothers (Kallianes & Rubenfeld, 1997). Kallianes and Rubenfeld (1997) noted that there also is a widespread false belief that disabled women themselves are not concerned with their sexuality and that disabled women have thus not had opportunities to participate in sex education classes. Families are overprotective and do not discuss sexuality. Disabled women have also been denied motherhood through coerced sterilization or abortion and have had their children taken from them (Kallianes & Rubenfeld, 1997) and Asch and Fine (1988a) noted that many states in the United States have had laws which prevented disabled people from marrying because of the fear that they may produce children with similar disabilities, and that disabled parents might harm or burden children. Asch and Sacks (1983) (as cited in Asch & Fine, 1988) suggested that a reported lower self esteem in disabled women and girls was due to the fact that disabled boys could still strive to achieve male norms through mastery and independence. However, disabled girls' best hope was to forsake their gender role which they were prevented from performing by patriarchal societal images of attractiveness and nurturing and to turn instead to achieving traditional male norms that could establish a sense of self and escape the stereotype of helplessness and dependence. On the other hand Barron (1997) found that some disabled women strived to achieve the traditional role of a mother and homemaker so that they could be seen as "something other than disabled, i.e. as women" (p. 223). However, it has also been noted that despite the prejudice, there were many disabled women who consciously resisted stereotypes, took pride in their identities, enjoyed sex, did not cover up their 'deformities', and demanded that the world accept them (Asch & Fine, 1988).

The overall suppression of differences within feminism has caused both men and women to choose between their loyalty to their gender, race, or disability when in fact there are multiple axes of subordination and multiple identities (Fraser, 1997). Fraser (1997) called for a post-socialist movement which focused on multiple intersecting differences which also equally gave attention to the redistribution of resources. Sullivan (1991) criticised the social model of disability in which Oliver (1990) proposed that the liberation of disabled people would be through the creation of legislation which promoted human rights to disabled people, the establishment of societal infrastructures based on user choice and control, the greater distribution of resources, and a united, strong, and vibrant disability movement. Sullivan (1991) believed that this optimism was unfounded because there was no prescription for economic change in Oliver's solutions. He believed that it was unrealistic to hope for societal change which was based on the good will of non-disabled people. He suggested that there must be dramatic material and structural change in order to alleviate the oppression of disabled people.

Alternative Analyses to the Social Model of Disability

Hughes and Paterson (1997) suggested, along with others (Branson & Miller, 1989; Liggett, 1988; Sullivan & Munford, 1998), that Foucault's post structuralist writings could contribute to the social model of disability because it included discussions about the body. Hughes and Patterson (1997) noted that while the body was becoming part of sociological theory, disability theory attempted to escape such discussions because of the medical and biological theory which dominated and oppressed disabled people in the past. However, by doing this it has given the body no meaning, no life, and no agency (Hughes & Patterson, 1997). A mind/body dualism has been created and discussion about impairment has been actually then left to medical debates. Hughes and Patterson (1997) suggested that a sociology of impairment was needed which reclaimed the body from medical discussions and placed it instead at the juncture between biology and culture.

The body also has a specific socio-cultural context (Turner, 1994) which needs to be acknowledged. Turner (1994) traced sociological discussions about the body from Nietsche who asserted that sexuality and bodily needs contradicted social order and civilised society, to Goffman who posited that the body was a "set of social practices" (p. 26), to anthropologists who believed that the body was a sign and metaphor for societal organisation; to feminists who saw the body as a social construction and to Foucault who explored how the body had been regulated and how it had resisted such regulation. It is also interesting to note that Foucault has been associated with social constructivism because of his view that knowledge does not exist independently of human construction (Olssen, 1996). Foucualt argued that discursive systems such as medicine construct reality "in that the ontological status of objects of concern . . . cannot be divorced from the conceptual matrix through which they were apprehended" (Olssen, 1996, p. 291).

The body is at the centre of Foucault's work and he considered it to be discursively constructed and a historical product of power (Hughes & Patterson, 1997). Modern power, itself, however, according to Foucault was not like earlier forms of power because he considered it "local, continuous, productive, capillary, and exhaustive" (Fraser, 1989, p. 22). It also was imposed gradually from the late eighteenth century onwards in the microtechniques of teachers, medical professionals, and wardens within institutions. However, these techniques were eventually integrated into global domination strategies. Fraser (1989) noted that the 'gaze' was the best known constraint strategy of Foucault's. It allowed the management of institutional populations by making the population visible and thus controllable. There were two types of surveillance. One was synoptic which included architectural and organisational observational arrangements. It was exemplified in prisons where rings of backlit cells circle an observation tower, in hospitals where patients are separated according to their disease, and in classrooms where desk arrangements reflect the students' ability. Individualising visibility was the detailed watching of individuals and their histories and habits. Both forms of the 'gaze' also depended upon a unidirectional observation in that the person being watched could not see the watcher. This caused the 'watched' to internalise the gaze. Modern power is thus everywhere, aims to produce docile bodies, and circulates down to everyday life (Fraser, 1989). However, resistance can also occur at all levels and social change for disabled people can subsequently be brought about through resistance at the micro and macro levels by challenging disabling structures, what happens to disabled bodies, and disabling policy (Sullivan & Munford, 1998).

Julie Allan (1996) argued that Foucault's work presented a 'box of tools' for exploring the experiences of disabled children. She examined the gaze's mechanisms which included the examination, hierarchical observation, and normalising judgements. Hierarchical observation of disabled students within the mainstream was evident because they are accompanied in class by "auxiliaries of teachers" (Allan, 1996, p. 222) who are monitored by specialists who are monitored by head teachers who are monitored by parents and review meetings. Disabled children are also observed internally in that their emotional well-being is part of their programme. Normalising judgement was evident because children with special needs are constructed in relation to children without special needs, or 'normal' children. Finally, the examination technique of surveillance had three features: it was imposed as a compulsory observation; it documented individuality; and it established individuals as cases who could be compared and judged. Allan, however, explained that there were limitations to Foucault's work in that he does not explain how institutionalised practices can be overthrown. Foucault also stated that power was neutral and did not identify what he believed was legitimate versus illegitimate or oppressive power (Fraser, 1989).

Sawicki (1991), using Foucault for her analysis, saw individual difference as a resource because it could be multiplied for multiple sources of resistance. Sawicki believed that resistance involved using Foucault's notion of subjectivity and genealogy. Subjectivity displays the knowledge and experience that has tended to be hidden, and genealogy tells the story of the marginalised. Resistance could be, according to Sawicki, carried out in local struggles at the everyday level of social relations. For example, Frank (1988) provided a single case study of a woman who resisted wearing prostheses because of her positive acceptance of her body which conflicted with the rehabilitation culture.

Turner (1994) suggested combining theories in order to fully discuss the body. He argued that social constructionism could be combined with theories which included biology because social constructionism itself was based upon the work of Berger and Luckman which was in turn based upon the work of Gehlen. Gehlen argued that human beings were biologically underdeveloped and therefore needed to construct a social world to "supplement their biology" (Turner, 1994, p. 25) as social agents. Also, Turner suggested employing Foucault's notion of the somatic society as the foundation of this discussion. Turner believed that today's society was somatic which is "a social system within which the human body, a site of constraint and resistance, becomes the principal focus of political and cultural activity" (p. 27). There were no longer the same societal concerns with industrialisation but instead with life's meaning, reproduction, and the control of bodies in space. By combining the concept of a somatic society with a discussion about private bodies through social constructionism and biology, it was thus possible to avoid narcissism and to connect it to politics and culture.

Social Constructivism and Disability

By using social constructivist theory which has been associated with Maturana, Varela, Foucault and especially Vygotsky's, both the social constructions of disability and the personal could be acknowledged. Social constructivist theory acknowledges the individual's experience, agency, and body, as well as the social context of constructs. Vygotsky's work is most connected to disability theory in that he wrote extensively in the area. However, Vygotsky's completed work about defectology was not published in English until 1993 and little has been written about it (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1994). It is also appropriate that this particular study use Vygotsky's social constructivist theory because it was derived from his extensive study and writings about various impairments. He was particularly interested in blindness and wrote on this subject in fourteen of the nineteen papers in his collected work.

In summary, as discussed above, Vygotsky was primarily interested in the development of children in their social context but at the nucleus of this development were biological influences and sensory-motor functions. He believed that we learn and develop through social encounters and through societal influences, but that the individual could respond differently to each of these encounters depending upon their developmental age and history. Also, social interaction was dependent upon the biological structure of the individual, and impairments brought with them social difficulties and dislocation because of problems which arose within the individual as well as within the environment and society. However, all children developed according to the same general rules, and what drove this development was the achievement of full social esteem and standing. Language was the primary social tool which transmitted culture. Social encounters through conflict triggered the learning of cultural concepts or generalised word meaning which at first appeared externally and then internally. Also the individual had an internal and unique sense of a word which was the sum of their personal experiences and emotional reactions to the word. Learning occurred best in the zone of proximal development in collaboration with more competent persons. The environment was considered controllable and could bring about a more just and desirable society and more fulfilled persons. Education was the key to the liberation of people and a just society.

Chapter Three
Blind Children and Social Dislocation

Vyotsky's Writings on Defectology

Vygotsky's work on cultural-historical theory came at the same time as his publications about defectology. These writings occurred when Russian special education institutions were attempting to cope with years of war which had brought with it seven million homeless, abandoned, and disabled children (Knox & Stevens, 1993). After an initial teaching and research period in Gomel, Vygotsky's hometown, Vygotsky was appointed to the Insititute of Psychology at Moscow State University and later also worked at a laboratory in the Medical Pedagogical Station where he was eventually appointed associate director of the defectology unit. His laboratory was renamed the Experimental-Defectological Institute in 1929 and he became its director. He also presented his studies at various conferences about disabled children, contributed to the *Pedagogical Encyclopedia* (1927-1929), and in 1929 was on the editorial board of the journal, *Questions of Defectology.* (Knox & Stevens, 1993). Vygotsky postulated that disabled children were the same as non-disabled children in that they developed according to the same laws (Knox & Stevens, 1993; Vygotsky, 1993/1929a). He thus called on psychological research to study disabled children with the understanding that they were the same as other children in their development; to study the social conditions of disabled children in development; and to study the specific developmental compensations of specific impairments (Vygotsky, 1993/1929a).

According to Van der Veer and Valsiner (1991), Vygotsky's writings on defectology reflected the development of his cultural-historical approach. They divided his writings on defectology into distinct periods. These periods build on each other but within his writings Vygotsky consistently argued that impairments were essentially about social difficulties. The first period (1924-1925) emphasised the importance of disabled children's potential for 'normal' development and the importance of social education (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991). Vygotsky argued that development was primarily about securing a social position and that the psychological life of an individual with an impairment was determined not by the 'defect' but by its social consequences (Vygotsky, 1993/1924; Vygotsky 1993/1925.).

Vygotsky wrote that people with impairments were socially dislocated and impairments were not primarily physical problems:

> Any physical handicap, be it deafness, blindness or inherent mental retardation, not only changes a person's attitude toward the world, but first and foremost affects his relationship with people. . . . To begin with, the child's misfortune changes his social position within the family . . . Later on, the physical handicap gives rise to a completely unique social setting unlike that in which a normal person lives. . . . All contacts with people, all apsects defining a person's . . . place in his social milieu, his role and fate as a participant in life, all the functions of daily life are realigned from a new standpoint. A physical defect somehow causes a social dislocation.. .(Vygotsky, 1993/1924, p. 76)

Vygotsky (1993/1924) compared this dislocation to physical dislocation which could be something that is out of place; undernourished; disconnected; or caused pain. He proposed that when the social dislocation of people with impairments was recognised and addressed then handicapped conditions would cease to exist:

> Physically, blindness and deafness will still exist on earth a long time. A blind person will remain blind and a deaf person deaf, but they will cease to be handicapped because a handicapped condition is only a social concept: a defective condition is an abnormal extension of blindness, deafness, or muteness. Blindness by itself does not make a child handicapped; it is not a defective condition, an inadequacy, abnormality, or illness. Blindness becomes these things only under certain social conditions of a blind person's existence. (Vygotsky, 1993/1924, p. 83-84)

In addition Vygotsky (1993/?) wrote that people with impairments were placed by society in unjustified "inferior" social positions:

> Blindness creates hardships when the blind child enters life. Conflicts flare up on the path. To all intents and purposes, the defect is conceived of as a social disorder. Blindness puts its bearer in a definite and difficult

> social position. . . . Tendencies to overcompensate develop as a psychological reaction. These tendencies are directed toward the formation of a socially accepted personality, toward the achievement of a position in the social world. . . . They strive not to replace sight but to overcome and overcompensate for the social conflict. (Vygotsky, 1993/?, p. 101)

Others had negative reactions to the impairment but the impairment, itself, also altered the social interactions of the person with the impairment. For example, in the case of individuals with sensory impairments Vygtosky argued that eyes and ears were social organs because they were crucial for interacting with the environment and interpreting its meaning (Vygotsky, 1993/1924). He said that blind children needed to be taught by combining all of the available senses and that blind children read a different symbol system using their fingers instead of their eyes as tools (Vygotsky, 1993/1924). Vygotsky also argued for the disintegration of all special schools which were antisocial and for integrated education where full societal and social participation could be emphasised (Vygotsky, 1993/1924; Vygotsky, 1993/1925):

> When educating a handicapped child, be he blind or deaf, precisely the same process is required to develop new forms of behaviour and to establish conditional reactions as is necessary when educating a normal child. Consequently questions of education for handicapped children can be decided only as a problem of social pedagogy. . . . Special education must be subordinated to and co-ordinated with social education. Moreover, special education must organically merge with social education and become its major component. Any special medicinal diet prescribed for a handicapped child must not undermine his overall normal diet. . . . We do not deny the necessity of special instruction and training for handicapped children. On the contrary, we assert that teaching the blind to read . . . requires special pedagogical techniques, devices and methods. . . .On the other hand, we must not forget that, above all, it is necessary to educate a child not as a blind child but as a child. . . . Our special schools have, for example, sacrificed the child to blindness and deafness. . . . Free the child from the unbearable and senseless burden of special schools. (Vygotsky 1993/1924, p. 82-82)

During the second period of his defectology writing, 1927-1928, Vygotsky explored Adler's notion of compensation (Van der Veer, 1991). He wrote in 1927 that impairments caused an adjustment struggle with the external environment which, when possible, caused other organs to take over the 'defective' organ's function and thus compensate for its difficulties. He also believed that the struggle which initiated this change was primarily related to the inferior social position which came with impairments. The individual strived to overcome their social position and this became the motivating force behind development. However, he still pointed out that an individual's development was still not determined by an impairment but by its social consequences.

In the case of blindness, a blind child develop(ed) with one aim in mind: "to replace sight" (Vygotsky, 1993/1927, p. 57) which was associated with a full social standing. Thus, he said that educationalists needed to help blind children transcend their impairments by helping them achieve "full social esteem" (Vygotsky, 1993/1927, p. 57). They must understand that there were no fundamental differences between teaching disabled and non-disabled children. However, it was "still absolutely necessary to take into account the specific developmental characteristics of a child with a defect" (Vygtosky, 1993/1927, p. 60) and consider that, for example, blindness does cause a unique line of development, although the way in which blind children develop would follow the same rules as in other children's development. He believed that compensation was dependent upon the extent of the impairment, the amount of behaviour divergence, the extent of the compensatory reserve, and the quality of the available social education. For example, proletariat deaf-blind children would have more difficulty in education because of their social place as well as their limited compensatory reserve in that two of the five senses were unavailable to them. However, he also noted that someone like Helen Keller had been able to compensate for her deaf-blindness because there was a strong social demand that she be educated (Vygotsky, 1993/1927).

From 1929 onward, Vygotsky's defectology writings reflected his cultural-historical approach to development (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991). This approach emphasised that it was difficult for disabled children to assimilate into human culture because human culture, institutions, tools, and "psycho-physiological organisation" were based on the beliefs of a non-disabled world and the assumption that there was a "more or less stable biological type" of person (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991, p. 73). However, he pointed out that if people lived in a world made up of disabled people, then another world and another assumption could bring about another type of person (Vygotsky, 1993/?). Taken a step further, it can be also posited that if people lived in a world which fully included disabled people, then other assumptions about people would also develop.

The Social Meaning of Blindness

In his undated manuscript entitled, *The Blind Child,* which was published in 1993 Vygotsky posited that there were three historical periods with different beliefs about blindness. The first period, the mystical period, occurred during the Middle Ages in which blindness was thought to be a great misfortune and was feared. Also, at the same time, it was believed that blind people possessed an inner vision, higher mystical powers, and spiritual enlightenment. They, like Homer, preserved folk stories and were notable philosophers. In Christianity, Vygotsky pointed out that blind people were placed on the porch of the church where they could be beggars in their life on earth and yet near God. However, he also noted that these beliefs were not founded upon the actual experiences and thoughts of blind people themselves.

The second historical period, the Renaissance, during the eighteenth century, Vygotsky called the naive and biological period, in which science took hold. Teachers and scientists who were now working with blind children believed that blindness caused the other senses to become substitutes for vision, and that blind people had superior tactile and auditory skills. For example, blind people heard better and were thus exceptional musicians. However despite these misconceptions, he noted that braille was developed during this period and that "one dot of braille has done more for the blind than thousands of do-gooders" (Vygotsky, 1993/?, p. 100). Education for blind children in special schools began in this period, and Vygotksy attributed this development to Valentine Hauy who stated that blind children would "find light in education and labour" (Vygotsky, 1993/?, p. 100). Vygotsky felt that the third historical period, the modern period of the twentieth century, would bring labour or work to blind people.

Cultural beliefs which are rooted in past folklore fundamentally influence how blind persons learn about and interpret the meaning of blindness (Wagner-Lampl & Oliver, 1994). Wagner-Lampl and Oliver (1994) stated how it is believed in America that blind people are "either helpless and pathetic or evil and contagious and probably deserve their fate" (p. 268). Also, on the other hand there exists the beliefs that blind people have special abilities, perceptual powers, and deserve unique attention (Wagner-Lampl & Oliver, 1994). They found in their study that blind people, themselves, explained their blindness in relation to these beliefs and folklore. For example, some blind people in the study believed that they were being punished by God, feel dead; that they had been castrated and impotent like the emasculated Oedipus: that they could become talented in music (Wagner-Lampl & Oliver, 1994). Goodnow (1993) noted that schools offer the social constructivist researcher a place to observe what people do and culturally learn at the institutional, interpersonal, and institutional levels. However, it needs to be also recognised that each blind person has a unique history; has different personal experiences; and responds to their experiences in different ways.

Blind and Sighted People's Beliefs about Blindness

Koestler (1976) believed that blindness is the most universally feared affliction and it is a fear that has been fed through the centuries as humans feel vulnerable in the absence of light. Darkness is also associated with Lucifer. Blindness has also been seen as an indication of divine punishment by the Greeks (Koestler, 1976). There is evidence that blind children were left to die by the Greeks and by the Prussians (Koestler, 1976). Monbeck (1973) in *The Meaning of Blindness* also contended that the fear of blindness caused the public to avoid contact with blind people. The public also held a number of misconceived beliefs about blindness in that he thought it was believed that blind people were miserable, unhappy, tragic, envious of sighted people, helpless, and useless. Monbeck traced these beliefs to one idea which was:

> Blindness has the same effect on all individuals and, therefore, regardless of what differences there may be among blind people, their blindness makes them more like each other than they would be if they were sighted (Monbeck, 1973, p. 13)

Lukoff (1972) also pointed out that blind people themselves felt that their blindness, and not their individual and unique personal attributes, dominated the social responses which they received from sighted public. However, he also noted that the individuals who played the most significant role in the lives of blind people were people in their immediate social environment: their friends, families, employers, and teachers.

People in the immediate social environment may also hold negative and stereotypical beliefs about blind people. Scott (1969) in his notable qualitative study, *The Making of Blind Men,* which included over two hundred interviews with adventitiously blind men and the professionals working with them, examined in depth the stereotypes and stigma which were attributed to blind people by rehabilitation professionals within service agencies. He concluded that "blindness. . . is a social role that people who have serious difficulty seeing or who cannot see at all must learn to play" (Scott, 1969, p. 3) Similarly to Monbeck, he found that the stereotypical beliefs that prevailed were that blind people were helpless, docile, dependent, melancholic, aesthetic (more sensitive to music and literature), and serious minded. These stereotypes led to stigma in that blind people were seen as different, as well as physically, psychologically, morally and emotionally inferior to sighted persons. He also found that sighted professionals' expectations became the blind person's.

However, Scott (1969) stated that some agencies in his study positively and actively sought to help their blind clients become independent through the delivery of instruction in orientation and mobility, techniques of daily living, and braille. On the whole, though, Scott found that most agencies believed that blindness caused insurmountable obstacles to independence. He argued that this was largely due to the pressure placed on the agency by the community to segregate blind people; to fundraise by capitalising on the fear and guilt of the community; to keep their number of clients high in order to compete with other agencies for funds; and to keep their specialised, as well as their experienced but untrained, employees employed.

More recently, Vaughan (1993), a sociologist who is blind, argued that blind people are kept in subordinate social positions by internalising negative self attributes which have been affirmed by their parents, peers and professionals. He thus called for more blind staff and decision makers within agencies which serve blind people. He felt that there were essentially just two perspectives about blindness. The first was that blindness is a nuisance, and the other is that blindness is a disaster. The disaster discourse emphasised such words as loss, abnormal, inferior, different, dependent, and unfortunate. Similarly, Kenneth Jernigan (1996) argued that his blindness was only a normal characteristic which like any characteristic brought about unique limitations, e.g. blue eyes cannot be brown. In 1913 Helen Keller wrote that "I have the advantage of a mind trained to think, and that is the difference between myself and most people, not my blindness and their sight (as cited in Foner, 1967, p. 52)." She also went further to state that sighted people were in fact blind as well because they did not see the poverty and "unconscious cruelty of our commercial society" (as cited in Foner, 1967, p. 29) which caused blindness:

> It seems to me that they are blind indeed who do not see that there must be something very wrong when the workers - the men and women who produce the wealth of the nation - are ill paid, ill fed, ill clothed, ill housed. Deaf indeed are they who do not hear the desperation in the voice of people crying out against cruel poverty and social injustice. Dull indeed are their hearts who turn their backs upon misery and support a system that grinds the life and soul out of men and women. (as cited in Foner, 1967, p. 52-53)

Jernigan (1966) acknowledged that blindness brought about alternative, but not inferior, techniques for performing activities like using braille when reading or using a white cane when walking. However, he took issue with Father Thomas Carroll, a respected rehabilitation worker, whose writings influenced the rehabilitation professionals who taught these alternative techniques. Father Carroll compared losing one's sight to death:

> loss of sight is a dying. . . . it is death to a way of life that had become part of the man. It is the end of acquired methods of doing things, the loss of built up relationships with people, of ingrained relationships with an environment. It is superficial, if not naive, to think of blindness as a blow to the eyes only, to sight only. (Carroll, 1961, p. 11)

He wrote a 'disaster discourse' in which he listed twenty losses which occurred when someone became blind (Carroll, 1961). Included in this list were such things as the loss of physical integrity because the person was no longer a "whole person" (Carroll, 1961, p. 14), loss of 'real' contact with the environment and loneliness because of this "visual silence" (Carroll, 1961, p. 26), loss of mobility, loss of techniques of daily living, loss of both social and written communication, loss of visual beauty, loss of recreation, loss of career, loss of independence, loss of anonymity, and loss of social adequacy which he acknowledged was due to the reactions of other people to blindness.

Monbeck (1973) observed that such negative beliefs over-emphasise the loss of attractiveness to others, of independence, and of normality. He maintained that such attitudes are transmitted through literature and fairy tales. The Bible on several occasions showed blind people asking Jesus for pity (Monbeck, 1973). Diderot wrote that "certainly death to (a blind person) is a much less disagreeable affair" (as cited in Monbeck, 1973, p. 29) than to a sighted person and that the moral code of blind people is different from sighted people because sympathy is the result of having seen misery and pain. Oedipus talked about the horror of darkness and his powerlessness. King Lear, after being blinded, was fooled by his son in disguise. Victor Hugo was compelled to say that a blind character in *The Man Who Laughs* had not done anything to deserve her fate.

Monbeck (1973) also examined the psychosocial origins of attitudes towards blindness. He believed that the significant function of an attitude is to develop a predisposed reaction. Attitudes are also instrumental to the satisfaction of one's personal values. He argued that the paramount individual value which operates when attitudes are developed about blindness is the high valuation which is placed on vision. Sight is considered important as a shield to danger and a means of detecting food. It is also described as giving detail to objects as simultaneous relationships of distance, position, form and size can be determined. Linguistically, the imagination is linked to mental pictures and comprehension is linked to "seeing a point" (Monbeck, 1973, p. 90). Our body image is also linked to vision in our perception of the "body-beautiful" (Monbeck, 1973, p. 95). Expressions such as 'the eyes are the window to the soul' are certainly indications of the importance of this organ to humanity. Ultimately, Monbeck (1973) argued that sighted individuals are convinced that what they accomplish is due to their sight, and that success is impossible without it. Therefore Monbeck stated that it then followed that the sighted person's values are threatened when they encounter a successful blind person, or when a blind person was not miserable. In addition, Monbeck argued that sighted people may take action to bolster their reality by espousing segregation because "blind people need special protection and help" (Monbeck, 1973, p. 103). Monbeck thus effectively argued that "sight and blindness obviously mean much more than the ability to see and the inability to see" (Monbeck, 1973, p. 111).

Blind People and Institutions

As in many countries, the provision of educational services for blind children in New Zealand began with segregation or the special school. The first school in the world for children with vision impairments was established in 1784 in Paris by Valentin Hauy. Lowenfeld (1975) stated that Hauy was greatly influenced by Diderot's 1749 *Letter* which was a milestone in the history of blindness. Diderot brought to the attention of his intellectual counterparts the fact that blind people could lead competent normal lives. He illustrated this by his accounts of three blind people whose achievements and intelligence "had emancipated themselves from the shackles of beggardom and ignorance" (Lowenfeld, 1975, p. 68). Hauy was also concerned with the occupation of blind people. His institution's goals were:

> first, to employ those among them who are in easy circumstances in an agreeable manner. Secondly, to rescue from the miseries of beggary those to whom fortune has been parsimonious of her favours, by putting the means of subsistence in their power; and, in short, to render useful to society their hands (as cited in Lowenfeld, 1975, p. 73)

According to Lowenfeld, Hauy's first pupil, seventeen year old Francois Lesuer, begged in the morning to support his parents and their six children, and cleverly studied in the afternoon with Hauy for a fee. Lesuer was taught to successfully read books with raised letters which Hauy produced. Lowenfeld attributes to Hauy three accomplishments which helped to form the future for the education of blind children. Hauy's school provided the stimulus for the founding of other residential schools throughout the world. He successfully trained students for gainful employment in particular trades and was the first to acknowledge that reading could be taught through the sense of touch.

In New Zealand there exists no scholarly historical study about the education of blind children. However, two journalists, Ken Catran and Penny Hansen, were commissioned by the RNZFB to research and document a history of the organisation for their centenary. They noted that the first school and institution for the blind was established in 1891 at first temporarily and later permanently in 1909 with 80 pounds left over from the mayoralty fund used to celebrate the Jubillee of Queen Victoria. It was called the Jubilee Institute, later named the Institute for the Blind, the Foundation for the Blind, and, finally, the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind (RNZFB). The Institute's areas of responsibility were:

> 1. education and the appointment of teachers, and maintenance of educational standards.

> 2. provision of work for those who had finished their education
> 3. administration of the Institute as a residence. (Catran & Hansen, 1992, p. 23)

The Jubilee Institute could certainly be defined as a total institution which, according to Goffman (1961), is an organisation "of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life (Goffman, 1961, p. xiii)." It is also unique in that it is the only agency within New Zealand which provides services to blind people and people with vision impairments. Under the first directorship of John Tighe, a totally blind Australian, and the tutorials of Jane Collier, twenty students studied in Auckland in the neighbourhood of Parnell. Mike Oliver (1989) identified such segregation as being a humanitarian response to alleviate the 'personal tragedy' of disability during the industrial revolution. Disabled people were 'taken care of' in institutions as they were excluded from work because of the eroding extended family during these times. As discussed previously, Vygotsky felt that segregated education did not actually educate children or address the primary social issues associated with an impairment and Kitchin (1998) noted that disability was both socially and spatially constructed in that spaces excluded disabled people and were "organised to keep disabled people 'in their place' and 'written' to convey to disabled people that they are 'out of place" (p. 343). He grounded this notion in the theories of social constructivism and political economic thought in that social constructivism posited that 'other' was a category learned from our elders who taught categories of sameness, and political economic thought was centred around ideas about power and not capital.

Oliver (1989) on the other hand stated that such institutions were related to capital in that they helped to control economically unproductive people and they also stood out as a monument to others of their fate should they no longer be able to work. Training in these institutions was seen as a social investment to increase the workforce when the supply did not meet the demand (Oliver, 1988). However, when the supply exceeded the demand then the concept of significant living without work was emphasised (Oliver, 1988). Government Benefits can be linked to this view in that they prevent pauperism when there is not a demand for workers. In New Zealand, the Pensions Amendment Act 1924 provided pensions for blind people over the age of 21, no matter what their earnings totalled, and paved the way for providing assistance to other disabled adults and in 1936 the Invalid's Pension was introduced (Mitchell & Mitchell, 1985). The 1924 Act also was the precursor to today's Blindness Benefit which covers the extra costs of blindness.

The Pensions Amendment Act passed largely due to the efforts of Sir Clutha Mackenzie, who was a Minister of Parliament until 1922; had been blinded at Gallipoli; and was the third director of the Jubilee Institute. The Jubilee Institute was renamed the Institute for the Blind in 1926 and commonly referred to as the 'Institute'. MacKenzie was also an expert at fundraising (Catran & Hansen, 1992; Newbold, 1995). The Pearson Fund, which today still provides financial assistance to blind people, the industrial workshops, the Institute Shop, and the touring Institute Band were all the result of Mackenzie's skills and they saw the Institute through the depression. However, up until the 1940s the workers at the Institute and in the Band did not receive adequate compensation for their work. The income of the Institute's members or blind people during the 1920s and 1930s was given to the organisation for their "maintenance and education" (Catran & Hansen, 1992, p. 47). Only a small allowance was given to each member who were called inmates by the authoritarian Board of Trustees (Catran & Hansen, 1992). Additional money was granted upon application to the Board of Trustees. Catran and Hansen (1992) also noted that the Institute viewed its residents as unpaid workers in their industrial cane and handicraft workshops and were dependent upon the Institute (Catran & Hansen, 1992). Such control extended into the blind person's personal life. Even marriages had to be approved by the Board of Trustees during MacKenzie's reign. There is also some evidence that a eugenic philosophy might have been present as Catran and Hansen (1992) cited a Board entry in which Mackenzie called into question the desirability of marriage for members with hereditary blindness. The language within the Institute is also interesting to note. Blind people within the Institute were called 'members' even though there were no provisions for actually joining the organisation. Also, today this term is still used to indicate who is eligible for its services (Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind, 1999).

Dr. Gary Newbold (1995), a criminologist who had experience writing social histories in New Zealand and who had written his Master's thesis about the costs of blindness, documented the history of the Dominion Association for the Blind, now named the Association of Blind Citizens, New Zealand (ABC (NZ)) and commonly referred to as the 'Association'. The Association was formed in the 1940s as a result of the Institute's autocratic and patronising control. The seed for its establishment came when there were a number of stop work meetings by blind people to address their working conditions (Newbold, 1995). For example, in 1941 workers at the Institute for the Blind stopped to protest the Board of Trustee's withdrawal of a government five percent cost of living bonus (Newbold, 1995). In 1945, a Blind Welfare Committee was formed and made up of blind people themselves. This committee was able to secure a lunchroom and cafeteria for the workers in the workshops in 1945 which Newbold (1995) documented as a remarkable improvement to the conditions of work at the Institute. This committee then called for the establishment of a subcommittee to investigate the formation of a stronger organisation (Newbold, 1995).

The result was the establishment of the 'Association' which was the first consumer group of disabled persons to be formed in New Zealand (Mitchell & Mitchell, 1985). In 1944, meetings were held by the Auckland members of the Institute for the Blind who were angered by the Institute's custodial attitudes and who wanted a voice which could influence government, local bodies, the Institute, and their working conditions (Catran & Hansen, 1992). The Association eventually won representation on the Institute's Board of Trustees by advocating for amendments to *The New Zealand Foundation for the Blind Act 1955*, which changed the name of the Institute for the Blind and was before Parliament.

This 1955 Act of Parliament was passed and still stands today as the only one of its kind in New Zealand. It was last amended in 1979 and is now called, *The Royal*

New Zealand Foundation for the Blind Act 1979. It established a specific charitable organisation by law and gave to that organisation the legislative responsibility for the education of a certain category of disabled children The Act stated that one of the purposes of the Foundation for the Blind, which is now commonly referred to as the Foundation, was

> to provide for the care, relief, education, and training of blind persons, the amelioration of their condition, and the maintenance and promotion of their general welfare (New Zealand Government, 1979, p. 4).

It allowed the Minister of Education to direct the Foundation to admit and "maintain" (New Zealand Government, 1979, p. 4) any blind person between the age of six and twenty (later changed to aged twenty one in 1970). Before this Act was passed the *1901 School Attendance Act* required that parents of blind children provide for the effective education of their children, but this also essentially meant sending them to the Institute (Aldis, 1932; Mitchell & Mitchell, 1985).

The Director of Education has the power to inspect the Foundation and to examine the "pupils being maintained or taught there in the subjects in which they are receiving instruction" (New Zealand Government, 1979, p. 5). The Department of Education, which is now the Ministry of Education, was required by the Act to provide full funding to the Foundation so that the cost of the education of blind children at the Foundation could be met. Prior to this only some of the educational costs at the Foundation were met by the Ministry. Oliver (1988) believed that such segregation was seen as cost effective because ordinary schools thought the presence of demanding pupils were a drain on their resources and a way to control this deviant group of pupils. These pupils were also subjected to medical control because the problem of disability rested with the individual (Oliver, 1988). Disability was defined as biological flaws in people who looked different, thought differently, and acted differently to those who had no disability (Sullivan, 1991, p. 258). Vygtosky, though, proposed that blindness was not abnormal, nor a handicap, and that special education needed to be liberated from special schools and 'special' education and become social education:

> A blind person will remain blind and a deaf person deaf, but they will cease to be handicapped because a handicapped condition is only a social concept . . . Blindness by itself does not make a child handicapped; it is not a defective condition, an inadequacy, abnormality, or illness. Blindness becomes these things only under certain social conditions of a blind person's existence. . . . Social education will conquer physical handicaps. . . . .. a blind person is blind and a deaf person is deaf and *nothing more*. (Vygotsky, 1993/1924, p. 84)

Institutions and Residential Schools under Scrutiny

Aldis' *The Betrayal of the Blind*

As early as 1932, the Jubilee Institute was under scrutiny. Morton Aldis, who was sighted and the secretary to the Jubilee Institute's Board of Trustees from 1922 to 1926, wrote and published an expose about the Institute. He thought that blind people were ordinary people who were condemned to servitude by the Institute:

> There can be no other body of men and women in New Zealand, outside the mental hospitals and the gaols, condemned to live in such a state of servitude; and there is no justification for compelling the blind to submit to it. They are not beings of a different and inferior species from the rest of us, only fit to be kept under tutelage and control; they are . . . just ordinary people with very bad sight. (p. 7)

Aldis asked that the liberty, happiness and self respect of blind people be the goals of the Jubilee Institute. However, he felt that the Institute was mismanaged and governed by unqualified appointees to the Board of Trustees. He also was critical of Sir Clutha MacKenzie, the director of the Institute at the time, whom he felt was politically appointed and incompetent. He pointed out that Sir MacKenzie was only twenty-eight years of age, had no qualifications and no teaching or managerial experience, and yet was now responsible for the lives of hundreds of blind people. He believed that Sir MacKenzie was too authoritarian and relied too much on physical punishment within the Institute:

> (MacKenzie's) notion of discipline seems to resemble that of the schoolmaster who announced that he would have a spirit of cheerful obedience if he had to thrash every boy in the school within an inch of his life. . . . When a boy of sixteen or seventeen had committed a breach of discipline . . . and refused to submit to the penalty of a flogging, Mr. MacKenzie expelled him from the Institute. . . . ..it is a scandal that the misfortune of being blind should deliver boys over to the mercy of an untrained and inexperienced young man, to be flogged by him whenever he in his absolute discretion thinks fit; a man, besides, of exceptional physical strength and unable to see the . . . effect of his blows. (Aldis, 1932, p. 18)

Aldis (1932) also wrote to the local papers about conditions at the Institute and with a petition which was signed by blind people approached Parliament (Newbold,1995). However, he believed that he was not treated fairly at the subsequent Parliamentary hearing which was made up of representatives from the political party in which Mackenzie was previously a Minister of Parliament. Aldis called for representation from blind people on the Board of Trustees; an appeal and review process for the Board of Trustee decisions; and government appointments to the Board of Trustees instead of publicly elected members. However these recommendations, Aldis' publication, his letters to the newspapers, and petitions were not taken seriously at the time (Catran & Hansen, 1992; Newbold, 1995). In 1935 MacKenzie received his knighthood (Newbold, 1995). MacKenzie eventually resigned from the Institute in 1938 after he was arrested on sixteen charges of indecent assault on eleven blind youths and men. A trial, however, did not take place on the recommendation of a grand jury of businessmen, esquires, and professionals (Newbold, 1995).

During the next decades along with changes in the Directorship and the Board of Trustees, the Dominion Association for the Blind (DAB) became active and was able to improve the conditions at the Institute. The Institute also during the 1950s and 1960s saw improvements in their economic conditions. This led to increased wages for blind people in the flourishing workshops. DAB also asked for and eventually received representation on the Board of Trustees, increased occupational therapy, guide dog training, and vocational guidance officers from the Institute

(Newbold, 1995).

In 1964, the special school at Parnell eventually moved to its own grounds away from the workshops and adult rehabilitation services. The New Zealand Department of Education bestowed on the Foundation for the Blind twenty eight acres of vacant land in Manurewa for the purpose of educating blind children. A special school was built and named Homai College. Some of the children, who were enrolled at Homai, also attended Manurewa High School where they were supported by a visual resource room in 1965 (Catran & Hansen, 1992; Havill, 1972). In 1972, it was reported that Homai had one hundred and ninety six students and twenty five teachers at the school (Havill, 1972). Ninety six of these children attended Homai with the remaining students attending either Manurewa High School or other secondary schools with itinerant teacher support from Homai (Havill, 1972). Homai had thus begun to provide itinerant and consultation services along with its special school services. This itinerant service became the National Visual Resource Centre in 1972 and later was named the Auckland Visual Resource Centre (Nagel, 1997). Homai College, itself, was administered by the New Zealand Foundation for the Blind (later named the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind (RNZFB) (Havill, 1972).

Some programme initiatives at Homai, which still exist, include the establishment of a national transcription department in 1964. Here, print materials, such as school textbooks, are transcribed into braille for students with vision impairment from throughout the country (Nagel, 1997). Homai opened the first deaf-blind unit on its grounds in 1970 and Havill (1972) noted that this represented Homai's increased interest in children with multiple handicaps. In 1972, Homai established a National Assessment Service (Nagel, 1997). This service offers a week long transdisciplinary assessment for students with vision impairments who are accompanied to Homai by their parents or caregivers (Nagel, 1997). In 1977, an itinerant early childhood advisor was appointed to advise families throughout the country and in 1980 an on-site Early Childhood Centre was opened (Nagel, 1997). In 1981, the Developmental Unit, which provides educational services to students with multiple impairments, and the Independent Living Skills Programme (now named Kick Start), which provides transitional services to school leavers in a residential programme (Nagel, 1997) were established. These services include instruction in techniques of daily living, orientation and mobility instruction, job-seeking skills, sexuality, and social relationships (Nagel, 1997).

According to Nagel (1997), in recognition of the diversity of its programmes and its changing focus from a special school for children with vision impairments along with changes to Education Policy in New Zealand, Homai College changed its name to Homai Vision Education Centre in 1996. It also restructured in the 1990s into four main programmes which still include the programmes mentioned above. These four programmes are the Assessment and Training Programme, Model Services (campus based teaching programmes), Residential Services, and Itinerant Teaching Services. However, it is important to note that the Homai Vision Education Centre has again just been designated as a special residential school (Grieve, 2000). This will involve becoming independent of the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind (RNZFB), although the RNZFB will have a representative on the school's Board of Trustees. It also will involve focusing on "a clearly identifiable core school function for learners who are blind and vision impaired" (Grieve, 2000, p. 5).

Other Expose' about Institutions

During the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, residential institutions were beginning to become a source of wider concern to the community as exposes in America and England began to appear (Sobsey, 1994). Tizard and Tizard (1974) noted that a number of researchers in America presented graphic accounts of the institutional neglect of children with intellectual handicaps during this time. Wooden (1976), for example, thought that children with intellectual disabilities were actually incarcerated in institutions and Government hospitals because it was convenient for parents and created jobs for professionals. One noteworthy expose was a secret photographic essay of such institutions in the United States by Blatt and Kaplan (1974) which began with the statement:

> There is a hell on earth, and in America there is a special inferno. We were visitors there during Christmas 1965. . .. It does not require a scientific background or a great deal of observation to determine that one has entered 'the land of the living dead.' (p. v)

In the 1920s in England, there were five hundred institutions, mostly charitable, which included seventy-seven institutions for blind children, which cared for disabled children and between 1900 to 1950 a quarter of a million children would be raised in these special schools which were overcrowded, lacking resources, and lacking trained staff (Humphries & Gordon, 1992). The children at these institutions were thought to be "part of the 'great unwashed' who were ignorant, immoral and feeble-minded. In short they needed to be saved from themselves and from their families" (Humphries & Gordon, 1992, p. 67).

Humphries and Gordon (1992) poignantly described in their study the personal experiences of children at these school. The first day at the school was traumatic for the children leaving their families and home. Ted Williams, a participant in their study, described the regiment and his feelings of imprisonment when he was a nine year old blind child on his first day at the special school in 1923:

> The first day you got there, you changed into the school uniform . . . And to add insult to injury, we were each dumped with a number. Mine was forty-three, prisoner forty three . . . And it got to be a part of your life. . . . All my clothing, all my possessions, what few I had anyway, I discovered there was a big number forty-three. . . . I remember the first night . . . I just laid you see and thought about home and wished I was back. I just cowered down under the sheets, beautifully clean, but wickedly cold (Humphries & Gordon, 1992, p. 71).

Humphries and Gordon (1992) stated that blind children in general received the best education because they were thought to have the most learning potential through braille. However, the teaching methods were authoritarian and corporal punishment was widely used. A particularly well used punishment was that of sensory and social deprivation in that blind children were not allowed to speak or be spoken to. In one school which had both blind as well as deaf students, Cyril

Hayward Jones, a blind student, described a divisive punishment which he was able to circumvent:

> One of the worst punishments was to go and live on the deaf side for a couple of days. . . . That was the only time we went to the deaf side, when we were naughty. Now the thing was, of course, that the deaf couldn't hear and we couldn't lip read. So it was really pretty desperate situation there. Well, what you had to do was learn to spell on your fingers, to be able to make yourself understood with the deaf boys. I remember the manual alphabet even to this day. (Humphries & Gordon, 1992, p. 91)

Resistance to the various school rules in this study also came in the form of stealing food which was tasteless but scarce (Humprhies & Gordon, 1992) .

Sally French (1996), who also has a visual impairment, documented the experiences of eight of her schoolmates at an English residential school for the partially sighted girls in the 1950s and 1960s. Like Humphries and Gordon's (1992) expose, she noted that the first day was very traumatic for these students. Also, some did not know that they were to leave home and thought they were just "going on a day outing" (French, 1996, p. 20). Some girls became distanced from their families and others did not. They all felt that there were low expectations at the school and domestic skills were emphasised instead of academic studies because of gender role expectations. The teachers were described as kind but ineffective. On the other hand, the matrons and domestic staff were remembered as cruel and abusive. There was also evidence of psychological abuse which centred on the body. For example, bed wetting brought about extreme punishments:

> Andrea . . . could remember at the age of six, being stood in the corner with her wet sheets tied around her neck (French, 1996, p. 31)

According to French, the students were forced to eat food which they did not like. They were discouraged from expressing emotions. Their parents were insulted by the matrons after they visited and French found that on the whole parents were not told about these experiences because some of the girls thought that this was 'normal' treatment. Others thought that their parents would not take them seriously or did not want to worry them. During adolescence the girls were particularly disturbed about the lack of privacy when caring for their bodies. They toileted, bathed, and dressed together, and one stated that when she left the school she inappropriately started to undress in front of people as well. None recalled having sex or menstrual education and felt ignorant about the subject (French, 1996). Even recently, Green and Stone (1996) found that many teachers of students with a vision impairment were not confident to teach on this topic or on personal safety despite the fact that half of these teachers encountered students who had been sexually abused. It is important to note the experiences of the women in French's study resulted in a lack of confidence, low self esteem, fear of travelling, feelings of social inadequacy, and shyness (French, 1996).

The Effects of Residential Schools

Rindfleisch and Rabb (1984) estimated that abuse was twice as likely to occur in institutions as it was in families and abuse in segregated institutions was rarely documented. More recently, Kennedy (1996) suggested that the prevalence rate of abuse for children with disabilities was two out of three girls, and one out of every three boys, and that this vulnerability to abuse is created by disabling attitudes and segregation. For example in New Mexico, the School for the Blind has recently settled a law suit in which fifteen former students claimed that the entire school ignored their physical and sexual abuse at the school (Pierce, 1998). Dick Sobsey (1994) identified four factors which characterised such institutional abuse. These include extreme power inequities, the collective nature of the abuse in that there is usually more than one offender or victim, abuse cover-up or rationalisation, and finally the existence of environmental conditions which encourage abuse. Sobsey also questioned whether or not institutions were not inherently abusive and cited the historical influences of genocide, euthanasia, eugenics, aversive therapies, and incarceration which have affected society's treatment of disabled people and has led to institutional segregation.

There has thus been a call to close all residential institutions because the institution is restrictive and placing a child in an institution is always harmful to the child (Rindfleisch, 1993; Sobsey, 1994). One special school in England actually closed itself and instead became an inclusion service because it believed that segregation was not right (Bannister, Sharland, Thomas, Upton, & Walker, 1998). An all encompassing negative affect of attending a residential school is the separation of children from their family or community in order to attend a residential school (King, Raynes, & Tizard, 1971; Mishne, 1979; Rindfleisch, 1993; Swanson & Schaefer, 1993). John Bowlby (1969) proposed that a secure attachment to a caregiver during a child's first few years was essential for a child's ability to separate from significant others in the future. When such attachment did not occur, then the affects on the child could include an incapacity to nurture others, to form intimate relationships, and developmental delays (King, Raynes, & Tizard, 1971; Perry, Charles, & Matheson, 1986; Smith, 1998). Mishne (1979) cited a number of studies which found that children who were separated from their families were weepy, withdrawn, and had an impaired body image and difficulty communicating. Also, adolescents who were in residential schools were thought to have difficulty forming an identity because they did not have a sense of self history or family (Perry, Charles, & Matheson, 1986).

There have also been a number of studies which noted the difficulties which indigenous children experienced when taken from their extended families for residential schooling (Bull, 1991; Ing, 1991; Urion, 1991). Gayle Kennedy (1996), a member of the Wongaiibon Tribe of New South Wales in Australia, was separated from her family and culture at age two for hospitalisation because of polio. She returned at age five but her return was filled with pain for all concerned:

> All the faces that surrounded me were white. . . . Then on a day that is forever etched in my and my parents memory, everything was SHATTERED! . . . It started out like any other day. Up early, bathed and fed . . . Then I was told that I was going to meet some special people and that they were taking me on a long journey . . . I saw tears in the nursing sister's eyes. . . . I was led into the visitors room there before me, were two aliens from another world. My parents! "This is your mummy and daddy" said the sister, . . . I recoiled in horror and screamed, "she's not my mummy. He's not my daddy. They're black". Tears streamed down their

> faces. How they must have hurt. (p. 3-4)

The indigenous people of North America were taken to Indian residential schools from the 1870s to 1970s, Canadian studies have found that their experiences were overwhelmingly negative and they included stories of brutality and separation which resulted in the loss of self esteem, family, and culture (Bull, 1991; Ing, 1991; Urion,1991). Residential schools also affected the parenting skills of their students. Ing (1991) found that Native American parents who were taken to such schools had limited access to the oral transmission of Native American child rearing patterns and values. They also could not draw on the experience of being cared for by their extended family and their tight knit community (Ing, 1991). These parents also felt that they had lost their language, self esteem, and self confidence which prevented them from strongly nurturing their child (Ing, 1991).

However, some disabled people have stated that special schools help them to develop a strong cultural identity which is vitally linked with their ability to be with each other (Corn, Bina, & DePriest, 1995; Jernigan, 1996a; Lane, 1992). A statement from French (1993a) about her experience also brings this issue to life:

> Attending special school at the age of nine was, in many ways, a great relief. Despite the crocodile walks, the bells, the long separations from home, the regimentation and the physical punishment, it was an enormous joy to be with other partially sighted children and to be in an environment where limited sight was simply not an issue. I felt relaxed, made lots of friends, became more confident and thrived socially. For the first time in my life I was a standard product and it felt very good. (p. 71)

In New Zealand, Judith Small (1998), who is blind, wrote in her Master's thesis that the identity of blind people is linked to their educational experiences. The participants in her study were also concerned that the New Zealand inclusive education system isolated blind children from other blind people and created a situation in which the development of their self concept was more dependent upon what sighted people thought about blindness than upon what blind people thought and experienced (Small, 1998). It is interesting to note that one study of blind children at residential schools found that their teachers and parents assessed them to have more social, emotional and behaviour difficulties than blind children at public schools. Whereas, the blind children, themselves, rated themselves as having less social, emotional, and behaviour difficulties than blind children at regular schools (Van Hasselt, Kazdin, & Hersen, 1986). A Finnish study found that there were no differences at regular schools between sighted and blind students in the amount of social support which they received from others and in their own ratings of their self esteem. A gender analysis in this study, however, did show that the blind girls in their study had lower self esteem than other students and said they had less support from friends (Huurre, Komulainen, & Aro, 1999).

Blind People: Excluded by their Community

Vygotsky believed that special schools have produced invalids who have been trained to beg, make brooms, and "knick-knack" weave instead of enabling disabled citizens to fully participate and interact in the community through meaningful work (Vygotsky, 1993/1924; Vygotsky, 1993/1929). He described work opportunites for blind people as being "that narrow door through which the blind enter life" (Vygotsky, 1993/1924, p. 86). In New Zealand there also appear to be narrow doors. Beatson's (1981) New Zealand survey of the employment status of people with vision impairments in New Zealand found that twenty four percent of men and twenty one percent of women in his study who were available for work were not in paid employment. This compared with figures of one and a half percent and two and half percent, respectively, in the general population at the time. He also found that of those who became visually impaired while working, only two and half percent remained in their jobs. In America it was noted recently that only forty eight percent of graduates from a vocational training programme for people with a sensory impairment found work. Also, if the graduate had a vision impairment then they were even more likely to be unemployed (Beadles, McDaniel, & Waters, 2000).

Specific professions have been developed in some countries for blind people.

Most notably, blind people have worked in Japan as physiotherapists for hundreds of years and also in Britain (French, 1995). French (1995) believed that this profession might have emerged from a view of blind people as having superior tactile skills. She traced Britain's history of this profession which began when two blind girls were taught massage in 1891 and then official training of blind students started at the London School of Massage in 1900. It later became segregated training at the Royal National Institute for the Blind from 1915 to 1992. French postulated that without this history, physiotherapy today would be considered a highly unlikely profession for people with vision impairments because when she actually spoke to practicing physiotherapists with a vision impairment they told her that there were inflexible environments and attitudes, and that their entry into the profession was hard won and under constant scrutiny.

In his New Zealand study, *The Costs of Blindness,* Newbold (1987) found four factors which had a negative impact on people with vision impairment in the area of employment. These factors included a reduction in educational attainment, employment prospects, job promotions potential, and earning levels. In Sweden, adventitiously blind people who returned to work were underemployed (Jeppsson-Grassman, E., 1989). Similarly, in Israel the educational achievements of blind youths were superior to their vocational achievement (Deshen, 1987). In Australia, blind people have significant difficulties finding work (Gillies, Knight, & Baglioni, 1998). Barriers to the employment of blind people have been identified as difficulties with transportation; in obtaining training; with public, professional, and employer attitudes; with inadequate funding for equipment and technology, and in finding appropriate role models (Crudden & McBroom, 1999; Gillies, Knight, & Baglioni, 1998; O'Day, 1999). Blind people have also stated that they do not receive adequate assistance with job seeking strategies, career information, and assistive devices (Gillies, Knight, & Baglioni, 1998; Wolffe, Roessler, & Schriner, 1992)

Blind women also face gender prejudice and stereotyping (Packer, 1983). When Packer (1983) presented vocational counselors with a hypothetical biography of a blind person who was either identified as a female or male, they recommended stereotypical occupations for both genders, but that male occupations were more desirable. For example, the counselors stated that the blind woman could be a typist or braillist, while the blind man could be a computer programmer. Koestler (1983) suggested that blind women need to have a sound education, good mobility and daily living skills, and an understanding of high technology in order to overcome employment barriers. She stressed that self knowledge was a crucial factor for a successful career and that blind women can benefit from role models of successful blind women. Blind women and men have positively documented their vocational experiences in a number of publications (Atmore, 1990; Gardner, 1983; Kendrick, 1993; Kendrick, 1998; Kent, 1983; Koestler, 1983; Sandhaus, 1983).

In general, a few blind women and blind men have overcome vocational barriers through personal motivation and assistance from friends, role models, rehabilitation agencies, and teachers (Crudden & McBroom, 1999). McConnell (1999) also emphasized the fact that parents' aspirations have a profound affect on the careers of their blind children. They have a deep understanding of their child's interests and strengths and have been identified as their child's long term support system in the transition from school to work (McConnell, 1999). Parents thus need to be included in vocational discussions about their child (McConnell, 1999). It is interesting to note, though, that an ethnographic study in Israel about parents and their blind children found that parents had low expectations of their children's vocational future as well as marriage prospects (Deshen, 1987).

Deshen (1987) documented that young blind people were motivated to leave their parental homes in Israel so that they could develop their own independent lives. However, a number of young blind adults in this study had returned home after years at the special school and were thus not familiar with their home community or their families. Some of his participants also began to develop middle class traits through their education and had difficulty returing to their working class backgrounds. He also found that most blind people, no matter what gender, wanted to marry sighted partners because they were considered to hold a better social position than blind partners. On the other hand, he noted that sighted people were unlikely to marry blind women, but would consider marrying blind men because of the belief system in their community:

> The marital preferences I have described are rooted in the Israel family system which has many traditional characteristics. One is that women are required to bring greater resources to marriage than men, another is that women must be able and willing to perform servile domestic roles in marital life. Moreover, in a situation where sexual inequality is widespread, the parallel requirement, that of men being successful breadwinners , is not considered as essential. Therefore, a sighted woman is likely to accept a blind husband, while the opposite is rare. . . . Where the blind partner is the wife, this entails a compound reversal of domestic roles, a servile position of the *husband vis-à-vis* a doubly inferior mate, being both blind and female. On the other hand, while a sighted wife and blind husband pair does imply a reduction in the traditional superior role of the male, it places the wife in a position that, at least stereotypically, rivets her to a servile stance *vis-à-vis* the husband. (Deshin, 1987, p. 143)

Deshen thus stated that blind women 's chances of marrying were poor. Another concern is that an American survey found that blind women who attended special schools had less knowledge about sex and reproduction than their sighted or blind peers who attended regular schools (Welborne, Lifschitz, Selvin, & Green, 1983).

Deborah Kent (1983) described her experiences as a blind adolescent in America as those of being excluded from the inner circle because she was unable to keep up her visual appearance through make-up, fashion, and the mimicking of rock or television idols' mannerisms. She said that she never dated and this was very painful when combined with the fact that one by one her close friends began to leave her behind for their boyfriends. She informally surveyed other blind women about their adolescence and found similar stories. She surmised that adolescent boys thought of a date as a status symbol and that they were unwilling to date girls with a low social standing. She also found that overall, mothers seemed to have an important influence on the visual presentation of their blind daughters. They taught them how to apply make-up and bought their clothes for them. Unfortunately, at times, they, as well, were unable to keep up with teenage fashion and one woman stated that her classmates would tell her that "nobody wore shoes like the ones she had on" (Kent, 1983, p. 249). More recently, it has been documented that parents still continue to play a large role in choosing clothing for their blind daughters, whereas magazine pictures play the largest role for sighted girls' selection of clothing (Kauffman, 2000).

Another visual presentation issue which may at times interfere with communication and a common understanding between blind people and sighted people is body language. McAlpine and Moore (1995) defined social understanding as the abilty to understand, interpret and take action relevant to various social settings and personal situations. They argued that visual information about the environment directly contributed to social understanding. For example, facial expressions and body language were crucial to the understanding of emotions in other people. There have been some studies which indicated that blind people have difficulty understanding another's perspective because they do not visually share or monitor the attention of another person and subsequently have difficulty correctly identifying the mental states of others (Pring, Dewart, & Brockbank, 1998).

Huebner (1986) also noted that sighted people may have difficulty reading the body language of blind people. Their body may be static or eye contact may not be made. One study noted that three blind kindergarten children did not hold up their heads, shake their heads yes or no, or turn their faces to the person with whom they were talking (Read, 1989) and another found that blind children used fewer gestures than sighted children when in conversation (Frame, 2000). Others have documented that blind children may display body movements which are not socially acceptable or easily understood and may include rocking, spinning, or eye gouging (Estevis & Koenig, 1994; Ross & Koenig, 1991). Huebner (1986) suggested that blind people may also not know about appropriate touching behaviors or distances for personal space. For example, blind adolescent boys had smaller personal space distances when intially meeting a female researcher than sighted boys (Eaton, Fuchs, & Snook-Hill, 1998).

Huebner (1986) stated that professionals need to teach blind people appropriate body language skills so that they would have improved social interactions through role play, dance, drama, and direct manipulation of the body with accompanying explanations. The research literature in the area indicates that some intrusive as well as some less intrusive approaches to this task have been attempted. Transon (1988) asked a ten year blind boy to wear a head band which provided him with auditory information by beeping when he rocked his body. The boy reduced his rocking when he wore the band, but still rocked when he was not wearing the band. Another study attempted to 'control' head rocking in a more socially acceptable manner (Ross & Koenig, 1991). It asked an eleven year old blind boy to change his common body positions when he began to rock his head. For example, put his head on his chin while resting his elbow on a table. They considered this intervention successful because the rocking reduced and the boy was also able to employ this intervention strategy on his own (Ross & Koenig, 1991). Raver (1984) used a 'look at me' game and praise to encourage a blind three year old child to keep her head up and turn it towards the person speaking. She also would gently manipulate the child's head into the correct position when necessary. While this literature empahsised changing the behaviour of the blind person, there appeared to be a dearth of literature on teaching sighted people to accept the body language of blind people. Bullington and Karlsson (1997) have pointed out that blind people, themselves, could feel humiliated about having their body be the object of such control, gazing and instruction.

Professionalism and Exclusion

Oliver (1989) pointed out that within special schools the non-disabled 'helping' professional emerged and actually controlled the life experiences of disabled children in special schools. Tomlinson (1982) contended that special education was a direct product of professional interests, power struggles and the need of industrial society to train and control a stable docile workforce. This is exemplified in a quote which she cited from the 1889 Egerton Commission in Britain which stated:

> the blind, deaf, and dumb, and the educable class of imbecile . . . if left uneducated become not only a burden to themselves but a weighty burden to the state. It is in the interests of the state to educate them, so as to dry up, as far as possible, the minor streams which must ultimately swell to a great torrent of pauperism. (as cited in Tomlinson, 1982, p. 37)

In the early 1900s, she noted that the medical profession had a tight hold on the special school through the eugenics movement whose aim was to better the British race through segregation or sterilisation of 'defectives'. From 1944 to 1977 it became important to carefully test and categorise students who were distruptive in the regular education system and thus the psychology profession became dominant in special education (Tomlinson, 1982). This psychology profession also emphasized that disability was a private trouble (Tomlinson,1982). Finally, the special education profession developed. This profession was interested in maintaining the smooth functioning of normal schools through the special education safety valve, the identification of children with 'special needs', and the special education profession itself (Tomlinson, 1982).

Fulcher (1989) also found that professionalism and democratism in education have opposing discourses because professionalism, although presented as technical competence, maintains control as its objective through language which is embedded in the 'individualistic gaze' of students with disabilities such as in the notion of the 'IEP' (Individual Education Plan). These linguistic constructs are not consistent with the central issues of inclusion. Subsequently, Fulcher asked for professionalism to be decoded by training regular teachers to be 'technically competent' as well as to be aware of the nature of politics and discourse through a syllabus about power and how it is exercised. She also called for the creation of a discourse based on an understanding that educational policy is made at multiple levels and on a pedagogy of inclusive teaching practice as opposed to loss and difference.

It has also been pointed out though that the identification of special needs has been rarely about children's educational needs but about removing children who challenge the smooth functioning of regular schools and finding additional resources (Galloway, Armstrong, & Tomlinson, 1994; Slee, 1994). However, the social consequences of special education include marginalisation and the denial of the usual educational experience (Galloway, Armstrong, & Tomlinson, 1994). Special education is thus said to be the institutional practice which emerged to contain education's failure to realise its democratic ideals (Skrtic, 1991). These ideals, according to Forest and Lausthas (1989), are based on four assumptions. These are, firstly, that every child has a right to belong. Secondly, every child has a right to grow and develop. Also, schools need to strive to be communities which value diversity and, finally, people need to dream and express their hopes for the future. Ballard (1994) has stated that "the call for the right to inclusion in schools and communities should not be misunderstood as a move to hide disability or to pretend that everyone is the same. Inclusion is not a policy of assimilation but of valuing diversity" (Ballard, 1994, p. 19).

Stainback, Stainback, and Bunch (1989) have proposed that there should be no 'special' system within the educational system and that inclusion can only occur in one system where all teachers are regular teachers and where all students are unique students. Lipsky and Gartner (1989) have also asked for the merger of the regular and special education system so that differences can become ordinary and effective education can occur for all students. They have also suggested that while segregation remains a possibility, that the education system will not change, rather it will continue to perpetuate injustice and will fail to provide appropriate resources to regular schools (Lipsky & Gartner, 1996). However, it has been pointed out that a radical transformation of the present education system is needed in order to advance inclusion and the suggested merger may only retain some of the 'special' ideas and labels which are inherent in 'special' education (Ballard, 1998). Recently a report by Wylie (2000) recommended the disestablishment of the Special Education Services organisation in New Zealand, which is a Crown Entity and is separate from the Ministry of Education, so that all educational services could be managed by the Ministry of Education. Bines (1988) outlines some of the advantages of moving towards one educational system. It is less stigmatising to pupils, more effective and able to focus on the drawbacks of the regular curriculum and methods of teaching, and an acknowledgement of the social dimensions of disability.

Exclusion through Placement Choice

In New Zealand, the 1989 Ammemdments to the Education Act gave the right for to all children to attend a state school. The Ministry of Education *Special Education Policy Guidelines (1995)* indicated that educational placement decisions were to be made in partnership with parents and students and that children with "special education needs have the same legal right to enrol and attend school on the same basis as other learners" (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1995, p. 1). However, it also stated that children in special education may need to be taught in different learning environments and that special schools and units would be retained if children were enrolled in them. New Zealand has tentatively adopted an education placement principle based not on inclusion and not even education in the 'least restrictive environment' as in America but on placement choice. This principle of choice also seems to be supported by parent groups, voluntary organisations, and professional organisations.

The Interagency Group (1991) which was made up of representatives from the New Zealand Society for the Intellectually Handicapped, CCS, the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind, and Specialist Education Services when reporting back from an international study tour asked for a "commitment from all to inclusive education" (Interagency Group, 1991, p. 18), but also stated that children with sensory impairments require a "central resource centre", "high quality expertise" and possibly a "concentration of learners with similar needs . . . within regular educational settings" (Interagency Group, 1991, p. 14). An unqualified retainment of special schools and units was the desired outcome by the Parents of the Visually Handicapped who "support a system that recognises a choice of all options and facilities" (Parents of the Visually Handicapped, 1993, p. 1).

Choice is an ideology which has dominated New Zealand's entire educational system and politics since 1984 when the Labour government began to implement neo-liberal social theory (Fitzsimons, Peters, & Roberts, 1999; Lauder, 1990; Olssen, 1997; Snook, 1997). The new right and neo-liberalism had begun to emerge in 1979 with the National government blaming its economic difficulties on the post war reliance on the state. Lauder (1990) explained that neo-liberal theory is based on the belief that individuals own themselves and owe nothing to society. Individuals are only concerned about themselves and the acquisition of power, wealth, and status. Capitalism is consistent with this pursuit but the state stifles capitalism by drawing off money from the private sector, creating institutional monopolies such as education, and by encouraging dependency through government benefits. Reducing the state's influence through the privatisation of Government monopolies, reducing taxes, and cutting benefits are the solutions to economic difficulties within neo liberalism theory. Lauder also pointed out that neo-liberalism sees education as a private good, a commodity to be sold, and in need of competition so that the system can produce marketable labour.

Subsequently, New Zealand over the last fifteen years has made significant changes to its education system. It has given parents more choice through the abolition of school zoning (Lauder, Hughes, & Watson, 1999) and encouraged competition through funding formulas based on the number of students attending the school so that schools must attract students to remain afloat (Thrupp, 1997; Wylie, 1999). The language within the system has altered so that instead of talking about how society benefits from the social education of its citizens, it talks about inputs and outputs (Grace, 1990). It has devolved the management of schools from the state to the individual school's Boards of Trustees in an attempt to make schools self managing (McKenzie, 1999). The critics of these reforms have pointed out that such policies do not benefit minority groups (Ballard, 1998; Lauder, 1990; Lauder, Hughes, & Watson, 1999; Olssen, 1997; Thrupp, 1997).

Ballard has suggested, for example, that disabled children could be seen as unattractive to schools because they may lower the test scores of their school which needs to compete for students in a market where achievement outcomes are emphasized (Ballard, 1999a; Ballard, 1999b) . Similarly, in Britain, Bagley and Woods (1998) found that market theories and school choice caused some schools in their study to target academically able students for entrance because they were viewed as likely to improve their schools image and reputation. Disabled children in their study were thus devalued and marginalised. Some scholars have also argued that disabled children do not have a choice because some schools simply do not want them (Booth, 1994; Slee, 1999; Sullivan & Munford, 1998). Competition between schools has led to social stratification and social inequality (Lauder, Hughes, & Watson, 1999; Thrupp, 1997). The reforms have not been concerned with the common good, have been undemocratic and have not included the views of Maori people, teachers and parents but have been dominated by the Business Roundtable (Codd, 1993; Johnston, 1999; Olssen, 1997; Snook, 1997; Thrupp, 1997).

Codd (1993) believed that the emphasis on managerialism has produced a school culture in New Zealand which is competitive, hierarchical, individualistic, and wasteful of human initiative. He argued that a culture of mistrust has formed within New Zealand schools which is not conducive to innovation (Codd, 1999). Such a school culture does not subscribe to Skrtic's (1991) prescription for a successful inclusive school which values innovation and sees student diversity as the force behind this innovation. Classroom teachers are constrained because they are thought to be self interested bureaucrats who need to be constantly surveyed and monitored through performance appraisal systems (Codd, 1999). Trust is based on interpersonal interactions which are fair, honest, friendly and show respect (Codd, 1999). Codd (1999) cited economic studies which demonstrated that trust breeds trust and improved productivity. Also, mistrust breeds mistrust and reduced economic performance. Subsequently, teachers are advocating for policy changes which will allow them professional freedom (Sullivan, 1999) but are also beginning to leave the profession (Sullivan, 1997). Similarly, students are leaving schools in that home schooling has increased each year from 1989 to 1996 by twenty percent because parents are unhappy with changes within the educational system and felt that they could give their child a better education at home (Kerslake, Murrow, & Lange, 1998).

One of the most articulate advocates of inclusion in New Zealand, Keith Ballard, has linked inclusion with ideology and politics (Ballard, 1992; Ballard, 1994; Ballard, 1995; Ballard, 1996; Ballard, 1998; Ballard, 1998a; Ballard, 1999; Ballard, 1999a; Ballard & McDonald, 1995; Purdue, Ballard, & MacArthur, 1998). He has noted that disabilities are the creation of specific historical contexts which can be changed (Ballard, 1992). However, up to this point in time disabled children in New Zealand have been discriminated against and excluded from their rightful place in schools alongside their peers, family, and community (Ballard, 1998; Ballard, 1999a). Teachers, schools, and communities who do include disabled children hold values which are rooted in justice and fairness, not individualism (Ballard, 1999a; Ballard & McDonald, 1995). Ballard defined an inclusive system as one in which disabled children "retain the right to be included as they wish, and to have the resources necessary to meet their needs" (Ballard, 1999a, p. 12). However, the new right ideology has created an unnatural commercial and competitive context in which inclusion has become difficult to implement (Ballard, 1999; Ballard, 1999a).

Also, exclusion has been encouraged because appropriate educational resources have not been available within regular schools which reflects the notion that education is a privilege for disabled children (Ballard, 1996; Ballard, 1998; Slee, 1993; Sullivan & Munford, 1998). Rizvi and Lingard (1996) pointed out that social justice theories have been traditionally based on the notion of redistribution of resources to disadvantaged groups. However, this notion has not been strong enough to dispute the new right concept of social justice which is rooted in individualism and the free market and which also supports the idea that cheap services are best (Rizvi & Lingard, 1996). There has thus been a call for a more post-socialist and more complex construction of social justice which also recognises the need for school change, multiple differences, power inequities, and cultural oppression (Christensen, 1996; Christensen & Rizvi, 1996; Fraser, 1997; Rizvi & Lingard, 1996).

Ballard (1998) has also pointed out that there are schools in New Zealand which include disabled children (Ballard & McDonald, 1995; Ballard, 1998; Ballard, 1999a). One such school was studied and it was found that the school's Board of Trustees, principal, teachers and parents had similar metatheories which emphasised that inclusion "was just part of being in teaching"; that the school was a "school for all children" (Ballard & MacDonald, 1995, p. 5); and that the school was a part of a working class community which "wanted things to be fair for everyone" (Ballard & MacDonald, 1995). Inclusion is consistent with human rights legislation (Ballard, 1996) and the recent *Beijing Declaration on the Rights of People with Disabilities in the New Century* by Disabled People's International, Inclusion International, Rehabilitation International, the World Blind Union, and the World Federation of the Deaf (2000). This declaration stated that "the continued exclusion of people with disabilities . . . is a violation of fundamental rights and an indictment of humankind at the inception of the new century" (Disabled People's International, Inclusion International, Rehabilitation International, the World Blind Union, and the World Federation of the Deaf, 2000).

It is interesting to note that critics of full inclusion have associated it with the jargon of new right ideology in that they state that one educational system and a reduction in 'special' education support would fit in nicely with government cost cutting regimes (Kauffman, 1995). However, inclusion has never been about dumping children into classrooms without support (Ballard, 1998a; Brantlinger, 1997; Slee, 1999; Stainback & Stainback, 1996). Inclusive education has been defined by many scholars as extending beyond simply placing a child with a disability in a regular class. Children must also be able to participate in a meaningful education (Howe, 1996). An inclusive school has been identified as

> a place where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports, and is supported by his or her peers and other members of the school community in the course of having his or her educational needs met." (Stainback & Stainback, 1996, p. xi.)

Some researchers have stated that inclusion in the regular classroom involves "equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services" (Lipsky & Gartner, 1994, p. 17). Others have stated that inclusion is essentially a human value which is based on the belief that inclusion is a right (Clark, Dyson, & Millward, 1995; Thomas, 1997). Some argued that inclusion is simply about inclusive and welcoming relationships (Liberty, 1998). Researchers have noted that inclusion is about participation, valuing difference, and recognising that exclusion is disempowering and constitutes people with disabilities as 'other' and not ordinary (Ballard, 1994; Wedell, 1995).

Forest and Pearpoint (1991) argued that choosing exclusion means isolation, stigma, rejection, loneliness, competition, and oppression. They call for a complete move to inclusion as is being done in the state of Colorado because the "criterion for inclusion is breathing" (p. 3) and not impairment, budgets, or resources. They believe that all children should be part of one education system and describe professional control and fear of change as the dragons of inclusion. They ask that disabled children, and all children, be seen as 'gifted' in that they have a treasure to offer and they all belong. Trent, Artiles, and Englert (1998) noted that social constructivism and Vygotsky recognise that disabled children bring strengths to the classroom and in the past special education has relied too heavily on emphasising the deficits of blind children and not the social learning which occurs within the classroom context. Vygotsky (1993/1924) also strongly argued that blind children needed to be educated at regular schools:

> The special school . . . isolates the blind child and puts him in a narrow, closed off, small world, where everything is calculated for and adapted to the defect (blindness), where everything reminds him of it. This artificial milieu has nothing in common with that normal world where the blind adult will ultimately have to live. In the special school, a close, hospital like atmosphere and regime are soon created. . . . This environment nurtures the defect and fixes the child's attention on his blindness.. . . . Blindness is not overcome in such a school but is intensified. . . . ..the special school reinforces the "psychology of separatism" which, even without the special school, is already strongly felt by a blind person. . . . We have to think not about isolating the blind person from life as soon as possible, but about introducing him into life as early and as extensively as possible. A blind person will have to live a normal life in the seeing world: he must, therefore, learn in a general school. (p. 85-86)

Chapter Four

Inclusive Education and Blind Children

Inclusion when it is successful is certainly worth celebrating (Ballard, 1994). For example, Janet Dixon (1994) whose son had a disability described how inclusion has turned her family's life into an enjoyable and ordinary one:

> Now Jeff walks to school alone. It can take from five to twenty minutes for him to get there, but he does it by himself, crossing one small road and then a main road with the school patrol. Five years ago I would strap him into a taxi with other children with disabilities. The door was firmly shut and Jeff was whisked out of our suburb to a locked special school. . . . That was five years ago. Yesterday afternoon after school Jeff caught the bus home with his friend and went to play at her house. We are now an ordinary family with four children and we all enjoy doing ordinary, usual things. (p. 71)

Ruebain (1996) defined inclusion as an "all for one and a one for all philosophy" which necessitates the rebuilding of schools and communities (p. 2). It has also been noted that there are a number of articles and books about co-teaching, collaboration, co-operative learning, curriculum adaptation, and natural support systems to encourage success (Brantlinger, 1997; Slee, 1992). Biklen (1985) outlines three broad strategies for achieving inclusion: 1. creating the commitment to inclusion; 2. creating the opportunity and capacity for inclusion, and 3. nurturing the themes of inclusion. These broad strategies are evident in Ballard and McDonald's (1995) case study of a successfully inclusive school which looked at each social actor's metatheories. This school's roll was described as from a lower socio-economic and multicultural community. The school's Board of Trustees saw their school as a welcoming place, another home, and a place where problems could be solved and shared.

The teachers in Ballard and McDonald's (1995) study stated that they worked long hours; thought inclusion was just part of teaching; believed disabled children were the same as any other child; and that inclusion was a human right and fair. The parents of the classmates of disabled children in another study stated that inclusion also had a positive effect on their own child's development and did not interfere with quality of education which their child received (Giangreco, Edelman, Cloninger, & Dennis, 1993). Purdue, Ballard and MacArthur's (1998) study about inclusion and exclusion in Early Childhood Settings noted that inclusive and accepting teachers thought that disabled children were ordinary and belonged at the school. However, all teachers do not necessarily have this same inclusive view. A 1984 New Zealand national survey of primary school teachers found that the attitudes of teachers towards disabled children varied according to the identified disability (Norman, Sritheran, & Ridding, 1984). While they may support the principle of integration, they did not feel able to teach children with sensory or physical disabilities, unless additional resources, support and training were available (Norman, Sritheran, & Ridding, 1984).

Similarly, Searl, Ferguson, and Biklen (1985) argued that without school support teachers may burn out as they feel isolated and work abnormally long hours. The American Federation of Teachers, for example, fear that teachers will not be given the support and resources which are necessary to meet the needs of all their students (Lipsky & Gartner, 1994). In the Netherlands, Pijl, Pijl, and van den Bos (1999) found that regular teachers mostly referred their students to special schools because it was thought that these schools had "more to offer" (p. 25); had a smaller teacher to student ratio, more services and special teachers; and the regular school could not be adapted to meet the very different learning needs of the student. The teachers did not consider the harmful affects of segregation and also when pressed were not able to say how the special school could be of more benefit to the student than the regular school (Pijl, Pijl, & van den Bos, 1999).

Additional teacher stress has been associated with inclusion and it is interesting to note that male principals do not experience the same degree of stress as their teachers who are charged with implementing inclusive policies (Bailey, 1995; Forlin, Hattie, & Douglas, 1996). Teachers are at the forefront of inclusive practice and if they are not supported will view inclusion only as a burden (Bailey, 1995;

Vlachou & Barton, 1994). Teachers in special education also have high levels of stress because of role ambiguity, low social supports, unsupportive supervisors, and lack of control over educational curriculum and service delivery (Bailey, 1995). All teachers are also today teaching in a climate of mistrust with intense bureaucratic and administrative requirements and media chastisements (Codd, 1999; Vlachou & Barton, 1994). According to Vlachou and Barton (1994), this climate has had a detrimental effect on teacher's inclusive work because their work must be prioritised and directed towards pupil achievement which tends to enforce the view that 'regular' children become their first priority.

If inclusion is to occur where all children belong in their communities, then changes need to take place in the classroom (Ware, 1995). Social constructivism emphasises that children learn about their place in society and their abilities through their social life and their direct encounters with adults and other children (Resnick & Nelson-Le Gall, 1997; Rogoff, Mosier, Mistry, & Goncu, 1993; Trent, Artiles, & Englert, 1998). Also, Ware (1995) pointed out that successful inclusion cannot come from a policy directive but needs to be initiated by adults and teachers who lead the social life within the classroom. She cited an example of an inclusive team teaching programme which was started by a special education teacher who stated:

> We were just told by central administration that we were going to do inclusion the following year . Just like that - no guidance, no training, no vote - just do it. . . . So, during the summer two of us got together and decided if we started small, we could make inclusion what we wanted it to be. In the fall, we paired up in regular education/special education teams, self-selected by established friendships and pretty soon we had nearly all the basic courses - math, science, English, history - covered by team-teaching. . . . Now our kids can take all their required classes in a regular placement with a range of instructional support provided in the classroom. (Ware, 1995, p. 132)

When given the opportunity to be professionally challenged and take part in inclusive education reform teachers can respond positively (Bailey, 1995; Forlin, Hattie, & Douglas, 1996). Ainscow (1995) studied an Indian school which focused on "finding ways of teaching that respond positively to school diversity" (p. 63). This school initiated workshops which their teachers were encouraged to attend. They responded with enthusiasm and were particularly helped by the team work, planning, and co-teaching practice which developed through reflection and strong leadership in their school.

Inclusive Teaching Practice

Teachers are given the responsibility of developing the social and academic skills of their students (Bunch, 1991). Searl, Ferguson, and Biklen in 1985 argued that teachers do not need to be a 'super teacher' but need to be creative in finding ways for a disabled student to be meaningfully involved in the life of the school. This means using strategies such as multi-level instruction and a carefully determined curriculum which balances student needs across academic, social, communication and life skill areas (Collicott, 1991; Falvey, Coots, Bishop, & Grenot-Scheyer, 1996; Searl, Ferguson, & Biklen, 1985; Thorburn, 1997). Successful teaching has been associated with such factors as creativity, preparedness, sequential learning activities, a caring community, student praise, small schools and classes, direct instruction time, mixed ability groups, and role modelling (Searl, Ferguson, & Biklen, 1985; Murray, 1991). Teacher modelling has also been described as an obvious way to promote social interaction between all students within the classroom (Searl, Ferguson, & Biklen, 1985; Murray, 1991; Thorburn, 1997; Ware, 1995). Jan Thorburn (1997) suggested that teachers be "warm but firm" (p. 96), encourage supportive behaviour from other students but discourage over-protectiveness or mothering, and highlight the disabled student's strengths.

Within the classroom Au (1990) and Harris and Graham (1994) suggest that the teacher's beliefs and attitudes will guide their actions, and teacher modelling fits with Vygotsky's notions about social learning. He stated that knowledge and behaviour can only be "understood in terms of the norms of the society of which that actor is a member" (Konold, 1995, p. 176) such as the classroom which is part of society's dense fund of knowledge of society (Moll & Greenberg, 1990). Formal schooling has been said to have three functions in that it teaches literacy, a greater understanding of an individual's historical circumstances which leads to more effective problem solving, and the culture's theory through language about the nature of the world (Cole, 1990; Cornbleth, 1990).

Becker and Varelas (1995) argued that Vygotsky's ideas about the zone of proximal development need to underpin ideas about teaching practice. Such teaching practice assists the student's construction of cultural knowledge. It does this through social interaction. It also bridges the gap between learning only in a 'top-down' manner or from the teacher to student and learning only in a bottom-up manner in which the students construct knowledge themselves (Becker & Varelas, 1995; Ware, 1995). The student has their own knowledge which they bring to the classroom which is then transformed through social interaction with the teacher and peers (Becker & Varelas, 1995; Schaffer,1996). Subsequently, such innovative practice ideas such as team work, professional role release, co-teaching and co-operative learning are helpful to the class (Rainforth, 1998; Schaffer, 1996). It has been noted that when a child works together with a peer that they can solve problems at a higher level (Schaffer, 1996). Peer interaction promotes cognitive change when the partner is supportive but at the same time is able to present to their peer some cognitive conflict or challenge (Schaffer, 1996). They thus scaffold their peer's learning in the zone or proximal development (Schaffer, 1996). When the child's partner is not able to present a learning challenge or conflict of views then studies have shown that peer interaction may be ineffective for learning and an adult may be needed to help this learning and interaction (Schafer, 1996).

However, classrooms as communities which learn together have been associated with social constructivism and inclusive practices (Mallory & New, 1994). Natural supports and peer collaboration to support the learning of disabled children in regular schools has been advocated by a number of researchers (Jorgensen, 1992; MacArthur & Morton, 1999; Mallory & New, 1994; Searl, Ferguson, & Biklen, 1985; Udvari-Solner & Thousand, 1995; Villa & Thousand, 1996; Ware, 1995). Jorgenson (1992) noted that teachers need to structure the classroom day so that every student is actively learning and outlines a number of strategies which enable the teacher to use peers in teaching. These strategies include co-operative learning and using peers as tutors (Villa & Thousand, 1996). Jorgenson (1992) suggested that one of the ways which schools can ensure that children feel that they belong is by checking a list of membership indicators. Some of the items on this list include that the student get to school the same way as other children and with other children; use the same facilities; is assigned to a classroom like other children; have the similar storage space in a typical location; is present at school events; is valued; learns alongside their peers for regular curricular subjects and is in regular PE and other such classes; can access physical environment; has appropriate equipment; and is a part of the school's extra-curricular activities.

The standard curriculum can be adapted to fit the specific learning needs of the learner with a disability (Baumgart, Brown, Pupian, Nisbet, Ford, Sweet, Sina, & Schroeder, 1982; Stainback, Stainback, Stefanich, & Alper, 1996). Curriculum adaptation has been variously described as adapting skill sequences and rules, using personal assistance, enhancing social or attitude change, and making materials that help the student to participate or complete activities (Baumgart, Brown, Pupian, Nisbet, Ford, Sweet, Sina, & Schroeder, 1982; Stainback, Stainback, Stefanich, & Alper, 1996; Thorburn, 1997; Wang, 1989). The New Zealand Ministry of Education (1998) has suggested that teacher aides can assist the teacher and perform such activities as preparing materials. However, they have also noted that the teacher aide is not trained to develop teaching strategies or learning objectives for students.

Inclusion means that some teachers may need to change the way they teach; use such classroom practices as co-operative learning or co-teaching practices where another teacher may bring "a particular expertise to the learning" (Falvey, Coots, Bishop, & Grenot-Scheyer, 1989, p. 155); and support each other through the use of problem solving meetings. Previously named 'special' teachers may need to learn how to teach alongside the regular teacher in the classroom as part of a team approach (Falvey, Coots, Bishop, & Grenot-Scheyer, 1989; Porter, Wilson, Kelly, & den Otter, 1991; Stone & Campbell, 1991; Ware,1995). This change of role implies no longer working exclusively with disabled students, but working with all students, and may include managing resources; working with teachers; providing in-service training; and developing whole school policies (Dyson & Milward, 1996).

Inclusive and Supportive Principals

A source of support to the teacher is the principal. The principal's attitude and leadership style is crucial to the school's success and value orientation (Fulcher, 1989; Ballard & McDonald, 1995; Bogden & Biklen, 1985). Bogden and Biklen (1985) argued that principals in the past have left special education to the professionals. However, when a principal believes that students belong to the school then successful mainstreaming can occur. They found that principals need to feel that mainstreaming can be used to accomplish their goals for the school because it may bring along with it extra resources. In New Zealand, principals have a difficult task. With the emergence of the government's New Right reductionist economic policies, Codd (1993) argued that because there is a "conflict between instrumental values of economic management and intrinsic values of educational democracy" (Codd, 1993, p. 153) principals need to give up their commitment to social justice in order to effectively manage their schools in these times.

However, Strachan (1998) noted that there were alternative forms of leadership which were possible within the New Zealand neo-liberal context. She studied one principal whose feminist and social justice agendas motivated her to support students who were at risk and to value multiculturalism. This principal was able to meet her goals because the entire school community also had such commitments. Zollers and Yu (1998) also described a principal with a severe vision impairment in America who was able to create a fully inclusive school by "bringing all members of the school community into his world of disability" (p. 743), being social and approachable, working long hours, and bringing disability into the open. They stated that he intentionally blurred the lines between the sighted and the blind world. He asked for support from all the people in his school and in a sense the school community thus became responsible for his success and failure although he was regarded as capable and a superior leader.

Thorburn (1994) noted that New Zealand principals who used a disability discourse which emphasised that disability was about social oppression rather than personal deficit, and who said that schools and professionals needed to change, were more aware that an inclusive culture need to be created with their leadership. From their research, Bogdan and Biklen (1985) said that when a principal believes that students with disabilities belong to the school, then the stage is set for successful mainstreaming to occur. Vandercook and York (1989) also noted that it is important for the principal "to model an accepting and welcoming attitude toward all children in the school" (p. 25) so that each person in the school community can be valued for their uniqueness. There also exists in the research literature many practical suggestions for the principal which support an inclusive school culture (Bogden & Biklen, 1985; Sage, 1996). For example, back in 1985 Bogden and Biklen advised principals to place children with disabilities in close proximity to children without disabilities and not in a separate location away from the main activities of the school. They recommend that the language in the school not differentiate students, e.g. 'Mrs. Smith's class' versus the visual resource unit, and that special education teachers should be integrated into the school through regular schedules, invitations to faculty social events and meetings, and have some responsibilities for students without disabilities as well. More recent literature suggests, however, that there are no simple tricks or gimmicks which can create an inclusive school because inclusion calls for major system changes and school reform (Ballard, 1999a; Sage, 1996).

Blind Children at Regular Schools in New Zealand

In America, the first group of children with a disability to move from segregated settings to integrated settings were children with vision impairments in 1900 (Koestler 1976, Spungin 1991). In New Zealand, sight saving classes were opened at Waltham School in Christchurch and Te Aro School in Wellington for children with partial sight in 1949, thirty two years after the first special class for backward children was established at Auckland Normal School (Havill, 1972, Mitchell & Mitchell, 1985). These sight saving classes were followed by similar classes in Dunedin at Forbury School and in Auckland at the Newmarket school. The children in the Christchurch class were the first children to be mainstreamed as a matter of policy into the regular school in 1962 (Mitchell & Mitchell, 1985). Although the exact date in the early 1960s is not documented, Catran and Hansen (1992) also point out that children with severe vision impairments were mainstreamed into secondary schools before 1964. The boys at the Foundation for the Blind attended Auckland Grammar School, and the girls attended Epsom Grammar School. At night between 6pm and 9pm, they were assisted with their study at the Foundation. These children were selected for mainstreaming if they were able to excel academically after they had learned such skills as Braille.

In 1962, a blind child was integrated into an Intermediate school. This child was assessed as having above average academic potential as she came third in her class (Catran & Hansen, 1992). Nevertheless, her potential may not have been fully reached as she had to take time to write her work first in braille and then type it for her sighted teacher (Catran & Hansen, 1992). In 1964, the Waltham facility transferred to Elmwood School and became the first resource centre for children with vision impairments (Mitchell & Mitchell, 1985). Havill (1972) noted that by 1971 about half of New Zealand's students with a vision impairment were attending regular schools with support from visual resource teachers or itinerant vision teachers. He stated that these placements provided the "opportunity for social development that cannot be equalled in special classes or schools" (p. 89) and that studies had found that social maturity and independence improved with such placements (McGuinness, 1970 (as cited in Havill, 1972)). However, Havill was pessimistic about the future of mainstreaming for children with vision impairments in New Zealand because of the low incidence of such students and New Zealand's rural nature which made it difficult to provide adequate specialist teaching services from the existing five resource centres. There are presently visual resource centres in Auckland with attached units in Nelson and Glenfield, and in Hamilton, Tauranga, Wellington, and Christchurch. There are sensory resource centres in New Plymouth, Palmerston North, Gisborne, and Napier. The visual resource centre in Dunedin, however, was informed by the Ministry of Education in 1996 that it never really was established as a resource unit at Forbury School, but there remains an itinerant vision teacher in Dunedin who is housed at Specialist Education Services. There is an itinerant vision teacher also attached to Waihopai school in Invercargill. (Mitchell & Mitchell 1985; Parents of Vision Impaired (NZ) Inc., 1996; Ross, 1972).

During the writing of this study, the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind founded the Vision Education Agency (VEA) trust. This trust, the VEA, is funded by the Ministry of Education to develop a national education service model for all children with a vision impairment so that a more cohesive national service can be delivered (Nagel, 2000). The VEA has put forward a model which firstly suggests that the Ministry of Education appoint a National Board of Trustees for Vision Education who will oversee the education of children with vision impairments. It is further recommended that four regional centres be established by combining the present Visual Resource Centres; that a National Assessment Service be established; and that the National School for the Blind be retained. It also proposed that the VEA, itself, continue to work in a policy advisory, standards setting, training, and research role. The Royal Foundation for the Blind (RNZFB) is included as a part of the proposed model because it currently provides services to children with vision impairments through government contracts which include transcription services, orientation and mobility services, and techniques of daily living services.

In America, Spungin (1991) stated that "educators of blind children invented mainstreaming and developed many of its programming concepts such as resource rooms, self-contained classrooms, and the use of itinerant teachers" (Spungin, 1991, p. vii). The first school for blind children was established in 1832 . However, in 1836 Johann Klein in Vienna advocated for blind children to stay at home and be educated at their local school where they would find friends for life (Lowenfeld, 1981). By 1900 there were special classes in regular schools for blind children in Chicago (Koestler, 1976). These children also were integrated into regular classes as part of their school programme whenever possible (Koestler, 1976). As early as 1889, blind children in Great Britain were attending regular schools in Bradford, Cardiff, Sunderland and Glasgow (Jamieson, Partlett, & Pocklington, 1977). It is also interesting to note that Samual Howe, the first director of one of the first schools for the blind in America stated that

> All great establishments in the nature of boarding schools . . . where there must be routine, and formality, and restraint, and repression of individuality; where the charms and refining influences of the true family relation cannot be had - all such institutions are unnatural, undesirable, and very liable to abuse. We should have as few of them as is possible, and those few should be kept as small as possible (Howe, 1866 (as cited in Lowenfeld, 1981, p. 11)).

In 1946, the state of Oregon developed an educational plan based on three principles. The first stated that children who could be educated at regular schools and should not be segregated in special classes or institutionalised in special schools. The second principle said that the special school for the blind's aim is the rehabilitation of children with vision impairments for regular school attendance and that the school should not be interested in "keeping children any longer than necessary" (Lowenfeld, 1981, p. 13). The last principle was that each student has a right to an individualised programme that helps to restore, safeguard, and conserve their sight. Thus, blind children in Oregon were expected to attend regular schools and the special school worked in co-operation with the public school districts to achieve its aims.

In 1953, a national educational conference in the United States, the Pine Brook Conference, developed a plan for patterns of public school education of children with vision impairments (Koestler, 1976). These patterns were: 1. the co-operative plan in which special classes, called either Braille or Sight Saving classes, in regular schools were established; 2. the integrated plan in which children with severe vision impairments were enrolled in a regular school with a resource room but were taught by regular teachers with the assistance and support of the resource room teacher; 3. the itinerant teacher plan in which children were enrolled in their own local school and a specialist itinerant teacher visited and advised the regular teacher and supported the child through instruction. In 1957 Lowenfeld pointed out that because residential schools for blind children taught the same curriculum as public schools with adapted teaching methods and because there was increasing recognition of the vital role which the family played in education, attendance at special schools should be restricted (Lowenfeld, 1981). By 1962, fifty seven percent of children with severe vision impairments attended public schools in America (Koestler, 1976) and by 1989 this figure had increased to eighty two percent (Erwin, 1991).

Despite this long history of mainstreaming, there are only a few studies and papers about the mainstream and inclusive experiences of blind children who have attended regular schools and the inclusive strategies which their teachers used (Erwin, 1991). In Great Britain, Jamieson, Partlett and Pocklington (1977) delved into the issues which were barriers to the integration or children with partial sight. In their study, they found that teachers were hesitant to accept children with vision impairments into their regular classrooms because they had no experience teaching children with vision impairments and did not know what to expect of the child. They also were uncertain as to how they could adjust their usually visual teaching practices to accommodate a student with a vision impairment. The parents in their study were crucial to the success of their child's educational experience in that they needed to actively support the integration of their children at regular schools and they all had demonstrated that they had "fought hard to keep their child out of special schooling" (Jamieson, Partlett & Pocklington, 1977, p. 194). The personal characteristics of the children in their study which contributed to success were intelligence, independence, confidence, sociability, and acceptance of visual loss.

Bishop (1986) outlined the factors which were considered to be related to successful mainstreaming of blind children through a survey of one thousand classroom teachers, vision teachers, principals, families, and blind students. Some of the most frequently mentioned factors included a flexible and accepting classroom teacher; peer interaction and acceptance; the blind student's social skills, academic achievement, self image, independence, ability to compete, and motivation; an accepting family; available support personnel, and adequate supplies and equipment. Interestingly, she also found that half of the components which were identified were directly related to the individual pupil in that they revolved around intrinsic factors like emotional stability. Similarly, Orlansky (1977) in his guide to mainstreaming children with a vision impairment firstly focused on the child. The student needed to move easily; be able to be oriented to new places and people without difficulty; be able to communicate their toileting needs; be flexible and adaptable; express themselves clearly; and feel comfortable about going to school before they were able to attend a regular class. He then discussed attitudinal and practice barriers to mainstreaming which emphasise difference.

Bishop (1986) also identified a number of components for successful mainstreaming which were related to disability specific skills such as ability to care for personal needs and travel skills. Bishop stated that this implied that specialist teachers carried a heavy responsibility. Her respondents rejected the statement, "the regular classroom teacher can effect successful mainstreaming without the support of the special teacher" (Bishop, 1986, p. 940). Similarly, Erwin (1991) cited an unpublished qualitative study by Kekelis and Sacks (1988) which indicated that the partnership between the classroom teacher and the specialist teacher is integral for successful inclusion. The successful instructional strategies which these teachers implemented included arranging seat assignments, respecting all students and their contributions, and encouraging peer support (Erwin, 1991). Another documented successful inclusion strategy was the unexpected part transfer of an itinerant vision teacher's office to inside a classroom which had a blind student (Krebs, 2000). This resulted in a part-time co-teaching situation between the vision teacher and the regular teacher. The other students in the class were also exposed to multisensory teaching strategies in a natural environment and participated in enriching disability awareness experiences.

Flener (1993) argued that itinerant vision teachers needed to become consultative-collaborative teachers. This involved leaving the expert role so that open communication could occur and solving problems in a joint manner with the classroom teacher. It has been suggested that collaboration between residential schools and local school districts when a student with a vision impairment leaves the special school for the regular school may enhance inclusion (Zebehazy & Whitten, 1998). However, when Zebehazy and Whitten (1998) surveyed residential schools, they found that the collaborative process needed to be improved. They suggested that collaboration needed to include less concern about student ownership, open and regular communication over a longer period of time, clear and precise planning, increased visits to the residential school by regular teachers, and staff assignments before the transition occurs.

The recommendation to place a blind student in their local school programme by the vision teacher has been investigated by Kim and Corn (1998). Their research questions asked what were the characteristics of the teachers which affected their placement recommendations and what combination of student and teacher variables best explained the placement recommendations? Interestingly, the teacher variable which was most significant was where the teacher worked. Teachers who worked at local schools were more likely to refer a hypothetical student with a vision impairment to local schools and teachers who worked for special schools were more likely to refer the same hypothetical student to a special school. Also, teachers in rural areas were more likely to refer students to special schools than teachers in urban areas where their resources were more readily available. They also found that if a hypothetical student had an above average intellect, used print as opposed to braille, had good social skills and O&M skills then they were the most likely student to be placed at their local school. This study thus alerts educators to the idea that placement recommendations are directly influenced by the teacher's employment situation, the individual characteristics of the student, and resource availability.

However, Erwin (1991) pointed out that inclusion benefits all children including blind students and suggested that inclusive programmes be based on an understanding that inclusion is a process. In North American early childhood settings, Erwin (1991) argued that the standard early childhood curriculum, which includes objectives in language, cognition, body awareness, self help, fine and gross motor skills, spatial orientation, visual efficiency, and social skills, is a programme which will enhance the blind child's growth and development. In 1996, Erwin's qualitative study of a young boy, Ryan, in a regular pre-school found that natural supports promoted his inclusion. Natural support was unobtrusive assistance which lead to achievement or obtaining contextual information about the environment. For example, the teacher aide was not assigned to him but to the class. However, she and other adults within the classroom frequently provided detailed verbal descriptions about what was happening in the classroom environment. The teachers also used spontaneous events and encouraged peer support to enhance Ryan's inclusion. They were able to encourage Ryan to develop his own strategies of interaction and learning in that they did not discourage him from bringing objects very near to his eyes, from being in close proximity to his classmates, or from asking questions.

In a New Zealand study, O'Brien (1989) delved into the issues of mainstreaming secondary students with severe and moderate vision impairments. She found that the preferred educational setting for social development was a school with itinerant vision teacher support and the preferred educational setting for academic growth was a school with a visual resource room. She also noted that schools and teachers had difficulties adapting the regular curriculum and the students with vision impairments attributed their academic difficulties to inappropriate instructional techniques in relaying information. Teachers and students with vision impairments in this study felt that it was the responsibility of the individual student to attain popularity through pleasant personality, ability of the student not to dwell on their disability, self assertion, and a willingness 'to have a go'. O'Brien concluded with the challenge to New Zealand education providers to develop an educational model which promotes maximum education with limited characterisation of the student as different.

Vygotsky promoted inclusion in his statement that "blindness is not a disease but the normal condition for a blind child; he senses his uniqueness only indirectly and secondarily as a result of his social experience" (Vygotsky, 1993/1924, p. 81). He also noted in his various writings that blind children learn in the same way as all children (Vygotsky, 1993/1924; Vygotsky, 1993/1924a; Vygotsky, 1993/1924b). He thus advocated for blind children to begin school at the same time alongside other children (Vygotsky, 1993/1924). He felt that special schools placed blind children in artificial worlds which "nurtures the defect and fixes the child's attention on his blindness" (Vygotsky, 1993/1924, p. 85). The special school is anti social and isolated the child. He thus recommended that education programmes for blind children become a synthesis of the best elements of public and special education but within the regular school. He also pointed out that "the task is not so much the education of blind children as it is the re-education of the sighted" (Vygotsky, 1993/1924, p. 86).

Parents and Professionals are Part of the Inclusive Team

Parents or caregivers are a vital part of the inclusive educational team and their team membership is formalised in New Zealand through Ministry of Education statements about parental right and responsibility to participate in educational decisions about their children and through their participation in the development and writing of their disabled child's Individual Educational Plan (IEP) (Carpinter 1995: New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1995). However, Lipsky (1989) hypothesised though that parents may not feel welcomed at schools because they may challenge professionals or because professionals have difficulty working with parents because of limited training. Lipsky and other researchers cited professional history as a source of parent/professional conflict as it includes the labelling of parents along with the child, and focuses on the parents' grief response to their child instead of on positive adaptive responses and society's negative response (Turnbull, Blue-Banning, Behr, & Kehrns, 1986; Wills, 1994). Turnbull, Blue-Banning, Behr and Kehrns (1986) have called for a new approach to research which is done in partnership with parents, and examines issues and identify themes that can support parents' success.

One example of such a collaborative research approach is a study by Nixon (1991), an American parent of a son with a vision impairment. His qualitative study of other parents of children with a vision impairment focused on the cultural and social aspects of parental coping. He found that a key parental concern was that:

> children with vision impairments have not been fully integrated into their schools, have not received the full range of educational resource programs and services they need, and have not been fully accepted as 'normal' children in their schools and communities (Nixon, 1991, p. 3).

He stated that the parents in his study who accepted their child's impairment coped splendidly with the help of flexible families and through their association not only with disability networks, but with other 'normal' networks. They felt comfortable with the professional support their children were receiving and they experienced a sense of power in their interactions with these professionals. Such power relationships are central to Munford's (1994) post- structuralist studies of the New Zealand caregiving experience. She showed how "caregivers can . . . be subjected to behaviours and activities that non-disabled people would not tolerate for themselves or for other non-disabled people" (Munford, 1994, p. 278). Supportive and accepting professionals are instead needed to create an inclusive environment (Ballard & McDonald, 1995; Purdue, Ballard, & MacArthur, 1998).

Ferguson and Asch (1988) pointed out that professionals must remember that the most important thing when a disabled child is born is that a child is born and a couple then become parents, rather than focusing on the impairment. Professionals also do not live the child's disability as their parents do (Ware, 1999). Researchers thus need to listen to the stories and experiences of parents in order to fully understand inclusion (Ferguson & Asch, 1989; Ware, 1998). Ballard (1994a) has documented the stories of New Zealand parents and families with disabled children in which Sonntag (1994) spoke about how at first she fitted the guilty, compliant and passive stereotypical image of a caregiver until her daughter, who had an intellectual disability, was rejected by the local kindergarten and school. She obtained a Bachelor's Degree and then wrote a thesis about caregivers who were strong and politically active for her Master's degree.

Colleen Brown (1994) told her story about being a mother of a son with Down's syndrome. She sought other parents for support and treatments which may benefit her child. She was rebuffed by professionals for her decisions and felt that many professionals and others saw her son as an object and pitied her. She felt rejected and her son's birth was not celebrated. However, she noted that there has been progress towards creating partnerships between parents and professionals at the cost of continual parental pain in needing to be the 'squeaky wheel' and in the retelling of their stories to strangers. She credited powerful parental advocacy for the creation of inclusive schools. Wills (1994), whose daughter also has Down's syndrome, called on professionals to stop being gatekeepers and "act on the voices of parents and disabled people" (p. 247). He called for power and resources to be given to families because they are the experts and the strongest advocates of inclusion for all children. Similarly, Galloway, Armstrong, and Tomlinson (1996) asked that professionals take positive steps by focusing on supporting their clients, by refusing to be agents of bureaucracies which are interested in budget allocations only and by advocating for one education system where all children receive all of the democratic professional support which they need for learning.

Educational Issues associated with Blindness

Vygtosky posited that there were unique effects of blindness and advocated for educators to understand the specific ways in which blind children achieved their educational goals. For example, blind children need to learn to read and write braille and to move safely (Vygotsky 1993/1924a; Vygotsky, 1993/1928). He emphasised that blind children have difficulty developing spatial relationships. However, he also believed that with verbal information from sighted people and direct hands-on experiences that blind children could compensate for this difficulty (Vygotsky, 1993/1928). Lowenfeld (1975) identified three cognitive limitations caused by blindness which educators need to address. These were: 1. limitations in the variety and range of experiences to gain knowledge of the world through the remaining senses; 2. limitations in mobility which is dependent upon safe locomotion and knowing one's position in relation to other items in space; and 3. limitations in social and environmental interaction which is dependent upon casual information gathering so that actions can be developed which meet environmental demands. Hatlen and Curry (1987) also posited that as much as ninety to ninety five percent of perception originates in vision so special educators were needed to adapt the curriculum.

Frailberg (1977), in her landmark research, noted that early specialist educational intervention may be needed as well in order to help very young blind children or babies form human attachments with their mothers through their other senses. Also, Tobin (1989) outlined some of the common concerns which a new parent of a blind infant may have. These included not being able to make eye contact with the baby and subsequently having difficulty bonding with the baby. Another concern which parents reported was the fact that blind babies do not smile as frequently or expressively as a sighted child in response to the mother's smile and body language. However there is evidence that blind infants do smile in response to human voices and tactile stimulation (Warren, 1984). Despite such difficulties parents do cope and adjust their behaviour to encourage their blind child's development (Conti-Ramsden & Perez-Pereira, 1999; Dote-Kwan, Hughes, & Taylor, 1997; Tobin, 1989). It has been recommended though that parents receive educational support services, and be introduced to other blind children and adults for role modelling and information sharing (MacDonagh, 1996; Tobin, 1989). It is interesting to note that similarly there has also been concern expressed in the literature about blind parents having difficulty raising their sighted infant (Collis & Bryant, 1981). These concerns have been shown to be ill-founded because blind parents have been able to use sound, tactile intervention, increased verbal communication, and imaginative games (Collis & Bryant, 1981). An interesting positive aspect of having a blind parent is that sighted children will have more influence on what goods and services the family will purchase (Gill-Williamson, 1991).

There has been some concern that blind infants develop object permanence skills at a later age (Frailberg, 1977; Rogers & Puchalski, 1988) and Frailberg (1977) found that blind infants acquired gross motor skills and exploratory skills later than their same age peers:

> there was a regular pattern of development for the blind infant, but it differed from that of the sighted infant. Adequate neuromuscular maturation was demonstrated throughout the first year in the postural items which all occurred within the sighted age range. But there was a considerable delay in self-initiated mobility. . . Only after he has become practised in reaching on sound will he begin to creep and walk, slowly mapping the concrete world around him. The prolonged period of immobility during the first year of life represents a serious threat to the ego development of the blind child. It lessens his ability to explore independently, to discover by himself the objective rules that govern things and events in the external world. (Frailberg, 1977, p. 320)

Limitations in exploratory skills have an effect on movement as well as literacy skills. Literacy starts at birth and involves interpersonal and environmental interaction (Stratton, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). Stratton (1996) outlined emergent literacy as an active constructive process for all children and looked at whether or not this was a different process for blind children. She defined literacy as a process in which the child builds environmental and cultural concepts. It also involves the active exploration of the environment and using meaningful language. Finally, it is also a social process in that adults or other children can give the blind child feedback and foster development. Some of the specific components which support literacy development include reading aloud to children, understanding that a symbol has a representational meaning, observing the act of writing, encouraging hand or tactile development, and creating a positive literacy environment. Stratton was concerned that blind children do not have the same opportunity to explore their environment and subsequently demonstrate delays in independent mobility and language development. Again early instruction in movement is thus recommended (House & Davidson, 2000; Stratton, 1996).

Another educational concern for blind children is concept development.

Concept development is also associated with literacy and language development because concepts cannot be learned incidentally (Cutsforth, 1951; Lydon & McGraw, 1973; Recchia, 1997; Warren, 1984). Cutsworth (1951) noted that words may have different meanings for blind people because they have different concrete experiences of them. He said that a teacher who teaches a blind child the concept of frog through a porcelain model will not be teaching some aspects of 'frogliness' which a sighted person may associate with a frog. A porcelain model does not have the slipperiness, slickness, colour, movement, sound, or temperature of a real frog. Hatlen and Curry (1987) cited the difficulty when teaching the concept of 'squareness'. A sighted child is taught to visually locate in the environment numerous examples of squareness to learn the concept. However, blind children, because they only can feel one square at a time, will need to experience a number of individual different squares in a variety of environments in order to generalise this concept. It also has been noted that a blind child does not perceive objects in their wholeness but must go from parts to the whole as the object is tactually manipulated (Lydon & McGraw, 1973).

Concepts and skills are usually taught to blind children through activity and movement (Hatlen & Curry, 1987; Lydon & McGraw, 1973; Nielsen, 1996; O&M Curriculum Working Party, 1993). Shaw (1986) noted that concepts related to body image and body parts can also be taught through music. Daveson and Edwards (1998) documented the benefits of music therapy within programmes for disabled children because it helped to develop social skills, self-esteem, and self expression. They defined music therapists as those who "use music primarily to achieve non-music goals" (p. 450) as opposed to music educators who were interested in enhancing musical knowledge and skills. Music, through melody and rhythm, enhances the development of auditory skills and attention span. Also, when combined with movement it helps coordination, agility, balance, laterality, strength, and locomotion (Davis, 1992 (as cited in Daveson & Edwards, 1998)). It also has encouraged blind children to spontaneously interact with their unseen environment (Shoemark, 1991).

Another important issue for educators of blind children is braille literacy.

Recently, in America there has been a decline in the braille literacy of blind children despite it being the only medium of literacy which is available to blind people (Stephens, 1989; Wittenstein, 1994). Schroeder (1989) stated that this is tied to negative attitudes about blindness. Spungin (1989) argued that limited resources in the mainstream have also contributed to braille illiteracy and that the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) process tends to favour what is available in the school as opposed to the needs of the child; that children with multiple handicaps whose vision impairment is not considered their primary handicap may be lost in the system; that advances in vision training have been unilaterally applied which encourage children with vision impairments to use their remaining vision despite the cost to literacy; that braille is not as enthusiastically taught in the same manner as print; that there are varying levels of proficiencies in braille by vision teachers; that braille is considered too complicated; and that braille texts are not readily available.

Such concerns have led to the recent passage of 'braille bills' in America which require braille instruction to blind children and state that it is the child's right to learn braille (Holbrook, 1996; Schroeder, 1989). They also regulate literacy instruction especially for children with some vision (Holbrook, 1996). It has been suggested that the auditory mode of literacy through listening to computers and audio-tapes is not sufficient to address the literacy needs of blind children and that braille is still the most efficient medium of reading and writing (Hatlen, 1996; Spungin, 1996; Tuttle, 1996; Zago, 1996). Wittenstein (1994) argued that teachers of children with vision impairments have been blamed for the decline of braille literacy. However, he found that teachers whose training included an emphasis on how to teach braille versus how to write and read braille were more confident and more supportive of braille as a literacy tool.

Professionals in the Education of Blind Children

Teachers and instructors who have specialist or additional training in the educational effects of blindness are considered to be an important support to the educational team in regular schools (Hatlen & Curry, 1987; Wittenstein, 1995). Hatlen & Curry (1987) stated that

> the integration of blind and visually impaired youngsters into the sighted community is essential for their social and emotional growth. However, integration will not be successful if these children are perceived by others or by themselves as being incompetent. . . . They cannot observe how the world around them is organised, cannot visually model others' actions, cannot get visual feedback on their actions, and cannot visually generalise from one situation to another. Thus, they need to have materials and the methods by which they are taught adapted and to learn skills specific to their function. . . . . .they must be taught these skills in carefully planned, developmentally sequenced programmes directed by people who are knowledgeable about the effects of the loss of vision on learning and growth. (p. 12-13)

Similarly, Lowenfeld (1989) noted that specialist teachers within regular schools needed to have a knowledge of the educational effects of blindness and teach more than just braille or mobility. He further stated that education's aim is to give the "blind child a knowledge of the realities around him, the confidence to cope with these realities, and the feeling that he is recognised as an individual in his own right." (p. 339)

A number of texts addressing the educational needs of blind children have been written and this literature is the basis for the training of specialist teachers (e. g. Best, 1992; Blasch, Weiner, & Welsch, 1997; Brown, Simmons, & Methvin, 1979; Corn & Koenig, 1996; Faye, 1976; Ferrell, 1985; Frailberg, 1977; Hill & Ponder, 1976; Inkster, 1977; Jose, 1983; LaGrow & Weessies, 1994; Lowenfeld, 1973; Lydon & McGraw, 1973; Mangold, 1982; Paskin, 1977; Perkins School for the Blind, 1992; Scholl, 1986a; Warren, 1984; Wormsley & D'Andrea, 1997). There are also numerous chapters within more general special education books which discuss the educational implications for blind children (e.g. Ballingall, 1995; Havill, 1972; Orelove & Sobsey, 1987; Suran & Rizzo, 1979; Swenson, 1998; Warren, 1981; Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1995).

Recently an expanded core curriculum statement has been developed in America (Hatlen, 1996a; Lueck, 1999) and is being developed in New Zealand (Vision Education Agency, 2000). In America this curriculum statement was developed in reaction to the mainstreaming of children with vision impairments without educational support or curriculum adaptation to meet their needs (Hatlen, 1996a). This move resulted in the graduation of young adults who "could solve binomial equations but could not make change for a dollar. They understood iambic pentameter but could not dress themselves." (Hatlen, 1990, p. 80) Thus, there was a call for educators to carefully assess and examine the effects of vision loss (Hatlen, 1990). In New Zealand the developing expanded core curriculum lists seven additional areas of learning for students with a vision impairment. These include communication modes, visual efficiency skills, movement development, orientation and mobility, social skills, daily living skills, and technology use (Nagel, 2000). Similarly, the New Zealand Orientation and Mobility Curriculum Working Party (1993) argued for a complementary and separate curriculum to the New Zealand Curriculum Framework. This report stated that an Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Curriculum 'gives the child the basic conceptual framework required to make progress in all of the other curriculum areas' (O&M Curriculum Working Party, 1993, p. 3).

Specialist educators for blind children in New Zealand include itinerant vision teachers, orientation and mobility instructors, and techniques of daily living instructors. New Zealand's itinerant vision teachers are trained at Auckland College of Education, whose aim is

> to produce teachers with the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to support students with special teaching needs across a wide range of educational and community settings, with particular emphasis on students with visual impairments. (Thorburn, 1993, p. 1).

Vision teachers teach tactile skill development, visual and listening skills, social skills, communication skills, typing, use of high technology, techniques for daily living, fine motor skills, some parts of orientation and mobility curriculum, braille reading, braille writing and mathematics in the Nemeth code. They also are able to recommend curriculum adjustments in content and methodology for science, social studies, physical education and health, music, and art (Thorburn, 1989; Thorburn, 1993). Thorburn (1989) noted that itinerant vision teachers in New Zealand were also teacher consultants and needed to be able to work effectively with parents and other professionals as well as directly teach in such areas as braille or low vision.

Nagel (2000) documented the 1999 learner ratio for blind children to itinerant vision teachers as being thirty seven to one. In other developed countries such as Australia this figure was between twelve to one and fourteen to one (Kirchner & Diament, 1999a; Nagel, 2000). Nagel documented vision teachers' frustration at being unable to meet the identified educational needs of their students when working with such high ratios. In America, Mullen (1990) and Rex (1989) have argued that itinerant teachers of blind children, who are unable to teach braille to their students at least three times each week because of large caseloads, will not be able to teach in a concentrated manner and that this teaching will be inadequate. The chairperson of the RNZFB's Board of Trustees in the 1995 Annual General Report also warned that blind children who were attending regular schools outside the Auckland region were in danger of becoming illiterate as there was little assistance with the "tactile curriculum they require to enable them to read and write" (Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind, 1995, p. 4).

New Zealand has one tertiary training programme at Massey University for professionals in blindness, other than vision teachers (LaGrow, 1989). These professionals include techniques of daily living instructors, rehabilitation teachers, orientation and mobility instructors, and rehabilitation counsellors. Orientation and mobility (O&M) instructors also meet the international professional competencies which have been developed by the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (LaGrow, 1989). They teach fine and gross motor skills, sensory skills and awareness, spatial concepts, movement skills and awareness, environmental awareness, white cane skills, independent travel skills, the use of high technology equipment, and orientation skills (O&M Curriculum Working Party, 1993). Orientation and mobility has been defined as

> the ability to establish and maintain an awareness of one's position in space and is dependent upon both the gathering and interpretation of available sensory information. . . . Mobility refers to the act of moving through space in a safe and efficient manner. (LaGrow & Weesies, 1994, p. 9).

O&M instruction to blind children has been available in New Zealand since the 1960s (Catran & Hansen, 1992), but services were regularly provided only to children in the special school not to those in mainstream schools (Havill, 1972).

Parents of blind children in New Zealand have spoken extensively about their frustration with the lack of orientation and mobility instruction in schools because they believe their children's development and safety is at risk (Parents of Vision Impaired, 1998; Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind, 1998a). When instruction is provided, it is provided by itinerant instructors who are employed or contracted by the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind (Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind, 1998). Kirchner and Diament (1999) spoke about life-shaping risks in America because educational services have been effected by a shortage of O&M instructors and vision teachers. They estimated that the ideal ratio of students to vision teachers and to O&M instructors was eight to one (Kirchner & Diament, 1999a). However, when they looked at O&M services, they found that the ratio was seventy two to one (Kirchner & Diament, 1999a). They thus called the staffing shortage a crisis and stated that the education of children with a vision impairment was seriously unsound.

It should be noted that some blind people have been critical of specialists in the field of blindness. Mettler (1995) argued that professionals, such as O&M

instructors, exaggerated the nature and extent of the difficulties associated with blindness and gave "primacy (to) the visual model of the world in managing the environment" (Mettler, 1995, p. 11). On the other hand, a survey of blind children indicated that their number one fear was being hit by a car (Wilhelm, 1989). Gallagher (1988), the executive director of the American Foundation for the Blind, argued that the needs of blind children cannot be addressed by 'generic' professionals such as occupational therapists or special education teachers. Instruction was needed from vision teachers, orientation and mobility instructors, techniques of daily living instructors, and specialist employment placement counsellors. However, he also noted that educators in the field need to prove that their services "do the job they are supposed to" (Gallagher, 1988, p. 228). Yet when he did an extensive library search to support the impact of specialised services, he found that there was a surprising dearth of literature. There were papers based on assumption and faith, but interestingly there were no "longitudinal studies. No powerful testaments from blind and visually impaired persons" (Gallagher, 1988, p. 228).

Friends and Classmates

A determining factor for successful inclusion of disabled children is friendship. Friendship offers companionship, stimulation, physical and personal support, intimacy and affection (MacCupsie, 1996). It also is linked to an individual's self esteem (Azmitia, Kamprath, & Linnet, 1998; Smith, 1998; Stone & Campbell, 1991; Youniss, 1983). Youniss (1983) noted that relationships, and particularly friendships because of its roots in reciprocity, enables the individual to see and accept themselves and others with their strengths and weaknesses. He cited Sullivan's notion that friends, who come to the relationship as equally able to reciprocate interactions actively construct reality together and engage in self appraisal through discourse in a manner which is different to all other relationships and which leads to mutual respect:

> ..friendship engenders mutual respect between persons who depend on

> one another, not as self-sufficient individuals, but as members of a relationship in which each can contribute to the other "in the pursuit of increasingly identical- that is, more and more nearly mutual - satisfactions (Sullivan, 1953, p. 246). "And thus, the self turns from the question: "What should I do to get what I want?" to the co-operative relationship where the issue is: "What should I do to contribute to the happiness or to support the prestige and feeling of worth-whileness of my chum (Sullivan, 1953, p. 245)?" (Youniss, 1983, p. 166)

Friends respect differences and co-operate in their usage of difference for mutual benefit (Youniss, 1983). They also empathetically share and analyse their knowledge and feelings with each other (Youniss, 1983). Friendship is different from peer or other relationships because it includes co-operation and an advanced notion of reciprocity in that a friend accepts and understands that at times their friends may not be able to immediately reciprocate kindness (Youniss, 1983). Friendship is thus forward looking and involves a commitment over time (Youniss, 1983).

Friendships and a child's social life also change over time and this has been linked to different developmental time periods (Higgins & Parsons, 1983; Smith, 1998). Smith (1998) stated that at the age of two or younger, children are interested in their peers because they can share perspectives and interests. Also, the opportunity to play with peers enhances a child's cognitive development, social skills, gender role development and communication (Smith, 1998). Smith (1998) noted that Vygotsky thought that pretend play held two important elements. Firstly, it created situations in which immediate satisfaction was delayed, and, secondly it helped children learn the rules for behaviour in their culture. At about two or three years old, a child begins to include others in their play. Smith (1992) cited the work of Corsaro who explained that pre-school children need to establish their place in their peer culture by seeking access to a play space. They will use language to access this space by saying that they are friends and this allows each child access to joint or associated play activities. Some other strategies which children use to be included are moving into the play area; doing similar play; walking around the area; disrupting the play; asking or having an adult ask if they can be included in the play; offering greetings and objects; and proposing other activities (Corsano, 1979 (as cited in Smith, 1992)).

When a child first enters primary school, they have a more consistent opportunity to socialise with their peers and other adults such as teachers (Higgins & Parsons, 1983; Smith, 1998). They begin to recognise that they are separate from and, at times, in opposition to adults as they start to form a peer group identity, culture, and new roles for themselves besides that of son or daughter. (Higgins & Parsons, 1983; Smith, 1998). They become more empathetic with age during primary school and are able to better understand how other people feel, think, and behave (Smith, 1998). Their perceptions of friendship include more abstract ideas such as acceptance, affection, and loyalty (Smith, 1998). Primary school children will also spend more time interacting with other adults such as music teachers, coaches, and other adults outside of school such as Brownie leaders. However, Higgins and Parsons (1983) noted that primary school students will develop the strongest bonds with their peers because of the many years which they may spend together in different classes. If children are able to interact positively, communicate accurately, excel in some activity, and initiate relationships, then they will also be able to attract friends (Asher, Gottman, & Oden, 1997 (as cited in Smith, 1998)).

During adolescence, there is an even greater attachment to the peer group as the individual begins to receive emotional support from these relationships and increase their understanding of their own individual strengths and their various and diverse roles within society (Smith, 1998; Youniss, 1983). Adolescents also spend more time away from home in various activities and begin to be influenced by adults whom they do not know such as movie stars (Higgins & Parsons, 1983). They are more likely to form cliques and associations which satisfy their mutual interests (Higgins & Parsons, 1983). Opposite-sex peers become more important in their lives and they learn new skills for interacting (Higgins & Parsons, 1983).

No matter what developmental time period, however, there seems to be gender differences within friendship relationships. Boys and girls differ in how they interact and perceive their relationships (Azmitia, Kamprath, & Linnet, 1998; Berndt, 1983). Girls tend to have fewer friends than boys and tend to limit the number of children in their friendship groups (Berndt, 1983; Azmitia, Kamprath, & Linnet, 1998). Berndt (1983) suggested that boys are more likely to want to play in groups whereas girls spend most of their time with one other girl. Girls as they get older are more concerned with the amount and type of intimacy in their friendship relationship. He noted though that boys do still have exclusive or best friends but that these relationships were not emphasised as much. In his study, girls shared play equipment with all of their classmates and said they would share more with a friend.

Making friends is an important part of any child's development and promotes social development (Grenot-Scheyer, Harry, Park, Schwartz, & Meyer, 1998). Schools which are inclusive will support peer relationships and friendships with disabled students. Parents often state that the reason their child is attending a regular school is so that they can make friends in their community (Grenot-Scheyer, Harry, Park, Schwartz, & Meyer, 1998). Grenot-Scheyer, Staub, Peck and Schwartz (1998) noted as well that friendships are considered the milestones which determine the success of inclusion. Opportunity and proximity are factors which influence the development of friendships for disabled children (Grenot-Scheyer, Harry, Park, Schwartz, & Meyer, 1998). MacArthur and Morton (1999) stated that

> friendships are at the heart of what is needed to ensure a high quality of life. They are important to children, critical to adolescents, and are a necessary element in a healthy adult life. (p. 38)

It has also been noted that childhood friendships provide the context in which we learn about social rules, citizenship, morality, altruism, kindness, and justice (Meyer, Minondo, Fisher, Larson, Dunmore, Black, & D'Aquanni, 1998). The friendships of disabled children are the same as other friendships in that they involve affection, feeling valued, fun, encouragement, shared interests, reciprocity, and mutual liking (G. Allan Roeher Institute, 1990; Harry, Park, & Day, 1998). They also help children develop their own unique support system independent of their family (G. Allan Roeher Institute, 1990). Friendships should be valued as an educational goal and school practices which enhance children's social life need to be developed (Grenot-

Scheyer, Harry, Park, Schwartz, & Meyer, 1998).

Disabled children experience a variety of relationships and multidimensional friendships which are satisfying and spontaneous (Grenot-Scheyer, Harry, Park, Schwartz, & Meyer, 1998; Harry, Park, & Day, 1998). These relationships can involve other disabled people who share experiences and can result in collective action to challenge discrimination and oppression (Chappell, 1994). They can also involve practical support, people of other ages, family friends, and nurturing mentors. However, researchers have found that disabled children have few friends and are often isolated in regular schools (G. Allan Roeher Institute, 1990; Hoben & Lindstrom, 1980; MacArthur & Morton, 1999; MacCupsie, 1996). In America, Erwin (1993) found that both integrated and segregated blind children spent most of their free time in solitary play, and this was perhaps due to the fact that these children had difficulty entering and initiating play with other children. Others have suggested that there may be a link between gross motor performance and social play (Harry, Park, & Day, 1998; Schneekloth, 1989; Sleewenhoek, Boter, & Vermeer, 1995). MacCuspie (1996) suggested that the school culture in Canada enveloped two assumptions that contravened the social inclusion of blind children. These were related to the values placed on difference within the school, and the competitive learning environment in the classroom.

MacArthur and Morton (1999) noted that teachers' beliefs and attitudes were related to the development of friendships within their class. For example, if the teacher thought that disabled children were different, then friendships with these students were unlikely to develop. Whereas, if teachers thought all their students were similar and welcomed, then this supported a climate of accepting and friendly relationships. The G. Allan Roeher Institute (1990) stated that there are a number of myths and barriers about friendships and disabled people which need to be overcome. These included the beliefs that disabled people are not capable of being a friend; that nondisabled people are not interested in friendships with disabled people; and that friendships do not need to be facilitated because they always happen naturally. Disabled people also have few opportunities to develop friendships as they are at times segregated in schools and in the community and cannot connect with a variety of potential friends.

Teachers and teacher aides can inadvertently segregate their disabled students in regular classes by staying so close to them that natural interactions with their peers are not possible (Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli, & MacFarland, 1997 (as cited in MacArthur & Morton, 1999); MacArthur & Dight, 2000). MacCuspie (1996) stated that there is a pupil culture which develops as a "defensive resource for pupils against teachers and other adults" (p. 20) and which is a place for children to share their own perceptions and values. Thus children who are surrounded by adults cannot easily participate in the pupil culture (MacCuspie, 1996). It is important for teachers to remember that friendships are reciprocal and that overuse of natural supports and buddy systems may result in children perceiving their disabled classmate as unable and needing helpers as opposed to friends (Bishop, Jubala, Stainback, & Stainback, 1996). Teacher aides should be assigned to the teacher and not the child so that others will not view the child as very different, or as being the responsibility of the teacher aide, rather than the teacher (MacArthur & Dight, 2000). The New Zealand Ministry of Education (1998) has also stated that the role of the teacher aide is to primarily assist the teacher and that an aide "does not have the training to develop individualised teaching strategies" (p. 7).

It is also important to remember that nondisabled children benefit from the social interactions which come with inclusion (Staub, Schwartz, Gallucci, & Peck, 1994). Nondisabled children have reported that they learned about empathy; increased their self concept as they supported their disabled classmates; and decreased their fear of others with an unusual appearance or behaviour (Biklen, Ford, & Ferguson, 1989; Peck, Donaldson, & Pezzoli, 1990 (as cited in Staub, Schwartz, Gallucci, & Peck , 1994)). Kishi and Meyer (1994) investigated the attitudes and perceptions which nondisabled children held towards disabled people and their own self concept. Some of their participants had been involved in a Special Friends Programme which buddied them with a disabled student during school play times. These children were more accepting of disabled people and they also continued to have more contact with disabled people six years later. Their social contact with their disabled peers also improved their self concept. However, they remembered negative aspects about their relationship with their disabled friend in that they were unidirectional, not reciprocal, and were based on a helping and teaching relationship. This type of relationship was particularly true for the girls. Kishi and Meyer thus warn that inclusive educators need to treat all their students in the same manner and not create social hierarchies which result in a disabled student being cared for by other students.

Inclusive schools and communities encourage friendships and social relationships between disabled and nondisabled children (Kishi & Meyer, 1994; Staub, Schwartz, Gallucci, & Peck, 1994; Whitaker, 1994), whereas exclusion "sows the seeds of social discontent and discrimination" (Karagiannis, Stainback, & Stainback, 1996, p. 3). Karagiannis, Stainback and Stainback (1996) also posited that inclusion benefits not only students and teachers but society as well in that it helps to create an understanding of individual similarities and differences. Gains in academic achievement are made for all students (Madden & Slavin, 1983 (as cited in Karagiannis, Stainback, & Stainback, 1996)). If all people are to have equal rights and equal worth then all children and young people need to be part of the social fabric of regular schools.

The Social Interaction of Blind Children and their Friends

A number of researchers have documented that blind children have social difficulties at regular schools, spend most of their time alone, and have difficulty making friends (Hoben & Linstrom, 1980; Kekelis, 1992; Kekelis & Sacks, 1992; MacCuspie, 1992; MacCuspie, 1996; Sacks, 1992; Sacks & Kekelis, 1992; Skellenger, Rosenblum, & Jager, 1997; Wolffe & Sacks, 1997). Erwin (1993) documented that no matter what the setting blind children seem to spend most of their time in solitary play. The play, itself, has also been described as perseverated. Blind children did not engage in a variety of activities and mostly engaged in gross motor activities as opposed to social and pretend play such as playing house (Skellenger, Rosenblum, & Jager, 1997). Another study also noted that blind adolescents in the Netherlands had a smaller social network than their sighted peers (Kef, 1997).

Some researchers have suggested that there may be a link between a blind child's limited gross motor performance and social play (Schneekloth, 1989; Sleewenhoek, Boter, & Vermeer, 1995). Zanadrea (1998) described in detail the activities in an early intervention programme which included sighted and blind children in a movement programme that emphasised play and social interaction. All of the games and activities were taught by regular physical education students at the local University and were always adapted so that they were accessible to the blind pre-schoolers. The blind children who participated in this programme interacted more comfortably with their peers because they felt safe and were included in all of the activities. Similarly, Macks (1992) noted that when blind students participated in non-competitive accessible games where they were on an equal basis to their sighted peers, they were accepted more and all of the children's self-image and self-esteem improved.

Rettig's (1994) literature review of blind children's play noted that language development, cognitive development, and exploratory skills were encouraged by play and that adult intervention was also necessary to enhance the blind children's play activities. Some intervention strategies which have been used include instruction in play skills; adapting the play equipment, and modifying the play environment (Rettig, 1994). For example , real world objects such as keys, doorknobs or pots can be used in play to encourage the understanding of these objects (Rettig, 1994). Toys which stimulate the auditory, tactile and olfactory senses could be chosen for play (Troster & Brambring, 1994), The environment, itself, must also encourage the blind child to move and orient themselves (Rettig, 1994. Schneekloth (1989) advised that play areas could be soft and made of foam so that blind children would feel free to throw their bodies into space. They also could include miniature real objects such as houses to encourage concept development and a variety of elements which requires complex activities to encourage movement development

(Schneekloth, 1989).

Other intervention strategies involve encouraging adults and peers to interact with blind children (Rettig, 1994). Adults can provide feedback to a blind child on how a toy works or feels and can answer questions (Rettig, 1994; Marts, 1990 (as cited in Rettig, 1994)). They can also suggest play, model play, and be a play partner which has been a successful strategy to increase the quantity and variety of play behaviours (Skellenger & Hill, 1994). Warren (1984) noted that adults need to be nearby so that a safe atmosphere can be created for exploration and play. However, there is little information about successful interventions which encourage sighted children to interact with blind children (Rettig, 1994). Some researchers, however, have stated that it may help social interactions if sighted children learn about the effects of blindness (Rogow, 1991 (as cited in Rettig, 1994); Scheffers, 1982).

Some researchers have suggested that blind children need to learn about their impairment so that they have a better understanding of themselves and can answer questions from sighted children about their impairment (Erin & Corn, 1994; Sacks & Corn, 1996). Erin and Corn (1994) explored how children first became aware of their impairment and noted that blind children wanted to know why they had a vision impairment and whether or not their vision would improve in the future. The children in their study also at various times pretended to have more vision by imitating the behaviours of sighted children such as reading a print book. Erin and Corn explained this as being an effort to find meaning in the behaviour or words of their sighted peers.

A New Zealand study by Bowden and Thorburn (1993) focused on developing a successful inclusive programme which would encourage interactions between a primary school student with a vision impairment and multiple disabilities, Jessica, and her classmates. They developed a programme which included seven teaching sessions for Jessica's four 'work friends' about Jessica's disability and positive skills which would help them play and work with her. The children in the programme were also given the opportunity to practice their skills and discuss the information which was presented to them. At the conclusion of the programme, the children took the initiative to interact with Jessica which also in turn encouraged other children to interact with her as the following quote from a teacher illustrates:

> Being able to see them . . . interact with her has really helped the other children become less isolated from her. She's become part of the group. They think she's not so unusual. (p. 271)

In America, Rosenblum (1997) explored the best friendships of blind adolescents through interviews of blind adolescents. These participants reported that friendship was about self disclosure, honest feedback, and empathy. They usually initially met each other at school but now spent most of their time at each other's home talking and participating in hobbies together. There were gender differences which emerged in her study in that girls were more intimate in their relationships than boys. Boys also reported doing more activities with their friends. However, both boys and girls engaged in shared activities like talking or listening to music which were accessible to both adolescents and they reported that the visual impairment did not affect what they did together. In a more in depth follow up study Rosenblum (1998) noted that best friends became friends because they "liked the same thing" (p. 597) or because they "liked each other" (p. 597). Rosenblum (2000) later documented that the friendships took a long time to develop and the blind adolescents in her study felt like outsiders in their school and they were not part of a popular crowd. However, they were able to develop friendships which one sighted adolescent stated was "a better friendship than with anyone else" (p. 443).

Some researchers have focused on the blind child's social skills and have stated that it is important that social skills and social understandings be specifically taught to blind children (Huebner, 1986; McAlpine & Moore, 1995). One training programme trained the blind students' sighted peers as well as their teachers to teach social skills to blind primary school students (Sacks & Gaylord-Ross, 1992). They taught five skills in a one to one setting. These included appropriate gaze, body posture, positive social initiation, joining group activities, and sharing in group activities. This study found that the blind children's' social behaviours improved most when they were taught by their peers, although their behaviours did improve as well after they were taught by their teachers (Sacks & Gaylord-Ross, 1992). Bina (1986) argued though that blind children learned social skills, and other skills, best in co-operation with a heterogeneous group of students. In such groups they can achieve academically, have success, feel like they belong and establish friendships (Bina, 1986).

MacCuspie (1996), however, believed that the pupil culture of a Canadian primary school which she studied made it difficult for blind students to be socially accepted. Some of the social assumptions of their peers were difficult for the blind students to meet. For example, one assumption was that "to be part of a group a child ought to be able to do what the other children are doing" (p. 60) but many of the activities were visual, such as being able to play marbles or baseball. Another assumption which was not met by blind boys, in particular, was "boys and girls ought not to be best friends" (p. 67). The blind boys in her study were more readily accepted by their female classmates in that the girls frequently volunteered to be their partner than did the boys. Issues around helping were also evident in her study. MacCuspie found that blind children were seen to need more help from all of their classmates but they were also seen as unable to reciprocate that help. This had implications for developing friendships because there was the assumption that only best friends reciprocated helping each other.

In addition to a difficult pupil culture, MacCuspie (1996) noted that the school culture as well did not enhance the social inclusion of their blind students. Some of the assumptions which prevented inclusion in this culture were that teachers needed to focus on the academic growth and not the social growth of their blind students; that teachers should not interfere on the playground; that it is to be expected that blind children will encounter difficulties with social acceptance; and that teachers should not discuss blindness with blind children or mannerisms which interfere with comfortable social interactions such as hand flapping. MacCuspie also found through her study that some specific educational assumptions prevented inclusion. These assumptions were that good teachers did not need assistance, support or additional training to teach their blind students; that blind students were not as valuable as their classmates and achieve less; and that regular teachers did not need to plan or adapt their teaching for inclusion. The blind children in her study were thus tolerated and not included.

Chapter Five

Method/ology: Constructing the Study

Understanding Meaning

In order to understand the meaning of blindness, it was important to learn about the experiences of blind people and study the meaning they, and others in their lives, gave to blindness. 'Meaning-making' within the social constructivist approach is not an isolated activity but an activity which is generated within and by social processes and language conventions (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Maturana & Varela, 1992, Mishler, 1986; Schwandt, 1994). The social actors' pre-existing schemas, experiences, values, and assumptions are also significant (Mallory & New, 1994; Monbeck, 1973; Schwandt, 1994), and these are embedded in the larger environmental, historical, cultural, political, economic, social, and ideological influences (Barton, 1988; Fulcher, 1989: Gerber, 1990; Maturana & Varela, 1992; Oliver, 1990; Skrtic, 1991; Swain, Finkelstein, French, & Oliver, 1993; Tomlinson, 1982).

Significance of the Study for Blind People

It has been increasingly acknowledged by disabled and non-disabled researchers that research can become distanced and alienated from the needs of the disabled community. Researchers have thus been asked to design studies which acknowledge and listen to the voices of disabled people (Morris, 1993a; Clough & Barton, 1995). In the planning stage of this study, all the blind people on the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind email system were asked what type of research in education would be beneficial to their community. Respondents to this query stated that they would be interested in research which explored the effect of educational practice on a blind person's life, and how blind people were included in the educational 'main stream'.

Case Study

Stake (1988) has stated that case studies are those which are defined not by any particular methodology, but "by interest in individual cases" (p. 236). A collective case study design, whose purpose is to explain a particular phenomenon (Stake, 1988), was thus considered appropriate for the present study. According to Yin (1984) exploratory questions of what, how, and why are characteristic of case study strategies. Also, this strategy has the ability to search for context, unity, and the patterns of meaning and to cope with a variety of evidence including interviews, observations, documents, and artefacts (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1988; Yin, 1984). Reinharz (1992) stated that case studies are also able to analyse changes in phenomenon over time, the significance of specific phenomenon for the future, and the relationship among the parts of a phenomenon. If individual case studies are combined, Reinharz noted that then the relationship between these cases and particular social processes or structures can be examined. The purpose of case study research as Donmoyer (1990) pointed out, however, is not to find the 'truth' or 'correct interpretation.' This is an elusive goal if we accept the view that knowledge is continually constructed and reconstructed in specific contexts and does not remain static (Kvale, 1996; Rosenau, 1992). A case study can add to a variety of interpretations for the reader to consider.

Case studies can help us understand the complexity and uniqueness of individual lives (Stake, 1988). Reinharz (1992) noted, for example, that the perspectives gained from feminist case studies have increased women's visibility; created a better understanding of women because the social forces for women's status was not overlooked; and reduced the errors of generalisations which are based on a single sex perspective. She also believed that an over-emphasis on generalisation can obscure the phenomena which is important for certain groups, and that case studies instead offered 'specificity, exceptions, and completeness' (Reinharz, 1992, p.174). Kvale (1996) argued that concepts of generalisation need to be replaced by the concept of contextualization (Kvale, 1996; Stake, 1988). Similarly, Rosenau (1992) stated that post-modern social science researchers

> offer indeterminacy rather than determinism, diversity rather than unity, difference rather than synthesis, complexity rather than simplification. They look to the unique rather than to the general, to intertextual relations rather than causality, and to the unrepeatable rather than the re occurring, the habitual or the routine. (p. 8)

It has been noted, as well, that generalisation is for the reader to determine after sufficient evidence is presented by the researcher or author (Kvale, 1996; Merriam, 1988; Rosenau, 1992).

Validity has been defined as "a form of reliable knowledge in some context and for some purpose, related to some entity" (Lincoln, 1997, p. 162). In the qualitative context, studies achieve validity if they are believable (Eisner, 1991; Merriam, 1988). According to Eisner (1991), this is achieved when a study is coherent, insightful, and has instrumental utility. Eisner also noted that a study made sense when the interpretations of the data were credible through the use of multiple sources of evidence which created structural corroboration, and through consensual validation when other people were able to agree on the interpretation of the data. Wolcott (1990) suggested some strategies for the researcher to strengthen validity within studies. These were to listen and talk little; to accurately record fieldwork; to write reflections about the study early; to include the primary data in final reports; to fully report even if data does not fit the developing interpretation; to acknowledge personal feelings and reactions in the final report; to request feedback from participants and colleagues as the study develops; and, finally, to write accurately.

Eisner (1993) emphasised that a study's representation was most important. This is "the process of transforming the contents of consciousness into a public form so that they can be stabilised, inspected, edited, and shared with others. Representation is what confers a publicly social dimension to cognition." (p. 6). Similarly, Kvale (1996) argued that the research report is where the validity of the study will be judged by the research community, and by the reader. The reader, according to Page (1997), interprets the researchers' interpretation of the participants' interpretations. Validity, itself, thus becomes a social construction because it is determined by the relationships between people who are interacting through the research (Kvale, 1996; Page, 1997).

Finding Participants

Using the tradition of qualitative research, for this study I collected and generated data through interviews and field observations in a total of ten case studies of blind individuals (Bogden and Biklen, 1982). These people included six blind adults, one blind teenager and three blind children. Two participants initially volunteered to participate in this study after they read the query which I had previously sent by email about the study. I asked four blind people whom I knew if they were willing to participate in this study and they were willing. The remaining four participants were found or contacted through their local Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind office, or their visual resource centre teacher; were asked if they would speak to me; and subsequently agreed to participate in this study. Because blindness is difficult to define in that some blind people may not be able to see at all but other blind people can see light, forms, or colours, I believed that it was important to find participants who were considered blind by education pedagogy. Scholl (1986) noted that the educational definition of a blind person was someone who learns through touch and hearing. Historically, Braille has also been linked to the education of blind children (Catran & Hansen, 1992; Henderson, 1973; Lowenfeld, 1975; Roberts, 1986; Scholl, 1986). So I looked for participants who considered themselves, and were considered by others, to be blind; who had a preferred literacy medium of Braille; and who said that they were educated as a blind child. I felt that a gender balance was needed in this study and that it was important to find an equal number of male and female participants so that a one gender study could be avoided. I also felt that there should be representation from the indigenous people of New Zealand in this study so that a mono-cultural study could be avoided. As I located the study's participants, one by one, I was conscious of these parameters and consequently the ten participants in the study did meet them. Also, it is interesting to note that all of the potential participants whom I contacted willingly agreed to participate in the study.

In the end, the participants were Tom, Anne, Hine, William, Sue, Stuart, Joe, Davania, Xena, and Blair. These names are pseudonyms which they, or their parents, chose for themselves. All of the participants said that they were blind people who used Braille as their preferred literacy medium. Stuart stated that he had a little bit of vision and could see colours and forms. There were five males and five females. There was one Maori woman, Hine, and one Maori girl, Davania. The rest of the participants identified as Pakeha. They ranged in age from six to fifty-six and lived in six different cities which were spread between both the North and South Islands of New Zealand. This provided a variety of educational experiences and contexts which could be explored. The participants' educational experiences included being a student at a segregated residential school, at a local or non-local mainstream school with a visual resource unit, and at a local or non-local mainstream school with itinerant vision teacher support.

Ethical Procedures and Informed Consent

This study was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee at the University of Otago. Potential participants, their guardians, or their employers were were always well informed and provided with information throughout the study. Any information which was provided to potential participants and participants in this study was provided in their preferred communication medium which was either braille, audio-tape, print, or computer disc. If a potential participant agreed to talk to me about participating in the study, they were asked to sign an *Agreement to be Contacted by the Researcher* form. After we talked, and if they agreed to participate, they were provided with an *Information Sheet for Interview Participants.* This form described the nature and purpose of the research; the research procedures; the time commitment requested of participants; the description and acknowledgment of any possible discomfort which the participant may have as they talked about their experiences; who would have access to the data and personal information from the participants; how the data would be disposed; the exclusion criteria which outlined who may not participate in the study (e.g. people who did not want to talk about their experiences); how the study would be published; and how to contact the researcher or my supervisors. If they agreed to participate, they then were asked to sign an *Informed Consent* form which indicated that they had read and understood the information which was given to them; that they had all of their questions answered about the study; that they knew that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty; and that they or their child would not be identified in the study. The adult participants' in this study pseudonyms were Tom, Anne, Hine, William, Sue, and Stuart. The adolescent participant's pseudonym was Joe and he took part in an interview like the adult participants with his parents' permission.

All of the mothers of the children and the adolescent in this study agreed to be interviewed. One father of the children in this study agreed to be interviewed with his wife. Their pseudonyms were Jenny, Joanne, Zwhaun, Stacey and Junior. They received an *Information Sheet for Parents of Participating Children with Severe Vision Impairments* and signed an *Informed Consent* form which were slightly modified to take into consideration the parents' perspectives about their children's participation in the study in that the child would be unobtrusively observed at school on a number of days over two weeks. Also, the child could be interviewed in the parents' presence with the child's and the parents' consent. The professionals who were involved with the child's education would also be interviewed with their permission. The children's pseudonyms were Davania, Xena and Blair. All of the schools, which the three children who were observed were attending, were contacted by a *Letter to School Board of Trustees*. This letter outlined the observation work which would occur in the child's classroom and included copies of all of the relevant information sheets. Permission from the school was obtained through an *Informed Consent* form for me to observe in each child's classroom for about five days over two weeks, and to interview the child's teachers and principal. Also, Homai Vision Education Centre signed an *Anonymity Express Waiver* which enabled me to use their name in this study because it is the only special school in New Zealand and was easily identified. All other names in this study are not real, or are pseudonyms which were chosen by the interview participants, themselves. A *Letter to Professional Supervisors (School Principals,* *Service Managers) of Teachers/Teacher Aides/Instructors* was also sent along with the *Information Sheet for Interview Participants so* that permission was obtained from the appropriate supervisors for the staff interviews. These supervisors also signed an *Informed Consent* form.

All of the three observed children's classmates' parents were also contacted by a *Letter to Classroom Parents* so that they could also be observed in the classroom. The parents of these children received an *Information Sheet for Classroom Parents* which was adapted to include relevant information of concern to them. For example, it stated that the school's name and their child's name would not be used and that participation was voluntary. If they agreed to their child's participation in the study, they signed an *Informed Consent* form. All of the classroom teachers (Lee, Sam, and Raquel), teacher aides (Ann, Liz, and Tracey) except one (unnamed), vision teachers (Catherine, and Jane), Orientation and Mobility instructors (Heidi, Bob, and Daphne) and principals (Bill, Thornton, and Chip) of the three observed children in this study agreed to be interviewed by signing an *Informed Consent* form after receiving an *Information Sheet for Interview Participants.* The programme director (Kitch) at Homai Vision Education Centre also agreed to be interviewed.

The Research Interviews

The interview conversations for this study were conducted in order to learn about the participants' experiences in the various educational settings, and about how these experiences have affected other aspects of their lives. Neisser (1994) noted that remembered experiences can be part of a life narrative which also helps to define the self and which is written and rewritten to cope with remembered experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991). Such cyclical constructions are part of a social process which involves the interviewer as well as the interviewee (Gergen, 1994; Kvale, 1996; Mishler, 1986; Robinson, 1988; Steir, 1991; Tripp, 1983). Gergen (1994) noted that self narratives follow rules which include having a valued endpoint, the selection of related events, temporal ordering, causal linkages, and demarcation signs (p. 91-93).

He also argued that autobiographical memories thus become more than the description of a specific remembered event, but, through cultural conversation rules, help to establish and sustain individual social identities in both children and adults (Eder, 1994; Gergen, 1994; Neimeyer & Metzler, 1994; Winegar, 1988). Kvale (1996) has also noted that the interview conversation is also the site where interchanges and conversation are used to build meanings, and where culture is transmitted (Robinson, 1988). For this study, the research interview therefore became an important "construction site of knowledge" (Kvale, 1996, p. 2.) about the meaning of blindness which was held by some people in New Zealand.

Since there was a specific phenomenon (the social construction of blindness in education) to be explored in this study, the interviews were semi-structured, which is defined by Kvale (1996) as "an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (p.6). An interview guide was developed as suggested by Patton (1987) so that I could be reminded, if there was a lull in the interview, of conversational topic areas which I might initiate and which might be relevant to the experiences of the participant. Essentially, the interview guide was used as a check-list of topics which the participant and I were free to explore in a conversational style. For the parents and the blind participants, the interview guide topics and a suggested initial question to be asked under each topic area were:

1. *School Experience:* Can you tell me about your (or your child's) primary, intermediate, secondary, and tertiary school experience?
2. *School Social Life:* Can you tell me about your (or your child's) social experiences at primary, intermediate, secondary and tertiary school?
3. *First Experience:* Can you tell me about how you first came to know that you (or your child) had a vision impairment?
4. *Onset of Disability*: (for adults with severe vision impairments) Can you tell me what your parents/caregivers have told you about their discovery of your disability?
5. *Upbringing*: Can you tell me about your (or your child's) upbringing?
6. *Family Attitudes:* Can you tell me about your parental, and other family members', attitudes towards your (or your child's) vision impairment?
7. *Family Ties*: Can you tell me about your past and present family ties?
8. *Professionals*: Can you tell me about your, and your (child's or parent's), relationship with professionals in the field of blindness?

9. *Inclusion, Mainstreaming, Special Units, Special Schools:* Can you tell me about your thoughts on inclusion, mainstreaming, special units, and special schools?
10. *Responsibility*: Who do you think, if anyone, should have the responsibility for providing services to blind children? why?
11. *If*: If you had a blind child, where would you send them to primary, intermediate, and secondary school today? why? or Can you tell me about your decision to send your child to school's name?
12. *Blindness:* Can you tell me about what you think or feel about blindness, and what you think or feel other people think about blindness and blind people?
13. *Barriers:* Can you tell me about what types of barriers, or things, exist which disadvantage you (and your child)?
14. *Vocation:* Can you tell me about your (or your child's)vocational interests, prospects, and experiences?
15. *Social Life*: Can you tell me about your social life at present?
16. *Philosophy:* Can you tell me about your religious, spiritual, or philosophical outlook on life which may have particular relevance to your views on blindness?
17. *Inclusion:* Can you tell me about whether you (and your child) feel included in New Zealand society? why or why not?
18. *Definitions:* you tell me about your definitions of disability, handicap and impairment?
19. *Terminology:* Can you tell me about what type of terminology you would like to see used in the disability area?
20. *Another If:* If you had to describe to a child or to an adult what to expect as a blind person in NZ, can you tell me what would you say?
21. *Future:* What are your plans for the future? or What do you see for your child in the future?

For the professionals who participated in this study, the interview guide topics and a suggested initial question to be asked under each topic area were:

1. *Experience:* Can you tell me about your previous experience with children with disabilities?
2. *Blindness:* Can you tell me about what you think or feel about blindness, and what you think or feel other people think about blindness and blind people?
3. *School Experience:* Can you tell me about what you think (name of child)'s primary school experience is?
4. *School Social Life:* Can you tell me about what you think (name of child)'s social experiences at school are?
5. *Family Attitudes:* Can you tell me about what you think are the family's attitude towards (name of child)'s vision impairment?
6. *Professionals*: Can you tell me about your relationship with professionals in the field of blindness (and/or with (name of child)'s classroom teachers)?
7. *Parents:* Can you tell me about your relationship with (name of child)'s

parents?
8. *Inclusion, Mainstreaming, Special Units, Special Schools:* Can you tell me about your thoughts on inclusion, mainstreaming, special units, and special schools?
9. *Responsibility*: Who do you think, if anyone, should have the responsibility for providing services to blind children? why?
10. *Curriculum:* Can you tell me about (name of child)'s curriculum and how you teach?
11. *Your influence:* Can you tell me about your influence on education policy and practice for (name of child)?
12. *Barriers:* Can you tell me about what types of barriers, or things, exist which disadvantage (name of child), and you?
13. *If:* If you had a blind child, where would you send them to primary, intermediate, and secondary school today? why?
14. *Why here:* Why do you think (name of child) goes to (school's name)?
15. *Vocation:* Can you tell me about what you think (name of child)'s vocational interests, prospects, and experiences may be?
16. *Social Life:* Can you tell me about what you think (name of child)'s social life as an adult will be?
17. *Philosophy:* Can you tell me about your philosophical outlook teaching, and/or on life, which may have particular relevance to your views on blindness?
18. *Inclusion* Can you tell me about whether you think (name of child) is included in New Zealand society?
19. *Definitions:* Can you tell me about your definitions of disability, handicap and impairment?
20. *Terminology:* Can you tell me about what type of terminology you would like to see used in the disability area?
21. *Another If:* If you had to describe to a child or to an adult what to expect as a blind person in NZ, can you tell me what would you say?
22. *Future:* What do you see for (name of child) in the future?

The Interviews as Conversations

In practice, I rarely asked the suggested initial interview questions, because the interviews were informal and relaxed, and, in the end, did resemble more of a conversation than a research interview. This may have been due to the fact that I was acquainted with a number of the participants, or had become acquainted with them through the time which I spent either organising the interview, or visiting the various schools. I also was aware of the power and cultural issues involved in the interview process as documented by a number of researchers (Clough & Barton; 1995; Limerick, Burgess-Limerick, & Grace, 1996; Mishler, 1986; Oakley, 1981; Riessman, 1991;

Scheurich, 1995). Oakley (1981) suggested that in a "traditional" interview the participants are thought to be "objects under surveillance" (p. 33). My focus in the interviews was not the participants but the participants' social interactions with educational systems and professionals which might have a relationship to their experience of blindness. The participants were not the subjects of this study. In a sense, the subjects were education policy and practice as described by blind people, their parents, and their educational professionals. Oakley (1981) also noted that traditional interviews assume that interviewees should not ask the interviewer questions. In the interviews in which I was involved, the participants did ask me questions and did discuss issues with me. Like Oakley (1981), I also found that the participants did take the initiative in defining our relationship as something beyond the interview because I, also, was always hospitably asked to dinner if the interview was to take place after working hours, and I was always offered drinks at all of the interviews with the blind participants and their parents. The interviews with the professionals in their offices, however, seemed to be a bit more formal, except those with professionals whom I knew personally, and then these interviews also took place over cups of tea. Also, at Homai Vision Education Centre, I was kindly given a place to stay during my visit there. All of the interviews thus became a gift and a kind welcome into the lives of the participants in this study (Limerick, Burgess-Limerick, & Grace, 1996; Oakley, 1981).

The interview format, itself, seemed to naturally take on a temporal narrative form, despite the fact that the interview topics did not necessarily need to be discussed in any particular order. In general, the participants felt most comfortable remembering their experiences from the beginning of their lives through to the present. The questions about their thoughts and feelings about education and societal influences then tended to come last. This was in line with various contentions that the narrative mode is our method for organising our experiences, interactions, and "remembered self" (Bruner, 1994; Neisser, 1994; Gergen, 1994). The time suggested for each interview was about two hours. However, the time of individual interview conversations with the adults ranged from approximately one hour to three hours. Both the time and the number of interviews was dependent on the wishes of the participant. One blind child was interviewed with her mother present, and this interview lasted approximately forty five minutes. The interviews for the blind participants and parents took place in an environment which was named by the participant.

The blind participants, if necessary, were familiarised to the interview room and equipment before the interview began. Also, at the beginning of each interview, each participant's rights were reviewed again which included their right to not answer questions which may cause them discomfort; their right to turn off the tape recorder at any time; their right to ask that information obtained during the interview not be used in the study; their right to withdrawal from the study; and their right to confidentiality. Interviews proceeded only after the participant had indicated that they were ready to begin and were comfortable. The interviews in this study were open-ended and in depth. Reinharz (1992) emphasised that such interviews allow the researcher to access people's own views of reality, ideas, thoughts, and memories instead of the researcher's preconceived notions. She stated that open ended interviews help to avoid feelings of alienation between the participant and researcher and that multiple interviews were more likely to be accurate as the opportunity for the researcher to ask additional questions and to receive participant feedback was present (Reinharz, 1992).

Transcribing the Interviews

All of the interviews in this study were audio-taped and then transcribed word for word as close as possible to the original speech. I, personally, then checked the transcription by listening to the relevant audio-tape and correcting any typing errors. Also, because Mishler (1986) noted that spoken words which are not clear in audiotapes can be transcribed incorrectly, any word which was deemed unclear was replaced with a '?' in the transcription. Below is Table 1 which is a list, in the order of the interview schedule, of the number of interviews for each participant, how long they took, the number of transcribed pages, and where they took place. After the first interviews were completed, I called or emailed the blind participants and parents to check that they were happy with their interview and were willing to have their interview transcribed. They were given their transcript to review in their preferred medium. The preferred medium took the form of computer disc, Braille, or audio-tape. I was able to provide audio-tapes and computer discs, myself. However, providing the transcripts in Braille involved using one local Braille transcriber who signed a *Confidentiality Form* which stated that all information which was presented about the study would be confidential. This form was also signed by typists who transcribed the interview tapes into print.

Table 1

Interview Schedule, Time, Number of Transcript Pages, and Locations

	interviews	time	# pages	location
Sue	4	4.5 hrs	117 pges	kitchen
Hine	4	5.5 hrs	179 pges	kitchen
Jenny	3	3 hrs	95 pges	kitchen
Joe	3	3 hrs	94 pges	lounge/kitchen
William	3	5.5 hrs	120 pges	workplace
Tom	3	6 hrs	142 pges	kitchen/workplace
Stuart	3	8.5 hrs	183 pges	my friend's kitchen
Anne	2	5 hrs	127 pges	workplace
Joanne (parent)	1	2 hrs	53 pges	kitchen
Zwhaun (parent)	1	2.5 hrs	48 pges	lounge
Xena	1	.75 hrs	20 pges	lounge
Stacey/Junior (parents)	1	2 hrs	72 pges	kitchen
Total	29	48.25hrs	1250 pges	

Once the participants completed their transcript review, I asked them, if they wished, to change or delete any items in the transcript. I then subsequently altered their interview transcript and asked if they would sign an *Agreement for use of transcript* form which stated that they had the opportunity to review and amend the transcript; were satisfied with it; and gave consent for its use in research publications of the study. The blind participants also agreed to participate in a final interview after their first interviews had been transcribed, accepted, and initially interpreted. In their final interview, participants were able to correct or qualify their statements and comment on the emerging themes and analysis that was developing. Reinharz (1992) noted that such follow-up interviews allow the participants some control over the researcher's interpretations. These interview transcripts were also given to the participants to review, revise, and accept.

The Case Studies of the Children

The children in this study were of primary school age because education professionals in this field were concerned with early sensory, cognitive, and movement development issues. Primary school students are also just beginning their secondary socialisation experiences. I therefore expected to observe and examine how the meaning of blindness is constructed in the present as well as the impact of current educational practices on this meaning. I observed each child in their school as unobtrusively as possible, but with the child's knowledge. Each child was observed for several hours at different times during the day over a maximum period of two weeks, so that I could learn about their actual day to day educational experiences and environments. After being introduced to the class as a student who was interested in the class activities, I generally sat away from the participant in the back of the class and took field notes. During class time, I also interacted with and helped the students and teacher, but did not initiate these interactions or activities. As Bogdan and Biklen (1982) suggested, I documented aspects of the physical environment in the school, the participants on the scene, the curricula and recreational activities in which the participant took part, the social interactions which occurred with the participant, and the time of the activities and interactions. I also attempted to document, word for word, conversations which I heard, and, as Merriam (1988) suggested, more subtle factors such as nonverbal communication and events which may have been expected to happen, but which did not. Relevant documents, such as the child's school work or records, were also examined.

Below is Table 2 which lists, in observed order by participant, the days and time I observed in the school, and the number of transcribed field note pages. The field notes with pseudonyms for all of the participants were provided to the blind child's guardians for their review and acceptance.

Table 2

Observation Schedule, Time, and Number of Transcript Pages

	Days in School	time	# pages
Blair	Mon., Tues., Wed., Friday	28 hrs.	48 pges
Xena	Mon., Tues., Wed., Friday	28 hrs	39 pges
Davania	Mon., Tues., Wed., Thur.	28 hrs	28 pges
	Mon., Tues., Wed.	21 hrs	37 pges
Total	15 days	105hrs	152 pges

Davania's school, Homai Vision Education Centre, was visited twice and for a longer period of time because the original participant from this school withdrew from the study after the first observation week. Personal reasons were given for this withdrawal. However, through my time observing the children in this class, I was able to identify another potential participant, Davania, and subsequently her parents agreed for her to participate in this study. The original observations of Davania and her classmates, who also agreed to be observed, were included as part of the data for this study. I returned to the school to make further and more specific observations of Davania and her educational experience. I was able to use most of the interview transcripts from the principal and the programme director in the school, because their interviews were primarily about their educational philosophy since they had little contact with the first participant in the school. However, the classroom teacher was interviewed again, and Davania's O&M instructor and parents were interviewed for the first time.

The professionals in this study generally took part in one interview, which lasted from one to two hours, at their workplace in whatever quiet and comfortable room was available. Below in Table 3 is a list of these participants in their interview order with the number and time of their interview, the number of transcript pages of their interview, and the location of their interview. These interviews were also audio-taped and then transcribed. I also checked the transcriptions of these interviews. These participants were then given their transcripts to review, revise, and accept by signing an *Agreement for use of transcript* form.

The Discussion Group: Collaborating the Construction

As part of this research I acknowledged that I am not blind and I could be considered to be part of an oppressive blindness system because I have twenty-two years of experience in paid work with people with vision impairments in various capacities. However, through this study I wanted to learn how I could be part of a coalition of blind people and others, in order to identify and solve problems. My interest in this study had evolved from encountering a number of different educational perspectives and practices for blind children. Because I was also concerned that my own beliefs may dominate this research, as part of this study I established, with people whom I knew, a discussion group made up of two blind people (Eleanor and Pita) and a parent (Linda) of a blind child. Pita represented *Ngati Kapoo* (blind families) which

Table 3

Child Participants' Interview Schedule, Time, Number of Transcript Pages, and Location

	# interviews	time	# pages	location
Tracey (TA)	1	1.5 hrs	32 pges.	small empty office
Raquel (Teacher)	1	1.5 hrs	32 pges	small empty office
Chip (Principal)	1	1.5 hrs	25 pges	participant's office
Daphne (O&M)	1	1.5 hrs	32 pges	kitchen
Jane (Vision Teacher)	1	1.5 hrs	29 pges	participant's office
Liz (TA)	1	1 hrs	19 pges	empty classroom
Sam (Teacher)	1	1 hrs	19 pges	empty classroom
Ann (TA)	1	.5 hrs	9 pges	Resource lounge
Thornton (Principal)	1	1 hrs	16 pges	participant's office
Bob (O&M)	1	1.5 hrs	29 pges	participant's office
Catherine (VRC)	1	2 hrs	37 pges	Resource lounge
Bill (Principal)	1	1 hrs	24 pges	participant's office
Kitch (Dep. Principal)	1	1 hrs	20 pges	school lounge
Lee (Teacher)	2	2.5 hrs	41 pges	school cafeteria
Heidi (O&M)	2	1.5 hrs	27 pges	lounge/office
Total	17	20 hrs	391 pges	

is the Maori consumer group in New Zealand. The purpose of this group was to help me negotiate meaning within the study. Their opinions and thoughts about the study as it developed formed part of the interpretation of the educational experiences, policies, and practices. This discussion group helped to address two problems which are noted by Bishop (1994). These are the issues of the 'top-down' project which is dominated by the researcher's concerns, methodologies, and interests and the 'bottom-up' project in which participants are evangelistically enlightened by the researcher. The intent of the discussion group was to thus form a collaborative research approach in which people with direct experience of blindness interacted with and advised me on the research procedures and interpretation.

Such research participatory elements have also been documented by Meyer, Park, Grenot-Scheyer, Schwartz, and Harry (1998) as a means for addressing researcher and participant differences. Meyer, Park, Grenot-Scheyer, Schwartz, and Harry (1998) used advisory groups as they studied the social relations of children with diverse abilities. They also were concerned that research does not necessarily have an affect on educational practice if practitioners were not involved in the research, and that the researcher meanings may intrude on the experiences of the participants whose culture, gender, and life experiences are significantly different to the researcher's. Their advisory groups were made up of representatives of relevant constituency groups, as is the discussion group for this study. Within their study, they were advised at decision points which they believed were part of the research process. The discussion group for this study was involved in three such decision points. These included the way in which data collection occurred, the way the findings were analysed and interpreted, and the way that final conclusions were drawn. The group advised me on all of these issues through our meetings, informal telephone conversations, and through their comments about the results chapters as they developed.

The blind participants and the parents of children in this study were also given the opportunity to provide me with feedback about my interpretation of their experiences and the data analysis process. All participants were given their transcripts to read and comment upon. If they were involved in a final interview, they were also asked to comment then about the research and the interpretations which the discussion group provided about their initial interviews. The blind adult participants were asked to comment on some conference papers which I developed as the research progressed and the initial results chapters in which they were included. Tripp (1983) noted that at times such consultation and negotiation is sometimes a "tortuous path" (p.32), but worthy because the representation of people's views and experiences needs to be "co-structured" (p. 35) in order to provide a fair and rational account of the participants' thoughts and stories. This study, as Tripp (1983) argued, thus becomes less concerned about what actually was said in the interview, and more concerned with what the participants want said in the final account of their experiences.

The discussion group's involvement with the study began when the members of this group agreed to participate by signing a *Consent and Confidentiality Form for Discussion Group Members* which stated that they understood and read the particpant information sheets; had all of their questions answered; were aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty; and were aware that their name would not be used in the final report of this study unless permission for this had been granted. The group then met at Eleanor's home over cups of tea after each of the ten case studies was completed. The home was welcoming and centrally located. At our meetings, Eleanor, Pita and Linda were asked to review interview transcript summaries, and discuss five open-ended questions. The interview transcript summaries were prepared after each participant completed their interviews. I prepared these by identifying the interview guide topic areas and presenting paragraphs of direct interview quotes under each area which I thought exemplified the participants' views. I also added other topic area headings if the participant spoke of other issues not within the topic area. I prepared a summary of the field note observations of the three children in this study by condensing the common and uncommon events in the four days into one day. These transcript summaries and field note summaries were given in the preferred medium to the relevant participant for their review and acceptance as well. The summaries and discussion questions were provided to the group members in their preferred medium (either print or disc) at least a week before our meeting, Since the disc copies of the transcript summaries, which were read through soft-ware packages with synthesised speech, did not have page numbers, each paragraph was numbered so that we could easily track them in our discussion.

The discussion questions for the meetings were: 1. What were your initial impressions of this person's experiences and 'story'; 2. What does this story tell you; 3. What does this story tell you about being blind; 4. What does this story tell you about education: and 5. What would you further want to ask or know about this person? The meeting, itself, was audio-taped, and lasted from one to two hours in the evening. I then later took notes from these tapes as I wrote and intrepreted the results of this study. The meetings at Eleanor's house included a lot of laughter and were very informal. However, we did methodically focus on each discussion question and one at a time. Also, each member of the group was given an opportunity to talk, and to discuss their thoughts, about each of the five questions, as we went round the circle five times. As time went on, the group was able to interpret the participant's experiences in light of the other experiences which they had previously discussed. We ended the meeting by developing a list of questions for me to ask the particular participant in a final interview. The discussion group decided that they did not need to ask any final questions for the participants in the case studies of the three children. Members of the discussion group were given in their preferred medium the first drafts of the results chapters, as well as any conference papers which I wrote about this study, so that their feedback could be continually obtained as I interpreted the data.

Demographics: The Context of the Construction

As part of this study, I also wished to compile some demographic data for blind children in New Zealand, in order to further place this study into context. I, therefore, asked each of the eleven New Zealand Resource Centres and two Visual Resource Units which all included children with vision impairments on their roll, and Homai Vision Education Centre to complete some questions and demographic tables about their roll for the years: 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1994, 1995, and 1996. This permission was sought through a *Letter for the School Boards of Trustees of Schools with a*

Resource Centre or Unit and through a *Letter for Resource Centres or Units,* themselves. These letters briefly described the study and asked that they help provide some demographic data for the overall context of the study. The *Demographic Data Tables for Schools with a Vision Teacher* asked for the number of students with visual impairments on their roll in pre-school, in primary school, in intermediate school, in secondary school, and in tertiary school. It also asked how many students in each of these settings were Braille users; were RNZFB members; were attending their local school; were attending a school with a Resource Room; and were attending a special school. *The Demographic Data Table for Homai Vision Education Centre,* excluding the Visual Resource Centre attached to it, asked for the number of students with visual impairments in the same school levels except at the Tertiary level and how many of these students were Braille users and RNZFB members as above. It asked how many students in each of these settings were attending a local school with a Visual Resource Centre, a school with a Unit, and classes at Homai Vision Education Centre, and how many students were day or residential students at Homai Vision Education Centre. A questionnaire was also included with all of the tables which were sent out. It asked the Resource Centres, Resource Units, and Homai Vision Education Centre if they had any difficulty collecting this data and if so could they describe these difficulties; if their data was not exact and the reasons for this in what years; and if they had any comments which they would like to make.

Data Analysis: Writing and Constructing the Results

The data for this study were collected in 1996 and 1997. The initial analysis of this data also occurred during this period. As suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1982), I looked for key themes, issues and events from one case study to the next in order to form the study's categories of focus and the emerging themes. The participants, themselves, as discussed above, were part of the analysis process through their transcript and conference paper reviews, and through their final interviews. After the data was obtained, I then began the task of analysing, interpreting, and transforming the 1700 pages of transcripts into this thesis. The interview texts were the first data format with which I worked. Interviews, according to Mishler (1986), are primarily a research method whose purpose is to "to understand what respondents mean by what they say in response to our queries and thereby to arrive at a description or respondents' worlds of meaning that is adequate to the tasks of systematic analysis and theoretical interpretation" (p. 7) He also noted that interviews are speech events and not simply stimulus-response behavioural activities without a context. Mishler argued that the interview is discourse in a narrative form which is jointly constructed by the interviewer and interviewee. The analysis of these narrative constructions in the writing of this study took into account Mishler's criticism of interview reports where the participants' contextual narratives or stories were absent.

My first task, however, was to organise the data into a manageable form, and create a paper trail which would help me locate and organise information in the data. This involved using Kvale's (1996) notion of meaning categorisation. I read each transcript again and categorised the text by conversation topic. Some textual sections could be categorised under a number of topics. For example, if a participant talked about their teacher at kindergarten, then this section of the text could be categorised under 'kindergarten' and 'kindergarten teachers'. A ring bound book was created which was indexed by categories. The participant's pseudonym, the relevant transcript page number, and a brief summary of the text item with key words was listed under each category. The categories were developed in sequence along with the temporal nature of the interview narrative. I developed the categories as I read the transcripts of my first participant, and then added to the categories, as I read through the other participant's transcripts if necessary. By the end of the third participant, no further topic categories needed to be developed. There were eighty five meaning categories which had been developed. I then reduced these by linking related categories into category clusters

Table 4

Meaning Category Clusters

*Cluster	Transcript Meaning Category
*1	Memory/Cause of Blindness
*2	Kindy/Pre-school; Pre-school/Kindy Teachers
*3	Why/Why Not/Feelings About Homai;
*4	Homai Assessment; To/From Homai/Sunrise; First Weeks Away
*5	Blind Friends; Role Models/Peer Support; School Together; Separate Culture/Community/World
*6	Hostel Facts; Moving Hostels; Hostel Staff; School/Hostel Hierarchy; Discipline/Regiment; Teasing
*7	Results of Going Away
*8	Outside Visitors/Visits and Family Visits; Outside Activities
*9	Parnell/Homai Teachers
*10	General Curriculum; Braille/Reading
*11	Music
*12	Orientation & Mobility; Techniques of Daily Living; Exploring
*13	Public; Privacy
*14	Family/Personal Expectations
*15	Reverse Integration; Stepping Stones
*16	Nearby Intermediate; Local Intermediate
*17	Local Primary; Non-Local Primary
*18	Islands in the Mainstream; Difference/Teasing
*19	Organised/More Responsible; Access to the Curriculum; Noise; Maths; General Curriculum
*21	Visual Resource Centres/Units/Teachers; Principals; Mainstream Teachers; Teacher Aides
*22	Blindness- Personal Thoughts/Experience
*23	Nearby Secondary School; Local/Non Local Secondary School
*24	Educational Control/Decisions
*25	Friends in the Mainstream; Communication/Body Language; Likes/Dislikes ; Blindisms
*26	Self Esteem/Personality; Body Image
*27	Employment; Vocational/Future; University
*28	Dating/Partners; Gender Issues; Parenting; Home School
*29	Family; Siblings; Grandparents; Maori Heritage
*30	Medical Professionals; Educational/RNZFB Professionals
*31	Inclusion
*32	Barriers; Societal Attitudes Toward Disabilities, Media, Fundraising
*33	Rights; Oppressed; Advocacy/New Zealand Consumer Groups
*34	Advice about New Zealand
*35	Who is/was/should be responsible for education; Government; Vision Education Agency; RNZFB Board of Directors
*36	Definitions of Disability, Handicap, Impairment
*37	Researchers

and are documented above in Table 4. These links appeared as I began to write this thesis.

As I began to describe, analyse, interpret, restory, and as Wolcott (1994) suggested, transform through writing the data into an account of this exploration of the meaning of blindness, overriding themes and subthemes began to emerge from the data and the meaning category clusters. These overriding themes are presented in Table 5. They emerged as a structure for the representation of this study which also helped me to organise my writing, as well as my thoughts as I wrote (Wolcott, 1990). The themes were common to all of the participants, and yet each of the participants' experiences within the themes and subthemes had a unique character. Thus, it became an important part of this study to contextually understand each individual participant's story within each theme and not to present the themes as disembodied from the participant's experiences which could occur if my results chapters were organised by individual themes. In chapters organised by themes, the individual stories of the ten blind participants would certainly have become lost and diffused, and as Scheurich (1995) pointed out, "all the juice of the lived experience (would be) squeezed out" (p. 241). Scheurich (1995) also argued that presentation of the individual themes are dependent on the researcher's creativity and that presentation of studies always carries the researcher's "baggage" (p. 249).

Including the Researcher

Scheurich (1995) further suggested that a researcher could, to some extent, ameliorate their imposition on the meaning of the research by simply providing a comprehensive statement about themselves so that the reader can more fully understand the interpretations which have been placed on the research. I am an older student who is now forty four years old. I have a Bachelor's degree in psychology, as well as drama, from Tufts University. My interest in psychology has been primarily in social psychology. My drama study, which is ongoing through my interest in film and video, was initially in theatre history and design. I also have a Masters degree in

Education from Boston College where I was trained as a peripatologist, or Orientation and Mobility Instructor, for blind children. I have since then worked in various organisations in the United States and New Zealand for the past 17 years in Orientation and Mobility. My interest in this study evolved from my work and my desire to expand my knowledge beyond Orientation and Mobility and to change careers. I hope that this thesis will lead me to employment in academia or policy. I am a lesbian and feel that I am aware of, and have experienced myself, societal barriers. My mother is a solo parent and raised my Greek family in a working and lower class Irish and Italian neighbourhood in a Boston, Massachusetts, suburb, although I spent my primary school years in a State Housing Project in Anchorage, Alaska. My attendance at Universities throughout my life has been financed through scholarships, grants, loans, and part time employment. For this period of study, I have received a small grant from the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind in return for quarterly reports of my work, for acknowledgements in any publications of this work, and for a copy of the thesis.

Presenting the Study

In the presentation of my study, I have attempted to let the reader get to know the blind participants, and their own interpretation of the meaning of blindness through both my words, and their words. I have organised three chapters of this study around the data from small groupings of the participants who could be seen by the reader in their common, as well as, unique and contextual story through the themes which emerged as I read their interview transcripts. So in a sense, I have attempted to put back the stories, which I had creatively taken apart. These chapters' groupings were formed according to age because the participants' experience of blindness occurred in a similar historical and societal context. I also have included the discussion group's thoughts about each of the participant's story in the result chapters. The themes and subthemes are documented in Table 5 along with their associated meaning category clusters and serve as a structure for the retelling of the participants' experiences. It is interesting to note that some meaning category clusters seemed to be directly related to a theme, while other clusters floated from one theme to another. For example, the cluster which included the family was utilised a number of times to further illustrate a number of emerging themes as I wrote this report.

The representation of these themes was written in a form which closely resembled the original transcribed data because I wished to include the participant's own words in this report. Kvale (1996) noted that direct quotes provide an impression of the interaction in the interview conversation, and exemplify the data in studies. I have also used Kvale's guidelines for reporting interview quotes in that the quotes are related to the text, contextualized, interpreted, balanced, short, and the best quote for the purpose (p. 266-267). They have been edited in that some of the 'ums', 'you knows', and repeated words have been left out so that they are easy to read and understand. I have also used three dots in the text, (. . .), to indicate if there are unrelated words or sentences which have been not been used in the quote.

Writing the Research

The characters in the text are written in Palatino text in a twelve font. I have also developed a large print copy of this report in fourteen point Arial text. This will allow some persons with a vision impairment to read the text of this document more easily. A permanently locked unformatted computer disc is also attached to the thesis so that blind people can access its contents with high technology. This thesis, itself, is longer than the maximum of 100,000 words because more of the actual participants' words are used in the presentation of the results of this study, rather than my words. This will take the reader more time to read. However, I believe that the richness, thickness, and uniqueness of the participants' words will be worth the effort. The three results chapters of this report have been crafted and constructed by me in the mornings over many rainy as well as sunny days. I have interpreted, and placed together, as well as in opposition, the different participants' stories. The chapter constructions have developed from my interaction with the data, participants, and discussion group and ultimately are my attempt to tell a meaningful story, as outlined by Wolcott (1994),

Table 5

The Study's Themes, Subthemes and Related Cluster Numbers

Theme	Subthemes	Related Cluster #s
The place for blind people:		
	* Blind children must leave their families to be educated.	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, 14, 24, 29
	* Blind children need to be controlled.	5, 6, 7, 26, 35
	* Blind people need to be watched.	6, 13, 15, 26, 35
	* Blind children learn best with other blind people.	5, 6, 9, 10
Finding other places for blind children.		
	* Getting away from the block	4, 8, 14, 29
	* Smart blind children can go to mainstream schools, but may not feel supported or included	4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 23, 25, 26, 29, 30, 31
	* Educational professionals include and exclude blind children	1, 9, 10, 11, 18,19, 21, 30, 31
Places to learn are hard to find		
	* Braille is literacy for blind children	3, 4, 10, 19, 21, 31
	* Blind people need and want to be taught specialist curricula	3, 4, 6, 9, 12, 13, 18,19, 21, 22, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32
	* Blind children can learn music, but not other parts of the ordinary curriculum	3, 5, 10, 10, 11, 19, 22, 27, 31
Places for blind adults.		
	* Blind children's futures are limited	3, 4, 5, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 35
	* There is a community of blind people	3, 4, 5, 22, 29, 32, 33
	* The participants have something to say about educational policy\practice for blind children	3, 5, 22, 24, 27, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37

through description, analysis, and interpretation. This representation is another social construction of the data (Steier, 1991). The personal tone and the use of 'I' in this report is, as Eisner (1991) noted, a signature for this report to prevent a disembodied abstraction of the author. As the primary instrument for this study, I have, in the end and through language of writing, uniquely interpreted the data. However, Eisner (1991) has noted that this is not a license for freedom, but an acknowledgement of my subjectivity, or my involvement with the research. Heshusius (1994) argued that subjectivity is a concept which is linked with positivist notions that a researcher can be objective. Researchers instead need to recognise that a researcher's participation and subsequent act of knowing cannot be accurately, verbally, or scientifically accounted for (Heshusius, 1994). Heshusius also linked knowing with full attention to another, with rigour, and with a mutually evolving world which is enchanted. Eisner (1991) similarly links knowledge with a connoisseurship that is appreciative of an array of qualities.

In the writing of this report, I hoped to become an educational connoisseur as defined by Eisner (1991). I have attempted in the following three results chapters to portray the important aspects of the meaning of blindness in New Zealand in remembered stories which are told around themes. Each chapter is one story which gives a sense of each of the chapter participants' unique and common experience of blindness in education. The chapters are also made up of the various sections which are also stories in themselves about the historical, social, curricular, pedagogical, and political meanings of blindness in education. The first results chapter is about the blind participants who grew up in the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s: Tom, Anne, and Hine. Their memories provide this study with a rich description of their times at the Foundation for the Blind which was their school and a potential workplace and lifetime residence. The second results chapter is about the participants who grew up in the 1970s and 1980s: William, Sue, Stuart, and Joe. They tell us about their, and their parents', struggles to leave the Foundation for the Blind and to participate in the "sighted world". The last results chapter is about the blind participants who are growing up in this decade, the 1990s: Davania, Xena, and Blair. Their stories are told through their parents, the educational professionals in their lives, my field observations, and their own words. The concluding two chapters of this report further interprets the participants' experience of blindness; places these interpretations into a theoretical context; and discusses the implications of this study for education policy and practice.

Chapter Six

Blindness is about the Institute for the Blind

> *Tom: There was . . . the cradle to grave sort of idea. . . . You would graduate from Nathan House to Pearson House which was the young men's hostel. . . . I mean it was Dickensian. It was hell. And then go to the workshops and then go and die in Bledisloe House or Hudson House if you were a woman. . . . And I knew that I was going to break out of that at some stage but I didn't quite know when.*

Introduction

This first results chapter includes the educational experiences of Tom, Anne, and Hine who were primary aged students in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Their attendance at various types of schools is listed below in Table 6 for easy reference.

Table 6

The Type and Order of Schools attended by Tom, Anne, and Hine

	Pre-School	Primary	Intermediate	Secondary
Tom	Local, Sunrise* (Sp.)	Parnell (Sp.)	Parnell (Sp.)	Nearby
Anne	Local, Sunrise* (Sp.)	Parnell (Sp.)	Local	Not Local
Hine	Sunrise (Sp.) & Nearby	Homai (Sp.)	Nearby	Nearby

'Local' refers to schools nearest to the family home
'Nearby' refers to schools near Parnell or Homai
'(Sp.)' refers to special schools for blind children
* The family relocated to be close to their blind child at this point in the child's educational career

Part One: The Place For Blind People

The experience of blindness for the participants in this chapter was firmly linked to the 'Institute for the Blind', later named the 'Foundation for the Blind', and then 'The Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind'. Each of the particpants described the personal effects of societal and educational discourse of the time which firmly placed blind children in the hands of the Foundation. They needed to leave their families to be educated and attend the special school. They also needed to be controlled, watched, and grouped together because it was felt that blind children learned best with other blind children and were not able to make decisions about their own lives.

Blind Children must leave their families to be educated

Tom

> *I probably in some way thought that everyone was without sight. I didn't perceive too much difference until we had to go to school.*

Tom, who grew up in the 1940s and 50s, explained that this was a time in which individuals had 'their place', and for blind people this meant living away from their families at the Institute for the Blind's special schools in Auckland. There was a special residential school for pre-schoolers, called 'Sunrise', and there was a special residential school for primary and secondary students in Parnell, called 'Parnell'. He stated that he remembered that his mother felt pressured to think that she was doing "well by him" by sending him and his blind sibling, her only children, to Auckland because this was "a place where . . . blind people could live and be educated." This pressure specifically came from a Lady B. who, Tom said, was from a prominent and "well meaning" family; was "paternalistic"; came to his home; and "spoke with a very English accent." He remembered this occurring when he was about four years old, but he did not remember how Lady B. found the family. He has just assumed that she was sent by the Institute for the Blind, which was later renamed 'The Foundation for the Blind', to do some "charity work." He also felt that mainstreaming of blind children was not considered by the Foundation for the Blind at that time because "it was the whole 'out of sight out of mind'. 'Look, you give us the money and we'll look after these people and don't you worry'." Tom stated, as well, that his family had been told that "blind children couldn't be educated" except in Auckland.

Before his residential experience at the special school, Tom recalled a happy childhood in which he was not treated as different. He also stated that he felt part of a community. The neighbours were very supportive of his mother, and he played with the children from down the road. He attended the local kindergarten where he remembered a "good atmosphere." His statement below is indicative of his early memories:

> I remember the whistles and the excitement so we may well have gone to a (Armistice) parade. I remember too dad had an old Model Y and I remember once he took us to the football or something. We ended up, I remember, sitting on a high stool in a pub somewhere drinking raspberry drink.

The move to the residential school for blind pre-schoolers, Sunrise, was traumatic for Tom and his entire family. Tom described his reactions and feelings of being "left" by his parents:

> I didn't want them to let go of me. . . . I mean they told me it was going to be all right. But I realised they were telling me that so that they could cope with it. I mean they knew damn well it wasn't all right. . . . And I was told to be a good boy and all this crap. And I just wanted to shout and holler, you know, "but this wasn't right."

He cried only for a brief time for his parents. He remembered that this was because the Sunrise staff told him that "children did not behave that way", and said, "You're being a silly bugger." Tom's parents did shift to Auckland to be near their children. However, according to Tom, they were not able to advocate for their children to become day students because of "the whole society thing", and because blind people weren't considered to be able to have much independence. Tom's father died soon after the move and his mother found it difficult to cope without the support of the friends whom she left behind:

> And dad was . . . transferring up to Auckland. . . . I am very unaware of the exact time, but it wasn't that long before he became ill. . . . And after he died mum came back up. She must have been up in Auckland for

> three or four years, but then she became isolated. She actually had a sort of . . . (had a) breakdown and she ended up in hospital. . . . I think she was just completely exhausted and no support, no support at all. And then she moved back to (her home town).

Tom also felt unsupported at Sunrise and he was not encouraged to grieve about his father's death:

> We got a telegram and again there was this sort of general thing that you didn't get upset about it. It was almost like someone told us . . . "the cat's had kittens." Like it was almost along those sort of lines. It was strange. I think we were in the day room. And I think the staff member actually had found it quite difficult to tell us. But I also remember as well, you know 'we've just had to get on'.. It was like mum and dad were completely separate almost. Like it was like they were in one world and we were in another world sort of thing.

The discussion group for this study felt that such experiences had caused Tom to build walls around himself thoughout his life, and said that the Foundation was a very "powerful place" which "owned its charges."

Anne

> *I certainly would have realised, well and truly by then that I had to learn to read by touch. That I wasn't gonna learn to read with my eyes like the others.*

Anne grew up in the 1950s, and 60s, and similarly to Tom, remembered that the educational pedagogy at the time was that blind children could only be educated in Auckland. Her memories of her separation from her family at age four and her time at Sunrise were scant. Anne had memories of two kind nurses, but also recalled having her freedom restricted and not being encouraged to develop:

> They had trees that you could start to learn to climb on to but there wasn't anyone to actually build confidence so that you would climb further. I think the furtherest I ever got was about waist height. I discovered that I could climb up that far but I didn't go any further.

She also remembered the upheaval when her family moved:

> Dad and I came up first and Dad stayed. I think Dad lived with his sister while he was selecting a house in Auckland. . . . Lots of things happened. Dad was bringing us up to Auckland. My younger brother was having plastic surgery on his hair lip and anyway eventually the whole of the family came back together in Auckland. But I went to the pre-school part of the Foundation, Sunrise. And I boarded there for a while. . . . . I'm not sure how long. I actually lived at Sunrise. I am happy to give you access to my personal school records if you wish. . . . I have no idea what's in them. And I frankly don't care.

What Anne did speak about was her happy and inclusive childhood before the move to Auckland. She adventurously explored her big two storied house, knew all the local shopkeepers, "smelt super wine type biscuits in (the grocery) van," and took the bus to a local kindy. Her kindergarten years were positive and she was able to develop a friendship with another disabled child:

> Apparently there was a young boy.. . . . I don't know that he was really (intellectually handicapped). If he was, it was only extremely mild. But I think that (he) was my eyes and I was his brains. And we used to get on the bus and go off to kindy. . . . . You see in those days the bus drivers knew who everybody was. Like there was only one bus that went round . . . Um what I remember about kindergarten? I remember about a crank handle telephone, nice teachers and I remember having to be lectured on the subject of biting.

Hine

Someone must have come down to have a talk with my parents and that, and they decided to put me in there. I was two.

At Sunrise, the residential home for blind pre-schoolers, Hine remembered that "we just found out that we were all one and the same." She was a student at the Foundation for the Blind's special schools in the 1960s and 70s. She recalled in her interviews that her whanau (family) felt unable to care for her because of her blindness. They felt that she would have more opportunities at the special residential schools:

> I think they found it easier to have me in Auckland at a place like that, because they didn't really see that they could do much for me at home. . . . Yeah, I think they felt that I could do better in a place like that.

Hine did not remember leaving her whanau. However, she did remember leaving Sunrise to visit her whanau. These visits were confusing and upsetting because she had become part of a family at Sunrise:

> I don't remember leaving home at age two. I remember actually going home at about age four. . . . I remember the nurses taking me home and then leaving, and holidays after that. And that was a bit difficult. Because you're sort of confused you know. Well you see your family and then the next minute you're going back to another family as it were.

From a young age Hine also began to feel separated from her Maori heritage. This was noted by the discussion group as well and the group felt that Hine appeared homeless as an adult. Hine said that on her visits home as a child "you sort of got a guilt complex about where your bloodline (was)." Hine also stated that she found a mother substitute at Sunrise with whom she still keeps in contact. Hine's memories of Sunrise were very positive and she wondered why more parents didn't send their children there:

> Well it was like a great big house. It was based on a home environment. Yeah it was great. And oh there must have been about twenty of us at any one time. . . . They to me were more like my brothers and sisters than my actual brothers and sisters were. They were more my family I think. Well I spent more time with them didn't I?

Ironically, despite being in a special residential facility, Hine did go to a local kindergarten near her home at Sunrise and, like Tom and Anne, her memories of her kindergarten experience were happy and inclusive:

> Yes, I went to a normal kindy. Absolutely loved it. . . . You met so many other children and the bits that I do remember is that we just accepted one another for what we were. Didn't feel different, never felt left out . . . (The teachers) didn't stop us from doing anything that the others did. Like if they did finger painting or if they played outside. . . .They just let us do

what they did.

Hine's break from her 'Sunrise' family to go to primary school at the Foundation for the Blind's special school which by then had moved from Parnell and had been renamed 'Homai College' was very traumatic:

> I went alone and I was dreadfully homesick for Sunrise. Dreadfully homesick. I cried. I cried for weeks. . . . And it was just a whole new ball game and the hostel was so big and there was lots of staff and noise. And it just wasn't fair. It was scary.

'Naturally' moving on to the special school

Hine felt like she was "thrown into Homai." She stated that she was particularly upset about the move because there was "a straight cut off." She was not allowed to see her 'mum' from Sunrise, and this "was awful." When Tom and Anne moved on to the residential hostels in Parnell, they did not recall the same trauma that Hine described, possibly because they had not experienced the same family bonds at Sunrise. Also, both of Tom's and Anne's families were nearby for weekend visits and phone calls. Tom said the move was a natural progression:

> I suppose it was a natural progression. And in some ways I was quite pleased to shift. Like because I wanted to get on with life I think. Like it was like 'gosh you know this is the next phase'.

Anne did not remember the move, per se, but did remember not feeling good about the Foundation and not liking the boarding aspect of it. Her earliest memory of Parnell at about age five depicted an isolated and desolate picture of a small girl, lying in bed and listening to the outside world:

> My earliest memory of Parnell are my earliest nights in the Parnell Hostel boarding school listening to the buzzer going off. Yeah. People crossing the road.

Blind people need to be controlled

Anne felt safe in her bed at Parnell because she was not under the regiment of the Foundation Hostel Staff:

> I do remember what I now regard as mean and miserable battle axes. But I think that part of that is to do with being away from home and regimentation. I remember my bed as being a place of safety.

Hine's memories of her young life were that of schedules and routines:

> It was so routine and you did everything by the bell. You did everything by lining up before you went anywhere. So if you went to breakfast you lined up first. Go to school, line up. . . . Based on the army sort of system.

Tom recalled feeling controlled by the routine at Parnell and described living in the Hostels as drab and awful:

> Where we lived was certainly the drab side of it. That was a drab side of not feeling you had much control. Like you were told what to do; told when to get up. Some of the food was pretty awful. And the weekends were pretty awful because like on Saturdays they felt you had to go out. So you were put in this crocodile and you used to go out somewhere or walk to the Domain . . . You had to follow on and so forth. Like crossing roads you always had to go in this sort of formation.

Both Tom and Hine commented that they remembered sweets were strictly controlled:

> Hine: And you didn't buy lollies and then just eat them like you do, like you can do. You bought lollies and you only ate them at the weekend.

The participants commented that power and control was also maintained by the children themselves through various power hierarchies. Hine believed that for the big girls "it would never do to mix with the little girls. That's the way it was there." Anne told a story about the rules of the senior girls:

> The meanest story I remember actually relates to (a girl), who was . . about ten years older than me. . . . I was about six and there was a real rule that said that "you were never, under pain of death, you were not allowed into the senior girls space." . . . And they each had their own rooms. That was the height of importance to have your own room. . . . And so anyway I had brought this book . . . upstairs from school one night. . . . And (this girl) was curious to know what I was reading so I showed it to her and then off (she ran) down the stairs and said "come and get it." I don't actually remember to this day how that was resolved but what I remember was a particularly mean streak in (her). And I've never really forgiven her.

Anne stated that children who had vision, versus congenitally blind children, were also at the top of the hierarchy. However, these children, Anne said, also were manipulated by the blind children to do things for them. Anne recounted an Australian phrase about volunteers to describe this: "you eulogise the volunteers and utilise the partialees." However, she also noted that the children with partial sight were useful as guides and teachers. For example, she learned to tie her shoes from an older girl with partial sight.

All three participants felt that teasing and bullying was part of the Homai or Parnell culture at the time. Anne said this was because the staff did not discourage this behaviour and did not say, "Hang on a minute. That's not the way to behave." Tom was teased but said this experience helped him eventually break from the Foundation:

> For me it wasn't so much the sighted who gave me a hard time but it was actually the blind kids themselves who used to call me "spastic", and "waggle head", and I was always considered a bit of the dunce . . . It was considered that I wouldn't be any good to make up the numbers to play cricket . . . I think that I was just at the bottom of the pecking order at that stage. But I was saying to my friend that it had a bit of a paradoxical effect. Cos I actually decided then that I was going to grind these bastards into the dust, as it were. And that's what basically, I think, happened a little bit. Like especially when I became independent from the Foundation and took my own direction which was very different from anyone else I was at school with.

All of these three participants' reconstruction of the Foundation's Hostel Staff presented a picture of untrained single older women who were perpetrators of punishment and humiliation. Anne described them as "mean and miserable battle axes." Tom remembered that they thought that "children were a bloody nuisance," and he felt they were also cruel. Tom had a memory of being told that he should not have been born by one of his favourite house mistresses:

> I remember once. . . and I felt very angry. And it's a funny thing we were told by someone who we quite liked. I remember someone saying "well why didn't your mother stop after she had one child."

Hine felt that the authoritarianism in the staff was due to the fact that they were too busy with too many children, and they had no experience of motherhood:

> Well when you're a mother you've got motherly instincts haven't you. She didn't. She was just 'matron ' and 'we'll do it this way and not that way.' And she didn't make any allowances the way mothers do.

Hine recalled that the staff humiliated her if she put her clothes on the wrong way by telling her to leave them on in the wrong position all day. Tom felt the punishment and rules to which he was subjected by the staff taught him how to be cunning and deceptive:

> It was mainly standing in corners. The matron actually used to use the strap but then there were complaints and she was forbidden to use them. Mainly it was actually privileges were taken away. Like one of the things we used to like at school was (our) crystal set (radio). . . . Well some house mistresses were very strict and they felt there was times where you switched the crystal set off and put your earphones up. But quite often we learnt to have two pairs of earphones, one on the locker and one coming in through the head of the bed and under the pillow where we could listen to late night programmes.

Anne and Tom, who went to school at the Foundation for the Blind's School at the Parnell site, had contact with the blind adults in the workshops because they were also located within the same block in Parnell. Hine did not have any contact with the adults in the workshops. These blind adults were described by Anne and Tom as authoritarian and formidable. Anne was particularly frightened by one woman:

> On a school outing one day we went and visited the workshops. . . . What I do remember was being filled with horror. Miss D. was a woman who was a very stentorian creature. She had a very loud deep voice and she hated kids and we were all always in her way or stupid or something. She was a blind woman who lived in McCoy House and worked in the workshop but you could hear her for miles around. . . . I met her in the workshops, filling packets with rat poison. And I just remember that being absolutely horrendous and thinking, "Oh please. No."

Anne remembered visiting the braille library where the "kind " staff member was a partially sighted man, and where the rest of the staff were totally blind women who, Anne said, were "horrible"; "hated kids"; and "behaved like the house staff." Tom, who went out to attend a local high school, was ostracised by blind people in the workshop:

> I mean we were ostracised a lot by them as well. And told we were smart asses sort of thing. Yes. And it was a feeling of probably that we were the elite group and that we had to be brought back into line as it were.

Blind people need to be watched

Another issue which came up for the participants about their lives was privacy. Tom felt like he was constantly "being watched." He stated that he was herded through the showers by staff who watched and supervised his bathing until age thirteen or fourteen when he moved to another Hostel. Tom found only one place where he had privacy:

> The only privacy you got was really when you found a part of yard where you knew you couldn't be watched. But even then you couldn't be certain.

Hine and Anne were not as concerned about being supervised when taking a bath during their primary years because they were also supervised at home. However, Anne remembered the "older girls complaining bitterly about (there) not being enough privacy." Hine, on the other hand, was quite frightened about bodily harm during her first shower. She had not expected to be shut in a shower stall and associated privacy with being alone and fear:

> When I went to Homai it was the first time I'd ever been into a shower and that was scary. . . . We're in this great big box type of thing and the doors are being shut on you. You weren't used to that. I remember at Sunrise it wasn't a problem if the staff came in and saw you or they came in and helped you. . . . But I mean when you go to Homai and suddenly the door's being closed on you and you're in this great big echo bathroom with a whole lot of other girls. And you don't know what's hit you. And you've got this water running down on you. . . . That's where I started to learn what privacy was all about. Well . . . when they shut this door on you wondered what for.

Later when Hine was an adolescent she felt her personal life was invaded when Homai objected to letters which she was writing to, and receiving from, her family. Homai paid for her mother to attend a meeting about these letters and unfortunately this was the only time that her mother was able to visit Homai:

> Well I was writing letters to my cousins and that. And they'd write back to me and tell me all about their social lives. . . . And who they were going round with at the time and all that kind of thing. And I don't think the school thought it was very good for us. . . . One of the staff went into my drawer and took a letter out and read it. . . . Over the top. . . . They read my letter. . . . Well they got mum up for this meeting and mum stopped the letters. . . . To keep me in school I'd say. . . . She stayed a night and they flew her back the next day. . . . It was quite awful.

Tom actually left the Foundation as a young man because he felt that his privacy had been invaded when a hostel staff member told another blind person what was written in a letter which Tom had received and which she had read for him.

Even the Board of Trustees at the Foundation became involved in Tom's personal decisions:

> I remember there was a guy . . . and he was telling me years later that the Board devoted a whole meeting to my morals. . . . And one of the things was because I was actually wearing corduroy trousers.

Such paternalistic attitudes and such intrusiveness, Tom believed, carried over into the public domain when visitors came to the Foundation:

> And I remember at school we often used to feel like monkeys in cages because visitors would come round and watch. . . . Oh yes. They'd watch you doing braille.. . . . You'd be doing something and suddenly a whole lot of people would appear. . . . A freak show.

Blind children learn best with other blind people

The classrooms at Parnell and Homai were segregated in that braille users were separated from print users even though most of the teachers did not know braille. Tom and Anne both felt that there were not challenged by their teachers. Tom felt that he "coasted along." Similarly, Anne said:

> I don't think I was getting stretched enough. I wasn't being taught enough in my reading, writing and 'rithmetic and in fact it wasn't till I got to Form One that we really started to have serious maths.

Tom and Anne, however, stated that most of their teachers were supportive and encouraging:

> Tom: And you know they encouraged us to have a wide knowledge of history and geography. . . . And we used to be encouraged to read. So yes there was quite a lot (of encouragement).

Braille was taught by a blind woman whom both Anne and Tom praised. Anne also developed a close relationship with her:

> I remember the stand out enjoyment times for me were obviously Miss E. who taught me braille. . . . Miss E. gave me literacy. She taught me to read and write and I remember going to her home. . . . and it was a lovely little house and I realised that even though I was blind I could have my own home and be independent. . . . And she read to me. . . . It was listening to somebody read braille. . . . The stand out memory is that was somebody reading braille.

Anne also was introduced to Miss E's blind neighbour, Mr. C, who was a piano tuner. Mr. C. was also an important role model for Anne because he showed her how to use audio-tapes to record letters and that "the world was a heck of a lot bigger than Auckland or New Zealand and there were ways of getting in touch with it. And that blindness wasn't a barrier." Except for Tom's affection for Miss E., Tom did not find any blind role models at school. He stated that the only other blind teacher with whom he came in contact were the music teachers and that he and his fellow classmates took advantage of their blindness and would "skylark around":

> Well I suppose we thought we could get away with it. Whereas the sighted staff could pick us out, pick us off one by one. Whereas the poor old blind teacher wouldn't know who the hell was doing it. . . . And sometimes they used to lose their cool which was also quite funny.

Tom and Anne both said they learned a great deal from Mr. T., a sighted teacher, who knew braille and who had some training in vision impairment:

> Anne: I mean other teachers were important but he was the first teacher I specifically remember teaching me something of value and importance. And Mr. T. also told me off in a way that mattered. He had a constructive discipline that I needed. And he was a very important man . . . He was a great teacher.

At Homai Hine was also in a class of braille users. Her teachers were supportive, encouraging, and "went over and above the call of duty." However, Hine said blind children learned at a "slower rate" than children in mainstream schools and she thus felt safer learning with other blind children:

> Because at Homai we were learnt to do things. . . . You all learnt together. At home they watched and they did. At Homai you were told and taught, shown, and you did. And if you got it wrong it didn't matter. If you get it wrong at home, if I still get it wrong at home. A lot of us we had that problem. They would laugh. You know. Awful.

Like Tom and Anne, Hine was taught braille by a blind teacher who made an impression on her.

> We only had one blind teacher. . . . he was very hands on. He was very up with the play. He knew what we wanted. He knew the way we should be."

She also was close to a Maori sewing teacher but she was not allowed to develop this relationship:

> I could talk to her about anything. . . . because she's got a family and a couple of them were adopted. And she was a Maori. . . . Yeah like an auntie. . . . Sometimes I used to ring her up. But they didn't let her take you out for weekends cause they didn't think that that would be a very good relationship. I don't know why.

The discussion group believed that Tom, Anne, and Hine's experiences as children at the Foundation continued to influence this chapter's participants' lives as adults because of the coping mechanisms which they had learned in order to adjust to this environment. They felt that the participants' similar experiences of family separation, of adjusting to the Foundation's control, and of educational difficulties and success at the special school led to feelings of social isolation and dislocation which caused Tom to build walls; Anne to feel insecure; and Hine to feel "homeless."

Part Two: Finding Other Places

Tom, Anne, and Hine seemed to long for a 'normal' life, and they equated this with being smart and "learning to be sighted." However, once in regular schools, their relationships with their sighted peers were not always reciprocal, and friendships were difficult to maintain. The participants also felt excluded by their regular schools and professionals who were inflexible in their pedagogical practices.

Getting away from the block

The participants' isolation from the 'sighted world' was broken through their trips home and into the community. In primary school, Anne and Tom were able to stay with their family only on the weekends. Both Anne and Tom found it very upsetting to be returned to Homai for the school week. Anne stated that she "hated going back to school on a Sunday night." However, at age nine and after five years at the Foundation, Anne, along with two other blind students, became a day student, and was shuttled to school by a taxi with some children from the Crippled Children's Society. Tom's mother visited him as often as she could when she lived in Auckland. However, the long trip back and forth was stressful. The trip involved taking a bus, a boat, and then a tram. His mother also had to travel two return trips in order to pick up, and then drop off, Tom and his sibling. Tom stated that he would not have been able to become a day student, because during his time it simply was not done. He stated that his mother "wouldn't have had the support either." Tom's mother eventually moved back to the South Island away from Auckland to be near her family when he was about 10 years old, and then, like Hine, he only saw her during the school holidays. His trips home on a plane were with an escort, whom he stated usually slept all the way. Once home, however, Tom, like Anne, did not want to return to Parnell:

> When I was an adolescent there were times when I actually really reneged about going back to the Foundation . . . And I had a lot of physical unwellness which I'm sure was just stress about not wanting to go back. . . . I probably wanted to be at home because I had . . . mates at home. And it just seemed much better. I remember one particular holiday where I got sick and I didn't really want to go back. And I don't think mum wanted me to go back either.

Hine, on the other hand, looked forward to going back to Homai:

> And to be honest I didn't actually want to leave my (Homai) friends. And I actually looked forward to going back to them at the end of the holidays. It sounds a bit mean but that's the way it was. Because when you live with people for a year and then you go home, you know it's a bit hard.

She felt different from her family and her siblings thought she was different as well:

> And when I used to go home I was looked upon as a snob. Because I was brought up in an English society rather than our own background. And I

> think I looked down upon them too a little bit. Because being from such a big family we often had to share beds. That was an absolute 'no no' with me. . . . I just didn't like that all. And so they thought I was a snob for that. And Homai also bought my clothes and Mum would pay for them. They'd send her the accounts. And when they bought me clothes, they were sort of better classed clothing than my family ever got at home. Because being such a big family you all had hand me downs.

Hine stated that she also felt different because she was not expected to do chores around the house like her siblings. She felt restricted in the Marae (meeting house) as well:

> But I don't like marae situations . . . they treat me different. I just had to be the wee couch potato, and sit, and say "hello" when you were spoken to. And that was that. Which is why I think I didn't like it because I couldn't get up and do things, go anywhere. (Because of my) blindness. I might get hurt yeah. . . . I don't know about over protective. They just didn't want me in the way. They didn't want that responsibility of having to keep an eye out on me.

However, Hine did remember some happy times at home, especially when her family lived with her grandparents who had high educational expectations of her and accepted her blindness:

> There was about twenty one of us staying in a four bedroom house. They weren't well off but we were well fed and we had everything we needed. My grandmother ran that show with an iron hand. Yeah there was no bickering amongst the adults which was really amazing. And we had our different means, like working at different places where we could get things. Like one would work at the wharf so he'd get fish. And my grandfather worked at the freezing works so we weren't too bad off for meat and stuff . . . I suppose you could call that a marae situation. When I look back on that you know I was amazed that my grandmother could actually run that whole show. That was the respect that she obviously earned from all the adults. .

During the school year, all of these three participants stated that they were not allowed off the grounds of the special school and they felt this rule to be disabling and restrictive. However, they were allowed to visit and stay with friends of their families and appreciated this time away from Homai. Anne found respite when she visited the home of a family friend on Thursday evenings:

> I'd go at about half past three or four o'clock in the afternoon. They'd always read a story to me. We got *Five on Smugglers Top* read out . . . and they had a collection of forty-fives. We'd have a very nice dinner around about six o'clock and then I'd get taken back about seven or seven thirty. And we had odd adventures along the way. Like, Uncle B. took me to visit the fire station.

Tom said though that outside visits were discouraged by the Parnell house staff:

> One of the girl's parents came from the same town and they wanted to take us out. And (the house mistress) said, "Oh no. Don't take them out. They're very ill." . . . It was almost like 'they're happy enough here', and 'you're only rocking the boat to take them out.' . . . But we had a neighbour who was a minor official. . . . And of course whenever he got in touch with the Foundation he always used to ring up the director because he had that authority. . . . He used to take us for weekends.

At age seven Hine was placed with a "reputable family" on weekends to whom she grew close:

> I was seven years old. She asked if there was someone who didn't get home very often that she could take out for a day and it turned out to be me. And it turned into days, and then weekends, and then holidays. And I kept in contact with her after leaving school. And I still write to them. And she is like an auntie. She's great. (I appreciated the) home cooking, family life and just doing things (that) at home I couldn't possibly do, like going out to the beaches. We used to go and stay at her bach and that for weekends, and go on trips up north, meet her family, and go to functions like weddings with her family. It was really neat. . . . We used to go horse riding and all these little things that at home I couldn't do.

Smart blind children can go to mainstream schools, but may not feel supported, or included

Tom, Anne, and Hine were all able to attend mainstream schools at some time during their educational career. However, they stated that they felt privileged to be selected to attend these schools because not all blind children could go to a regular school. Tom's selection for secondary school was precarious. The house staff did not want him to go:

> One of the teachers actually fought for me to get to high school. There was a definite conflict between house mistresses and school staff. Like the house mistresses were very much for passivity and you know 'keep the bastards down' and really that's how it was. And I still feel quite angry about that.

This discouragement caused him to wonder if he could cope with a regular school. However, when he sat the entrance exam he was able to enter the B stream. He stated that it was "hard going", and that the blind children at the school also were required to attend four evening "prep" classes at Parnell after school each week. In these classes, they would be tutored by Parnell teachers, and prominent and benevolent members of the community who volunteered:

> They were benevolent but not paternalistic. . . . And of course the other thing was that we got friendly. Like the one chap who I used to go out to meals at his place. And when he gave up school teaching and he shifted down to a farm I visited him. . . . I still have a bit of contact with him.

Tom was certainly pleased to "get out of the Foundation" and "get some independence." However, he did feel separated from his sibling and he was not even really sure what his sibling did in those years. He also said that he was now living in two worlds: the sighted world and the blind world. He preferred the sighted world because of ordinary things:

> And you became to actually value the sighted world more and also want to be part of it more. Like going to things. . . . There always used to be an Anzac Day parade service at school and I used to go . . . We had a cricket team I used to back. . . . So I used to want to spend as much time out of the Foundation as I could.. Well I felt that the world outside was much more easy going and there were much better things happening. like just ordinary things happening . . . Yes, living things. And there were two parents and they used to go to maybe concerts or plays, or you know better meals and so forth. . . . It felt very different. It felt good as well. And I suppose at that stage too I knew that I needed to break out of the blind world. I didn't want to be restrained by it.

However, Tom, was not always included at his secondary school, especially when he did not participate in the school activities. For example, he felt excluded from his classmates who were doing military drills:

> There was almost this feeling of ostracising that you weren't doing military drill. So what happened is that most of whom weren't doing military drill had to go to this room. . . . Some of them probably were there because of conscientious objection but I didn't understand that. . . . And again it's a feeling of not being wanted.

Anne who was now a day student similarly was uncertain whether she would be able to receive her secondary education at her local school. She was placed in the school for a six week trial. She interpreted this as a time when she was to learn to be sighted. She was proud though that she had gotten out of Parnell when other blind children had not:

> I thought I was better than everybody else cos I'd got out of Parnell. And I remember being very annoyed because I'd had six weeks learning to be sighted. Learning to be like sighted kids at intermediate school and I came back to the break up um in Parnell and no fuss was made of what I was doing. No mention or fuss.

Anne was eventually allowed to attend her local school with her siblings and she felt that this success, and her subsequent success, were due to her and her parents' desire that she be the same as other people:

> What happened for me was two things. I wanted to be the same as my family. I wanted to be like my brothers and sisters. And my parents wanted that for me too. And it was really the parental drive. The other thing was that they wanted the best for each of their kids and I think it's reasonably fair to say that all of us have done well.

Anne felt that she was thrown into the mainstream where there were no specialist teachers to support her. She also stated that she felt unnerved because of the amount of noise that a school of seven hundred pupils generated, versus a school of seventy pupils. Her comments to her teacher about the noise in the end though caused her to feel guilty about being in the regular class:

> Now I got into real trouble um one day cos I actually talked about noise in the classroom and the teacher told the class off and I still feel bad about that. Then the kids were not noisy at all. . . . In fact our class was pretty quiet and our teacher used to comment that because I was so sound oriented she wished that all the kids would listen as much as I did and the kids had to focus on more on sound cues than they would have otherwise, if I hadn't been there.

However, Anne felt included because of her achievements:

> I was included in the school because I did a number of things that drew a bit of notoriety to me. Like I was Junior President of the Discussion Club for a while. I was in the debating team. I was in the school choir. So. And I really enjoyed those things.

When Anne moved on to the top stream at a prestigious mainstream secondary school, where the Parnell pupils happened to go, she did not feel included. She stated that part of this was due to her own social skills and not her blindness:

> Sometimes I wasn't fully included. But I think, I mean I'm quite strong about this, I have a lot of assertive ways and I don't think it's good enough to say, "Oh I might have been excluded simply because I'm blind." I think a lot of the things that've gone bung in my life, and continue to go bung, are to do with my style in my life. And I have control over that. It's whether or not I choose to exercise that control.

Hine said she was unprepared for her attendance at an intermediate school near Homai but she felt lucky that she was chosen to go to the school:

> I reckon I was lucky to go to intermediate. ..I think we were chosen on a. . . a scale from one to ten. And I think you had to be pretty well over seven. You know I never got asked if I'd like to go intermediate. I was just told I was going. And I thought it to be a privilege. I thought well they must think I'm pretty all right. I knew it was going to be different. I knew it was going to be hard.

Part of her academic difficulties were caused by the fact that, like Anne, there were no specialist teachers to support her:

> We had no resource centre whatsoever. . . . We had no-one that we could talk to, that understood our needs . . . . We were just chucked into it.

However, she stated that she enjoyed her intermediate school because she "finally felt normal." She felt part of the class until the sighted children began talking about what they did over the weekend or bought pies for lunch when she could not.

Hine found her high school experience to be easier and felt that she belonged because she had blind peers at the school, specialist support, and a place to go if she did have difficulties:

> There was quite a few blindies there. There might have been about ten of us at the one time but not all together. But we had a resource room. There were two resource teachers. . . . Yes it was easier. A lot easier because we had a room we could go back to. And I think I found it easier because I'd been out in intermediate so classwise with the learning that was fairly well straightforward. And we had mobility around there.

Hine felt included and again stated that she felt normal:

> I loved everything about school. I loved going to school and meeting my friends. And I loved just being normal . . . Part of the whole system.

Hine and Tom both made an effort to break away from the tendency to socialise only with their blind friends. Sighted friends were mentioned by each participant as one of the determining factors for feeling included. For example, Anne defined inclusion for blind children as dependent on interpersonal relationships with teachers and sighted peers:

> How they got on with their peers? Whether the teacher found having the kid in the classroom a pain? Whether the kids ostracised the blind child or whether the only friends the blind child had were friends who were different?

Hine was the only participant who had a number of sighted friends :

> (They) just accepted me for what I was. I didn't have to prove myself for them . . . . they taught me sort of how to be normal, the sighted people.

These friends, who were of Maori or Pacific Island descent, were deemed unsuitable though by Homai staff because they were "a bit wild," sexually active, and smoked cigarettes. She was also suspended from high school because of her behaviour. In the end, Hine decided to leave Homai but she said she did want to continue at high school and searched for another boarding situation. However, she was not permitted to live away from Homai. Hine believed that she was like any teenager in that she was rebelling against her family which happened to be Homai. She felt trapped and wanted to become an active participant in the general community:

> I had enough. Had enough of . . . being good. I had enough of living in the Homai sort of complex. I wanted to be with my friends and live a normal life. Like normal being go home to a house, and you know, but we went home to our rules. . . . I felt trapped. I just wanted to get out of it. . . . Though I did want to carry on my education. But since I was told I couldn't (go) out to board or anything, well I just thought well there's the end of it.

Hine left Homai and high school but then had to go to another Foundation boarding hostel which was at Parnell. She stayed a year before eventually returning to her whanau after fifteen years in Auckland.

At present, Hine stated that her friendships are limited to her partner's friends. She appreciated when sighted people make an effort to become friends because she thought her blindness influenced her body language and her ability to interpret interactions:

> If you actually see someone you're gonna wave to them or give them a smile. And cos I can't do all these things, I really appreciate it when sighted people do it to me first. And then they're guaranteed to get a smile from me and a hello. . . . . Naturally there's gonna be no eye contact and no body response or anything. And sometimes . . . I'll ask a real close sighted friend, "How did that person look when I said this?" I'm

> interested in that sort of side of things. You know I like to know if they smiled, took no notice, looked grumpy about it. Things like that.

She also stated as well that sighted people may not be able to read the blind person's body language:

> I think when making sighted friends you've got to be more positive than they are. You've got to really reach out to them. Cos more often than not lots of people don't quite know how to take you which is only natural. They can't know how to take you if they can't read your face.

Tom and Anne's friendships at mainstream schools were with other 'different' children. They both, as adolescents, became close to Jewish boys or girls:

> Tom: I also developed quite an affinity at that stage with the Jewish boys from school . . . because we were different like they didn't go to the religious part of assembly for instance.

Tom "sort of" felt like a typical teenager, but was also aware that he did not participate in the same activities in which his sighted peers did participate:

> Like some kids had their own cars and that sort of thing. So I did feel a bit different during that time. Like I realised that there were things that some people were doing that I wasn't doing and so forth. So I was very aware of that.

He thought the "main angst" he had was during his adolescence when he believed that everyone but him was having a good time. Tom, as an adult, called himself a "bit of a loner."

Anne identified a number of possible reasons why she did not have an active social life in her mainstream schools. She was out of zone at secondary school; was not popular but well known; did not cruise the shopping areas as her peers did; and her best friends were different:

> And I have to say that my closest friends were usually either Christian, or different. The person who taught me to sign my name is Jewish. . . . They

> weren't in the mainstream.

As an adult, Anne also said that she does not have "an active social life" because she is a workaholic. Her blindness also affected her social contacts and interpersonal communication:

> I was in church one day and there was a guy behind us singing lustily and I turned around to do what I thought was smile at him and say, "Hey. That's neat." I was told off for laughing at him . . . . Even the issue about making sure which is a nod and which is a shake. You know, to be absolutely sure that the visual signals you're sending are not confusing the oral message.

She also said that she could misunderstand a sighted acquaintance's intentions if she had known they were in a room but had not spoken to her:

> Have you not spoken to me because you don't want to? Or have you not spoken to me because you haven't even seen me? . . . And then you can impose on the sighted person thoughts and things that are never entertained in their head. And it may be that . . . they didn't have time. Not that they didn't want to. So you can quite wrongly make assumptions about people's actions that are absolutely wacky.

Professionals include and exclude blind children

Tom, Anne, and Hine encountered and talked both positively and negatively about professionals outside of the Foundation for the Blind. These included principals, teachers, and medical professionals. Principals, who were exclusive and did not welcome their blind students, were remembered by Tom and Hine. Tom was specifically aware of being separate from part of his mainstream school's identity which was rooted in the headmaster's enthusiasm for sports:

> I felt at times left out of things . . . Like especially the sport thing was a big thing. . . . Like you know the headmaster at Monday's assembly, depend(ing) on how the first fifteen (rugby team) or the first eleven (soccer team) had got on, and if they had lost then (he was) grim, in fact they were (all) very very grim actually . . . He actually took the New Zealand cricket team over to England at some stage. So there was definite

high expectations on sport at school.

Hine did not feel welcomed by her intermediate school principal because he was more absent than present. She "only saw him at assemblies."

At high school Hine felt particularly included by a high school teacher who had learned braille:

> I had a science teacher that would actually come along and he'd draw diagrams for me and go through them with me. And he'd label them for me as well because he obviously had a bit of knowledge about braille. And you know that was really neat. Yeah and that was a real help. He was a brilliant teacher. I reckon he should never have been there. He should have been a professor.

Anne felt accepted by her intermediate teachers because her blindness was not considered an impediment to learning and achieving:

> Extremely positive (attitudes). I was lucky. My teachers at intermediate school were absolutely excellent. They were good motivators and good stretchers and no nonsense. Quite strict.

She was appreciative of a teacher who shared and sparked her musical interests:

> I always used to chat to the pianists who provided our morning assembly piano music. I valued the music in the school, very strongly. I valued our music teacher. . . . She was a bit crazy. I think I was one of the few students in the school that really liked her. She introduced me to so much pleasurable music.

Tom, Hine, and Anne felt that some of their teachers made them feel out of place because of their particular learning needs. Anne's teachers at intermediate "continued to teach the 'chalk and talk' style. Chalk and talk . . . on the blackboard." Hine also spoke of similar difficulties about the use of the blackboard. Tom stated that in high school "some (teachers) felt having a blind student in the class was a bloody nuisance" and that he was "left" out. Similar feelings of abandonment were expressed by Hine about some of her secondary teachers:

> We were just students to them and that was it. See with the teachers at Homai I think we were a bit more than students. . . . They really wanted to get us as far as they could. And they really took the time and they put their whole energy into it. Unlike the mainstream school, well, all you can do is teach thirty students. And those of you that get it - great, and those that don't - tough.

Hine had a Visual Resource Centre at high school. Whereas, Tom and Anne did not. Hine, however, felt that although there was a place for her to go she was not encouraged by the visual resource teachers:

> But we had these two resources teacher that if you had any trouble. They had the time when (the other students) had PE. We couldn't do PE. So that was our opportunity to go back to the resource centre and talk with these teachers about a certain thing that we didn't catch in class. They never encouraged though . They never said "come to us." We were just expected to know it. And of course some of our blind pupils didn't go to them and they fell through the stream.

One of Anne's intermediate teachers did not have an adequate knowledge of braille and subsequently treated her unfairly:

> For a while I only had one Perkins Brailler so there was a bit of an argument about whether I needed one at school and one at home. They're actually quite heavy to carry especially when you're an eleven year old. . . . My teacher used to argue that I ought to be able to take it backwards and forwards. . . . But it was bizarre because the typewriter was lighter than the Perkins and I had a typewriter at school and a typewriter at home, but not a Perkins at both ends. . . . . I knew it was a pen and I knew it was hell of a lot bigger than a regular pen and I knew I needed it at both places and it was heavy to carry. So what's the argument?

This teacher's attempts to provide natural classroom reading support for her when there was only print material available also made Anne feel different, especially because she was able to read:

> The teacher organised somebody to sit next to me. A different person. . . . They would rotate through the class so all the kids had to put up with

reading to me at different times. Yeah. It certainly made me feel different.

Tom felt that the attitudes of medical professionals also made blind people feel less than human because they did not acknowledge that blind people could live fulfilling lives. They were only interested in cures for blindness. Anne mentioned that her encounters with medical professionals were centred around finding a diagnosis and a cure for her blindness. They thought that she could be taught to see because her eyes did not appear to be damaged and then she was sent to a psychiatrist. This occurred despite the fact that by then the Foundation had ophthalmic information, which they did not disclose to her parents, that indicated that there were biological reasons for her blindness.

> My parents didn't know the cause of my blindness. . . There was a person who Dad knew who thought there was a chance that I could be taught to see. . . . And I couldn't. . . . At that stage they didn't know that the retinas of my eyes were damaged and the annoying part about it is the Foundation for the Blind . . . knew but never told Mum and Dad. . . . In fact, I don't think Mum and Dad knew that I'd even been to a different ophthalmologist. . . . I don't actually have much time or respect for ophthalmologists. They haven't told me anything useful in my life.

Part Three: Places To Learn Are Hard To Find

Despite Tom's, Anne's and Hine's attendance at regular schools inclusion was not achieved because the impairment related educational resources and syllabuses were not fully developed or provided for them. For example, Braille was considered to be similar to print as an essential educational medium and tool. Yet, all of the participants stated that they had difficulty finding or managing the braille material in the regular school. Orientation and Mobility Instruction was also viewed as essential. If it was not provided then the participants stated that their social life was limited along with their free and safe movement which, in turn, restricted them from fully participating in school. Maths and sports seemed to be areas of concern because this chapter's participants found them difficult to learn or were actually prevented from learning in these subject areas. Music was a dichotomous activity in that it was considered to be a way of participating in the school while, at the same time, it perpetuated stereotypes and feelings of being 'special'.

Braille is literacy for blind children

All of the participants felt that braille meant literacy for blind children but it was not taught in regular schools at the time. It was mentioned by all of the participants as the reason why they had to attend a special school. Also, Anne and Tom both mentioned that when they realised they had to learn braille, they also realised that they were different from other children and it formed part of their identity.

> Tom: I had a definite sense then that we were different (at Homai). But I probably knew before then because I actually had started learning braille at Sunrise.

Braille lessons began at the Sunrise, the Foundation for the Blind's pre-school, and continued in small classes of about ten to twelve children at the Foundation's special school at Parnell or at Homai.

Tom, Hine, and Anne described themselves as good braille readers, and they all loved reading. Tom said he especially liked the Parnell teachers who would read to him, and as mentioned above, Anne enjoyed being read to in braille. Tom remembered his progression from primary school to Grammar, and then to University in terms of what kind of braille writing equipment he was using. He stated that he went from a writing frame, to a Stainsby, and then to a Perkins Brailler. The equipment and number of braille books at both Parnell and Homai were limited though. For example, Anne said:

> We had stuff all resources. Like I think we had about two braille books. It was terrible.

Later, when Anne was about 9 years old, she remembered there being more emphasis placed on the Parnell teachers learning braille. She associated this with the development of the Australian and New Zealand Association of Educators of the Visually Handicapped (ANZAEVH). However, the braille resources, which were mainly received from the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) in England were still limited:

> ANZAEVH was founded round about 1961, '62. I mean they read about braille and books. And they taught and knew they had to teach it to us but the purchase of resources from the RNIB and the States was so restrictive. There wasn't enough braille being produced in New Zealand. . . . We were taught from Beacon Readers and there were a couple of neat American books. I remember one book about maple syrup . . . The dots were clean and clear and sharp. And the binding was solid and the books were solid and they didn't feel like they were gonna fall to bits. Whereas all the RNIB titles had paper covers and they all had been well worn and well rubbed and well read and they were all dog eared.

All of the participants stated that the textbooks which were necessary for the three participants to fully participate in their mainstream schools were also not readily available. At her intermediate school, Hine believed that all the blind children were placed in the same class because there were not enough braille texts and thus the texts needed to be shared. Anne also talked about how there was preferential transcription treatment for one of her blind classmates at secondary school because his father was on the Foundation's Board of Trustees:

> Most of the braille I needed at (secondary school) got brailled. . . . Um there were a few arguments about Latin books and stuff. But we did have a problem at (secondary school) and through university because (another blind student) who was a year ahead of me, his Dad was on the board, and so it always seemed to me that (his) books got transcribed ahead of the rest of us.

All of the participants felt that the bulky braille material and its associated equipment was a disadvantage. Hine's desk was not big enough to accommodate her needs and she needed to carry heavy equipment all around the school:

> Another wee disadvantage to us is the huge books we have got to carry around and this is where I think discs is marvellous, computer. Just grab

> a couple of discs and your wee keynote or your wee laptop of some sort and carry on. Well in my day we had to take about three or four boxes plus your folder full of your braille material, and your braille machine.

Anne stated that blind children in schools needed more space and equipment. However, she also stated that money was not always the answer to meeting the needs of blind children and that knowledge about the needs was more important:

> You know there are stacks of things our kids need. . . . . Partly money. Mostly, mostly a vision of what's needed. Mostly qualifications and experience. Mostly whether or not the teachers and the parents realise that the kid needs these things. . . . If you don't know what you don't know, then it wouldn't matter if you had a million dollars. You wouldn't know what to spend it on.

Tom, Anne, and Hine commented on the fact that the development of high technology, such as auditory computer software, was helpful to blind people but that it would not supplant braille. Anne stated that braille was the closest thing to print. Braille was about reading and spelling. It also allowed the reader to directly interact with the material and "skip forwards and backwards easily and conveniently."

These three participants also all believed that braille led to success as an adult. Anne said that blind people, including adventitiously blind adults, have a responsibility to learn braille so that their potential can be realised:

> There's a duty on each of us to do the best we can with our abilities to become useful tax-payers in society at some stage in our life. That's you know, part of the part of the work ethic. I'm quite conservative in that regard. I think I've got a bit of a responsibility and I get a bit annoyed when really able people don't learn braille. I know that all the really successful blind people in the world are all braille users.

Braille was also seen by Tom and Hine as a reason why blind children are still sent to the special school. Both, if they had a blind child, said they may need to send their child to Homai for a good grounding in braille but Tom stated that he would live near the school so that his child would not have to board. Hine also believed that special units in nearby cities could be established for braille instruction:

> So I think in the primer years, we should maybe not go to Homai as such, but just have courses in different towns . . . where the kids can go and stay there for their first primer years and learn how to just get into a normal primary school and learn braille if they need. Cause it doesn't take that long to learn braille. And once you can learn that in your first years, you should be basically right.

Anne was concerned that presently teacher aides were being used inappropriately and were teaching braille:

> I believe that teachers working with kids with vision impairment must have formal training qualifications . . . . You wouldn't use teacher aides to teach print reading to sighted kids. They might support the print reading activity, but the primary teacher is the qualified teacher. And when our blind students get teacher aides to teach braille, that's a cop out. And they're usually only a page ahead of the kid, if that. . . . And the teacher aide doesn't have plural children to validate their experiences, just one child. If they don't learn the correct tactile skills the kids will never learn to read at speed. . . . I mean there's the formal braille code but there's the whole bit about imparting the reading, the recognition of the dots, which requires formal training and practical experience. I know it's not the teachers fault that they haven't got the qualifications but what I'm saying is . . . it's the teachers that make the difference.

Blind people need and want to be taught specialist curricula

Anne and Tom did not receive Orientation and Mobility (O&M) instruction at the Foundation's special school, because the O&M syllabus and the long white cane were not developed until the 1960s. Instead, Tom and Anne were given a white cane with a shepherd's crook to use for independent travel. This was a short cane which came up to their waist. Each felt it was inadequate for independent movement.

> Tom: it was mainly tapping the ground (in one spot) . . . as you went along.. . . You used sound quite a bit . But like it certainly didn't give you the same protection as the long cane."

Tom taught himself how to get around with the short cane, and Anne spoke of feeling defeated when she was expected to travel with the short cane:

> In Standard 3 . . . the goal was to get to the Post Office in ten minutes and there were about eight blind people and one teacher. . . . There's no such thing as a mobility. No long cane. Long cane arrived in New Zealand in 1964 or '5 and I didn't get long cane instructions till the beginning of the 6th Form. . . . Little short canes. And courage. Yeah. Step out in faith. I didn't have much faith and no courage in those tearful experiences.

Tom stated that he was able to circumvent a travel rule and gain some independence when he walked back to Parnell from high school:

> Sometimes people used to lay down the law that we should stay together but then I mean we used to more or less please ourselves on what we did on that. You know because if we left school at a different time we'd walk home on our own . . . Oh yes I was pleased to be able to get out of the Foundation and also to get some independence.

At home Hine, who had O&M instruction, found that her movements were restricted by concerned adults at the Marae. She was also not allowed to go out because her family did not acknowledge her skills and abilities:

> I can go home and I've still got to sit around. Oh I hate it. They don't believe I can do anything. Like when I was 15 or 16 and that I had this job. And I was staying in (the city). . . . And you had to walk down (town) which is a hellish place. . . . Catch a train, get on and off that train and all that sort of thing. My family would never have believed that I could do it. Not on my own. They would have said, "Who's with you?" Or, "Did you have a special bus to get there?"

Even at Homai, though, walks were considered a special activity. Hine said,

> I know (the teachers) went over and above the call of duty. Some of them, they'd take us for walks.

At about age twelve Hine had O&M instruction at Homai and she stated that this enabled her to be independent and take part in activities which other teenagers took part:

> It was very hard. It was very new. But once you got the idea of it, it was great. Yes I was taught to catch buses and trains. And do it on my own and walk around malls. And shopping centres. It was neat.

When Tom and Anne received O&M instruction, their safety and independence also increased. Anne's enthusiasm for O&M is exemplified in this statement about gaining control of her movements after O&M instruction during high school:

> One of my early mobility memories was walking home from the bus in the pouring rain and feeling really pleased. Because normally in the pouring rain . . . you're not in the rain on your own. You're in the rain with a sighted person running like crazy. . . . . Um and I was in charge and I could go as fast as I wanted to go and I knew that I could get home quite safely even though it was raining. So I felt really good that day. Quite a high really.

Tom first had instruction in the 1970s as an adult when he was preparing to travel with his baby in a backpack. He had positive memories of O&M, and the O&M instructor whom he stated was the first actual professional he had ever met at the the 'Foundry'.

> I didn't learn long cane until I learnt from Mr. C who incidentally was the best teacher I ever had with the Foundry (slang for RNZFB). He was good. In fact he was extremely good. He was an extremely good teacher.

All of these three participants had considered using a Guide Dog instead of a white cane for their orientation and mobility. When Hine used a white cane though she said she was in more control of her own movements and she received more information about the environment with a cane. Anne and Tom commented that they felt pressured to use a dog either by the general public or by Foundation staff. Tom did not feel comfortable with the idea:

> I don't think I'll ever have a guide dog. And one person said to me once that they felt if I ever did have a guide dog I'd end up by leading the dog.

> I've always liked dogs, I think they're tremendous animals but I have feelings about the relationship, the master slave relationship that develops. I feel a wee bit uncomfortable about it. And to me I mean the cane gives me the information I need.

Anne did not like dogs, and felt that this actually upset some professionals in the RNZFB:

> I can't stand dogs that lick. I can't stand dogs that get in my space. . . . (Another person) and I are the two most eligible non-guide dog users in the country and I know it upsets Guide Dog Services.

Tom, Anne, and Hine believed that if blind children do not receive O&M instruction, and preferably at an early age, their movements would be restricted; they would be dependent and lose control of their movements; and they would not be able to fully participate in society. For example, Anne described a fretful time when she was not familiarised to her first mainstream school:

> And the other memory is being in the middle of the playing field and not being able to hear where the school was. Having to orient and listen for the road; having to think about where the sun was, if it was out; having to think about the wind; having to think about all other clues that you normally wouldn't. . . . I was thrown into it. It wasn't pointed out to me at all. I mean I just wandered out and thought "Hell. How am I gonna get back?" And I know I don't remember anybody being systematic about teaching me how to find my way around the school. The assumption was that there would always be a child to help me. And there was, which meant that I didn't learn very much about how to find my way around independently.

Anne's social life as a student was limited because of her mobility skills in that she said she was not able to travel to her friends' homes independently, and she was not able to walk around the shopping areas after school like her peers.

Hine, now as an adult, has had little O&M Instruction in the city where she lives. This has limited her friendships to those of her partner's:

> It's mostly Andrew and people he knows. I want my own friends. I want to be able to get out and just go with other people to other places, coffee

> shops, meetings.

She became frustrated when her movements and informational descriptions were controlled by sighted guides:

> Often if you go shopping with a sighted person, . . . you can get your shopper that will just whip you round the market. When you're in town, "Where do you want to go now?" rather than you (being able to) ask "What's in this shop here?" And most people don't want to tell you. "Oh it's just a book shop." But they never actually say "that's Whitcoulls." You know a book shop can be any old book shop. Or "this a clothes shop" and you might want to know about that clothes shop.

Tom, Anne, and Hine all believed that O&M instruction for children should come from an O&M professional, with support from para-professionals (i.e. teacher aides), the family, and other blind people. For example, Hine believed that if she had a blind pre-schooler, she would be able to help teach O&M:

> I'd keep them here and try and teach them as much as I could here. About being blind and being aware. I might teach them a bit of braille. But more learning how to cope with stress, with getting around.

Techniques of Daily Living (TDL), which is about ways for blind people to independently manage their personal and home activities, was also a syllabus which was not taught in the mainstream schools, and rarely taught at the special school. Tom did not receive any TDL instruction and stated that as a young adult in the Foundation hostels he was not allowed to boil a jug because the staff thought he might burn the house down. He also was not allowed, nor taught, to cook or even to peel his own bananas. Anne had only one day of TDL instruction and was concerned that today blind children also had limited TDL instruction and skills:

> All the kids in itinerant services came back into Homai for a day and we had to have cooking lessons. I remember that was the day I learned to use a tin opener. . . . Yeah. It was a hopeless day. . . . Um everybody around the table slopped their soup. . . . We had no support . . . unless you actually boarded at Homai College. . . . There was zero practical help with TDL skills. Zero. And so TDL was a complete and utter miss out. . . . I bet you dollars to donuts, if you go round the country and do a proper

> survey of how well children butter their bread and make their beds and pour the tea and cut up the cake for afternoon tea and serve it to their aunts and uncles when they turn up. And a hell of a lot of practical things that sighted children do you'll find as wide a variation of competency in 1996 as there was in 1965.

Anne and Hine said they learned to cook only when they lived on their own even though both had had cooking classes at school. Anne had some classes in the mainstream which she stated were hopeless. Hine had classes at Homai but stated that her sister actually taught her how to cook:

> I didn't know how to cook . . . . We did everything else like our own washing and that but no we never cooked our meals. . . . My sister gave me a very quick basic cooking lesson. . . . And I sort of picked it up as I went along. . . . Mum and dad wouldn't let me. I might burn the house down.

Anne talked about how she had no control over her dress because of her blindness and believed that blind people are a reflection of their family's dress sense:

> Dress is very important. In particular, my sister now is responsible for my wardrobe and I go shopping with (her). I don't have much concept of colour. I'm really hopeless at it. (My sister) is very good at making me tidy. My experience is that particularly congenitally blind people . . . are a reflection of their family. The whole issue around dress is the area where you have least control over except to the extent that it may or may not matter to you. If it matters then you will try really hard to get people who give you confidence to choose your clothes with you, for you. Really more 'for' than 'with' in my case. And so you have only control to the extent that you will say, "L. it's time we went shopping."

All of the participants stated that they thought TDL instruction was a necessary component of a blind child's education. However, it was unclear whether they believed that TDL instructors needed specialist qualifications. For example, Tom stated that an Occupational Therapist may have the qualifications to instruct blind people in TDL.

Because, all of the participants felt that specialist instruction was an educational necessity for blind children, they felt that class withdrawal for instruction was important and not necessarily stigmatising. Anne felt that class withdrawal could not be avoided because of time-tabling issues although she said it was important to identify appropriate times for withdrawal. She stated that class withdrawal could make a student feel inferior. However, she believed that it could make a blind student feel superior as well:

> I don't see that there's any way round it. I believe that there are times when the kids are gonna need to be out of the classroom for special instruction. And I think that it's very, very difficult to get that time frame and timetable right. It's extremely difficult. .... You can feel a bit special though, if you're taken out of things and you can feel superior too. You can feel either inferior, or superior. . . . .. You know there's no simple answer. What is required are some very sensible and sensitive teachers negotiating sensibly with parents.

Blind children can learn music, but not other parts of the ordinary curriculum

All of the participants described learning ordinary school subjects at the special and at mainstream schools, e.g. spelling, reading, history, and geography. However, there were subjects which seemed to be emphasised more at the special school, such as music. However, maths and physical education seemed to be considered unnecessary for blind children to learn at both types of schools.

Music was especially important to Hine and Anne. Hine was taught piano at Homai, and later learned to read braille music. Her musical talent helped her gain family at Homai:

> My status was music. And a lot of the big girls were musically minded. Well a lot of blind people are. . . . so I found not maybe a mother substitute, but older sisters that would take me under their wing. . . . I am a self-taught piano player. . . . I believe I started mucking around with a piano at age three and I've been told my first song that I could ever play all the way through was God Save the Queen. And that was when I was about four.

Later in the mainstream, Hine continued to have music lessons after school at Homai, and she was able to use her talent in a social way because she always was able to play in various bands with her blind and her sighted peers.

Anne found pleasure as well as role models in music. She and Tom learned piano during primary school, and Miss M., her music teacher who was blind, made an impact on Anne:

> Miss M. made beautiful music. Um the brass band made incredibly noisy, but still interesting music. That music was a way towards peace, of relaxation, of pleasure; that you could make music as part of team activity; as part of the school; that you could sing in the choir; that you could be part of sounds that were really pleasurable.

Tom believed that music, which he resisted, was taught with the belief that it could lead to a piano tuning vocation for the males at Parnell. Anne did consider becoming a classical pianist as a career but stated that she did not have the commitment to practice. Hine did pursue music at various times in her adult career. She played the keyboards and sung for various 'pop' bands.

Music seemed to be a curriculum subject that was accessible to blind people. However, there was the general belief throughout Anne's and Tom's education, no matter in what school they were enrolled, that blind people could not do complicated maths. Tom felt that this was due to the fact that a suitable tactile code for math, and math signs, such as the Nemeth Code, had not yet been developed. Anne and her favourite teacher, Mr. T. developed their own system for math:

> You're dividing 24 into 394. Well you normally put your 24 in the left and the 394 in the right and you write your answers across the top and your carry overs underneath. . . . Now with braille, we worked out that it was dumb to write the answers along the top, so you put your answers down the side. Mr. T. and I worked out how to do that.

However, despite her success with this, Anne limited herself in Math because she was influenced by the overriding belief that blind people could not do maths:

> One of the difficulties I had was that I had this belief that blind people can't do maths. I don't know who managed to instil it in to my head but, you know, if you acquire beliefs like that and then they totally become self-fulfilling and those beliefs can do an incredible amount of damage to your horizons.

Tom felt that he probably could have done maths if he had not been "lazy." Hine did not mention in her interviews that she had any difficulty in maths in school, and she believed that blind people did not need any special help with math, if it was done in the Nemeth Code.

However, Hine was not allowed to participate in physical education classes but stayed on the sidelines. She felt that she was not normal because, when asked, Hine answered that normality meant being sighted and doing physical education:

> Well, being as sighted, as close to a sighted way of living which is the majority rules. Trying to live as close to the ways of a sighted person instead of just mixing with blind people and just staying around where they stay. Even as far as going to phys. ed. . . . . Have a try. Give it a shot . . . cause a lot of our group just decided they couldn't do it and so they just stayed indoors and just had a study period. And I didn't want to do that. Yeah. And even I couldn't do it. I just stayed out there with them.

Anne and Tom, as well, were left out of sports in the mainstream. Tom only felt a part of his school, when he gave sports a try:

> Once I remember we got praised for our particular form for everyone had a go at sport and I remember I also had joined in the swimming sports even though I didn't do very well.

Anne hated sport and she did not receive any satisfaction from participating because she said she would always come last:

> I hated and loathed and despised sports. . . . I get no satisfaction out of just being there. You know, out of participation. Like you're supposed to say to yourself "what matters Anne is that you tried." No that's not good enough for me. . . . I don't have to win, although I am a bit of a winner,

> but I did learn that I couldn't win every time. That I couldn't come first in all the things that I tried. So what matters to me still is that I don't come last. There's somebody behind me. . . . I don't see any value in participating for the sake of it. I don't see any reward in doing that at all. And the only sport that I discovered that was half successful, where you wouldn't guarantee to come last all the time, was swimming. . . . Mum organised swimming for me at primary school on Saturday mornings.

All of the three participants believed that sports could be done by blind people and that it was more pleasant experience when it was done with other blind people at the special school:

> Hine: I think the disadvantages (of the mainstream) were the advantages at Homai. Like we couldn't do their PE work. But we could at Homai because we had our own special brand of PE We didn't go round doing things like the long jump, the shot put and all that sort of thing. But we swam. And we played blind cricket. And we did to our ability but we couldn't do it in the mainstream high school.

> Anne: And you see, things like blind cricket, hockey, oh even water skiing. They are things that where blind people can test themselves against people of their own capabilities and know that it is possible to move about independently . . . I had a go at water skiing . . . I still haven't stood up on the stupid skis. And that's not because I'm blind. Because I went with groups of other blind people who can stand up on those skis. So peer support in things like sports is absolutely critical and if you've got one blind person stuck in a school of thousands of sighted people, you're never gonna get that peer support. You're never gonna be stretched. And you're never gonna know that it is possible to do these things. You might read about it in a book but that is not the same as meeting Joe Bloggs who's got up on the on the skis, or whacked a cricket ball around, or run a marathon, or whatever.

Part Four: Places For Blind Adults

When the participants thought about their futures, they seemed to be limited. The workshops of the Foundation were initially seen as their only vocational place. However, each of the participants was able to by-pass this "terrible place" and find employment in other places through the help and support of others. The blind community found Hine and Anne their first jobs. Tom was helped by ordinary members of the community. Each of this chapter's three participants made a conscious choice not to have blind children because of their own experiences as blind children. Further to this blindness seemed to affect Hine and Anne most in their pursuit of a family life. They both stated that sighted partners were more valuable and that their blindness prevented them from being the mothers whom they would want to be. However, despite these negative views of blindness, each participant believed that blind people could act as role models to blind children. Anne and Hine were actively involved with other blind people who helped each other in personal and political activities.

Blind children's futures are limited

All of the three participants talked about how they felt that their lives were laid out for them by the Foundation. As adults they were all expected to work in the workshops. Tom, who lived at Parnell, was particularly aware of a controlled life:

> Like the whole of that block was the Foundation and . . . there were very few . . . houses in the block that didn't belong to the Foundation. So yes there was a blind ghetto really. . . . It was the control. It was the feeling that your life was going to be limited. . . . You got this feeling that the rest of your life was set out before you because you had it all round you. You had the workshops. You had the hostels. And there was no feeling that you could ever break out of that. You certainly weren't encouraged to break out of that.

At age fifteen, Tom did work at the workshops during the school holiday:

> I packed tin lids. Yeah you had to count to 12, drop (them) in the packet. . . . And you packed them into boxes and they were taken away.

He remembered the workshops as being "creepy" and he did not consider the blind people there to be models:

> Well you saw the blind people in the workshops. And of course there were some really bad role models amongst them. Because quite often you used to see them coming home very pissed after the pub. . . . I

> remember the manager of the workshop who was quite a nice chap said to my individual foreman "Oh put him beside someone nice. Put him beside someone who doesn't swear very much," you see. So they put me beside this chap who really was quite disturbed and had the most outlandish stories about his sexual attributes and so forth. And in later life I know that he probably was a hopeless alcoholic who certainly had stuffed up most relationships in the most incredible way . . . but at that stage you used to almost hang on every word he said.

At the time, Tom thought "Hell why don't they strive more? Why don't they break out? They don't have to be like that." He believed that there was a prevailing attitude of "feeling beaten", and he said, " I knew that I had to be, that I wanted to be different from that." Tom's experiences in the workshops motivated him to stay out of the workshops as an adult but they stayed with him:

> There were times when . . . I thought . . . "I've got this degree but perhaps I'm going to end up packing those preserving jar lids." And the thought of that made me bloody minded as well. Like I knew that I wasn't going to do that.

It is interesting to note that Tom found outside employment through his own contacts and initiatives. He was not helped by the Foundation. His first job was found by one of his voluntary readers:

> One of the voluntary readers actually got me a job. And it was interesting that . . . the director always said "Oh look I'll get you a job through so and so." But it was always bullshit and never happened. And then this person said, "Look I think I could find you a job" and of course . . . I don't think anyone ever believed them and suddenly I had this job in a factory for the school holidays. . . . It was very very good. . . . It actually gave me a chance of earning money. And of course just being used to working in an ordinary workforce and coming to grips with that was pretty amazing.

Hine, who like Tom lived away from her family at the residential school during her education, stated that the workshops were "where everybody went when they left Homai unless they went home." Hine also felt that the workshops existed as the place for blind adults:

> I think the workshops were just there for somewhere to put blind people when they finished school. . . . . They just herded you all into these workshops. . . . The only blind people I think that got up and got jobs were the ones that pushed or had support like me. . . . There were people at the workshops for years, years and years. . . . They never really left. Never had a life.

Hine did not receive any vocational help from the Foundation but instead found her most stable three jobs through blind friends. Her first job was the most important because she believed it kept her from becoming stuck in the workshops but interestingly this job was at the Foundation:

> I didn't really want to go to the workshops either but I didn't want to stay at school. So this great guy (who was blind) . . . made sure that I didn't go to the workshops. I never ever did until much later in my life, but not at that time. Cos he said that if I'd gone there I would have just been stuck there. . . . .They wouldn't have bothered to find a job for me.

Hine at one point did work at the workshops in order to "fill in the day" before her music gigs in a band at night.

Anne did not ever work in the workshops and was influenced mostly by her family's expectations with whom she lived during her intermediate and secondary education. She, like the other two participants, at one point was employed by the Foundation. This work, however, was viewed in a negative light by her family because it was, according to Anne, a "lesser job" and "not a successful (job)." Her father had died by the time she was employed at the Foundation and she found it interesting when she reflected back about statements which he had made:

> Dad would say, "Over my dead body would Anne work for the Foundation" and that's exactly what happened.

She also felt that blind people, themselves, were negative about working for the Foundation:

> There are other blind people out there who say, "Well anybody who works for the Foundation only works for the Foundation because they

> can't work out in the big wide world."

Anne was able to transgress such negative beliefs:

> The reason why I broke all the rules was because when I came . . . to work . . . I didn't perceive that I was working for the Foundation. On the block. I perceived that I was learning to work. . . . I mean there were Foundation staff for whom I had zero time and I knew that I could do better than them. And I knew that I could make a difference to people's lives. So I managed to crash and ignore all the subliminal pressure around working for the Foundation by simply not really thinking about it.

However, when she read Scott's 1967 study about blind people who became in a sense 'professionally blind' when working for agencies in the field she became challenged:

> I can understand why blind people working for an agency for the blind can become compromised. . . . But Scott forced me to stop and ask, "Well am I dependent on the agency? Do I make decisions around my dependency and would I have the courage to stand up against something that I thought was really important?"

Tom, Anne, and Hine encountered beliefs that indicated that their family lives as blind adults would be limited. Firstly, Tom and Hine were not encouraged to date. Education about reproduction and sexuality was not available at the residential school. Tom and Hine learned about these things from their peers or at home. Some of Tom's teachers taught these subjects on the sly:

> That was done on the sly yes. . . . Yes done by one or two teachers on the sly and they let us know that if we ever mentioned to some staff that they were doing it they would get into trouble. . . . There was more like telling you how babies came and of course we used to look up things in books, like swear words in dictionaries and so forth. . . . I think it was very brave of the teachers to actually do it. Because they actually probably put a more human perspective on things rather than just a crass sort of behind the bike shed sort of stuff.

However, in general there was secrecy and silence in the residential school about sexuality unless the issue presented itself through unwanted pregnancy. Also, Tom, Anne and Hine also mentioned that blind people were discouraged from marrying other blind people. Tom felt that the Foundation actively discouraged this because it was believed that blind families would not be able to cope:

> People were ostracised, especially if two blind people got together. Or someone became pregnant . . . which often happened. . . . Having blind children and 'they wouldn't cope. ' And apparently there was a bylaw that you had to actually ask the director if you could get married.

Anne, herself, at one point thought that having a sighted partner equalled success:

> Certainly when I was at high school and through my university years, I used to believe very strongly that I would not have succeeded unless until I married a sighted man. And I have not done that and I don't consider myself a failure. And I don't actually care how I'm judged but I know that there are a lot people who believe very strongly that your only successful if you've married a sighted partner. And I believe that marriages will only succeed if you happen to love one another and fundamentally respect each other and are prepared to change.

Hine felt that sighted partners were not interested in her but more in her musical abilities and thought having a blind partner would bring slavery:

> I don't really think they were interested in me. I think they were more interested in the fact that I was very musically aware. . . . I just don't think they could see themselves with a blind person. . . . Blindness was a contributing factor to it anyway. . . . People look upon blindness as a slavery. You know . . . and 'how can I possibly be seen with a blind person?' . . . And then I suppose they feel they'll miss out on the eye contact. I really don't know. Like this is just my own opinion. And I don't think we have the same sort of things to talk about.

However, Anne and Hine both had sighted partners at some point and both were concerned about their levels of dependency on them. Anne believed that one relationship failed because her partner felt sorry for her, and because she was dependent:

> I think he felt sorry for me and then he got a bit tired. Maybe I was a bit

> too dependent on him for things. And then he decided to move on to do other things. And that's not a bad thing. I don't have bad feelings about him when I look back.

She also felt that there were gender issues involved around that dependency ~~in that~~ blind men who did not have sufficient daily living skills can rely on their female partners to compensate for them:

> (One blind man's) own actual practical skills are atrocious. . . . He gets away with blue murder . . . . And there are quite a few blind people who are very slack at very basic things who get away with being slack because, and guys in particular, manipulate their sighted hangers-on, women. Yeah. And I feel very very sorry for those women. . . . I got to meet a whole stack of sighted spouses. And the ones that stayed were very special people. Very special people indeed.

Another gender issue which came up was parenting. Both Anne and Hine believed that their blindness prevented them from being the mothers that they would want for their children:

> Anne: Blind people can't look after children unless they've got a real good sighted partner. You get these toddlers, and here's a classic example, there's my veranda out there. All you need is one of them to swing over those rails and fall down. You wouldn't know if they knocked themselves out. You wouldn't know if you were here on your own. There are a lot of things that we can't do as blind parents.

Anne did not feel able to offer her children a wide range of life experiences; and worried about practical issues and dependency:

> I feel very strongly about exposing my children to the widest possible range of experiences and as a blind mother, I don't consider that I could give my kids what my brothers and sisters give theirs. I never considered that I would be good enough. And that's not a commentary on what other blind people do. . . . I'm making a judgement about Anne. . . . (Blindness) limits. It may limit. I believe it would limit the experiences that I would give my kid. . . . And just practical things like

> you're riding along in the car with the two year old. . . . Next thing, "What's that Mummy." I've got no idea what two year old's looking at. No clue in the whole wide world. And not being able to answer their question would for me be unacceptable. . . . And I wouldn't want my kid to be responsible, to feel responsible for me. I think that's quite a burden, an unfair burden.

Hine who did have children at a young age, had no preparation for family life from Homai. She said she had children because she was insecure:

> I probably had the children for someone to love me, you know. Someone to love me back. . . . It doesn't sound very nice. . . . Yeah. Almost like a pet (or) company, and I loved them dearly but I'm not a mother.

She left her children with their father or grandmother whom she felt were better 'mothers'.

> I got very angry. And a lot of it I think was frustration. Because I couldn't do what . . . you hear other mothers saying they 'do'. . . . But I couldn't do as mothers do.

Tom did not have any issues around being a parent, except that he, as did Anne and Hine, made a conscious effort not to have a blind child. Hine said,

> If I'd had one blind child and I found it was going to be hereditary I'd never have had any more. Because I think it would have been unfair to the children.

Tom's decision not to biologically have children was made because he did not want a blind child who also may have had other disabilities and he did not want his child to have the same type of childhood which he had at the Foundation:

> We consulted a GP and we really decided we didn't want to risk having a blind child. . . . And at that stage it was 20 years ago so mainstreaming wasn't that much of a venture at that stage.

There is a community of blind people

All of the participants said they were in a different world while at the residential school. Tom said that the blind adults in this world felt "beaten." They used alcohol inappropriately and realised that he did not fit into this ethos:

> And it wasn't until I got to my second year at University that I suddenly realised that I really didn't belong there. You know that John Lennon song Working Class Hero? You know 'they'd hate you if (you're) clever and despise a fool.' And that was a definite Pearson House ethos. . . . And I was starting to really feel that the whole attitude there was very much a everyone against the world' atmosphere. . . . They'd bitch like hell about everything but when it actually came to doing anything about it, no-one would do anything about it. Like I think they really felt defeated. And there was a lot of alcohol abuse. And although I went along with that for awhile, I began to become very uncomfortable with it.

When Tom left Parnell he felt that his blind sibling "resented" him because he was "out there." Tom's relationship with his sibling was strained. Tom "was not the same" as others in Parnell. He did not feel close to his sibling until much later in life.

Tom also stated that the language which blind people used to describe themselves was also derogatory. For example, blind people lived at the "Foundry." They also used the phrase that they lived in "Wally's Zoo", which implied that they were not human, but animals:

> 'Wally's Zoo' was Parnell. Because we felt that (the director) exerted control over us. I'm not sure how much control he did (have), but it was a general feeling that if there was any great misdemeanour he was the person who sorted it out. . . . He was perceived as benevolent. . . . But he was very much into keeping the whole system of cradle to the grave going. That's what it was all about and that's what he was going to do.

Tom thought that the "the biggest way to change actually is having a role model." He was a role model for a young blind boy:

> Like I know for me with there is this young chap I was telling you about . . . Now his parents are what I describe as fairly simple working class

> people. They're nice people and I think I definitely have been a role model for them. . . . It's interesting they actually brought his grandmother to see me because the grandmother wasn't coping that well with a blind child. And it was a bit crass and it's like you know "here's a blind person." But at the same time I understood and I didn't feel bad that they were doing it.

For Tom, however, long term friendships with blind people were elusive. He did not have very many close friends at Parnell, but instead he said that he only had a "bond" with the other children at Parnell. Tom put a wall up around himself, and was very careful about who could become his friends. In order to "maintain" himself, he resisted placing himself in vulnerable positions with others. From his time at Parnell, he could recount only one woman with whom he still keeps in contact.

Tom made a concerted effort to break away from the Foundation as an organisation and he was now only minimally involved in the consumer organisation, the Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand (ABC(NZ)). However, he still has an emotional tie to, and a love/hate relationship with, the Foundation and blind people:

> It is changing. But the thing that I hate most about it is not so much the Foundation but the way that some blind people are absolutely stuck and they live, breathe, and eat the Foundation. I just could not do that. . . . . That that's their entire world. . . . Like they know nothing else.

Anne, on the other hand, as an adult became actively involved in ABC(NZ) when she was a Foundation employee and believed that she could make a difference by advocating for change alongside other blind people:

> I got into the Association . . . because in the Foundation at my level, I couldn't make a difference. . . . I perceived that by working through the Association I could have a much stronger influence on services to blind people.

She said that sighted people in partnership with blind people could also help alter the barriers which existed for blind people:

> Politically it is better if blind people do the advocacy. Politically you are more likely to be listened to but usually you cannot do it by yourself.

Anne, unlike Tom, remained part of the Foundation so that she could change it and barriers in the sighted world:

> (The world) is made for sighted people. But it's a challenge. That's the fun. That's the excitement . . . I'm the first at getting dis-spirited and depressed and irritated by stupid barriers but you do have to make a decision in your life. Are you gonna let these barriers defeat you or are they going to be the motivators, the challenges, that cause you to try and change what's around you? . . . feel very hostile to the barriers but I also feel that . . . 'here's another barrier and let's see if we can knock this one over.' . . . I believe very strongly in the challenge that barriers pose, not the problems. The opportunity for change. The opportunity for solutions.

Anne, like Tom, believed that the blind community used demeaning language to describe themselves and the Foundation and that this language could become a self- fulfilling prophecy:

> Like I get really annoyed when people talk about "the Foundry", the Foundation, . . . And it's blind people who do it. . . . And "blindies", and "blinkies." "The Foundry" calls up for me the image of the iron foundry. It calls up for me the image of beating into submission and every thing about institutionalism and that is why the word is used. That's how the word came about. Now if you keep describing or using that word about the Foundation then I believe at least in your own mind you run the risk of it becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.

She said, "The strongest criticisers (of blind people) are other blind people."

Anne avoided making blind friends when she was in secondary school, despite being at the school which some Parnell students attended:

> I think there is a very subtle pressure that belongs right throughout your life, that you probably don't often bring out, dust off and examine. That (is) blind people aren't whole. That the blindness makes you less than whole. And that you'd rather struggle and battle to be as nearly like the so called "perfect" you know "whole" with sight than associate with your

> blind peers. There's a real snobbery about "well, you know, I'm more intelligent than all the other blind people", or "I'm better at this than they are."

As an adult, Anne was quite close to a number of blind people through her advocacy work for blind people. She also now attempted to use language in a positive manner:

> Most of the things I've got wrong in my life or most of the things that I've failed in my life have been to do with language . . . . They're style issues. The way I've worked with people, failed to work with people.

Of these three participants, Hine was the only participant to view the Foundation and the blind community as her family. However, she said that she was homeless. She had little contact with her family, but still kept in touch with two very close blind friends. During secondary school, though, Hine, like Anne, said that she avoided blind people because she wanted to be "normal." Nevertheless, as an adult, Hine reported that she valued Ngaati Kapoo *(blind families),* an organisation of Polynesian blind people, to which she was affiliated but did not consider to be 'family'.

> It's just a Maori, Pacific Islander, attitude towards blind people. And not as 'blind' people in the way that the sighted people see it, not as 'we're third'. . . . We're tops. Our only difficulty is that we're blind, but we're still Maori. We're still Polynesian. And we're gonna be blind in the Maori and Polynesian way and we're gonna go out and check out all these maraes. . . . We've created our own umbrella. . . . An affiliation I think you have to say. Because a tribe is more a family thing. . . . But we're all of the same. We're under the same umbrella and we're all blind. And we're all affiliated with Polynesian.

Ngaati Kapoo was established by Maori blind people in response to the Foundation's lack of awareness about the cultural needs of Maori people:

> And we did everything the Maori way. Had a blessing and invited the people from the Foundation over. We mixed with them. We started doing things like putting a Maori member on the Board of Trustees. Then we started to stretch out and go out to different communities. To different maraes. . . . And now we have a kohonga up and running. For kids of our blind mothers and fathers. . . . Now we've set up different maraes in

> different areas of New Zealand and every couple of years we go visiting each other. And have a meeting, a conference. Yeah. We did this all of our own bat and we went for funding. . . . I just don't think (the Foundation) ever thought of it in that way. I just think that they thought "well we're all blind and that's it." They didn't recognise our own need.

However, she also was thankful for the Foundation because she was now educated and otherwise would have been asked to fill a stereotypical roles in her tribe:

> I think we're lucky to have the Foundation otherwise we'd have been left home to either be the village idiot or the wee magician. . . . That's gone now but it used to be.

Hine believed that Ngaati Kapoo would help to change attitudes in the Maori as well as in the pakeha *(European)* community. Ngaati Kapoo was also creating blind Maori role models which were previously unavailable to her:

> It's changed a heck of a lot of attitudes out there. And I think in some sectors it's created more awareness than the Foundation ever had. . . . You get a lot of pakeha groups go to a marae *(meeting house)* and they want to put something forward. But if they come with the Maori aspect, it's really different. And a lot of our runners in Ngati Kaapoo, our elders,. they're fluent, they're bilingual. . . . Those tall runners that run on ahead of us and lead the way.

Hine strongly believed that blind people have a bond:

> I really enjoy being with my own. I feel aware then when I'm with my own, both as a Maori person and a blind person.

This bond was created through the experience of blindness and through different ways of communicating:

> We developed our own ways, of communicating, of togetherness, whatever. We can get together in a group and talk about things and sighted people are just totally left out. They know nothing of what we are talking about. Not because we all went to the school but because of the way we explain things I think. . . . It is a different world. It's totally different. And where sighted people like to look back on things they saw. Books they read perhaps. Paintings they do maybe, whatever. We go and

> look back on music we heard. Or sounds we heard. Things we touched, statues and so forth. . . . You can have a new blind person and they'll bring something up and 'click' straight away you know exactly what they're talking about.

The participants have something to say about educational policy\practice for blind children

Anne, Tom, and Hine felt that it was important for blind children to have contact with blind adults:

> Hine: Cos those parents won't know how to teach . . . everything. It's all right for them to say "Oh we're gonna teach our boy braille." But that's not every aspect of blindness. They're gonna have to teach him to overcome frustration. Teach him to learn a whole new set of rules about life. You know. It's going to be hellish for that, more so for the parents than him, cos he's only a child. It's gonna be a heartbreak for them. . . . Well there was a mother in hospital with me and she'd had a child and it was gonna be blind. And I says to her, "Well get one of the Foundation staff to try and get a member, . . . "I'll even volunteer, to work with you with that child." . . . Because we know where that's child gonna be, what he's gonna require, and how the parents can help that child."

Despite their negative experiences as children at the Foundation for the Blind, Tom, Anne, and Hine felt that the RNZFB should have some responsibility for educating blind children in New Zealand. Tom felt that the RNZFB was in the best position to advocate for, and provide services to, blind children, because the organisation had expertise in the area. He thought that the Ministry of Education needed to be responsible for making "sure that these services (were) in place." However, he believed that the Government, in general, thought that it did not need to become involved in the lives of blind people because it had given that responsibility to the RNZFB through an Act of Parliament, and because it had placed a representative on the RNZFB Board of Trustees. Tom was passionately advocating for the RNZFB Act to be repealed at the time of this study. He thought the Board of Trustees was too powerful and needed to change. He also believed that he was still emotionally tied to the Foundation because of his concern about its governance and strongly reacted to an Advisory Committees' racist statement which was used to justify their belief that blind people were unable to govern themselves:

> Probably the emotional tie is over this governance. I actually believe this is a real chance for the Foundation to go forward and I'm really hoping they're going to take it. I'm not sure if they are, actually. . . . I don't know if you saw a message from the X Advisory Committee last week but it was appalling . . . It was like, "the Pacific Islanders, they gave them their independence and then they weren't able to take it."

Anne also believed that the RNZFB should have the responsibility for educating blind children:

> I think that there needs to be a central reservoir of skill. And I would prefer that that reservoir of skill be at the Foundation for the Blind, if only because New Zealand is such a small population and blindness is such a low incidence disability . . . . The numbers are so small you're only gonna gain (knowledge) if you centralise the knowledge.

She thought that the Ministry of Education was responsible for providing and prioritising the funding for educational services for blind children. However, she eloquently stated, as well, that the education of blind children needed to be seen in a wider and pervasively stressful context:

> The Ministry of Education is responsible for providing sufficient money . . . and they must fund it and they have not funded for anybody . . . If I stretch my mind across what my brothers and sisters are telling me about their children, there's never enough teachers. . . . I am amazed that I can meet teachers who aren't . . . threatening to commit suicide or leave the profession or murder the next kid that comes along or whatever. There are some teachers still being gratified in the profession but I don't know how. . . . I think that all the evidence on the news media and all the personal evidence that I have suggests that teaching in New Zealand schools now is incredibly difficult. Under resourced. Under funded. And the teachers are unloved. The morale is low and blind kids, well they're at the bottom of the heap. Who the hell cares about them? . . . It's low incidence, ignorance. If you don't meet a blind person every day, you're not gonna think about it.

However, Anne also said that the limited resources were only part of the difficulties which faced blind children in education:

> If you don't know what you don't know then it wouldn't matter if you had a million dollars. You wouldn't know what to spend it on. . . . But I actually think that that's only half the problem. The other half of the problem is knowing whether or not you know what you need.

She felt that the ABC(NZ) was not concerned enough about educational issues because half of its executive at the time of her interview were adventiciously blind and did not have the experience of being educated as a blind child:

> The Association doesn't really think that much about the kids. We do have a representative on the Homai Vision Education Centre. And she is really committed to it because she's a parent and a former Homai student. The Association executive, well . . . half the Executive have not been educated by the Foundation. . . . They haven't been educated as blind children.

Hine believed that the RNZFB should be responsible for the education of blind children through Homai Vision Education Centre but with the help of parents and blind adults:

> It should be Homai in conjunction with the parents for these kids. Like half of our parents didn't know what we did. . . . But they should have a say now as to what can be done. . . . It should be worked by blind people with sighted help. I've always had that belief. The Foundation should be run by blind people with sighted help.

Also, similarly to Tom and Anne, Hine felt that the Ministry of Education should be the resource provider of educational services to blind children, which also needed to listen to blind people:

> I certainly think they should do a bit more listening to what we want. . . . Just try and understand where we want to come from. . . . And kids of today need more support. A whole lot more support. They need encouraging. Blind people need a lot of encouragement.

Hine, like Anne, also stated that blind people were considered insignificant and not noticed because their numbers were small. She thought that the Government, in general, didn't care or think about blind people "because they've got a Board of Trustees" at the RNZFB, but at the same time she felt that if the Government was involved in the lives of blind people then they would then be sent back to the workshops:

> I suppose it's lucky that in one way we're not run by the Government, cause if we were they'd have us in workshops. ... Yeah. They'd have us all in our wee groups, all the wee sheltered workshops for the blindies. They'd do that. ... 'One, two, three, pack a dozen and put another gernet out.' We'd do very simple things that's what the government would do. It gets us out of the way. It gets us doing something.

It is interesting to note, however, that if Hine had a blind child she would want to send her child away to board at Homai because of the structure, routine, and expertise which Homai would be able to offer her child:

> If Homai was still going as Homai was then I would send them there. I don't think I'd send them to pre-school though where I went to because I think that was a bit sheltered. Yeah. I'd keep them here and try and teach them as much as I could about being blind and being aware. I might teach them a bit of braille, but more learning how to cope with stress, with getting around. Homai didn't prepare you for stress. ... I would try and live (close) .... But I'd want the child to be a boarder. .... and get the child over the weekend. ... But yeah I'd send my child to that school because it was routine and the schooling. I don't think I could put them straight into a public school. They don't have the facilities.

However, Hine also thought that it was important for blind children to attend mainstream schools as well:

> I think from an early age we should have had much more integration with sighted children of our age. And I think we should have been made to go out into a primary school, say a couple of days a month. And those of us that got used to it a couple days a week.

She felt that inclusion in the mainstream should be dependent on the resources available and consultation with the blind student themselves:

> I think if they are going to include us in the school system, they should

ask us if we have any needs before they decide to include us.

Tom felt that inclusion in the mainstream was the ideal. However, as discussed earlier, he was concerned about available braille instruction. Anne felt that a blind child's educational needs combined with the teachers' expertise and available resources would ultimately determine where her child went to school:

> I know it's not the teachers fault that they haven't got the qualifications but what I'm saying is that . . . it's the teachers that make the difference. . . . The teacher may identify that the child is better supported in a special school for this period, or they may identify that the child is better supported in the mainstream for this time. But it's the teacher that's gonna be pivotal in providing the support . . . I'm not against residential schools. I'm not against mainstreaming. What I am against is somebody laying down the law that says "mainstreaming is better than residential schools" or "residential schools is better than mainstreaming." What is important to me is that the kid gets the resources and teaching that they need in the most appropriate environment at the time which could be one or the other or a mixture.

However, Anne did believe that inclusion was the ideal and she hoped if she had a blind child that she could send them to a mainstream school but mistrusted the education system:

> I would have to say that it would be a mainstreamed school but I couldn't be certain that I would be able to give the child the proper teacher, instructor, peer group support that I think that child deserves in that mainstream environment.

Chapter Seven

The Golden Years: Striving for Normality

Sue: People look at disabled people and think "Oh no. They haven't got a good learning capacity. They're not worthwhile." . . . And they don't see that if you make some small changes or alterations, or whatever, then we're quite capable of giving something to society. . . . Blindness is one of the most feared things. It's one of people's greatest fears. . . . And they can't imagine how someone would be able to cope. . . . They think "Well, how would they be able to live a normal life?."

Introduction

This second results chapter includes the experiences of William, Sue, Stuart, and Joe who were primary aged students in the 1970s and early 1980s. which have been described as New Zealand's golden years because of the economic prosperity during these times. Table 7 below lists the types of schools which they attended. Joe's mother, Jenny, also describes her thoughts and experiences in this chapter. Table 7 below lists the types of schools which this group of participants attended.

Table 7

The Type of Schools attended by William, Sue, Stuart, and Joe

	Pre-School	Primary	Intermediate	Secondary
William	*Non-Local	Homai (Sp. day)	Local (& Nearby)	Local (& Nearby)
Sue	Local	Homai (Sp.)	Nearby	Local
Stuart	Local	Local, Not Local, Homai (Sp.)	Not Local	Local, Not Local
Joe	Local	Not Local (Boarded)	Not Local (Boarded)	Local

'Local' refers to Schools nearest to the family home
'Nearby' refers to Schools near Parnell or Homai
'(Sp.)' refers to Special Schools for blind children
* The family relocated to be close to their blind child at this point in the participant's educational career

Part One: The Place for Blind People

The blind participants in this chapter, William, Sue, Stuart, and Joe, were less controlled or influenced by the Foundation for the Blind than the participants in the previous chapter. The influence of the Foundation along with the amount of the participant's involvement with other blind people seemed to decrease in correlation to the participant's age. The participants, though, who boarded at school away from their families, for no matter how long, still told traumatic stories of sadness, isolation, and separation. However, their parents seemed to have more confidence to challenge educational authorities and the common practice of segregation during these times. The participant's individual stories, personalities, and family environments, overall, seemed to be more important to the participants in this chapter than their blindness.

Blind Children must leave their families to be educated

William

> *I don't actually have any resentment about being at Homai itself because I'm sure that it's helped me. They gave me very good grounding in braille skills and some of those fundamentals, and god knows it's difficult to get these days.*

William, like Tom, was the second blind child in his family, and he remembered following and benefiting from the footsteps of his sibling, Jess. Before his birth, his family had already moved close to Homai because William said that "there was a rising awareness of the damage that (could) be done psychologically and to the family unit by sending children away." Jess had become very homesick as a residential student and William's parents felt that they would be happier if Jess lived at home and was a day student at Homai. So the family uprooted and moved from the "back blocks" to the city:

> I think they lived somewhere which allowed Jess to travel home in the

> weekends. And apparently Jess used to get very upset about having to go back . . . And it sort of got to them. . . . . I think there is a strong sense of family and I think when the crunch comes, we do stick together. And also Mum, in particular, is a real worrier. . . . She just couldn't bear the sight of Jess being so upset all the time.

William remembered that his family life was vibrant and happy. His memories of his early years involved exploring the world with his brothers and sisters:

> I was very lucky. . . . They took me out shopping everywhere and I went to the movies with them. And I really got out and about a lot with them. . . . I obviously wasn't protected too much because I had lots of bumps on the head. . . . I don't recall being restricted . . . . I (do) think I had too much done for me and when you can't see, you need to actually have hands on experience because you can't just observe.

At an early age, William learned from others outside the family that he was blind, and they considered him both exceptional and incompetent:

> I was quite articulate. I was talking long before I was one. . . . . I also used to ring up (the radio) quite a bit. . . . People used to ring up and say, "aren't you a marvellous little boy for all the things that you're doing." So I guess it was quite ingrained in me quite early on that I was really quite exceptional to be even living and that I was blind and I couldn't expect that I can do too much.

It is interesting that the discussion group for this study found William to be articulate and successful. However, they also felt that throughout his life he had hidden stresses on account of his blindness.

William's parents felt that Jess had been too protected, so William was sent to a regular kindergarten. However, the local kindergarten rejected him but his parents persisted and they found a kindergarten which was accepting:

> I went to a kindy that was further away because the local kindy wouldn't take me. . . . I mean Mum and Dad by that stage were probably realising that seeing as they had another blind (child) that they needed to do a few things differently from how they'd done them in the past. . . . They were worried about what was going to become of Jess . . . and maybe that was

> what motivated them to send me to a regular kindy.

William had friends; was taught like the other children; and generally felt accepted and included at kindergarten.

> I was treated very similarly to everyone else. I remember that one day I said some sort of word that the teachers found objectionable and I had my mouth washed out with soap and water. . . . I had a very nice little friend called Sally. . . . I remember-playing games and getting in the sandpit, and all those things. . . . I really enjoyed my kindy. I don't recall being left out of things so it might have been that if there were things to feel then they showed me. . . . I felt very included.

Sue

> *It's not actually my blindness that I feel is the problem. I feel it's the way I've been treated by other people . . . . I wonder if females feel that more than males. And it may depend on the circles you move in as well whether people treat you normally or whether they are patronising. Because I have days where it doesn't worry me and everyone I meet is great. Then I have another day where you just feel as if you may as well go home because no-one's taking you seriously or no-one's treating you normally.*

Sue was born in a city where there was a Visual Resource Centre at a nearby primary school. However, despite this fact Sue remembered that her parents always expected that she would leave for her education:

> I don't think (my parents) even explored the possibility of me being educated locally because it just wasn't available as an option. Like they knew other kids who were a bit older than me who just went to Homai.

However, Sue was able to attend her local kindergarten with her cousin and loved going there. She, like William, remembered feeling included. She did not feel different, fitted in, and was treated just like the other children:

> My cousin actually went there so that worked out quite well because I had someone I knew that was already there. . . . I really really enjoyed it because I had lots of friends and the teachers were really good because .

> . . they didn't fuss over me banging into things. . . . They just let me get on with it and treated me like any of the other kids so I really enjoyed it there. I can just remember having lots of friends and just feeling really happy there. . . . I didn't feel that I was different.

Sue also was an active member of her family who didn't make "a fuss" of her. The discussion group for this study felt Sue's family was just a "regular family" who loved her. Sue described them as close, traditional, and normal:

> Pretty close really. Traditional. Fairly normal in terms of New Zealand families. Mum and dad were quite close. I never really remember them fighting much or arguing much. That wasn't a feature so we felt quite secure in our family. And we felt really loved. We had grandparents who meant a lot to us. . . . Mum . . . sewed clothes for us and did a lot of cooking. She was a real motherly figure I suppose. So yeah it was a really secure family life.

Sue felt that she accepted her blindness as a child because she was not treated differently in her family. Her first awareness of blindness came from a conversation with the children next door:

> I remember my next door neighbours used to say things like "I know why you went blind" and I'd say "Oh why?" And they'd say "Oh because you got sand in your eye." And I remember just being a bit annoyed because I knew that wasn't the reason. . . . I just accepted my blindness.

The discussion group thought that such experiences were indicative of Sue's experiences throughout her life in that she would encounter many societal barriers because of her blindness despite her intelligence and affability. By the age of five, Sue had an assessment at Homai with her parents and preparations were being made for her departure from home.

Stuart

> *My mother has never read a book on blindness in her life, nor will she. I think she started a few but has never been really that interested, you know that convinced by them. My mother has an extraordinary amount of common sense for one person. . . . The most important thing . . . was that*

I was able to develop as a normal child because that's what I was.

Stuart's remembered experience of blindness included early medical attempts to correct his eyes so that he could see. At age ten months, he recalled that he had corneal surgery and that he was restrained for seven weeks so that he would not disturb the bandages. Stuart did not remember the trauma which his blindness brought to him at but was told about its consequences:

> My mum tells me that for about 2 months after I came out of hospital I spent a very large amount of time screaming. She has told me quite frankly that she almost killed me. . . . When you spend seven weeks in care being tied up tight, . . . and bandaged up, it's probably not that easy a thing for a young child to cope with. And so for quite a long time after that I was not an easy child to look after.

He, like none of the other participants in this study, was able to see colours and sometimes the shapes of large objects. He had vivid memories of his red pushchair:

> I remember it's colour and remember sitting in it and I remember being driven around in it by my brother who seemed to spend a lot of time with me as a kid.

However, Stuart stated that he was considered blind and not partially sighted:

> The word blind was used a lot. I learned the word quick real quick but it didn't matter to me. It was probably one of the later words that I learned. . . . It was never used as exemplum of what I should be. It was never used as a template. . . . If anyone tried to use it (as an explanation) my parents disavowed that totally or they would ignore it. . . . So, by the time (of) . . . kindergarten it was probably ingrained in me, a very very deep sense of naturalness about who I was. Blindness or no blindness. I was me. I was just this kid.

The discussion group noted that , Stuart, "was his own person" who "wasn't in with the blind thing at all" and didn't "conform to the system."

Stuart remembered attending his local kindergarten where he felt stimulated and accepted:

> I was mainstreamed straight into kindergarten. I was lucky to be able to go . . . At the time it was a very small town. And very very few services in it. Certainly no services for people with any disability of any kind. . . . There was a very very visionary teacher at kindergarten at the time . . . I was expected to climb climbing frames. I was expected to play with play dough and throw it at other children and do all of those things and slide up and down slides. We had a wonderful playground.

Stuart's vision helped his inclusion at kindergarten because he was able to use it to explore and move in new environments:

> Sight was a definite capital point in my favour in terms of my integration into kindergarten . . . . There was an understanding that I was blind. But there was also an understanding concurrent with that. I was a blind kid who didn't really have any problem adjusting to his environment.

There was no itinerant professional support available to his family before he reached primary school age, so his mother and teachers relied on their innovation and their community to help teach Stuart. For example, Stuart's mother, like Tom's, was on her own during Stuart's kindergarten years, and needed to work. However, she was able to find a neighbour who would be valuable to Stuart's development after school:

> Melissa lived close to us and she had four kids . . . . It really was pretty rough and ready sort of family. . . . Exploration was expected . . . because Melissa was not the kind of person . . . to have any time for a kid who was going to be frightened of doing things. . . . . I was allowed to fall down steps. I wasn't allowed to walk onto roads but I was allowed to walk close enough to them to be yelled at to get away from them. I was allowed to run along beaches. I was allowed to have the Billy goat ruck (me) up the backside with his horns.

Stuart felt that this challenging environment along with his natural inclusion in the family helped to develop his self worth and confidence:

> I understood that I was part of a family. . . . And there was no extra treatment except in cases where it was absolutely necessary . . . . So for example, when your mum is crossing the road with two other children . . . there was no "I'll take Stuart across first cause he can't see." It was, "Hold onto me for god's sake we're going." That was how it was.. So that

> also developed . . . (self) reliance. . . . It's an intrinsic feeling of (the) capacity to control and to look after oneself.

Joe

> *Since I was born. . . . I sort of grew up with it so um . . . it's sorta normal . When did you sort of realise that you had sight? You're not really conscious of it. Everyone around me was probably used to it. It was never really a big issue.*

The discussion group described Jo as as an "average kid" who was generally "happy with his life." Joe was born on the family farm and no one noticed that he was blind for about four months. Jenny, his mother, remembered that the Plunket nurse wrote that his eyes focused well. Jenny, however, recalled that eventually she began to feel that something was not right:

> I mean his eyes looked normal . . . . and the doctor said, "Well they look normal. . . . I'm sure they're okay but if you're worried we'll refer you on to an ophthalmologist." . . . And he said, "Mmm you know there's something not right but it's a bit beyond me." And so he actually sent us to a paediatrician. . . . And he said ,"Oh yes there's something not right. . . . I'd like you to see a colleague of mine." . . . And so we went to see this fellow. . . . (The) colleague said, "Is he enrolled at the Foundation for the Blind?" . . . And I'll never forget it. . . . I really don't remember much else that he said.

Despite this news, Jenny stated that she "had to get on with things" because she had a busy family life:

> I came home that day to pick up other pre-schoolers from wherever they had been pegged out for the day and so we were really very busy and I think may be that, without a doubt, was a good thing. . . . Had to get on with things.

Jenny received support from Homai which she described as "wonderful" and a "confidence booster." Jenny, however, would have liked to see her early childhood advisor more often but at the same time believed that the family was in the best position to provide an educational programme for Joe:

> There was a pre-school advisor at Homai who was an absolute life line. . . . She visited us once a year . . . And she would write and we would write to her if there was a problem. But once a year was just inadequate. But then on the other hand, the different times that we were at Homai and I thought "If we were having daily contact or weekly contact or even monthly contact with Homai I don't know if it would have helped that much." Because I think we kind of did it . . . . We just sort of had this child who . . . we were able to normalise more than if he was going to the blind school for a day every week.

Joe remembered his early years as being a time of exploration with his siblings and felt that he learned quite a lot from them:

> I think it's good that I have had (siblings) that are older than me. Mum reckoned my brother would decide when it (was) time for me to start to climb a tree, or when it's time for me to ride a bike or something.

Joe even recalled that one of the reasons that he went to his local kindergarten was because his siblings had gone there and it was "just sort of (a) natural progression." Jenny said that Joe was expected to fully participate in kindergarten like he did at home and this meant receiving some bumps and bruises:

> I remember looking out the bedroom window and here was Joe quite well up the tree and (his brother) going up behind him. And all I could hear Joe saying was "Come on . . . push harder." I thought, "Oh my goodness Joe shouldn't have been climbing trees. Oh a blind boy climbing trees." And so I thought, "Right I can't do anything about that." So I just came away so I couldn't see it. . . . It was a conscious decision. "Leave it to him. Don't fuss" . . . When he was three . . . I was conscious of the fact that the kindergarten teacher was really quite stressing out about it all because whatever Joe did . . . she sort of "(gasped)", or "You might hit that. Oh! You might fall over that." So I can remember saying to her, "Look . . . if you are worried about Joe just walk away and don't look."

Joe remembered being happy, the sandpit, morning teas, a good friend, and the acceptance which he received at kindergarten. He received individual support from a young woman who was employed by the Crippled Children's Society. She also worked after kindergarten with Joe while his mother worked. He felt that this was preparing him to be away from his mother but was concerned that it was not an interesting job for his aide because he was only interested in being outdoors with his father working on the farm:

> She used to go to kindy and she'd help me sometimes and then I think it was a couple of afternoons a week she used to come home too. Mum might go away a bit so I'd get used to it. . . . (We'd) come home and . . . Dad was doing something and I'd go and see Dad. It must have been pretty boring I suppose for her.

Joe also felt that because he had to be away from his family during the day at kindergarten, that it prepared him for boarding during his primary years.

'Naturally' moving on to the special school

Willliam and Sue attended Homai during their primary years. They both went to Homai because that was simply where they were expected to go. William was a day student:

> It wasn't a very long distance at all. . . . I think they just thought that that's where blind children go. I mean I don't think there was much choice at that stage. . . . And like Mum and Dad, I mean they're really great people, but they're not the kind of people who would really question authority. . . . I don't really have any regrets about it.

William also in a sense was simply going to his nearby school and like the other children at kindergarten he took his friends to see his new school:

> I went there on a couple of days before I actually started. I think that must have been the fashion that you went to look round with your kindy. . . . And I remember taking N. and another friend . . . so they could see my school . . . . And then I just went to Homai on my 5th birthday.

Sue had a more difficult transition to Homai when she turned five. She recalled that the trauma of leaving her family was repeated every time she returned to Homai from visits home:

> I don't know if I exactly remember the first time but I remember other times after holidays. I used to get so worked up that I'd be vomiting on the way to the airport . They'd have to stop and let me get out of the car to be sick. . . . And I remember the night before going up to Homai I'd wake up. I wouldn't be able to sleep and I'd have to get up and have supper with them and I'd just be crying.

The discussion group for this study noted that Sue's experiences at Homai were filled with sadness. Sue's first weeks at Homai were also filled with pain despite the support which she received from the Hostel staff:

> I just remember the first few weeks up there being really really traumatic and just crying all the time. Oh it was awful. I don't think I'll ever forget that. . . . Constantly sitting in the playroom and crying and being told not to worry but just feeling absolutely desolate. . . . I remember the staff being quite nice. I've heard from other kids that the staff were actually quite mean to them and told them not to cry and threatened them when they got homesick but they were actually nice to me which was one good thing.

Sue believed that the rationale for her attendance at Homai was based on an educational pedagogy which stated that blind children needed to be separated to learn skills which could then be built upon in mainstream settings:

> I think they really thought that in order for blind children to do well academically they needed to be separated, especially at primary school. . . . They thought that possibly at intermediate and high school you could be at normal schools but they felt that you really needed the individual grounding in like braille and typing and mobility at a specialised school in order for you to get those basic skills just to build on.

Stuart's and Joe's family did not see any need to send them to Homai. However, Joe and Stuart were also not always able to attend their local school. Stuart, at age 9 did attend Homai for one year. His visual resource teacher advocated for this attendance because she believed that there were essential skills which could not be taught in the mainstream:

> (The VRC teacher) . . . was now rowing with my parents . . . saying that

> you really have to send (Stuart) to Homai because he is not going to get what he needs to get here. . . . No one was teaching braille music (here). . . . Typing was another thing . . . . Living skills was another area.. . . . It was time that I started doing things "the blind way." . (The teacher) had this idea that only blind people or people , who knew about blind people, could teach other blind people how to do things. My mother thought this was absolute rubbish and of course it is absolute rubbish.

Eventually, Stuart's parents reluctantly agreed to his departure from home:

> My mum and my step-dad said, . . . "We'll try it and see what happens." It was a very hard time for them too. It was hard for me because I just didn't know what to expect and I don't think they did either. And I know that my siblings didn't because to them it seemed a bit stupid that Stuart had to go away. . . . It seemed bloody strange that (a) child should have to go away just because he couldn't see and while that might sound acceptable to some people to my family it wasn't.

Jenny, Joe's mother, reacted negatively to her assessment visits to Homai and decided not to board him at Homai:

> I hated Homai. . . . My memories of Homai were all these (children) were sitting around in chairs doing all these blindisms. . . . (And) Joe at that stage . . . was used to every step he took finding something else on the floor or whatever. I mean at Homai you couldn't possibly leave anything on the floor because someone might trip over it. We actually worked exactly the opposite. As an incentive to move round we left things on the floor. . . . Sure Homai had to protect the children but we actually felt that we didn't want to protect him. We wanted him to be able to get on in the real world not in a little protected world that was Homai.

Jenny, however, felt pressured by Homai staff to send him to Homai:

> They just assumed that he would go to Homai, and really threw up their hands in horror when we said, "Well we've actually decided that he's going to private board in (the city) and go to X Visual Resource Centre. And they sort of '(gasped)'. . . . And it was quite obvious that they felt we were making a big mistake. . . . Yeah they were worried but we had made our decision.

Blind people need to be controlled

Of all the participants in this chapter only Sue and Stewart ever actually lived at Homai and neither remembered this time as a natural experience. For example, Sue remembered that from the age of five to seven she lived initially in what was named the 'pre-school' hostel even though she and the other children at the hostel were in primary school. She had memories of moving from hostel to hostel as she grew older. She lived in the junior hostel when she turned eight and lived in the senior hostel when she turned twelve. Her bedroom always had about four or five other girls in it and her time was also regimentally scheduled:

> Nine to twelve (in class) and then . . . we used to come home for lunch from twelve to probably half past twelve and go back and have playtime until one and then we'd be there till three. And then we'd come back to the hostel and we used to have dinner at about half past four. And we'd be in bed by quarter past seven.

She recalled that her meals in the hostels were formal, controlled, and "regimented":

> Like there were set things you had to say. . . . Like you had a serviette there . . . and at the end of the meal you had to say, "Please is my serviette clean or dirty?" . . . And if it was clean, you'd roll it up and put it in the serviette ring, and if it was dirty, you'd put it . . . in the washing basket. And then you'd have to ask, "Please may I be excused?" . . . There was no freedom of speech even. It's just really awful really when you think back what it was like. All these set things that you had to say. I don't think you were allowed (to talk to each other). . . . I mean it wasn't like a meal at home. It was formal and strange really.

Stuart also remembered that he did not feel like he lived in a secure home:

> There was no sense of comfort or security in that place. The furniture was cheap. . . . I mean to me the whole thing was tacky as tacky can be. It was not a home. It was a dormitory and that's what it was. Each dormitory had four beds in it which were by no means really very comfortable beds at all.

He believed that the staff were "not educated" and Stuart recalled one staff member who used to have the children in his hostel watch television for five hours at a time on Saturdays because "she couldn't be bothered doing anything else." Sue remembered a staff member who would quiz the students each evening about the television news:

> I remember there was one staff member . . . none of the girls liked. . . . Every evening we'd have to sit down and watch the 6 o'clock news and afterwards she'd ask us all questions about it. And like I was eight then. And how much of the news do you take in when you're eight? . . . You'd have to sit there until you could answer the question. Well I mean I was really scared. I mean you can't answer . . . . I mean the news is just gobbeldy gook.

Sue's mother also recounted to Sue a time when the principal exercised his power:

> (My mother) remembers being really annoyed at one stage when I was in my Form One year. They came up to Auckland for a wedding and she went and saw the principal at Homai. And he like really kept them waiting for ages. They sat in his office while he drunk coffee and didn't offer them any. They were made to feel really not worthy of his attention basically.

Stuart clearly remembered physical punishment from the hostel staff:

> I have seen kids pinned to the floor by staff in the hostel that I was in . . . I have seen kids quite literally beaten about the head continuously by staff in that place. Um you are quite welcome to use this material. I have no problem in defending it. . . . If parents of children like me knew the kind of physical punishment that you were witness to in that environment and if the Education Department what's more knew . . . I suspect Homai would have been closed down years ago. . . . This was regular to the point where you could see it at least once or twice a week with certain kids.

Punishment in Sue's remembered experiences usually involved withdrawal of privileges and the show of power about trivial matters:

> I remember once there was some sort of plastic container thing in the playroom and they found that it was broken and all the kids had to sit in the room until someone owned up that they had done it. I mean that's a real power trip.

Despite her seven years at Homai Sue recalled that she was never able to get close to any particular staff person because of a high staff turnover:

> You would just get to know someone and get on with them really well and then they'd go and leave. You'd think "Oh I hope the next one will be nice" and it was like anywhere. Some of the staff were really really nice and quite motherly. . . . Others were horrible.

Stuart said he regarded Homai "as an alien environment" where children "were forced into believing that blindness was the only thing that matter." However, he was not "a standard product," and reacted to Homai by bullying and rebelling:

> I became deliberately rebellious because I knew what kind of consequence that would probably have. . . . I began to cause more trouble than Homai was prepared to be bothered with. . . . I did some quite awful things. I mean I started a fire once. I knocked a whole lot of books down in the library just so that other blind kids could trip over them which was actually a really cruel thing to do. But I did it because I wanted to demonstrate . . . that I had no time whatsoever for the system that they were operating under.

On the other hand, Sue recalled that she reacted to Homai by becoming shy and withdrawn:

> I withdrew into myself and became really really shy . . . They used to take me over to one of the men who worked in the office at Homai. . . . I used to have to sit on his knee and talk to him because they noticed that I'd got really shy and withdrawn and that I wouldn't talk to males. . . . I did quite like him but I don't think I was really chatty. . . . I remember there were a few people from (my city), . . . who were at Homai and I think they used to come over and see me in the hostel and I wouldn't talk to them. I wonder if maybe that was one of the results of having all your security taken away from you and going away from your family that you wouldn't really trust anyone. . . . Maybe you do just withdraw into yourself.

The hierarchy among the students, according to Sue, revolved around vision and cognitive ability:

> The kids who were partially sighted were in a separate class and I think they were looked up to a little bit by the totally blind ones. Just because we thought they are able to do a little bit that we couldn't do. There were children there who had multiple disabilities and I suppose they were looked down on a bit. And there were also kids there who were deaf blind and we had very little to do with them.

William described a similar hierarchy. He said that children with multiple impairment were "left to last when (a) team captain was picking them."

William also recalled with tears one Homai teacher who abused him. He had her for three years and subsequently he "hated going to school":

> I just dreaded going to school every morning. I had for some reason some concern about swimming, about putting my head under the water. . . . I was just a bit frightened of it. And one day this teacher lost patience and she actually lifted me bodily out of the water and then kept ducking my head under the water repeatedly until I said that I would try to do it myself. After that I refused to go in the pool at all. And, but was really bad was that, (oh dear excuse me), that nobody believed me you know. My parents did. I mean that was the main thing. . . . . And I remember, to give mum credit, that was a time when she did stand up to authority and . . . saw the deputy principal and said, "He can't go on like this." . . . The teacher denied having done it.

Blind people need to be watched

The privacy of all of the participants in this chapter had at one time or another been disregarded either at Homai and in the general community. All of the participants talked about being grabbed by the well meaning public. For example, Joe's personal space was regularly invaded when people in his town grabbed and pulled him to his destination instead of guiding him. Sue stated that she felt particularly conspicuous on Homai outings and was patronised by the sighted public:

> You can imagine a whole busload of blind kids going on an outing. It was quite artificial really. It was like you weren't actually part of it, the

> real world, because you're so noticeable. And you could tell that people stared a bit. People weren't just natural. They'd just treat you like "Oh here are all the wee blind kids out. Isn't it nice that they get out?" Just comments like that. Just feeling really conspicuous.

There were also occasions when invasive outings were made by the public to tour Homai:

> Sue: very second week we'd have an outside (Brownie) pack coming to Homai and they'd be doing their 'friend to the blind' badge. And they'd want to look at braille and learn how to do sighted guide and have a little tour around the school. And even though I was only about nine, I felt really used. Like you know, "What a load of crap. How dare you come along and just expect us to give you all this stuff and you just wander in and leave again." It was like being in an exhibit at a zoo or something.

Sue also remembered that toileting procedures at Homai were particularly embarrassing and traumatic because everything was watched and documented:

> It sounds really gross but we had a time when we had to go to the toilet. And everyone had to do poos in the morning and if you didn't do poos and they didn't write it down in the book, then you had to sit there until you did. Like really old-fashioned stuff like that which was really traumatic on little kids.

Homai's dressing practices led to a blind friend of William being humiliated at the regular intermediate school:

> This friend of mine who did phys. ed. (and) . . . pulled his trousers down in front of the class. I mean (when) we were at Homai. That's what we used to do. We just used to get changed because no one could see anybody else. . . . But obviously at intermediate when you've got a class full of sighted girls that wasn't very appropriate and I remember he was the laughing stock of the place for years.

Sue commented that her body image was negatively affected by staff members comparisons of her body during communal bath times:

> We would sort of have communal bath-times and I remember the hostel staff saying things like "Oh look Sue's got bigger breasts than so and so. .

> . . Oh, you're already starting to develop. " This sort of stuff. . . . Like comparing with the other kids and that went on right through into the girls' hostels as well. . . . Not realising that that sort of thing, when you're totally blind, actually has a really big effect because you're relying on other people's interpretations of your body because you can't see yourself how you are in relation to others. . . . I don't think they realised how damaging it can be. Also even making it an issue. I mean that may have been the case but to make it an issue made you feel as if you weren't like the others or as normal.

Sighted staff would also use their vision to intrude on her privacy :

> They would play little tricks sometimes. Like they'd sneak up and not say they were there and listen into what you were saying. Really childish things like that which were really quite rude.

William remembered a mainstream teacher who similarly took advantage of his blindness and disciplined him for a joke which she heard him tell when he did not know she was there. On the other hand, William described a time when he thought the invasion of privacy helped to build relationships within his Homai class:

> I remember sitting in classes at Homai and having letters read . . . from parents of children far away. . . . It seems like a hell of an invasion of privacy really but at the time it was really interesting. Because I mean when I go down and stayed with X's family . . . I still will remember . . . the name of her brother and sister for example. Because it was almost like a soap opera where you were following the saga of all these different families that you'd hear these letters from. . . . So in some ways although it does seem like a hell of a breach of privacy, it sort of built up relationships in a way with other students.

When William's confidentiality was broken later as a young man, however, it left him feeling powerless:

> Suicide. . . . I must have been 19 then. . . . I guess I had a sort of crisis in confidence you know. Like I sort of thought that the future was really uncertain. . . . The hospital where I ended up decided that because I was a blind person, then obviously they needed to contact the Foundation for the Blind. Because blind people, that's where they get help from. And so this social worker from the Foundation for the Blind came in, even though I didn't want them to, and talked to me. And then, next thing I knew, half

> the blind people all seemed to know what had happened. And the difficulty I had was that if I complained about it then it just made the thing worse. So I couldn't do anything.

The police were called to talk to Stuart once because a neighbour, who knew Stuart was blind, became concerned about the way he was walking down the road:

> One poor distressed woman decided to call the police one day . . . I suppose she was just distressed because she saw me battling down the road at 100 miles an hour. I walked very fast and I was wandering along the side of the road as I do and I had this unnerving habit of walking in the road when there weren't any cars . . . . And I saw a blue uniform come up . . . He said, "Are you all right?." And I said, "Yeah fine." He said, "You're not lost are you?" And I said, "No. I know perfectly well where I am. Do you want me to tell you?" . . . And he said, "We just wondered whether you were all right." I said, "Have you had someone ask whether I am?" And he said, "Well yes" and I said "Here's a message from me." . . . I think what I actually said was "Mind you own business and I'll mind mine."

Blind children learn best with other blind people

The participants in this chapter who attended Homai held various beliefs about their education at Homai. Stuart regarded his teachers as "caretakers." He said that he "didn't learn anything" and was "bored stiff" because the classes of braille users were mixed age and ability groups, who followed the same curriculum despite their differences. He believed that the low expectations of his teachers were realised in their teaching practices:

> The brighter ones were just not expected to be bright. You were expected to be blind. . . . You were expected to be this disabled, ineffective, ineffectual, unstable child with all these disabilities.

On the other hand, Sue and William both felt that they received a good education at Homai. Sue believed that her teachers taught more effectively than mainstream teachers because they allowed their students more time to explore and presented concepts in a concrete manner. Both particularly liked their first teachers. Sue liked hers because she took the class on innovative outings to building sites and farms. William remembered his teacher's imaginative songs:

> She was lovely. She was really very inventive. She used to write little songs and do all sorts of things. And I really enjoyed that . . . We had a whole lot of people in our class who had difficulty saying their 'ths' properly. . . . So she wrote this song called 'I'm a Finker.' I'm a Finker. It was really quite good.

Sue also felt that her Homai teachers held high expectations of their students:

> I think most of them were quite positive. . . . I think they thought that children who had visual impairments were able to achieve because they took our schooling really seriously and pushed us. And I'm pretty sure that academically we were at least at the same stage as our sighted peers when we went to intermediate if not slightly advanced because we'd had extra things like typing. And we'd also had more individual attention.

By the time the participants in this chapter attended Homai, braille was being taught by the classroom teachers instead of by blind instructors and, in fact, Sue only recalled one blind adult with whom she had contact but who was an excellent role model:

> The librarian. And she was really neat. In fact she probably had one of the biggest influences over me of anyone who was there because she was absolutely devoted to reading and she really instilled that in most of the kids that came through. . . . It was as if she'd read just about every book in that library and it just gave me a real love of reading. She's actually deaf-blind. I think she actually had a really stressful time there because a lot of kids went through phases of teasing her . . . . So it was a real shame because she was an excellent person to have in that role and we probably didn't realise it at the time but she was a real role model for us because she had a real job and a responsible position and she was very effective in what she did.

William's role model was his sibling Jess. Similarly to Sue, his role model installed a love for reading braille:

> I guess I was lucky with role models. . . . Jess was very good in the sense that . . . Jess used to read to me an awful lot. Lots and lots of stories and things from the library that I'd bring home and things. And I guess

> because Jess's a very proficient braille reader.. . . . And it installed a love of braille that I've never lost really.

He and his classmates also were influenced by the political action of blind people who marched down Queen St. to gain more appropriate representation on the RNZFB Board of Trustees. Upon hearing about the march, they organised their own protest marches at Homai:

> We used to have little marches in support of our favourite radio stations. And, I mean it's not exactly very political. But we just thought it was cool to have marches because I think that was at the stage when New Zealand was getting quite into protest marches. We heard about it on the news and we thought this was pretty neat because the 'blindies' were doing that too of course. There was that huge march that happened . . . down Queen Street, when all the blind people had banners. . . . . And I remember being quite affected by that. Oh it was a big thing. . . . It was all to do with the quality of the Board and the decisions they were making.

Stuart only remembered meeting one blind adult when he was nine years old. He had no blind role models and felt there was no need for them. This used to upset some people:

> I didn't regard blind people as role models. . . . I wouldn't have dismissed someone because they were blind. It just happened that my role models were not people that happened to have no sight. . . . George Benson in the jazz guitar field was a model for me. Jose Feliciano . . . by the way was not. I listened to his music and liked some of it. Stevie Wonder certainly was not a role model for me but some of his black American contemporaries were. . . . And it used to annoy people . . . sometimes when I didn't know any music from Stevie Wonder. It used to upset them a bit.

Joe, who did not attend Homai, did not remember having any contact with blind adults and was not aware of the Association of Blind Citizens (ABC(NZ)). His mother, Jenny, did remember one blind person who took it upon himself to visit because he felt that he could offer the family advice. However, Joe did not see the need to be with other blind people:

> It's good to meet people but quite often I find even though you might both

> be blind your interests are probably quite different anyway which quite often happens. Just because you're both blind it doesn't really matter. Well it doesn't mean that you're automatically going to be friends or anything, I reckon. . . . It just depends on people's personality and interests and what they like to do and things.

Part Two: Finding Other Places

The participants in this chapter as they moved from Homai encountered a number of difficulties which prevented them from feeling included at their regular schools. They and their families struggled to leave Homai but then they encountered an educational system and educational professionals who were ill prepared for their entrance into regular schools. Some participants needed to travel considerable distances to schools which were prepared for all of their students and some changed schools and helped them to become prepared.

Getting away from the block

The participants in this chapter who lived at Homai found that their time away from Homai was valued, but at the same time was controlled by Homai practices. Stuart, who was accustomed to walking all around his home community, noted that he was only able to travel outside of the Homai grounds during Orientation and Mobility lessons. He, also, was prevented from pursuing his outside interests which previously had involved going on adult weekend excursions with his local wildlife and tramping clubs. He also was prevented from taking further outside music lessons by Homai's Deputy Principal who felt that blind children needed to socialise at Homai:

> I wanted to start playing the organ (while) playing the drums at the same time. . . . . (The deputy principal) took exception. He thought that this was excluding in the sense that it was putting me in a position where I was better than everybody else and he couldn't see how this was possible. After all I was on his territory and I was a blind kid. Again, I reported this back to my parents and that was one of the very key things that made my stay at Homai so short. . . . But he, in fact, stopped me from continuing some of those extra curricula activities because he thought that

> it was excluding me from the social blind environment that I was supposed to be part of. It was totally backwards.

Luckily, however, he had plenty of visitors and did not feel 'dumped', as he assumed some of the other children had been left which he thought was evidenced by their lack of visitors. Stuart, after a year, was able to return home by way of his resistance to the rules and the life at Homai. He was considered "normal" and Homai asked for him to leave:

> I'd come from a very different system and as far as (my previous primary) school was concerned. They were happy to have me back straight away. And they did. ... We won. We won the argument in the end. I began to cause more trouble than Homai was prepared to be bothered with. They accepted that I was a normal kid and at one stage I recall later again hearing that (the deputy principal) once said to my mother, "Look there's nothing we can do for your son. Please take him away."

Sue's experience was different to Stuart's experiences. She loved her class and the occasional hostel trips to parks and beaches. However, she found that attempts to integrate her into community activities off campus were not well planned and she did not feel included. She was bored at church and at the local Brownie pack because "most of the things that you did were games that you couldn't take part in individually because they'd be running around the hall or just doing things that involved reading or writing." Homai also did not plan activities on campus where she could socialise with her sighted peers:

> I think there was a couple of times where we went and spent a day at a normal school but it just wasn't enough. ... Like Homai's really close to quite a few primary schools. ... They could have been encouraging children to come in and play after school or come in and having ... sports days ..., but there was none of that. ... And like I think (sighted children) used ... the hall ... for different classes and stuff. Well we weren't asked if we wanted to be in those classes. ... So there was very little integration with other children which I think is really bad. You know that's how blindisms and all those sort of things start if you're in an environment where blindness is normal.

Sue's most enjoyable excursions from Homai were weekend visits with members of her extended family where she "got to get out of that boarding school environment and spend time with a family and do neat things." Sue also appreciated her visits home during the holidays but had a difficult time returning to Homai. However, her friends at Homai were able to help her transcend these difficulties:

> Every time the holidays came around and you came back you had to settle back in again because it was a huge transition from being in a close family to being in a hostel where you had to be more independent and there wasn't . . . those really close bonds. . . . I tended to be one of the sort of popular kids . . . so I mean that really helped.

William, who went home every day after school, believed that he had a standard family life. He was close to his supportive family who were also strict:

> I think it's easy for me because I was a day pupil. So I grew up with (my siblings). . . . . If I didn't like a teacher (my parents) always stuck up for me. . . . Which was really important for me, because loyalty is really important. . . . Mum and dad had probably mellowed out quite a bit by the time I came along. . . . But you know they were still really strict. . . . Even when I was like 18 or so I was always expected to be home by midnight.

During primary school he did not want his time away from Homai infringed upon:

> I didn't have many sighted friends but I did have one or two who kept in touch on a fairly regular basis. And I went to Cubs for a while . . . and a lot of the kids from Homai went to that. And I didn't enjoy it for that reason. . . . I remember at the time thinking it was a bit of a drag that all these kids from Homai went as well.

Smart blind children can go to mainstream schools, but may not feel supported, or included

Sue and William who were at Homai for all of their primary years were mainstreamed into the nearby intermediate school. However, this transition was not a natural progression. Sue worried that she would not "make the grade" and was finally relieved to discover that she would not have to instead attend Homai's work experience class. William felt both significant and ordinary when he was able to attend the nearby intermediate:

> I remember thinking it was all very important or that I was very important, the fact that I was going to intermediate now and going to a school for sighted children. I remember thinking at the time that that was quite a significant thing. That I was going to a school just like everybody else.

Sue became frightened and withdrawn when she entered her new school:

> It was quite scary when I first went to intermediate. . . . I mean there were heaps. There were like about 800 kids or something at that school compared to about 100 at Homai. So that was one factor. . . . It like really frightened me . . . I was quite outgoing and well reasonably extrovert at Homai whereas once I went out into intermediate I was really quiet again. Shy.

Also, Sue and William both were not fully included because they were still primarily considered to be Homai students. The Visual Resource Room at the Intermediate School was managed by Homai and Sue felt that Homai still had power over her:

> If you did something naughty in class or if you had to be reprimanded or anything, then the resource teachers would always be informed and it would always go back to Homai. . . . Everything was documented and everyone knew about it. . . . You still felt pretty much under Homai's thumb.

Joe, the only participant in this group who did not attend Homai, instead boarded in four different private homes during his primary years in a nearby city where there was a school with a visual resource centre. Similarly to the Homai students, Joe remembered the day he left home as being traumatic:

> I remember the first day and I was heading away to (the city) so I ran away down the shed. I was there for a while. . . . And tried to get away because I didn't want to go . . . . I had to go away really for learning braille and that. It's probably the main reason. Yeah.

He, like Stuart, reacted to being away from home by rebelling and alienating some of his classmates:

> Because I wasn't that old. I was only five and I used to get to get pretty homesick . . . I remember I used to fight all the time when I first started school. I suppose I was sort of rebelling or something I suppose. . . . Mainly just (fighting) my classmates and that. .. It's not that I didn't like them but I found it was pretty hard to make friends and I was a bit homesick.

Joe stated that he didn't worry about feeling different. However, he said that he had lived in two worlds: one away from home, and one at home on the weekends:

> It doesn't actually worry me but even if I did (feel different) at the time . . . I'd rather that than everyone sorta crowded around you. I liked to have a bit of time on my own just to think. . . . I suppose I had two worlds too because I used to be in (the city) and then I'd come home. . . . I used to like to keep them separate too. I used to like coming home and I didn't think about school when I was at home.

Joe, according to Jenny, withdrew emotionally during his time away from his family and did not communicate about his two lives:

> I actually said to him just recently, . . . "How did you really used to like it when I took you to school on a Monday morning and you knew that you wouldn't be home till a Friday night?" He said, "I hated it really." And I said, "Well. You never really said." He said, "No, but I used to."

Joe "found it was pretty hard to make friends" in his classes at primary school. In order to help him make friends whenever he changed classes, he was asked by the school if he wanted any particular classmates to be in his new class with him:

> I suppose I got special treatment in a way. I used to get asked you who I wanted to be in class with . . . to try and help me to get to know people and make friends and that.

Jenny worried that Joe's friendships were not natural and reciprocal:

> Because some special notice was taken of Joe, sometimes a child that befriended him was rather a loner and they got a little bit of a spin off of that. . . . It got (them) some special mention because they would be good with Joe.

However, in the end, according to Jenny, the adults around Joe acknowledged that his relationships in class did not seem to bother him:

> I mean all the way through school we have quite frequent IEP meetings. . . . And then at some point in that meeting there's always his socialisation and all we adults sit around and say, "Oh well you know he gets on well with everyone but he doesn't have a friend and he does things by himself." And that comes up every time. But then the actual conclusion is that it doesn't worry him.

Joe spent his first Intermediate school year in the city and there he said he preferred to spend his time alone even at playtime:

> Like people were starting to at lunch time . . . play rugby or whatever. I wouldn't and that didn't really worry me. I'd always find plenty to do. There's always plenty of work to do. I had plenty of homework to do. I prefer to do it at school and then be free when you're at home.

Stuart was the only participant in this chapter who was able to be included at one of his local primary schools but this was only after he had been refused entry to two or three other local primary schools:

> The difficulty of getting me into a school was horrendous. . . . There was, for example, one principal of one school in the area who suggested to my mother that he couldn't take me because I might jump across the fence at play time and run home. . . . A totally ignorant thing to say but demonstrative of the total lack of understanding of not only the needs of the child but the wishes of the parent and the propriety of that parent to have some sort of wish for their child which they took for granted with sighted children.

At his local primary school, he said that he was a typical new entrant who walked to school each day with his siblings; had his own friends at playtime; was respected; and was accepted:

> There was a proper sense of comradeship amongst my peers and myself. There was no way in which they regarded me as being any less of a child than they were. As a kindergarten child I don't ever remember being teased much at all. And at primary school too there was acceptance.

Stuart's acceptance to his school was linked to the fact that a retired teacher aide, who happened to be learning braille, was willing to teach Stuart. Eventually however, Stuart's ability to learn braille "outstripped' his teacher aide's. At age seven he changed schools to be closer to a braille teacher who was a RNZFB employee. Stuart was able to stay at this school throughout his primary education, but attending involved getting up at six in the morning and taking a factory bus, then another bus, and then a taxi with other disabled children to reach this school.

Stuart's friendships were predominantly with sighted classmates with whom he had things in common, despite the later establishment of a Visual Resource Centre at the school and the subsequent increased attendance of children with vision impairments. After Stuart's year away at Homai, one close friend changed classes to be with him upon his return to the school:

> There is one special friend that comes to mind who took his commitment to his relationship with me to the extent where he even changed classes with me after I came back from Homai. . . . His name was Robert and he remains very fixed in my mind because that was a very special thing . . . But that gives you an example I suspect of the kind of special relationships that I developed and I suppose I have continued to develop over my life.

Sue found friends at her mainstream Intermediate School but felt most secure around other blind children and was not encouraged to see sighted friends out of school time:

> Although you were in separate classes you still felt you needed the security of being around other blind kids. So it wasn't as if we were totally isolated, we were just semi-isolated. . . . I made some good friends. But then again I don't think we were encouraged to bring them back at weekends or after school. . . . I think I went to one birthday and

> maybe had one friend over the whole time I was at intermediate.

In her Form Two class, she did not feel accepted because she was placed in a class where she was not challenged, and had little in common with her classmates.

> My Form 2 class I hated because they put me into a class who I saw as being, . . . quite thick really. And it really annoyed me because I was sitting there and they'd be doing really basic stuff. And it was just really boring. . . . I remember they did this really horrible drama thing and they sort of made up this script and everything. And I thought it was really dumb but you couldn't say anything about it and they seemed to really get into it and it sort of united the whole rest of the class. I just felt really embarrassed about the whole thing but I had to go along with it.

William, on the other hand, easily found sighted friends throughout his time at Intermediate School and said that he and his best friend had a similar sense of humour. He also had common interests with all the children in his class to which he was introduced by his family and neighbourhood friends:

> I think gradually as the novelty wore off they were more interested in seeing what kind of disruption they could cause. . . . But having said that, I can think of at least five or six people in my class in Form One and Two with whom I got on really well and with whom I used to spend time outside school hours. . . . I think that the blind kids who were stuck in Homai . . . found it difficult, in particular, because they didn't really know a lot about what the sighted people, sighted children, were talking about or what interested them. Whereas at least I knew enough from friends of mine about certain comics or things like that were topical. . . . . In Homai we used to talk about radio things all the time. But of course the big thing in a sighted child's life, who's going to intermediate, is probably what's on TV.

Sue's family had become aware of her difficulties in Form Two and advocated with the Visual Resource Teacher for her return home to attend her local secondary school despite Homai's opposition to this idea:

> There was a lot of opposition when they were planning me coming home for high school. . . . (The Homai principal) in particular wasn't encouraging at all. I think (the visual resource teacher) had a lot to do with helping it come about. And just that my parents pushed and pushed

> and just said "No. We want her down here," even though Homai basically said "Oh we don't think it can be done. Blah. Blah." It was reasonably new at that time but it wasn't unheard of.

The transition to her new secondary school was well planned, however, and Homai also helped with her transition through the provision of brailled textbooks:

> I think a lot of it went on behind the scenes with the principal meeting with the people from the Blind Foundation and with other teachers working out where I'd keep my books . . . And when to have lists of books into (Homai) to get done and how to go about doing a handout, and how I'd manage in different classes. . . . I wasn't just plopped in there I don't think because I got the feeling when I came that I'd been talked about and I was expected. And people knew who I was.

Sue, along with Stuart and Joe, went to her local secondary school and had difficulty finding new friends because they had not developed local friendships during primary school. Sue felt "out of it" and a bit of a "novelty."

> I used to have everyone coming up to me: "Oh show me how to read braille. How does this work? How does braille work?" . . . and asking me all these questions. And whereas now I'd probably be a lot more OK with that, it actually annoyed me. Because I thought 'No. I don't want to be different. I just want to fit in. I don't want to be asked all these questions about my blindness. I just want you to talk to me as you'd talk to anyone else.' And it really irritated me. . . . These people were only wanting to ask these questions. They weren't actually wanting to lead up to a relationship. They just wanted to know this stuff and then they'd go off with their other friends. And I sort of thought 'Oh well, what's the point anyway'.

Her shyness prevented her from initiating relationships. She felt insecure about what she would be able to offer her peer group and didn't believe she had many common interests:

> I found it quite hard to initiate conversations. Most of the people who were in the in group had something to offer or had something that made them sort of special like they might be really good at sport or they were really attractive or they were just quite vivacious. And I just wasn't that sort of person. I think they were quite accepting . . . but I think they were a little bit in awe of (my blindness). A lot of them didn't really feel that I

> was one of them. They just kept seeing my blindness rather than me. . . . Maybe I would have been more accepted if there'd been more kids with disabilities at the school. . . . I mean I was walking around with a brailler and a cane and making lots of noise. . . . I probably didn't have all the same interests as other kids. . . . They probably watched more TV than I did and they knew about all the current pop stars and TV stars and all that. . . . Or I couldn't play team sports and that was one thing that a lot of them would do in their out of school time.

The discussion group noted that some of the participants in this chapter, like the participants in the previous chapter, had difficulty finding friends, and there were lively discussions within the group about whether or not this was due to the effects of blindness or individual personalities. There seemed to be communication dilemmas and sighted children seemed to have different interests from their blind peers, especially during adolescence. Sue, however, did have one close friend whom she appreciated:

> And I used to do quite a lot with her. She'd come up and stay at my place and I'd stay at her place. I used to walk to school with her and sometimes walk home with her as well I think which was nice. Because it was really quite nice to be able to walk with someone.

As an adult, Sue still found it difficult to be socially active. She said that this was partly due to the fact that she had to rely on other people to make initial contact with her:

> It's up to the other person to make all that initial contact and a lot of people just don't because they're put off by that eye contact thing. . . . I think to some extent by changing people's attitudes it can improve it. . . . I say to people "If you see me in the street and recognise me then do come up and say hello because I won't know if you're there." And I've had people do that. . . . So I think it can be changed to a certain extent by that but you can never be on the same footing because it's still up to them to make the contact.

Sue said it was particularly frustrating when she was unable to call out and make contact with people in a crowded room:

> In our society it's not really polite to go, "Hey, so and so!." Especially if

> it's sort of somewhere quite formal. You just don't do that. And you have to sort of say to someone "Is so and so here?" or "Could you catch their eye and get them to come over?" And it's such a performance. Whereas anyone else can just catch their eye and wander over or whatever. (At Homai) you just yelled out. . . . I quite like that. As kids you probably do that as well because you've got no inhibitions. But as an adult you just never do that unless you're a bit drunk or something.

She spent a lot of time alone, but was continually making an effort to meet people with whom she had things in common:

> I do swimming but that's mainly by myself and I do a lot of reading and of course that's by myself. . . . I've looked into like joining clubs and things around the University. But the thing with that is that most of the clubs are geared towards being able to see. I mean they're either sports teams or they're things like different arts like painting or photography.. . . . In the past most of the groups that I've gone along to in my spare time have been lobbying type groups (for people with disabilities). And for the past few years I've been trying to think of something I can join that's totally non-disability . . . So that I can meet more people.

Joe also spent a lot of time alone. He rarely went out and spent most of his time at home. Jenny thought this was due to Joe's blindness, transport problems, his nature, and the fact that Joe did not want to appear dependent upon others to guide him in unfamiliar places:

> Blindness certainly plays a large part in what comes now. . . . He can't play sport. He can't drive a car. And that's pretty important stuff for (teenagers). . . . It doesn't actually worry Joe. So I don't suppose it's a problem. He's actually quite happy doing his own things and he's always busy. He's never ever said, "What can I do now? I'm bored." . . . . And maybe I think that's the nature of the child a bit too because some children are just more sociable than others. So you can't entirely blame the blindness I guess. . . . Sometimes children would actually invite him to come with them or whatever. Joe views that as wanting to help him. And he doesn't like having to admit that he's got to be helped. . . . And often I've said to him, "Well sometimes people are actually offering friendship by offering to take you with them." But he can't quite see that.

Jenny stated that Joe was not keen to participate in many recreational activities when he was identified as a blind or disabled person:

> He went on the Spirit of New Zealand. . . . They have a buddy system in that a child that's already been on it goes as a buddy on the 'disabled trip'. Doesn't really like that ('disabled trip'). He goes skiing and he will do it now but for a long time he (wouldn't). He just has to on a ski field-wear a blind skier bib . . . for other people's sake. . . . He used to hate it. And every time he used to come down, . . . he'd rip this thing off and put it in his pocket.

However, Joe did not believe that his blindness, itself, prevented him from being social, but other factors such as being educated, or having a social personality:

> I think you can probably make (blindness) get in the way. . . . Some people could use that as an excuse but I don't think it needs to be. I guess it probably throws people you haven't met before a bit. At school everyone's pretty used to it and I don't sort of feel awkward or anything. Just I think it probably just depends on the individual. . . . I think it's just more your personality, whereas some people probably don't get out enough and so once that starts it's a vicious circle I suppose. And you've got to be educated and have something to talk to people about. . . . There's probably some groups of people that are always doing sport but to most people I don't think it matters. . . . We've got a stereo (in the common room) and . . . well there's always my lunch.

He remembered one time when his blindness affected communication with sighted people. Nevertheless, he did not think that his blindness caused a difference in his communication methods:

> I remember when I was probably about Standard four if I was talking to someone I probably used sorta to face them with my ear. . . . And that's something that I've had to learn and it's automatic now and you just face people as you're talking to them. . . . People say that you miss out on a lot of body language but I've never sort of known it so I don't consider that I do.

Stuart, as well, had a difficult time at his local secondary school and said that he was not the "most agreeable kid" there because he "had opinions." Stuart felt that part of his adjustment difficulties at this time were also due to the fact that he was also adjusting to the fact that his vision had improved with surgery two months before his attendance at college:

> When I got out of hospital I remember the whole world was different. . . . It was really quite bizarre because it was a case of someone going to a plant and saying "Here is a plant," without me touching it because before that's what I would have done. . . . It was just this green blob before. Whereas now I could see the leaves and the flowers. I remember . . . seeing some begonia flowers. . . . They were bright red and I stopped a little shocked and I said "I don't want to go near those. What are they?." And was told they were just flowers. . . . It was totally confusing and I just didn't know what to do. . . . They say that when you get an amelioration of a sense that you go through a stage where your brain takes you back into childhood to some extent to make sure that you can develop that sense along with the rest of them. . . . There's an internal remapping. . . . I'm sure a psychologist would have had great fun with this.

Stuart was still unable to read print, but for Stuart the amount of visual stimulus which he was now receiving was enormous:

> The amount of light and extra stimulus on my brain that this operation afforded was probably causing major alterations in my brain's response times and reactions to all stimuli. Some psychologists . . . have suggested to me that such a profound change in the way I saw the world probably had innumerable effects on my conscious and subconscious mind. I can tell you that the first months of college were much more tiring to me physically and mentally than any time I'd known before in my life and my eye's new-found perceptiveness bewildered and downright terrified me every day for the best part of a year.

He felt that his peers were unable to help him "decode this strange experience" and he "was less inclined" to make friends his own age at his new school, but he was able to make older friends:

> I started making friends with quite a number of 6th, 7th Form people at the school because I couldn't find large numbers within my own form years that I was representative of, or that were happy with me. . . . To some extent I am not part of my own generation. . . . And I don't think that's a problem actually. . . . And (my friends) still are (older). I mean it's always been the case. There's no change with that. And very few of my congeners in my form years were close friends. There were some of course. But there weren't that many. Most of them were older.

He became friends with some of his teachers whom he followed in his seventh form to an out of area urban secondary school. This school offered him more academic challenges and subsequently his social life also improved as well:

> (An old science teacher) was at (this school) and this was a plank because I thought, 'Hey this is good. I can go there' and (my music teacher) was there too and . . . she was an excellent link because she was able to tell people about me and let them know that I wanted to come. . . . . And (I) did make a lot of friends (there), many of whom I've kept. . . . I used to go out a lot. It was a very social year for me.

At present, Stuart felt that his blindness did not limit his social contacts, but that his work did and he stated that he was not very sociable.

William had few close sighted friends during high school, but his blind friends helped him feel accepted and included:

> I think I felt safer that a lot of people there were the people that I grew up with. . . . Maybe the novelty of sighted people had worn off for me. There was a time there where I thought that it was somehow superior for a blind person to have sighted friends. . . . Maybe by the time I was in third and forth form and I could see the injustices that were being perpetrated on us,. . . I started becoming more politically aware as a blind person about how we were trampled as a class. . . . So I guess that also attracted me to mix with other blind kids as well as share common experiences.

As an adult, he spent most of his recreational time with his family, using the internet, or enjoying cricket. He had no difficulty finding sighted friends with common interests, but believed that his close friends were blind:

> The blind ones are definitely the closest ones. And I think blindness is something that bonds you in some respects. . . . I think it's definitely community. And maybe for some people it's not but I guess that for someone who's very political like I am, I do think there's a kind of an almost brotherhood sort of mentality about blindness that if we can't all keep together and work for our betterment then we're going to be pretty much stuffed.

Sue believed that it was important to have blind friends during school:

> I started to have contacts with someone else who was blind . . . That was just because I'd known them at Homai. And they'd come back (here) so I just started like ringing them . . . and that was quite helpful for me just to be able to speak to someone else who was blind who really understood some of the things about blindness that sighted people would maybe trivialise or wouldn't really completely understand.

On the other hand, Joe did not think that blindness, itself, was enough of a common ground for developing a friendship which depended upon personality and common interests. Joe noted as well that he did not have much in common with children with visual impairments because they were always worried about the vision which they possessed, and still felt different on camps which were organised by the RNZFB for peer support because of his blindness:

> Yeah we used to have camps but I was about the only totally blind one. . . . It used to strike me that it was always a real worry for them because they would have to go and get glasses and change their glasses . . . and see eye specialists. It used to be a bit of a worry for them. I got it a lot easier than they have. Like I knew them quite well but not real good friends. I'd be better friends with people in my class the same age as me really.

Stuart also did not develop any lasting friendships with any blind children or children with a vision impairment. He briefly had one friend with a vision impairment who had a similar interest in music, but, similarly to Joe, found that blind children were not necessarily able to become friends with each other:

> I had friends that I brought home and went to stay with. They were all sighted people. It was a totally blind-free zone. . . . It was never pre-supposed that because I was blind that I had to mix with blind people. My mother did try this once after a little while at the insistence, at the encouragement of people like (my VRC teacher), but discovered that it didn't work with me. It just didn't work at all. And I think the only reason she tried it was because she wanted me to understand that there were other blind children around.

Professionals include and exclude blind children

The participants in this chapter remembered a number of educational professionals in detail who were instrumental in helping the participants feel included at their mainstream schools. Stuart felt included at his first primary school and part of this was due to his principal's and teachers' beliefs and attitudes:

> His attitudes were only available to me in so far as his teachers attitudes were available to me and his teachers attitudes to me were always very positive.

William, who went to his local intermediate school with other blind students, stated that his principal was attentive and friendly:

> I think he probably paid a wee bit more attention to the blind students than he might have to others. He always used to speak to me quite a bit. . . . I thought he was quite inclusive. And wanted us to be involved in things.

Sue remembered her secondary school principal:

> Quite overpowering but she was really positive about me being there and she was really enthusiastic that the school would do everything they could to help me.

Joe's primary school principal was approachable and reminded him of home:

> Yeah I was actually good friends with the Principal . . . Mr T. and I thought that it was pretty good because we had a 'T' plough at home so um . . . . Because like I have a plough the same (name) as him so. Yeah I used to have a yarn to him and that. Yeah he was quite nice. I'm not sure if he's still there but um yeah he's a nice guy.

Sue and William who lived at or near Homai College said that they felt not welcomed by educational professionals at mainstream schools who grouped them together, either in class, or through exclusive language. For example, William was disowned through his secondary school principal's language:

> The principal kept referring to us as Homai pupils. And I found that really offensive. And the other teachers called us that too. I don't know whether it was some sort of prehistoric version of political correctness. Whether they didn't want to just call us blind pupils or whatever. . . . It almost felt to me at the time like they were trying to disown us.

Stuart thought most of his principals were not welcoming. His second primary school principal was concerned that his blind students were going to somehow negatively affect his school's image or management:

> He was close to retiring and he was this very ponderous public school old fellow who spent most of his time in his office and he may grace the stage at assemblies occasionally if he so wished to. . . . He regarded the inception of blind children into his school as an impediment if it was going to affect the administration of his school and if it was going to affect the image of his school. . . . . His view of my being there and of other visually impaired students who later came to that school was that they were okay as long as they were within the framework of the school. He didn't want to make any exceptions.

Stuart's local secondary school principal was similar in that he wanted to avoid challenges to any difficulties within his school:

> The principal at the time . . . was a "good news" principal. He liked good news . . . . You know he was one of these awful missionary types. I don't know where he got it from . . . .but . . . whatever problems I was having in the mainstreaming system and trying to get used to the school of his were as far as he was concerned problems that were related to the choice of school.

The participants in this chapter felt included and accepted by a number of their classroom teachers, especially when their teachers' commitment to education included taking the time to learn braille. For example, Sue's secondary school teachers were very supportive:

> A couple of teachers at school actually learnt braille while I was there. One of the maths teachers and one of the typing teachers . . . which was really helpful.

William felt accepted by his teachers when they expected him to be similar to the other students in the class:

> I remember thinking it was quite neat that I was in the A stream with all these other sighted kids . . . I don't really know what the teachers thought that a blind child could achieve. But certainly I don't think we were treated much differently in terms of the class work we were expected to do or how we were supposed to hand it in and things.

Stuart's teachers at his second primary school were innovated and enthusiastic about educating their students who, in turn, were from educated families and who were willing to learn:

> These were people who were innovative and they were enthusiastic as well. . . . They didn't regard themselves as baby sitters they regarded themselves as people who were educating children. I suppose they had a fairly easy base to work with. These were kids from well educated, wealthy homes. . . . No one in my family had money or anything thing like this but by god I fitted into . . . that foreground superbly because I was willing to learn and I was very little trouble.

Sue encountered a secondary school teacher who was naturally inclusive:

> This maths teacher was just totally natural and just treated me as she would any other student. You know we just used to talk about general things as well . . . Yeah it was just nice for someone to treat you normally.

Joe continued his theme of feeling accepted by primary school professionals who reminded him of home:

> When I was in J2, I suppose I had a teacher called Miss M. I think she had parents down (this way) and that. So that was pretty good. And she'd grown up on a farm.

All of the participants in this chapter also encountered classroom teachers who were not inclusive because of their teaching practices. For example, Joe had difficulty at his local secondary school, because some of his teachers were unable to adjust their teaching methods to include him:

> But one thing though . . . quite often it's quite sort of new to them when they put something on to the blackboard and they've got to sort of say it too . . . Some are better than others. . . . It takes a bit of getting used to.

Jenny believed that some teachers, because of the spontaneous way they taught and the time needed to produce braille material, were not inclusive teachers.

> Some teachers from what I can gather are just a little bit more spontaneous than others. And they haven't actually planned it word for word last week so that it can all be in braille. Sometimes they are a wee bit spontaneous and they suddenly say, "Turn to such and such a page. There's something that's going to enforce that." It's 'oops haven't got it for Joe."

The discussion group felt that the mainstream educational professionals in this chapter did not understand the educational needs of blind children. Stuart said that he was expected by his teachers to use his memory when there was no braille available in order to participate in the primary school curriculum to which he did not have a natural access. Sue's secondary teacher's attempts to provide natural classroom reading support for her seemed to be ill planned:

> In most of my classes, I had to have whoever sat by me . . . read the stuff off the board to write up. And that was actually a bit of a pain. . . . . I didn't like having to feel dependent on the other kids in my class. . . . I think there was a point where they decided that rather than putting all this stress on one kid like my friend at that time, they'd make it so it was sort of like a buddy system and everyone would have turns doing it. And that was actually even worse because it meant that kids who wouldn't otherwise want to do it were forced into doing it. It's really horrible when you're sitting by someone who you know doesn't want to be sitting by you.

William believed that he was treated unfairly when his teachers did not have an adequate knowledge of braille, and he was not supported by his visual resource teachers:

> Well the resource room was kind of like a home base and you'd go back

> there and collect your books for the next period. So this particular time . . . I thought that we had finished the maths subject that we were doing. . . . I thought it would be the next volume. . . . . I mean I knew that the teacher jumped around the place . . . And when I got there, we were not using that volume. And so I explained what I had done, and the teacher said that I had to write 100 lines saying "I must remember to bring the right textbook to class." And I tried to explain that I brought the right textbook. It's just that braille was so bulky that I'd brought the wrong volume. She wouldn't accept it so I went to the resource room who I always thought was supposed to advocate for us on these sorts of things. And they wouldn't help.

One of Stuart's teachers actually refused to teach a Physics class because Stuart was in the class:

> I faced my very first bit of institutionalised refusal to teach a blind student and it came in the form of a man called Mr. M. We had the science classes streamed and I was in the top one . . . ..Mr. M. was supposed to teach the physics module and he couldn't teach that class because I was in it. . . . I complained. I went to the Principal and I said "you cannot let this happen. It is not legal." . . . . The suggestion was made that I change classes and go into another class . . . I said "No you have put me in this class because I've earned the right to be there. Now you do something about it. It is your problem. It's not my problem." . . . They changed the teacher. Mr. M. went to some other class altogether, lower down the circle and I was taught by this very very good science teacher anyway.

Sue's Form Two classroom teacher was not able to challenge Sue academically, and she felt that some other teachers did not want blind children in their class:

> I felt really angry that I'd been put into that classroom because the classes were slightly streamed . . . I'm pretty sure it was a below average one. . . . I mean I didn't bomb out in my Form One class. I performed fine. . . . but for some reason they just put me into that one. . . . I thought "Well what's the use of really trying when no-one seems to think I'm capable."

On the other hand, Sue's secondary school teachers supported her so much that she felt pressured to achieve:

> I knew that all these people were doing quite a lot more to make sure that I achieved so I felt a bit of pressure when it came to exams and stuff to do well . . . .I mean all kids are pressured to a certain extent, but (their

> teachers) never had gone to special efforts to draw diagrams and (to give) a bit of individual attention to explain stuff.

Sue's science and home economics teacher were not able to work out some of the logistics of her performing some practical activities so Sue had a teacher's aide. Sue found her to be patronising, intrusive, and not needed:

> I didn't actually get on with her with very well anyway. I found her a bit patronising. So when she was in the class with me I actually found her a bit invasive because it just made me stick out as being a bit different and at that age you just want to fit in with the rest of the kids your age. . . . I think it was Bunsen burners and that which are pretty difficult for blind people to do, and measuring little amounts. I can't really do that very well when you're.. Oh that's right and she also helped me in home economics. . . . I probably could have done that for myself really if I'd known where everything was because I'd been used to doing that at Homai anyway.

Joe and Stuart also had teacher aides. However, they found them less intrusive. Joe believed that this was because his primary school aide had other students to support:

> Remember in my class there was actually another boy with cerebral palsy and so she used to help him too. He used to have a bit of trouble with likes of measuring. She wasn't really with me all the time. I could do most of it.

His secondary school aide worked for approximately twenty hours a week of which his parents, themselves, paid for eight hours. Joe found her to be helpful because she translated and read material which his classroom teachers were unable to provide to him in an accessible medium:

> She goes to about two periods of English a week. She goes to History, mainly because there's um usually a lot of copying and that to be done from the board or making notes or quite often we'll have a lot of reading to get through in a short time. I should have practised more but I'm not that fast a reader. . . . She does go to maths. Like for example at the moment in maths we have started doing graphs, y equals x squared or something and you got to graph that and that's a bit more time consuming. I do that on my own (with) one of those pin ball things. . . . I probably wouldn't work as well if I didn't have her there. . . . Everyone's pretty used to her.

Jenny stated, even though Joe's teachers were not teaching in an accessible manner, that this questionable need for a teacher aide helped others to accept Joe's mainstreaming:

> I mean it would be ideal if he didn't have a teacher aide with him. But he has to have because otherwise he's going to lose so much of a lesson. . . . I'm sure teachers, though they know they shouldn't, do sometimes tend to write something on the board and say "read that." . . . Joe has never been terribly good at putting his hand up and saying "I can't read it." . . . The (teachers have) got to teach the majority. . . . I don't want the teachers to be aiming everything at Joe because a lot of parents could legitimately say, "He's getting more time." And I think that's important for mainstreaming in that a mainstreamed child can't be seen to, for other parents of normal kids a mainstreamed child, be given lots more time. Because that's not fair. I mean he's only one of the class. And so the teacher's aide is going to avoid that ill feeling.

Vision teachers or visual resource teachers were seen by all of the participants as integral to successful inclusion because they taught essential skills in reading, writing, and maths. Stuart and Joe chose their schools because of the availability of braille teachers, who also eventually became, or were, their Visual Resource Centre teachers during primary school. Joe said that his vision teacher was like a buddy to him during his years away from home:

> The teacher was good. He and I used to go up to the Visual Centre, . . . (learning) braille . . . We used to go for a bit of a walk around school and I'd would try and find my way around. Though . . . the resource teacher, I suppose he sorta helped me. . . . I used to like to talk to Mr X. . . . And he (liked) ships . . . so he used to like to talk about that. Wouldn't get much work done but ..

Stuart remembered most of his visual resource teachers as education facilitators whose presence did not stigmatise him, but helped him when the rest of the class was pursuing visual activities:

> Debbie was a facilitator. She wasn't taking me aside and making an exception of me in that class. She was expected by the class teacher to work within the confines of me being in the class as a part of that

> classroom. . . . Sometimes people would say, "Is your special teacher coming in today?" And my answer would often be, "Well she's not my special teacher. But yes, she is coming in today." . . . She sat next to me. She was with me fairly closely but where there was independent activities to be done she wasn't holding my hand all the way through it. It was expected that I did them on my own. . . . . . . I don't think I felt a stigmatism where having another adult in the classroom was concerned. If anything it was a help because in some cases I was unsure. . . . It was often totally visually oriented activities. . . . It was all very well for me to sit in a classroom and paint a picture like all the other kids were doing but if there was something else that could be done, it was.

During the participants' secondary school years and despite the difficulties with accessing the curriculum, there tended to be less interaction with itinerant vision teachers. For example, Sue felt her teacher did not play an active role in her education at her local high school:

> There was a resource teacher based at (another) school. He came round probably every week or every two weeks but he didn't actually do a lot. He checked that everything was going OK. And he liaised with teachers a bit just to order books (which) I needed in braille or just checked that I had everything I needed. So I didn't actually have a lot to do with him really.

However, William, found his visual resource teachers were taking too much of an active role in his education because of their association with Homai and he felt unsupported and different:

> I was also becoming very conscious at that stage of the fact that the resource room teachers were inappropriately being used as go betweens in situations of trouble between the students and the teachers. I remember I had this business studies teacher who hadn't quite cottoned on to the way that I used to work which was that I did no work all year and then crammed for the exams and got the top mark in the class. . . . And so she actually complained to Mrs L. who was the resource room teacher. And I actually made a point of going all the way to the deputy principal. . . . And I made the point that it is a totally inappropriate thing to shield a student from standard disciplinary contact between a student and a teacher. . . . And they couldn't see my point. . . . It was this whole Homai pupil phenomenon.

William also felt that his visual resource teacher did not see the value of his friendships with his blind classmates

> We used to have this wall outside C block which is where the resource room was. We used to sort of line up on this wall and wait for the seagull droppings to fall or something equally exciting. And talk and things. And she used to really resent that and try to break it up. It's a statement that says that somehow blind friends are inferior.

Part Three: Places to Learn are Hard to Find

The participants in this chapter, like those in the previous chapter, had difficulty accessing all of the curriculum, and some did not receive adequate instruction in literacy or safe movement. The quality, as well as the quantity, of instruction in braille, for example, had an influence on the participants' lives. William, who had braille instruction and resources available on site at primary school and secondary school, was very literate, and an active braille user via high technology equipment throughout his life. Yet, Joe, who only had on-site braille instruction at his primary school, only used braille to study his textbooks. Otherwise, he relied on talking books or talking computers at home. Orientation and Mobility instruction was not easily available to the participants at regular schools and the participants stated that this affected their self esteem and social life.

Most of the participants in this chapter also had difficulty accessing physical education because of its emphasis on visual sports and activities which their teachers were unable to change. Maths was mentioned like in the previous chapter as a difficult subject to learn and the participants speculate that this may be due to the linear tactile code for maths. Music was easily taught to the participants in this chapter and it was enjoyed by all of the participants. Some of the participants pursued it as an interest outside of school.

Braille is literacy for blind children

William and Sue linked their attendance at Homai with their need to learn braille, and Stuart and Joe's entrance to their primary schools was dependent on the availability of braille instruction. For example, Stuart was only able to attend his local school because of the lucky fact that the school was able to locate a retired teacher's aide in the area who was learning braille and agreed to teach Stuart:

> There was one hope, one or two hopes actually. And one of them came in the form of what was then just called (the town) School just down the road from where we lived actually. . . . But one of the reasons that happened was because there was at the time a retired woman who had been a teacher's aide in the state school system who was now learning braille. . . . She lived (nearby). She offered to help teach me braille. This was a ray of hope, cause it was understood that braille was going to be the way I had to go.

Joe's parents were informed that daily braille instruction was so important in the primary years that they needed to choose between sending Joe to Homai or to the nearest city to board where there was a visual resource centre. Attending their local school just wasn't an option because Jenny believed that braille instruction would eventually devolve to be the responsibility of a teacher aide:

> Well we were told, or understood, that he needed daily contact with the Visual Centre in those first years of school. And so that's not possible to have someone coming from (there) to (here) everyday. . . . They'd have been coming an hour and three quarters travelling, to spend one hour with one child, and then go an hour and three quarters all the way back. . . . . It's the braille. . . . And the tactile. . . . If there was a problem in the classroom, they were right there. Well that wouldn't have happened had he been in a totally mainstreamed primer five year old at somewhere like (here). It couldn't have happened. . . . I actually started to learn braille. . . . If I learnt braille I could perhaps be his teacher's aide at the local school. But then I'd be learning braille a week before he learnt it and that wasn't going to be very satisfactory either.

William also believed that teachers aides were not appropriate braille teachers, and that, ideally, classroom teachers should have a literate knowledge of braille:

> In an ideal situation you wouldn't put an illiterate teacher in front of a sighted child so why should you put an illiterate teacher in front of a blind child. And if we were being quite idealistic then we should probably say that there should be at least one primary school teacher in every school who was braille literate and that teacher should have the blind students. Because I just don't think that it's acceptable that a kid in a remote area has to wait for a qualified teacher to come along some considerable distance, once a week or even twice a week if they're lucky, to give them a little bit of braille instruction. And nor do I think it's appropriate that a teacher's aide teaches a blind child the fundamental skills of literacy because sighted children don't get taught the fundamental skills of literacy by a teacher's aide.

Stuart's first teacher's aide was not able to keep up with him in braille, and a more proficient teacher, whom he initially saw twice a week, was found:

> Virginia wasn't able to deal with it any more. We got onto contractions by this stage . . . and capital letters and full stops and whatever else were coming in at this stage. I learned braille very fast. . . . . Virginia enlisted some help and the help came in the form of Janet . . . She was employed by the Foundation at the time. . . . . She was a good braille reader and a good braille writer.

Eventually, braille was more readily available to Stuart at his next primary school which established a Visual Resource Centre on site and employed Virginia as one of its teachers.

Braille, itself, was associated with achievement by the participants. For example, William felt especially proud when he stopped double spacing his braille:

> Homai's divided into that sort of junior and senior block. And we all thought we were so responsible when we went to the senior school because we stopped doing double spacing between our braille. And it was all very adult.

At Homai, the word 'braille' was even given to other activities which were adapted for their students. Sue said,

> I was eager to learn and do lots of neat things that we did. We used to play what they called 'braille games' every Friday where you went to the hall and it was basically a game that they'd converted so that blind people could play it. So something like skittles or they made up different games with balls.

Joe linked it to simply being able to read despite the advent of talking books and software programmes:

> I think you've got to learn braille really so that you can at least read books. I use talking books too but I probably use talking books a lot more for my reading in leisure time. But I read braille for my text books mostly anyway.. I don't think you can get by without it really.

William believed that braille was sometimes not recognised as the primary source of literacy for blind children because of negative attitudes about braille:

> I'm a wee bit concerned that, because of the pressures that the visual resource centre teachers are under, only the students that are absolutely very intelligent are getting access to braille. And I think that comes from a mind set that says that braille is difficult to learn and somehow it might be outdated with all the new technology or it's cumbersome. There's that classic example of when you go and see a couple of children at work and the teacher will say, "This child can read print but this child <u>has</u> to learn braille." You know the wording's very important because it reflects attitudes. . . . It's a last resort thing. I mean I deal with people all the time who are adults who are totally illiterate because they used large print during their education. And the prognosis was always that their sight was likely to deteriorate. Now they can't even read their own agendas of meetings or read what they've written themselves and I think that that's a dignity thing.

William and his wife decided that they, personally, could help change attitudes to braille by teaching their sighted children to be bi-literate:

> (We) decided a long time ago that our children are going to be bi-literal. I mean we're going to teach them braille at the same time as we teach them print. Because, otherwise, it makes braille appear to them as abnormal.

William thought that high technology enhanced braille, but could not replace it:

> I mean computers have certainly actually enhanced braille because now there's so much more braille than there used to be thanks to computer production. I think sometimes people need to be careful about defining what literacy is. Because to me it's being able to have complete access to what you read and what you write and certainly if you've got a talking computer you can write something for someone and print it out. But then if you went to read back what you've written in a public forum, . . . it's extremely difficult. . . . If you're in a meeting and you need to skim your notes . . . then you've got to have an earpiece in your ear and the synthesiser rabbiting away at you while you go through it. So that can be distracting.

Braille, itself, was learned by most of the participants away from the mainstream classroom. All of the participants felt that this was necessary because of the attention which it needed, and the fact that it is a different way of writing. For example, William said,

> And I don't see how you could easily do that without withdrawing the child and giving them tuition in braille because the rest of the class just wouldn't be relevant to them. . . . I got involved in a discussion with some educators a while ago and they took me to see a child who's learning braille at a local school. . . . I wasn't convinced that he was progressing as fast as he could have because he was trying to be integrated into the class activities. And it was quite an undertaking really to try and co-ordinate the pace of his work and the pace of the rest of the class's work when it's really a very different form of communication. I think people have to be much more focused on outcomes rather than what makes them feel good. . . . It may really make a sighted person who's committed to this sort of thing feel very warm and fuzzy about the fact that, 'gosh the blind child's been integrated into the class and that's really marvellous.' Trouble is if that jeopardises a child's literacy skills then that child's going to spend the rest of his life as an adult having problems with literacy and therefore with employability.

All of the participants also mentioned that the noise which was associated with their braille production either via a Perkins brailler or a printer caused too much disruption as well for them to stay in class. Joe had a separate room just for his braille production equipment. Sue disappointedly and belatedly discovered that her brailler's noise was an issue with her classmates:

> I always thought the other students in my class didn't worry that I made so much noise on the brailler during class and that it wasn't a problem. But I actually found out from someone . . . that at a parents' evening one of the kid's parents who was in my class actually complained about the noise that my brailler made to the teachers.

The participants stated that the use of braille required them to be more organised and responsible than their sighted peers, because the size of their braille texts required that books be broken down into volumes which were stored outside their classroom. Also, as Sue remarked, some participants needed to bring their own paper because paper for print was only available in the classroom:

> You had to work out what text books you were going to need to bring from the resource room into your class. And make sure you had the right volumes and that. Other stuff that sighted kids didn't have to bother about too much because everything was provided. You had to make sure you had enough braille paper and typing paper. . . . You just had to be more on top of things.

Braille books were also in limited supply during the participants' school years. They relied on transcription services from Homai, nearby Visual Resource Centres, and local volunteer groups to produce the books which they needed. For example, Stuart said,

> Some of that was done for me by transcription. Some of it was done by the Braille Club. The Braille Club were a tremendous support. . . . The Braille Club, right throughout, . . . were a godsend. If they hadn't been there a lot of my very early education just wouldn't have happened. . . . Because they were the ones that did it a lot of the time. . . . It was people . . . who were volunteers. . . . And most of them are still doing it. I keep in regular contact with those people. They were a tremendous support.

Stuart, also, later in his life was able to use overseas braille libraries to obtain books which were not available in New Zealand.

Blind people need and want to be taught specialist curricula

All of the participants in this chapter stated that Orientation and Mobility was essential to a blind child's growth and development, and that it should occur at an early age. William's statement below illustrated this:

> I think that a blind child has got to have O&M . . . Because to me Orientation and Mobility should be treated for a blind child as a core curriculum subject. It's not something that comes naturally but it's something that's essential.

Jenny felt that Joe had only enough O&M instruction in order to travel routes in his own rural town. She gave this as one reason why she and Joe were considering his attendance at a Homai vocational transition programme after high school:

> Sure he can get around here, not a problem at all, get round school and (town) but that's not a city. And so he really does need . . . a real intense programme in that department. And so that would be achieved at the (transition) programme.

Joe also expressed some doubt about his ability to travel in new environments. However, he was very confident when travelling around the farm:

> I don't use a cane at home just around school. . . . But if I went somewhere else it would take a wee while to get used to. . . . I ride a motor bike around a bit, so. Best not to go too far afield on it but. . . . Mum's not that keen on us going up the road but..

The participants in this chapter had both positive and negative relationships with their Orientation and Mobility Instructors. Stuart praised his second O&M Instructor who was able to help him learn about his vision, and who challenged him to travel in difficult environments.

> The one thing Mr. F. got on to, which no one else got on to, was my sight. He got on to that real quick. And that's what saved him with me. . . . And the reason his training has stayed with me more is because he relied upon that one important thing that I think a lot of mobility instructors at the

> time didn't rely on and that was the person's capacity to learn from experience. And experience in Mr. F's eyes was something a little bit harsher and harder than someone like (my first instructor).

William's admiration for his first instructor was linked to her unique personality and sense of humour.

Stuart had a very negative experience with his first O&M Instructor at the special school whose instruction was not challenging.

> Miss B. was not a teacher. Miss B. was another caretaker. . . . I'm sure she had her heart in the right place. But her teaching was grossly deficient. . . . . There was no risk taking involved in mobility training at all at Homai. . . . Miss B.'s teaching was really not up to very much and I don't think I learned anything from her.

Sue was afraid of her first O&M Instructor and found O&M to be quite a stressful experience. She also mentioned like Stuart the fact that O&M at the special school was the only time that she was allowed to walk in the sighted community.

> And when I started mobility on the whole I liked it, but I was quite scared of it as well because . . . there were times when if you did do something wrong, you weren't actually given constructive criticism. You were just told off. I found that quite stressful. So sometimes I'd be quite pleased to be going and doing mobility training because you'd be going out of the school and walking round the streets and stuff, and it would be different. But at the same time I was a bit nervous about it. Wondering if I'd be able to do it well and . . . probably more scared of the teacher.

Her instructor was also harsh and unfair:

> Once we'd done all our basic cane travel and stuff we were told to do things like going into shops and getting stuff. . . . If you've never done that, it's actually quite a big ordeal to walk into a shop. . . . . And I don't think we were eased into that. We were just bossed into it and I actually remember once the mobility teacher asked me to go to a shop and buy her a pound of butter. And then she told me off because the butter had been cheaper in another shop. . . . .. I mean how ridiculous.

An issue which was talked about by the women in this chapter was that they felt that the white cane stigmatised blind people. Sue felt that she became 'obvious' when travelling with her white cane, and Jenny felt the white cane drew unwanted attention to Joe and it made her uncomfortable:

> I'm sure that one benefit of being blind is that you actually don't know that they're staring. .... Joe was quite little and he'd only learnt cane skills and we were walking just around the street on our holiday weekend .. There were crowds in (the town). And because he had the cane skills, he was really quite proud of all this and he'd scoot along the place with his cane. And it was wonderful because we got in behind him. I mean the crowd just opened up and we would go through ... but people would . . . pretend they weren't looking as he went past. But because we were coming behind him, we were very conscious of the fact that they were stopped and ... and turning around to stare at him.

Some of the participants noted that a lack of O&M skills could cause humiliation which would interfere with feeling included. William said,

> If a blind child is dependent on sighted children or teachers aides to lead them around, to get from the classroom to the toilet, because there's no funding for O&M, then you've defeated that (inclusion) purpose anyway. It singles out the blind child as being inferior and dependent.

Sue stated that as an adolescent she was worried about appearing incompetent.

> I can remember being quite scared. I knew the layout of school reasonably well but ... if there were four classrooms in a row, it was quite hard to tell which one you were going to unless you counted along. And if there were heaps and heaps of people around then it can be quite hard to do that. And I can remember feeling really nervous that I might walk into the wrong class by mistake or sit down in the wrong class. And that was actually a really big issue then because you don't want to be seen as incapable or doing something different.

Sue's, lack of O&M confidence, combined with the fact that she did not like going to events alone, affected her social life after school:

> Sometimes it was just the logistics of getting somewhere. Like if people are meeting in a big hall and there's heaps of chairs all around and you're

> not exactly sure where they're going to be and whether there's seats and all the rest of it. That can just be quite difficult when you're using a cane. And especially if you can't go along with someone. I mean most people at that age feel more comfortable if they're with one someone anyway. So when you do it by yourself.. . . . I think I just felt a bit nervous about even doing something that was unfamiliar.

Stuart, William and Sue were controlled and disabled by O&M rules or by the lack of O&M instruction. For example, Stuart commented that in the special school, he believed that O&M was used as a way to regiment blind people, and that this was indicated by the fact that students at Homai only travelled in the sighted community during O&M lessons.

> You did (O&M) in controlled situations where the teacher was watching you all the time. . . . ..Because it's a sort of regimented thing again. That was how they wanted it to be. Because they could control people as 'blind people'. . . . . .. And I'm not kidding. .. It was one of the rare times you actually ended up being outside the place in a sighted community on your terms.

One of William's rare criticisms of Homai was that he did not receive O&M instruction until age 9 or 10:

> I think the O&M could have been better. . . . See a lot of us we walked around Homai holding hands because we were keeping track of where each other was. And I actually don't recall us ever being given a cane to do any serious sort of stuff with until we were about 9 or 10. . . . You see a cane should be like seen as an absolutely essential part of a blind person's.., you know. It's like putting clothes on as far as I'm concerned.

William felt that he did not have good O&M skills and part of this was because he was just taken off the O&M class list one year when he was ill:

> I remember that we did quite a bit of O&M when I was eleven. It was probably because they decided that there were a whole bunch of us going to intermediate and they should sort of upskill us. . . . But then I got appendicitis and so I was away for about a month with that. And when I came back, I turned up looking forward to my O&M lesson and they said, "Oh you can't be in the group anymore because we've left you behind." And I was pretty much left to flounder really.

As an adult he travelled more effectively with a guide dog, than with a white cane because of his limited orientation skills. He believed that the approach that his first O&M instructors took was too focused on travelling specific routes, and not independent travel:

> I don't ever recall being restricted by my parents and I don't think I was really ever wrapped up in cotton wool as such. I think that when I was being taught what we called mobility in those days. It was more in the line of being taught a specific route. . . . There was always a very specific objective in mind and there was never a lot of concentration on the mechanics of identifying where you are in an unfamiliar place and perhaps using clues like the sun or traffic or wind direction to get you back to a familiar place if you were lost.

Sue was prohibited from using her cane in her mainstream schools, and this affected her confidence:

> We just walked to school; dropped (the canes) off in the resource room; went back to the resource room after school and picked them up . . . .. I remember there were parts of school that I knew my way around really well but I didn't sort of wander all over the school grounds in my breaks which I probably may have done if I'd been able to use a cane.

However, she felt that she was a good traveller and attributed this, not to her O&M instructors, but to her parents:

> There are always kids in your class who have quite bad orientation skills or whatever and you just thought, 'Mmm isn't that weird that you get lost in a room.' . . . I think it's a lot to do with like my parents always just let me go. . . . They just expected me to find my way round like anyone else like my brother and sister. I think that had a lot to do with it. They didn't sort of mollycoddle me.

Jenny, Joe, and Sue believed that O&M instruction should come from a professional, with reinforcement coming from para-professional support, the family, and role modelling. Sue, for example, stated,

> Well it needs to be someone trained. It can't just be anyone. . . . But the parents and the teacher aide should be told the basics just so that they can reinforce the basics. You know, the way they're holding the cane and the way they're moving.

On the other hand, Stuart and William believed that professional instruction was not needed for O&M. For example, William stated that if he had a blind child, his wife could teach the O&M.

Stuart regarded Orientation and Mobility professionals with cynicism and part of the "blind way", because his best mobility training came when he was on his own and challenged himself. However, he did feel that it was important for parents, as well, to take responsibility for O&M instruction:

> Now if you want to be included in the mainstream society, in the sighted world, . . . the biggest challenge that's concomitant with that is your capacity to be mobile. Whether it's . . . climbing hills and crossing streams and whether it's just doing something really simple like crossing a road, you must respond to the challenge of doing that. And I don't have a lot of sympathy for people who whine about it. Particularly parents, who whine about it and who never take their kids out for a walk. Who've never taken their kids to a place and said, "right I'm going to get you lost and you're going to find yourself again." Who never take their kids and see whether they can cross a river or do anything that's remotely difficult.

Stuart's childhood experiences included such challenges:

> The rough territory that I was going through at the time contributed more to my sense of mobility . . . than the mobility training did. . . . (My first O&M instructor) used to take you to streets with no cars on them. . . . You were only supposed to walk along and only on the safe bits. . . . I learned at ten and eleven that this was not the way the world was. And I learned that because I lived in an area where there were plenty of unsafe things. And I was enjoying those all the time. Water. Hills. Gorse. Brambles. . . . I used to take the dog for a walk out almost every day without exception. And I had beaches close to me and . . . later on . . . I was going out for long periods on my own.

The need for Techniques of Daily Living instruction was also mentioned as a necessary syllabus for blind children by William and Sue. Sue had positive memories about TDL activities at Homai, especially when she was able to practice her living skills out of the hostel environment:

> I think most of that was . . . integrated into just what we did. We were taught how to tie your shoelaces and kids were taught how to make their bed and . . . then they were taught how to get dressed. How to wash themselves. . . . Once you got to junior levels you were taught things like how to polish your shoes. . . . I remember quite close to the time when I was leaving Homai . . . everyone had a turn at spending a weekend in the flat that was attached to the hostel and that was like really neat because you had to cook all your meals. You had to vacuum and clean the bathroom and make your bed and do other things that you would if you were flatting. And I really loved it. It was like a real challenge.

Stuart, on the other hand, who had attended Homai partly because of the availability of TDL instruction, did not have a similarly positive experience. His TDL lessons were not related to his daily living experiences:

> The staff, for example, were responsible largely for cleaning the place. They were responsible for doing things like the laundry for the place. The children never had do any of this at all. . . . You were served a meal. . . . You never got to do any cooking of your own at all. I don't think I ever saw a kid wash a dish in the bloody place. . . . I mean it was pretty damn shonky if you ask me. (It) was taught in a totally controlled, irrelevant out of class situation where the premise was basically that you were a blind kid and you learned it the way some expert, so called, was going to show it to you.

In the participants' mainstream schools, instruction in curriculum areas which were not part of the general curriculum sometimes occurred through class withdrawal practices. However, the participants in this chapter thought that this practice was necessary and not stigmatising. Sue actually preferred to be taken out of class for individual attention because it was less stigmatising than having 'special' instruction in class.

> When you're actually just going away for a class and as long as it's not for too many classes so that you're not missing out on too much, I don't think that's as intrusive. Because the rest of the class has noticed that you're not there but hey don't sort of see you as having to have special attention and special help.

Sue also talked about time-table issues and the social difficulties of having specialist instruction after school:

> It's also really important to have your social times with your peers as well. You know like your playtime and lunch time and after school. . . . I mean it's hard because you don't want to cut them out of class time either.

William stated that he would encourage withdrawal because he believed that specialist instruction, such as instruction in braille and O&M, was a necessary part of a blind child's education and it needed to be individually taught. He also made the point that blind people have been rarely asked about this issue.

> I would encourage (class withdrawal). . . . I don't know any blind person that supports totally the concept of full inclusion. The trouble is that these people who come up with these ideas could change profession tomorrow and we're stuck with the damage that they've done for life as blind people. And no one's ever asked us. . . . I guess the way I would try and summarise it is 'as much withdrawal and blindness based tuition as necessary and as much integration as practical', which is quite different from what seems to be the trend these days.

Joe and Stuart said that their withdrawal from class for instruction did not cause others to stigmatised them. Stuart actually stated that he stigmatised himself, and he thought it was preferable to keep withdrawal to a minimum. Despite this, he believed that class withdrawal was necessary but his classmates were also welcomed to come with him out of the class as well:

> I do think that if you do it too often the kid can develop a stigma to themselves. It's probably nothing that anyone puts on them . . . I mean no one castigated me about being pulled out of class. None of my peers did. . . . Some of them even came over to see what happened. I asked them, "Would you like to come have a look?" And they did.

Blind children can learn music, but not other parts of the ordinary curriculum

As in the previous chapter, at school the subject areas of music, maths, and physical education were more, or less, accessible to the blind participants. Music was a part of all of the participants' education. Although, the intensity of instruction seemed to depend on whether they attended Homai, and on whether they had an exceptional talent. At Homai, music was an important part of the school's curriculum. Sue and William both attended music appreciation assemblies during primary school with the senior students, who were over the age of eight. They would sit and listen to classical music during this time. Sue attributed this unusual class to her unique music teacher who loved classical music. William and Sue both enjoyed these assemblies and William's description of it brought the young class to life:

> She started these music listening classes on a Wednesday morning. And you used to get a different work each week . . . and the first one we had was the 1812 Overture and we had the Pier Gent Suite and all these really excellent pieces. Yeah it was neat. I must have been ten when that started. I remember it was in the hall. . . . Yeah. So and then we had this test at the end of it. I remember somebody writing that it was the 1812 Overture but they spelt it 'overchewer.' . . . But I think the person who got the highest score got a prize, like a record voucher or something. I think I won it one year.

At Homai, piano lessons were offered after school, and Sue reluctantly took part in these but she did not live up to Homai's expectations that blind children were good musicians:

> I learnt the piano and I hated it and that was really horrible actually because I remember there was this great kafuffle about did I really want to learn piano and I said, "yes I did." . . . And probably after the first lesson I thought, 'Oh no' this isn't for me. I hate this.' But then I had to keep going with it for about three years and I hated it. And I dreaded every lesson because I knew that I wasn't any good and it was just demoralising and embarrassing. And I think they probably still had that sort of stereotypical idea that all blind children were going to be good musicians.

William and Sue were also both in the Homai choir which became part of the Foundation's fundraising campaigns. William said,

> I remember we were really in huge demand in Braille Week. I'd probably baulk at it now. But we used to go and sing at shopping malls and sometimes we did schools. . . . . But it was good. And we learnt some really good stuff. And she was a good music teacher. Because we learnt it all by ear. She would sing a phrase and we'd sing it back. And sometimes we were doing like four part harmony this way.

According to Sue, weekends were sometimes booked up with musical performances. William responded with enthusiasm to such weekends, and even spent some weekends at the music teacher's home for extra lessons:

> I don't know whether she just liked us or whether she thought we had particular potential or whether she thought that we needed her intervention. But whatever she used to pick a few of us and we used to go to her place quite a bit for the weekend and stay with her. She was really neat. But the kids used to laugh at her wobbly voice because she had an operatic type of voice.

William continued to pursue his musical interests at his mainstream schools, although he still had music classes at Homai after school.

Stuart was encouraged at his regular primary schools to pursue his musical interests. He was permitted to play the class piano at kindergarten whereas his classmates were not allowed this liberty. Stuart attributed this to his need to be stimulated differently from his classmates:

> I wanted to know what it did and so I sat and played around with it for a bit and I remember that after about thirty minutes . . . getting a tune going. . . . And so from that day on I was the only child that was allowed to touch it because I had gained some sort of self stimulation.. . . . . Unfortunately there was a bit of double standard . . . but at the time it was thought that there was a need to find something . . . that I could concentrate on. . . . I suspect it may have come from the kindergarten teachers, themselves, because obviously there were some activities which were difficult for me at kindergarten. Drawing and the like.

Since braille music was not being taught in his city at the time, Stuart's talent in music was given as another reason why he needed to attend the special school for blind children. At Homai though, as mentioned previously, Stuart found that his music lessons were more restricted, and in the end this was also partly a reason for leaving Homai. It is interesting to note that later at his local high school, Stuart's principal tried to persuade him not to attend another school which offered him more challenges, because his musical expertise improved the local school's image:

> One of the things that I was doing that year was giving their Music Department a very good name. . . . And I was also partially the music director because the music teacher at the time couldn't cope with the music directing of the thing so it ended up being up to me. . . . So (the principal) saw me as a means of getting his college on the map musically. . . . He didn't like the idea that I was going to go. . . . So he tried his hardest to keep me at (the) College, possibly for his sake more than mine.

Joe's musical education was not as extensive as the other participants. No special attention was given to his musical ability during school. He took lessons after school and was able to play the piano by ear. However, he was discouraged from learning braille music because it was difficult to learn and he felt that he only had a recreational interest in music:

> I wanted to learn. . . . I play by ear. . . . I've looked into (braille music) but oh they reckon that it's that much relearning to do. Well it's totally different from the rest of braille so it wasn't really worth it you know. Well if I was going into a musical career maybe it would be but it's just a hobby. I got a pretty good memory I suppose for it. . . . . I don't really think we did much music though. Music sorta depends on your teacher. If your teacher's not musical then you don't do music I suppose.

The participants, like the participants in the previous chapter, had a similar experience in regards to accessing different parts of the curriculum. Maths, physical education, and home economics were areas which required individual and separate instruction. During maths at their regular schools, all of the participants had one to one instruction. Sue said also that class withdrawal worked well for her:

> Maths is really difficult for blind kids to do so my first couple of years I

> did that individually with this teacher. . . . I tried it out with the rest of the class first and it just didn't work terribly well. It was quite hard to keep up and because so much of it was done on the blackboard. . . . I'd never really liked maths particularly much but I actually came to quite enjoy it with her.

When Sue became more competent at maths, she returned to the classroom but it was not an enjoyable experience because the teacher did not provide her with braille handouts or understand braille and calculators were difficult to obtain.

> I went back to not really liking maths a lot because it can just be really frustrating sitting in that class and having to have everything read off the board to you. . . . And by that time they were starting to use scientific calculators and we just couldn't get a scientific calculator that talked. . . . I think in the end for exams I had to sort of dictate to someone what I wanted them to do on the calculator. It just seemed as if it was a lot more work than what everyone else had to do. . . . When I had an assignment or whatever I just had to read out to the teacher what I did and they'd mark it for me. . . . Well it takes a lot longer because you have to say "Opening brackets. X squared plus four. Closing." . . . . You've got to be quite precise otherwise it can make a lot of difference.

Joe's vision teacher helped him in class during primary school. In high school, he found Algebra difficult and was then enrolled in a more relevant 'maths for life' class. William was also "horrible' at maths but he knew other blind people who excelled at Math. He felt that his strengths simply lay elsewhere. However, his visual resource teachers were concerned, chastised him for not working hard enough, and pulled him out of physical education class for extra instruction. William, however, simply paid more attention to the subjects in which he excelled:

> I think one of the things that really annoyed people about me was that I was always very focused . . . and I knew from a very early stage that I was not going to do school cert maths. And the resource room people used to say things to me like "Well if you want to stay home while your wife goes out to work then don't do school cert maths. See if I care." But I annoyed (them) because in 5th form I did no work and got the top mark in the country for (another subject) at the end of the year and a really good mark for English.

Stuart stated that the Nemeth Code, the tactile Math Code, was difficult to use, but that he mostly had difficulty with the concept of two dimensional figures, the requirement that he label these figures, and Maths' relevance:

> The biggest problem I had at mathematics was I wasn't very good with figures. I wasn't great with geometry. I understood the principles. . . . I just couldn't put them into practice. . . . It was "Draw me a pyramid in two dimensions." I couldn't do it. Still can't. I have the kind of mind that if you are asking me to think about a three dimensional object and you're drawing it for me in two dimensions on a page. I can't rationalise that at all. . . . And of course in geometry in the 4th and 5th and 6th Form you're expected to know about these sort of things and expected to be able to draw them and know how they work. . . . Graphs, I enjoyed. . . . The rest of it was plain boring.

Physical Education was a subject area which was not made accessible to some of the participants. William, and his blind classmates, were not even required to take physical education at his regular schools, nor did he attend any school sporting events:

> I always got out of them. It was really good. 'Blind people cannot do phys. ed. because they're blind." They were certainly very good at promoting that view.

Sue, while attending Intermediate, remembered having sports at Homai instead of at Intermediate. Joe's primary school phys. ed. class was not accessible and he spent most of this time with his teacher aide using different equipment but still trying to be included:

> (She) used to do PE. Yeah trying to sorta get the ball skills and that. . . . You've probably seen those balls. They're not really like a normal ball you can't bounce them or anything. . . . Usually I'd try and do much the same thing as (the class) just with a different ball or whatever.

He did not take phys. ed. after the fourth form when it became an elective subject. However, during his last year of secondary school, he enrolled in Outdoor Education and this class especially helped him to feel more included at school because he was "sorta social with a few a people." Jenny though said that she had to pay for a second teacher's aide to be with the class so that he could be included:

> I don't believe that it's appropriate to have one teacher in charge of a group which includes Joe doing things like river crossing. We always feel that for the safety aspect that that teacher must have another adult. And in fact if we've got to pay that other adult to be there which means that Joe can be in the class, well so be it. . . . But then of course none of these adults work entirely with Joe in a situation like that. They're an extra adult with the group. They're not supposed to be tailing Joe all the time.

Stuart was included during his physical education classes.

> I did everything without exception that other sighted kids did. Absolutely everything and that was by the insistence of my parents and by the encouragement of my class teachers and also the active encouragement of my peers in class. I wasn't much good at running but I could do it. . . . (If) the teacher says . . . "We're going out to play cricket," I was expected to go out with them and do that but there was always someone with me who was helping me and that person would be a peer. . . . It was never a task. It was never a chore. . . . It was part of class activity. . . . It is never a situation where it was said, "You can't do this because you can't see" and if anyone ever did try and say that it was always me coming back and saying, "Well we'll see about that. I'll do it."

Stuart was also not assisted during his other outdoor activities:

> I was never assisted teacher's aide-wise on school camps. Um and this was wonderful because it meant that if everyone else jumped into a stream I did too. But remember also that I had this in me anyway because from a very young age I had been tramping. I had been rafting. . . . I was an active kid and I was used to getting my hands dirty and I was used to getting cut and bruised.

Two participants mentioned the fact that they were not in the same place as their classmates during other times. Sue was excluded during part of home economics during high school. She had her sewing module at the local office of the Foundation for the Blind. However, she did enjoy her lessons and found that she learned more there than at school:

> I think we had a sewing module and we tried doing it with the rest of the

> class but it just didn't work. So, I went after school to the Blind Foundation and did sewing there. And that was quite good.

Joe chose to do his Forestry correspondence course during his study periods in his own quiet study room:

> Oh I've got correspondence fourth period. I do my forestry. (My teacher aide) will be there for that period. It's all pretty easy really because I've got it all there on my computer so. . . . . I'll probably go to my room where I've got the brailler and that. . . . Probably go there and do it. It's nice and quiet.

Part Four: Places for Blind Adults

The participants in this chapter encountered prejudice when attempting to become active citizens in employment. They were not expected to work in the RNZFB workshops, but some had difficulty learning about their abilities and possible vocations. One participant was insecure about his future and he twice attempted suicide. Unlike the participants in the previous chapter, however, the participants in this chapter, had no hesitations about living their lives with their own children. Sue felt that, because of her gender and her disability, she would have difficulty finding suitable partners. The males in this chapter, though, all believed that they would have fulfilling lives with partners. Sue and William were also committed to working with, and for, other blind people to change societal attitudes and barriers. However, Stuart and William, who did not spend a significant amount of time at Homai believed that blindness was not enough of a common experience to bond people, or enough of a political issue to rally behind. All of the participants, however, were concerned about the lack of educational resources which were available to blind children in regular schools, and this led some of them to advocate for schools with visual resource centres, one to advocate for the special school, and one to advocate for whatever regular school had adequate resources.

Blind children's futures are limited

The participants in this chapter did not expect that they would work in the RNZFB workshops, although the female participants, Sue and Jenny, were uncertain about the vocational futures of blind people. As Sue grew older, she was unsure of the employment opportunities which were available. She looked at what other blind people were doing but found that she did not want to do these things:

> I was aware of the sorts of things that blind people did. I knew that there were blind telephonists around and blind typists and . . . . those were the two overwhelming ones. And I knew that those were the sort of things that I didn't want to do.

Sue and her parents had high expectations of her, which were similar to the expectations which were held for her siblings. Her parents, however, always allowed Sue to also make her own life choices and she always felt "in control of (her) life". At the time of this study, Sue had completed University and was seeking her first employment. She found that most employers misunderstood her abilities and were not flexible or aware enough to make simple alterations to jobs so that they were accessible:

> I have to be quite positive about my good qualities which is fairly hard to do anyway. I mean no-one's very good at singing their own praises. And also come up with ways of getting around things. . . . A lot of the jobs you need a driver's licence. And that's not essential. You can still get around using taxis or public transport. A lot of people won't see that as being a viable option but I'm quite sure that it is. It has to be. . . . . There's still a lot of people who won't employ someone with a disability just because they'd rather take the easy route and take someone who's able bodied just because they think that it would be easier. They'd have to make too many adjustments if they took someone with a disability.

Jenny, Joe's mother, was concerned that Joe would not be able to find employment as others can because he was blind:

> We've sort of come to a bit of a cross road in that Joe's future. He's been mainstreamed however much (but) the time has come that he's got to face

> the rest of his future as a blind person. I mean he can't avoid that. And so the Foundation for the Blind must have to be the resource that we use to help. There isn't any other choice. Joe can't really just present himself at the Employment Service and say "I want a job." I mean there has to be some input from an organisation. That has to be the Foundation for the Blind.

Jenny further explained that the transition programme which Joe was to attend at Homai after high school would be able to inform Joe about which jobs were accessible to him because his options were limited because of his blindness and his environment:

> Maybe that's a little bit of our fault right at the moment because it concerns us a little . . . that he sees nothing but farming. . . . But there's more to life than that and so he really needs to be got away from the farm to see other options. . . . We're not really saying that he couldn't be a farmer or couldn't do something farm related. We just want him to be away to be given other choices, as well. . . . But I really have a feeling that . . . Joe may not be a farmer but I think he'll be something related to agriculture, maybe in a city perhaps but related to agriculture because he really does really enjoy it. . . . Living in the country he's always going to need someone to help to drive.

However, Jenny did note that Joe was already earning thousands of dollars in a firewood business which he and his brother operated. Joe considered himself to be self employed as an agriculture worker and as an investor:

> Well I suppose you could say I'm self-employed. Just lately I've been . . . selling some firewood and that's pretty good money. . . . That's just after school and weekends. . . . I'm quite interested in shares and investment and that. So like I sell firewood and then I buy shares. . . . I've got a broker. And so I usually ring up and get a bit of advice. . . . That's my interest.

Joe thought that it would be difficult for him to become a full time farmer because of problems with transport and with working sheep in the paddocks. However, he felt that he could work in sheep yards and in wool sheds. He also believed that he could farm trees because farming was how he really wanted to live:

> If you're a farmer you're going to have to be a wee way out in the country, aren't you? So transport's going to be a bit of a problem. Although I couldn't stand living in town. I like the outdoors and open air and a. Yeah. It's a good life.

William and Stuart were able to find employment in the areas in which they were interested. Nevertheless, William did consistently need to advocate for himself against bigotry. For example, he was discouraged from pursuing a career in the broadcasting industry:

> Every radio station I went into they always said, "Oh you may have worked somewhere else in the past but I'm sure you wouldn't be able to work our equipment." They'd shut their eyes and think 'you couldn't possibly work the equipment if you were blind.' So I'd always have to show them. I just got used to that.

He felt that the RNZFB vocational services did not have high expectations of blind people and did not understand what he was able to do:

> I don't recall any sort of discussion about what we might be or what might become of us when we weren't at school. I remember that we had Mr. V. come out to talk. . . . I think they called them Placement Officers. . . . I remember saying that I wanted to work in radio. And him saying that it wouldn't be possible because already there was all this new technology starting to come in, that you had to read screens, and that a blind person couldn't possibly do it. . . . I always found him extremely dismissive and restrictive. And (I) formed the view that the placement service was a waste of time and still think that.

It is interesting to note though that William worked for the RNZFB at various times in order to have "stable" employment. He also commented that one of the reasons that blind people worked for the RNZFB was because they were not considered capable by society and that the RNZFB had a fair employment environment:

> And I suppose one of the reasons for that could be (is) blind people certainly had really good quality education and training and were generally encouraged to excel and make the best out of themselves and then they go out into a big wide world where society just doesn't believe that a blind person's that capable. It may be changing now. And so the only thing that they can do is to work for the Foundation where they can

> generally be confident that their skills will be accepted on merits and that they can succeed at the level that they're capable.

Stuart had no contact with RNZFB vocational services and similarly believed that the RNZFB perceived blind people as unemployable in the community. He and his family had high expectations which were unrelated to his blindness and which were instead associated with his interests. Stuart was able to achieve his vocational goals through self discipline, and was able to find an employment situation which brought most of his interests together:

> Some people find my code of thinking on this quite hard because they expect that I'm proud of what I am because I can't see and because I've achieved so much in spite of that. . . . It's got nothing to do with that. I've achieved what I've achieved because I wanted to do it. . . . I've had my own controls which have got nothing to do with that facet of my personality which I call blindness. They have something to do with another facet of my humanity and personality, which is discipline. . . . Plenty of people think I've got the most ideal job in the world. . . . I love it . . . because it is truly a culmination, a pinnacle, an ultimate constellation of all of the things that have made me and I don't think I can explain it in any other way. . . . I spend a lot of my life out in the field in very interesting places documenting New Zealand's fauna and flora . . . which involves me in picking up . . . a lot of threads that were brought up in my childhood. My love of animals. My intrinsic love of scholarship. . . . My love of the outdoors.

Stuart's blindness did cause people to categorise him, but Stuart felt that sighted people as well were categorised by things like their appearance. However when he was performing as a musician he ignored the prejudices which he encountered in order to keep his sanity:

> I worked for a while as a professional musician. . . . I think stereotypes come up all the time but that's from people before they get to know you and it's from people who don't want to know you. . . . There were stereotypes but ones that were based mainly upon perceptional rather than employment things. They weren't based around whether I could do the job. They were based around 'How do you manage setting gear up and things?' . . . I just ignored it. . . . I was a good musician so I let that speak for itself. . . . There are certain stereotypes . . . that you ignore and you ignore them for your own sake because they'd drive you insane if you didn't.

The male participants in this chapter all expected to find a partner with whom they would have a family. However, their sexuality was not necessarily accepted by their educational institutions. William dated a girl during secondary school who lived at Homai and, as in the previous chapter, the expression of sexuality between students at Homai was discouraged:

> I started going out with Kylie who's blind when we were in Form Two. . . . And we went out together for three years. So it was quite overly serious for our age. Got very intense and incurred the wrath of the hostels. Well actually incurred the wrath of the whole world really. We just wanted somewhere to sort of cuddle really. And I remember everybody seemed to think this was scandalous. . . . They did apparently have this matron's flat lounge open for people to go in and have guests there and sort of make them a cup of coffee and make them feel a bit at home. Then some other kids . . . did something to spoil it . . . and so it was closed off. They reopened it again but then the matron got all upset and said that we were just 'snogging' in there. . . . I mean we weren't really doing anything terribly offensive but you know hormones kick in at about that age. . . . And my parents were quite puritanical about those things. You weren't allowed to take a young lady into your bedroom and shut the door.

At his own high school, blind students were not expected to attend the school ball. William, though, was a romantic and did not permit this expectation to influence his decision to go with his second girlfriend who was also blind:

> It was a really neat night and, like I did it all properly. I got one of those hire limo things and picked up Helena with her 84 year old Nana all the way from Holland there. . . . And we'd been to the ballroom dancing classes. And I remember I got to practise with the head girl for the school. And I was so overwhelmed by this because I always thought she was quite nice in the first place. I just about fell over. I think which just reaffirmed their view that blind people cannot do ballroom dancing. . . . Anyway we got there and we did the waltzes and stuff and I had a friend of mine, one of the sighted friends . . . said to me, ... he didn't say it in a patronising way, he just said how proud of me he was that we were participating like that. And yeah we had a great night. . . . People were quite surprised because . . . blind kids just didn't go to the school ball.

During his adolescence, William believed that he would not be attractive to sighted girls because, despite his abilities, he was insecure about his body image and felt unworthy:

> I remember for some reason we had a new girl come to the school when I was in the sixth form. And she just had a really nice voice and she seemed really . . . like a nice vivacious kind of person. And at that time I just thought, . . . 'there's no way that somebody like that is going to be interested in a blind person.' It was those kinds of things at that stage that made me aware that I was a blind person. The funny thing was (my present partner) and I went over for a big trip overseas for a few months and when we came back she was on my doorstep at home. And like had it not been for (my partner) it would have been very different probably how things had turned out. . . . Yeah. And she actually kept in touch for quite a few years on the telephone and stuff. . . . Yes it was definitely a disability thing . . . because I never knew what I looked like. And part of it was that . . . if you get told often enough that you're precocious or that you're arrogant or whatever, then you start to believe it. And you just start to believe that you're not worthy of that sort of attention.

William's present partner is not blind. When he met her, he also felt insecure but in love:

> I met Alison when Alison was Helena's amanuensis for her theory exam and Helena introduced us. . . . See I just knew that she was.. . . . It just sort of happened. It was pretty tacky and kitch. I realise this. But I just realised that she was something else. I mean I said to Helena, "I just have these feelings for Alison which are not appropriate if I'm going with you and I need to sort it out." And I spoke to Alison and I sort of thought that I'd get the good old rejection routine. She said, "I think you're a real sweetie." And I said, "But.." And then she said, "No. There's no buts." So there you go. I couldn't believe it.

Stuart and Joe did not have partners during the time of this study. Joe did not date or go to parties. He thought though that eventually he would be attracted to a partner through their voice and their personality:

> I suppose you go on more like what they sound like. Personality. . . . I don't think it would be too difficult (to find someone).

Stuart was looking forward to having a wife, whom he assumed would be sighted, and children. When asked what he would do if he had a blind child, whereas the participants in the previous chapter replied that they would either avoid having a blind child or bring them up differently, Stuart replied that he would essentially bring his child up in a similar manner to his own upbringing but he would test educational professionals with whom he had a difficult time:

> They would have a pretty interesting life really from me. They would have things expected of them. . . . When it comes to mobility then they would get the same as I got. And probably harder actually. Yeah, they'd probably get it a little harder than I got it because I would be assuming that I had a sighted wife. I don't know why I make that assumption but I do actually. Maybe because I've been out with sighted people most of my life and as you know I don't mix in those circles . . . where I could meet a blind woman. . . . If I had a sighted wife then that child will learn fast mobility wise. Because that partnership between myself and wife . . . would revolve to some extent around the fact that we would bring him or her up as a child in the situation that I was currently working in. So they'd learn to burn themselves on pots and then not to burn themselves again. They would learn that because that's how I learned. . . . I would be looking up and down the directory of mobility instructors and I would probably be taking one or two of them in that I liked the look of and giving them a very very long chat.

Sue, also, unlike the women in the previous chapter, was looking forward to becoming a parent even if she had a blind child:

> I would love to become a parent one day. My eye condition is hereditary so there is quite a high chance I would have a blind child. . . . I have the usual concerns about parenting that most women have who have not had a lot of contact with small babies, but I think that with experience and practice I would be a great parent. I know blind women who are excellent parents and I think they would be very useful contacts for me when I become a parent for giving me tips and successful ways they have found for doing things.

Sue, however, like Hine in the previous chapter, had difficulty finding partners who saw her as a sexual being, and like Anne in the previous chapter, thought that blind men were able to find partners because women had a maternal instinct:

> I think still, especially males, I think they don't see females with

> disabilities as being sexual beings. . . . I think just of the people I know in New Zealand there's far more blind males who have married than blind females. And who have married sighted partners. . . . I think that sighted women are more likely to take on that (helping) role because it's a little bit more maternal. . . . And the men don't because it's like a come down. You know sort of like lowering themselves. . . . Possibly men are more conscious of physical perfection and that sort of thing and they want a woman who will make them look good. Yeah, beautiful women. Yeah. Someone who's going to make them look better than they are.

She also felt that it was more difficult as she got older to meet people because of communication problems and the possibility that she would be rejected:

> I think it gets harder as you get older in some respects because it's harder to put yourself out in case you're going to be turned down. It's harder to say to someone, "Oh do you want to meet for a coffee?" . . . Whereas sighted people will sort of gravitate to someone that they want to get to know better. It's a lot harder for us to do that. You've got to be basically sitting beside them and even then if you're in a crowded room it can still be hard because if they're not looking at you then they don't hear what you're saying. Sighted people can just gradually build that thing up, sort of nodding to each other, and saying "hi" when you pass . . . You actually miss out on a lot of contacts that you'd otherwise probably have if you could see.

An issue which came up in this group of participants about having limited lives, which did not arise in the previous group, was suicide. William revealed that he had attempted suicide twice in his life because he believed that he had a limited future as a blind person:

> I must have been nineteen then. . . . I guess I had a sort of crisis in confidence. Like I sort of thought that the future was really uncertain. . . . Well they brought this psychiatrist person in. I think by the end of it I had just about convinced them that I'd done the right thing. But I guess they thought that perhaps that I was strong enough to just get on with it. And they didn't insist that I have an ongoing course of counselling and they should have done. Well I actually, you're the first person outside of Alison that I've told this too, but I only resolved it very recently and that was after another attempt only last year. It was all very different reasons and stuff. But it was all tied up with the same thing. Yeah. See people think it's strange. . . . Yeah. And people really don't understand. . . . And this time I knew that I had to do something. It was just ridiculous like it felt like things were in bits. And it is sorted out now. . . . I guess there's

> a fine line between being arrogant and just being grateful, or being mystical or whatever. But when I look at the kind of life that I have with (my family), I've got so much to live for. And it's only recently that I can really appreciate that. And I think it's a bit like alcoholism actually. It takes a hell of a lot of strength, if you have those tendencies, to shake it off. . . . But it probably wouldn't have come to that second crisis if they'd sorted it out the first time. Yes. Definitely it was disability related. I really felt that no matter how able I was that society wasn't going to allow me to succeed. I think that's still true to some extent but there's nothing to be gained from quitting either.

William's blindness also affected the manner in which his first suicide attempt was treated. The hospital made decisions for him which he did not like, and the RNZFB invaded his privacy:

> The hospital where I ended up decided that because I was a blind person, then obviously they needed to contact the Foundation for the Blind. . . . And so this social worker from the Foundation for the Blind came in, even though I didn't want them to, and talked to me. And then next thing I knew half the blind people all seemed to know what had happened. And the difficulty I had was that if I complained about it then it just made the thing worse. So I couldn't do anything.

There is a community of blind people

The participants in this chapter held varying views about whether or not there existed or was a need for a community of blind people. As in the previous chapter, the participants who lived at Homai felt like there were two worlds, one of which was blind and the other was sighted. Sue said,

> I mean we hardly ever saw sighted kids and I think that's the really bad thing because I mean you suddenly leave Homai. You're in the big sighted world and it can be quite a shock for some kids.

Sue and William, nevertheless, felt that blind people had a natural connection. For example, Sue said,

> I know of other people who have been mainstreamed right through and they don't feel any particular solidarity with other blind people. And I

> don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing. . . . They probably don't know what they're missing. . . . I've been reading some stuff on women with disabilities and heaps of women just see it as so important, it doesn't matter what their disability is, to have some sort of support group because it's just really good for problem solving. . . . I mean it's not like having blue eyes. It's far more important than that. Because it's got really wide consequences. It's not just a bodily feature or something. It's an actual way of being, a different way of doing things and getting around. And everything. . . . I can't imagine not having blind people that I can talk to about things. It wouldn't matter how good my sighted friends were. I'd still feel there were some things that they just wouldn't understand.

William and Sue also felt that it was advantageous to work with other blind people in advocacy. They were both involved in the Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand (ABC(NZ)). William said,

> I think it's definitely community. And maybe for some people it's not but I guess that for someone whose very political . . . there's a kind of an almost brotherhood mentality about blindness. If we can't all keep together and work for our betterment, then we're going to be pretty much stuffed.

Sue and William believed, as well, that advocacy agencies which represented a number of groups of disabled people, such as the Disabled Persons Assembly (DPA) in New Zealand, were not as effective, and did not necessarily understand the specific needs of blind people. For example, William said,

> I don't believe that there is such a thing as a disability sector. You have an organisation like DPA (Disabled Persons' Assembly) for example which claims to speak on behalf of people with disabilities whoever they are . . . but the Association and the Foundation very infrequently are consulted. And so they go to Government claiming to speak on behalf of people with disabilities and I think for these people who are mainly experiencing physical disability to tell Government how it is for us with a sensory disability is no less paternalistic than someone without a disability doing it. Because they've got no idea. The Government like it that way too because they have fewer people to deal with. And we're selling ourselves dreadfully short with this generic disability approach. There's no doubt that we have common experiences of discrimination and marginalisation that we need to share and build on, but in the main I think blind people need to be assertive in our own right. And certainly there is a blind consumer movement that is quite entrenched in history here.

William also believed that there were some conflicts between people with physical impairments and blind people which were related to the fact that blind people in New Zealand received an invalid's benefit while they were earning a wage, if they were married and if their partner was not working. This benefit's purpose is to meet the costs of blindness in employment and William felt that it was justified:

> I think that every disability has its financial costs. And every disability has its social costs. And that when you go blind as a result of an accident in the past you've been very well catered for. And I think that it is appropriate that there be some kind of compensation for congenital disability as well that perhaps acknowledges the fact that firstly things do take a bit longer to do, and, secondly, that your opportunities, because of functional difficulties and attitudinal difficulties, are going to be less.

Sue and William felt that it was important for blind children to have role models from the blind community. William was a role model for a blind youngster of his extended family but he felt that he set too high a standard at times. However, the youngster would only listen to him about important matters in his life:

> It's totally different for him because people give him a very hard time based on the things that I've done. And they expect him to measure up to a similar standard. And that makes it very hard on him. . . . And people say that he looks up to me and he talks about me. I've had teachers at school tell me he talks about me all the time. I mean that's a real responsibility I never asked for but I guess I accept that I've got it. And whenever anything serious comes up to do with his future or his education, his mother always sort of gets me to intervene because I'm apparently the only one he listens to.

Sue suggested that mentoring programmes be established for blind children in the mainstream because of her belief that role models were needed because "there are some things that only another blind person can truly understand."

Sue and William, though, both had negative experiences with the blind community as well. William said that the community was "insular to the point of being incestuous" and at times blind people could be "terribly horrible to each other." He felt that blind people were too critical of blind people. Sue experienced a national meeting of blind people where she felt that she did not belong and she was anxious about being criticised:

> I just felt really quite overwhelmed and as if I didn't fit in. And I don't know if it's . . . because there's all these articulate blind people . . . who are able to say things a lot better than you think you'd be able to say them yourself. . . . I think sometimes the higher up you go in the blindness, the more cliquey it gets. . . . I found this quite interesting too was that if someone said something that people didn't agree with, they were really rude. Whereas other groups if someone says something you don't agree with you don't say anything. You might think it but you respect people for what their view is. But in this sort of situation and I don't know if it's got something to do with not having eye contact. People make a verbal (comment) . . . like if someone says something really silly everyone yells out "Oh god!" You know. In other groups people just don't do that. It's really rude. It's sort of quite fascinating but it makes me really nervous. I just don't talk unless I majorily have to.

Stuart and Joe, who both described themselves as apolitical saw no reason for blind people to work in advocacy or socialise together because they did not think that blind people necessarily had enough in common. Joe also was not aware of the work of the Association of Blind Citizens. Stuart thought that there was a blindness culture, but that he did not fit into it because he had a bit of vision, because he did not believe that blindness was only one part of his humanness, and because there was no common political ground:

> I don't fit in because I don't subscribe to the idea that you should retain a culture . . . simply on the basis that you can't see. To me it is like suggesting that you're exclusive because your exclusive and that argument goes round and round in circles. . . . I don't subscribe to any political models which base themselves on the premise that you can't see therefore your righteousness is any greater than anyone else's righteousness. And this comes back to some extent to my understanding of my blindness as a facet of my humanness. . . . If there's a political lobby of blindness, what basis does it actually have? I would suggest the basis for such a lobby are fairly tenuous. What have you got? Your old white stick's there. The old guide dog that gets run over by a car occasionally. And there might be the odd step or two that some blind so and so trips over because he isn't careful enough. Those are fairly tenuous grounds on which to base a blind lobby.

Unlike William and Sue, Stuart did not have any blind role models, himself, but he said that he would not dismiss a role model if they were blind.

All of the participants, except Joe, thought that blind people did experience common difficulties in New Zealand, and these were, firstly, gaining access to information and, secondly, meeting the extra financial costs involved with blindness. For example, Sue noted that access to information was an "all encompassing" barrier in her life:

> All encompassing, if you don't have the information about something. I mean there are some services and things around that I probably don't even know exist because I've never seen the information written down. So I'm immediately not going to access them because I don't even know they're there. It can be as simple as that and it can be something like you can't participate fully in something if you don't have the information. I could go along to a committee meeting and everyone else would have the reports and minutes and everything in front of them in print. But if I hadn't had it beforehand in an accessible format then I can't even participate in that meeting. And people might think that I'm just passive and not clued up or whatever. . . . So we need to have a huge societal shift in thinking before we even are going to get some of that information available and it doesn't help that the population of people who can't read (print) is pretty tiny really. So a lot of people are just going to argue that it's not worth the money and the time to do it.

Stuart believed that change needed to begin at the grassroots level and that the individual needed to take responsibility for their access needs:

> If you expect the right to participate in a system that can't cope with you, you must also assume the responsibility of ensuring that it can. And that's always been my way of doing things and that's probably one of the reasons . . . that I haven't found blindness to be a limitation because I've accepted the responsibility of ensuring that it never is. . . . And I'm damn pleased I have done it. There's a tremendous amount of respect you earn from people. You'd be astonished and the kind of things that people will do for you, when they know that you are as strong as, if not stronger than, they are in dealing with things.

The participants acknowledged that the internet and moves towards telephone banking were improving their access to information.

All of the participants stated that their were additional costs of blindness and these were associated with needing to live in more expensive houses which were closer to the city where there was public transport available, and needing to use special equipment in order to access information. William also noted that in his daily life activities he spent more money than others because did not want his partner to take on all of the household duties:

> I know there are some people that mow the lawns and things like that. . . . We have somebody to do that. And of course Alison does all the driving but I try not to take advantage . . . and I'll catch a cab anywhere that I need to go or walk or whatever.

Sue was the only participant that believed that environmental barriers existed for blind people. Part of this barrier was caused by giving flat curb access to people with physical disabilities. She felt that tactile warning tiles were needed at these curbs and that disabled people needed to work together to advocate for environmental access for all people:

> I think total flat crossings are dangerous because you've got to have some delineation between the street and the crossing. You can't have a huge kerb because people in wheelchairs can't access that then. So you've got to have a compromise. . . . But I think that probably is an issue right across the disability field that people with all different disabilities have to have a united stance anyway. Because I mean with such small numbers . . . we need to be able to compromise on what we need. Otherwise we won't get anything and there's no point in getting something that is going to be all right for one but not for another. I mean that defeats the purpose really. . . . Until I knew people who used wheelchairs I wouldn't have thought about kerbs. . . . And it would be the same for them. They wouldn't realise that if you can't see then you don't know where the footpath ends.

Sue felt, and Stuart did as well, that road designers and engineers had little concern for pedestrians in general. Sue said,

> A friend had a public library in her suburb that she wanted to be able to

> get to. But there was no way she could because they had installed islands in the middle of the road. And it was just far too busy and she couldn't just get across this road to get to the library. And I think that's becoming a trend as well that islands are being installed which are for the convenience of traffic and they're hopeless for pedestrians.

She advocated for audible pedestrian traffic light controls because sighted drivers were not considerate.

> People just tend to think it's their right to turn in front of you . . . when the lights are on to cross. They're not supposed to but they all do. And you've got to be really assertive in walking out as soon as the thing's gone otherwise you've got to wait till the next cycle. So at least having audible traffic lights, you know that it definitely is your turn to cross.

William, Joe, and Sue also noted that societal attitudes towards blindness were also a barrier, which needed to be overcome because blind people were not seen as capable citizens. William described his own attempt to change such attitudes:

> Certainly there are times when you might be on a train or a bus or something and you might get talking to someone and you'll tell them that you're getting off at the bus stop outside the Foundation for the Blind. And then they'll expect that you're getting off there to weave baskets or something. And I suppose then I feel that to make a point about what blind people are capable of then I might want to slip into the conversation (about) the . . . job I do.

Joe also stated that in order to change attitudes he needed to appear capable and confident:

> I think it's a great help to people if they've got someone in the community that they see wandering about every day and it makes a lot of difference whether that person's having trouble or if they can sorta handle things. Yeah. I think it's important to appear as if you know what you're doing.

Sue had one University lecturer who "basically thought that I (she) was just at University for something to do." She also found her encounters with the sighted public to be patronising:

> Yeah I constantly get people talking to me in a different way. Like being quite patronising. Some of that's just because people are so scared. . . . They don't know how they should best help so they get all frightened and then start talking in a silly way. But some of that is actually they just think that you are less intelligent or you're needing of constant help.

However, she passionately believed that she could change attitudes by working in education groups with other disabled people. She also was aware of times though that she could not change such attitudes, and needed to use public pity to her advantage:

> I hate going to somewhere like Income Support. As soon as I go in there I start to feel horrible because I feel that I'm needy. And I hate having to say to them I need a disability allowance to pay my rent or whatever because it is my right. . . . I mean it would put their backs up if I say "It is my right to have this disability allowance." . . . Whereas if I say, "I feel that I have a need to have this and it's due to whatever", then I'm much more likely to get it. Because they see you're dependent on them and they quite like that. But it feels far better for me to be able to say, "it's my right" because I feel more equal that way.

The participants also all stated that the media perpetuated patronising attitudes about blindness. Sue pointed out that television characters seemed to only have a meaningful life if they were sighted. The RNZFB's fundraising campaigns also depicted blind people as objects of pity and blindness as a disability to be feared. William remembered one such campaign:

> I mean I think that the Foundation blatantly capitalises on it. Perhaps not so much as it used to because the 'blindies' jump up and down too much. But . . . they had these Daddy's eyes are dying commercials. "Daddy's eyes are dying." Really tugging at the heartstrings unashamedly.

Jenny purposely avoided bringing any media attention to Joe:

> We've always been very anti the whole publicity thing. . . . Sure that was pre-Braille Week, so people might feel sorry for the poor little blind boy and give more money. I appreciated that but I hated the thought of Joe being viewed as the poor little blind boy. And I mean we've had many reporters and people ring over the years wanting to do articles . . . . We had so many stipulations about how it was to be done and how it wasn't

> to be done that (one) reporter actually eventually said that well it really didn't matter. They didn't do it..

Blindness was simply not considered to be of media interest by the participants. Previously Stuart said that it was just one facet of himself. For William, it was just one of his characteristics:

> I'm certainly not ashamed of it. There's no doubt that it can be a bit of a damn nuisance at times but then so can being short. Or a number of other characteristics. Bad-tempered. I sort of think of blindness as a characteristic just like other characteristics. Sometimes it can be an advantage. I mean maybe you can have a really good relationship with someone because you don't know what they look like.

The participants have something to say about educational policy\practice for blind children

William was the only participant in this chapter to advocate for Homai and for its continued establishment. He did not have any regrets about attending Homai and Homai offered peer support and an "excellent education." He felt that resource problems prevented success in an inclusive environment

> I think if you have a special school where you take someone out of their family environment, that has quite long term repercussions in term of relationships. But I think the benefits are that if it's done well you can get an excellent quality of education from that setting. Inclusion: . . . the special resources are spread far too thinly and you almost have the opposite effect. I mean a child can go home to their parents and family and have that support and the love that they need. They can mix well with sighted children which is probably good .... But at what cost. And as I say I think the resource problems for inclusion are not really worth the benefits.

William also believed that the RNZFB should continue to hold some responsibility for the education of blind children because they held a commitment to consumerism and were not subject to decisions from parents who resented special needs children. Also, teachers too readily dismissed the ideas of blind people as being irrelevant because they came from "super blind" people:

> I'm not convinced that the visual resource centres should have too much clout. Firstly because they're under the auspices of the respective Board of Trustees and I often think that those Boards of Trustees can under-resource visual resource centres because parents sometimes resent the amount of funding that goes into children with special needs. . . . But also I think there is merit in blind people who have by some arbitrary definition succeeded actually saying, "Well you know this is what worked for us. These are the good points of the system that we went through and these are the things that we would like to change." . . . If you try and say those things to a visual resource room centre teacher, you'll get a reaction like, "Oh well you're super blind." . . . Somebody said to me that one of the resource centres had described me as that and that I made life difficult for all other blind people by implying that blind people on average can do things that they in fact can't.

However, William, along with Sue and Stuart, thought that the RNZFB's Act of Parliament needed to be repealed because it reflected the RNZFB's negative views about blindness. For example, Stuart said:

> They regard (blindness) as a fault. They regard it as something that they can correct. They regard it as something that they can 'ameliorate' in terms of the quality of a person's life. . . . . You quoted an interesting little piece in your proposal which brings something to mind for me. 'They come to us for help' is the last words in that little advertisement. . . . I think that is a basic tenet of their idea of blind people. That they need help all the time and that they are not whole people without being helped. . . . But the help thing is going to be a problem in the Foundation as long as they have the baggage behind them that they've got. And that baggage includes things like the Homai situation, the Parnell situation, the question of the workshop type environment. That's always going to be with them and until they reform themselves and redesign. I think the Act of Parliament should be chucked out. And I think that it's preserving no benefit to blind people in the modern day.

William and Sue noted that they would like the RNZFB to be governed by representatives who were elected by blind people themselves. William said,

> To me it doesn't matter whether the people on the Board are blind or not. We've got quite a few blind people on the Board at the moment and you only need to look at the way they're running it to know that blindness does not mean that you're competent to run the Foundation which is a multi-million dollar organisation. Some of them are quite clearly out of

> it. But what is important is not so much whether the people are blind but whether blind people put them there.

Joe, Sue and Stuart believed that special schools should be disestablished. Sue did not believe in places like Homai despite feeling that she had a good education there. She felt that although special schools knew how to teach blind children that this should not preclude mainstreaming because regular teachers with resources and support could do the same. Sue, along with Joe, also mentioned that schools with visual resource units were more than capable of teaching blind children and that if they had a blind child, they would consider sending their child to such a school. Joe said that he would do this even if it involved boarding. Sue and Joe also believed that, as Joe said, blind children were "not any different" and that the Ministry of Education needed to be responsible for the education of blind children. Otherwise, Sue said that blind children would be dependent on charity for their education:

> I think the Foundation should be primarily there for adults because children who are blind, their needs come under the Education Department primarily, just like other children. And if they have additional needs then that should come under the Special Education Service which has been set up to assist children who have additional needs. I mean the Foundation for the Blind has very little Government funding anyway. . . . I hate having to depend on charity for anything. It just puts us back into that charity model where we're pitied and seem dependent and useless and not able to be independent and get along ok in life.

Sue also pointed out that there were resource problems for children in regular schools and that "you can't chuck in the old blind kid into a classroom and expect him to survive." She tentatively suggested that the proposed establishment of a separate agency, a National Vision Education Trust, by the Parents of the Visually Impaired would alleviate some of these problems:

> There's children in this area who are missing out on what they should have just because of lack of resources basically. They're not getting enough individual time from teachers and teacher aides and everything. So I think basically what's needed is just more finances and (if) it goes through the Special Education Service (SES) . . . a lot of that money would be used up just through administration. . . . Whereas maybe setting up a

> separate agency which is what they're looking at doing at the moment . . . that might be better in that there might be less administration costs and it might not have to go through all the red tape that it will have to go through in SES.

She felt, as well, that the Government took advantage of the public's charitable generosity, and would not fund core services, such as Orientation and Mobility. She advocated for more assertive funding applications from the RNZFB for such services. However, Sue was concerned in addition that the RNZFB had a monopoly on services for blind people:

> I don't think that the Foundation should have a monopoly on the services for blind people. Because it means that our services aren't as good as they could be if people aren't striving to give the best service they can, not competing with another agency. Then yeah I just think that the consumer . . . should have a right of choice and we don't have that at the moment.

Stuart stated that ultimately parents were responsible for the education of their child. However, Stuart did not think that a National Vision Education Trust should be established by parents. He also did not believe that the RNZFB should be responsible for the education of blind children for similar reasons:

> Anyone who's got a vested interest thinks they know it all. . . . It's anything which is precious to people. And there's nothing more precious to a parent than a child. There's nothing more precious to the Foundation than a child either. . . . Parents talk about progressing but they don't talk about progressing in the sense of being accountable to other agencies than their own. And I think there is a big flaw in that argument because that precludes the idea again that other agencies can contribute to the credibility and the status and the stability and the security of this so called new agency. . . . And that would be a very dangerous assumption to make. We('ll) get the Homai experience all over again and I would not like to see that.

He also thought that special schools perpetuated the myth that there was a proper "blind way" to live, and that someone else could better take care of blind people:

> The negative perception of blindness implies . . . that someone else will take care of it. . . . the way that is best for these blind people, and that's

> to put them with other blind people and let them live in a blind existence and go on blind holidays and go to blind parties and that sort of thing.

Stuart advocated for inclusion which was an ethical and a family responsibility, and it also did not have to occur at the local school but at schools which were stimulating and well resourced.

It is interesting to note that both Stuart and William explained that, if they had a blind child, they would home school that child during their primary years because neither trusted the education system. Stuart was also concerned about poverty within schools and within New Zealand:

> In New Zealand particularly I think the system . . . has been hijacked by people who think education should be easy. . . . My education was a very well stimulated one in parts. And the most important parts were the ones before I was twelve and thirteen. You know those were the most important building blocks in my life. . . . I think the resources have changed. I think they've gotten more limiting and more limited for the teachers. I think there has been a great many more constrictions placed on teachers nowadays . . . and a great many more stresses which means that they can't do what they did. . . . They're becoming bloody baby sitters. They're having to feed and clothe their bleeding charges half the time. . . . Sure adults . . . may choose to be poor or deprived, but children are young developing lives. I think the situation in some of our poorer schools . . . I'd think it ages kids to see that kind of thing. And I think it ages teachers. And I think it sours things.

William was concerned about literacy and about the meaning of blindness in education:

> I think if I had a blind child I would give up work and home school them. I wouldn't trust anyone that I can think of with giving my child the skills of literacy or giving them the right signals about what blindness means. . . . The thing about home schooling any child whether they be blind or sighted is the social interaction thing. And we'd need to get that right because I mean you would need to have them mix with other blind and sighted children. But academically I would have to do a cost benefit analysis and say that the cost in terms of a good education is not worth the benefit of the social interaction. . . . . And you see a lot of it's location dependent. I think probably the kids in Auckland are doing reasonably well with the resources they've got. Maybe, it started happening about 10

years ago but it's the people in those outlying areas that really worry me. . . . But I guess that, if we look on the bright side if they haven't got an academic ground at least they'd be able to grow up and walk confidently into a pub and socialise which is all they'll be able to do with their time.

Chapter Eight

Blind Children Rarely Belong in Regular Schools

Xena: I'm very intelligent and like some things at school they do aren't really appropriate for me and it's not fair. Like there was these assignments and um one of them was 'we had to look'. Well what a very stupid idea to think that up because they knew that it was really awkward for me and they could have just set up something else that I could do.

Introduction

This third results chapter includes the more recent experiences of Davania, Xena, and Blair who were primary aged students in 1997. Their school attendance, by type, is listed in Table 8 below. Their parents, their teachers, their principals, and my observations about their experiences are included in this chapter. Xena's own thoughts about her school experiences are also a part of this chapter.

Table 8

The Type of Schools attended by Davania, Xena, and Blair

	Pre-School	Primary	Intermediate	Secondary
Davania	Local	Homai (Sp.)		
Xena	Non-Local	Non-Local		
Blair	Local	Local		

'Local' refers to Schools nearest to the family home
'(Sp.)' refers to Special Schools for blind children

In order to set the scene for the participant's educational experiences in the 1990s, individual demographic questionnaires were sent to all of the New Zealand Visual Resource Centres, Sensory Resource Centres, and Homai Vision Education Centre in 1996 and 1997. The questionnaires asked each centre to document for different years where their roll of children with vision impairments was attending school and the number of braille users and RNZFB members on their roll. All of the questionnaires were returned for collation and analysis. However, some of the returned questionnaires were incomplete. The only parts of the questionnaire which all the centres entirely completed were the parts which were concerned with the most recently completed academic year, 1996. These are presented in Table 9. The general comments from the centres about the questionnaire included statements about the unavailability of data from previous years and the extensive amount of time which was needed to complete the questionnaire.

However, all of the centres endeavoured to complete the questionnaire tables and one centre stated that it was "a very worthwhile exercise." Some centres also generously sent additional information. Forbury Visual Resource Centre sent a 1988 article for the ANZAEVH newsletter which documented the work of one itinerant vision teacher and the fact that "the first 'totals' (totally blind students) were brought back to their home areas at the beginning of 1984." Deanwell Visual Resource Centre sent a copy of a 1995 demographic table of the itinerant roll of one thousand and eighty children with vision impairments which was developed by the New Zealand Association of Teachers for the Visually Impaired. This was concerned with such information as teacher to student ratios (the overall average was 1 to 35.4), funding allocations (the total was approximately $558,237), the number of braille users (approximately 2.9% including pre-school and tertiary students), and the number of children with "profound" or "moderate" impairments on the roll (approximately 34%). The Auckland Visual Resource Centre sent a 1984 demographic table about the national roll of six hundred and sixty two children with vision impairments which was developed by the Auckland Visual Resource Centre. This table was concerned with teacher to student ratios (the overall itinerant average was 1 to 55.1), the number of children on the itinerant and Homai rolls (83.2% and 16.7% respectively), and the number of RNZFB members on these rolls (approximately 67%).

In regards to this study's questionnaire the centres commented on the specific categories in the questionnaire. They stated that the number of RNZFB members on their roll was not documented and not easily discoverable. This category has therefore been deleted from Table 9 because this information was not received from most of the centres. Also, most stated that some of the students on their roll attended post-secondary schools or programmes, special schools besides Homai, special classes, religious schools, home schools, or private schools, and that there were no categories for these students on the questionnaire. However, most of the centres wrote in the number of students in these schools, and so the categories, '# attending other schools', 'home school', 'special school/class (no age identified)' and 'post-secondary school' have been added to Table 9. However, the numbers in these categories may not be accurate because this information was not sought in the original questionnaire and this is indicated by a '*' in Table 9. Also, some of the centres said that the category, '# attending local school', was a misnomer because some of their students attended community mainstream schools but these were not necessarily a local school and there was no other appropriate category in which to place these students. However, all of the centres completed the table as if the category was called, '# attending mainstream school', so it was renamed accordingly for presentation in Table 9.

Table 9 indicated that most children with a vision impairment attend mainstream schools (75%) in 1996. There was a decrease in the percentage of children at Homai Vision Education Centre in 1996 (approximately 5.4%) than there were in 1984 (16.7%). However, when an analysis was done of the number of braille users of primary, intermediate and secondary age, who either attended mainstream schools (35 students) or Homai Vision Education Centre (23 students), it appeared that there was still a greater percentage of students who used braille attending Homai Vision Education Centre. Approximately 40% of such students throughout New Zealand attended Homai in 1996. And that percentage increased to 50% if post-secondary students were not included in the figures. Also, it is interesting to note that although overall a small percentage (5%) of students attended mainstream schools with a visual resource room, 76% of these students were at Homai Vision Education Centre. The primary user of mainstream schools with a visual resource room was Homai Vision Education Centre. This may be due to the fact that many residential students at Homai attend Manurewa High School which has a visual resource room. In general, however, Homai Vision Education Centre seemed to have reduced its residential programmes. Only 2.2% of all primary and secondary students with a vision impairment, or 20 students, lived at Homai Vision Education

Table 9

1996 Attendance at Various Types of Schools by Students with a Vision Impairment

Type of Student	Total # on Roll and % of Total	# Braille Users and % of Column A	# Attending Mainstream School and % of Column A	# Attending School with V. Resource Rm. and % of Column A *	# Attending Homai and % of Column A	# Living at Homai and % of Column A	# Attending Other Schools and % of Column A ?	# Attending Home School and % of Column A ?
Pre-school Students =	226	11	56	1				
	21.30%	4.90%	25%	0.40%				
Primary School								
Students =	478	30	398	12 (2M)	23	6	38 (26s+12)	7
	45%	6.30%	83.20%	2.50%	4.80%	1.30%	7.90%	1.50%
Intermediate School								
Students =	94	5	76	6 (5M)	11	6	1	
	8.80%	5.30%	81%	6.40%	12%	6%	1.10%	
Secondary School								
Students =	265	23	203	27M	13	8	12 (6s=6u)	
	25%	8.70%	76.70%	10.20%	5%	3%	9.10%	
Special School/Class								
(no age identified) ? =	67						67s	
	6.30%						100%	
Post-secondary ? =	33	1			10	10		
					30.30%	30.30%		
Total # =	1163	70	733	46	57	30	130 (99=6u=25)	7
% of Total =	100%	6.60%	69%	4.30%	5.40%	2.80%	12.20%	0.65%
% of Total excluding								
Pre-school and	907 = 100%	6.40%	75%	5.00%	5.20%	2.20%	14.30%	0.77%
Post-secondary								

*

s = Students attending special schools or special classes
u = Students enrolled at Homai and attending a special class at a mainstream school
M = Students enrolled at Homai and attending a mainstream school with a visual resource room
Other = Unidentified places such as Special Classes, Special Schools, Private Schools, Home Schools
? = Data which may be approximations because it was not sought in original questionnaire but which was provided

Centre. There was a post-secondary programme, called the Kickstart Programme, which had 10 residential students, or approximately 30% of post-secondary students who were counted in the questionnaire. This programme catered for 33% of the residential students at Homai.

Part One: The Place for Blind People

Davania, Xena, and Blair, had different stories than the participants in the previous chapters because they seemed to have educational choices. However, these choices were influenced by where they lived and what types of schools were in their area. Davania, the oldest participant in this chapter, attended Homai Vision Education Centre (Homai) as a day student but this was only because Homai happened to be in the same city as her family. Her parents believed that because of Homai's expertise and resources that this school would be best for Davania. Xena, the second participant, also attended the school in her city with the most expertise. She attended a non-local school with an attached visual resource centre. Blair, the last participant, lived in a city with itinerant vision teacher support. He attended his local primary school but his mother was seriously considering sending him away to Homai Vision Education Centre where there were more resources and more expertise. She, as well as Xena's mother, however, did not want to split up their families or be away from their children.

Blind Children must leave their families to be educated

Davania

> *Stacey: She'd only been at kindy for a little while and then they decided to have her (at) Homai for a day. . . . and then there would be two days. Then there'd be three days and they getting her used to it. And then came the day where there was no more kindy and they wanted her full time, five days a week at Homai, and they wanted me to stay home.*

Stacey, Davania's teenage mother, returned to Auckland after the premature birth of her twin daughters, one of whom was Davania. She wanted to be closer to her whanau and partner, Junior, who could give her the support which she needed. Stacey's memories of Davania's birth were filled with trauma and pain:

> Like I said to the doctor, "There's something wrong." And he said to me, "It was just Braxton Hicks." . . . And then the next day the pains started increasing so I rang him back . . . and he said, "No you're fine." And so on the next day, the Friday, they got even worse and closer together. . . . So on Saturday I went to the movies with an absolute pain. . . . I just managed to get home and I had her. It was like I got into my room, jumped on my bed, and waters broke . . . And then everybody just . . . went into a great big panic and rung an ambulance and by then Kerry was out. That's Davania's twin. . . . Kerry lived for twelve hours.

Davania struggled to stay alive while she was in hospital for five and a half months. Stacey stated that finding out about Davania's blindness was a joyous occasion because the news was presented in such a formidable way that Stacey thought that perhaps Davania was going to die:

> They'd taken Davania into a room. They'd taken the whole incubator and that into the room by itself and they called me in and when they told me. Like it's still pretty fuzzy to me because all I could think of at the time was 'Okay this is it. She's gonna die. She's gonna die. She's gonna die.' And then they said to me, "Oh your daughter is blind. There's nothing that can be done for her. There may be in the future but right now she has this condition." And I was like, "Wow! You know what I don't care. I thought you were gonna tell me she's gonna die."

Davania's early years were filled with her family's protective and loving support:

> Stacey: We stayed with his auntie for a while.
> Junior: . . . Sometimes they got over protective, the family. Like telling us how to do it. They never really give us a chance to do it ourselves sort of thing. It was like going back to school again and writing down essays and all the rest of it.
> Stacey: Both of our families adjusted very well to Davania's condition. . . . They just accepted her with open arms and if anything (they) spoil her too much. . . . Like she's never wrong. Even if she's caused the trouble. 'No it's not her fault.' Where we crack down on her, they just let it slide. So she's spoiled. The favourite grandchild.

Unlike the other participants Davania had no early contact with the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind (RNZFB) nor with any early intervention teachers from Specialist Education Services despite having been seen by various medical specialists and helpful Plunket nurses who could have referred her.

At age three, Stacey began to take Davania to her local kindergarten. Stacey and Junior felt that the staff were so unprepared that they needed to accompany Davania every day to the kindergarten. The kindergarten staff eventually suggested that she get in touch with the "blind school" and gradually Davania began to attend Homai Vision Education Centre (Homai) on a full time basis in their early childhood unit at age three and a half. Her parents felt that there was expertise at Homai and because Davania's teacher aide hours were also running out:

> Stacey: They assigned her a teacher aide while she was at kindy. . . . And then the teacher aide's hours would always run out. . . . They just started having her full time at Homai because they only assign so many (teacher aide) hours for each child for a year. I was actually quite glad she was going to Homai. Because they obviously knew what to do and what would help her.

Xena

> *Zwhaun: When I was first told that she had this condition, people would go, "so what would her schooling be?" And they said, "Ah, Homai College." And I made my decision right there and then before she even left the hospital, 'over my dead body.' Because I think . . . family unity is important. The security of the home and everything is important but don't let the parents fumble around. . . . Empower us to do something by giving us things . . . not in your technical terms but in terms that we understand and give us some dignity back, especially for mums.*

Xena was also born prematurely. Zwhaun, her mother stated, that she was initially shocked to see how small Xena was but immediately loved her daughter. She also quickly accepted her daughter's frail medical condition despite the comments from various professionals that she needed to first experience all of the grief stages.

> I thought, 'Oh my god I've given birth to a barbie doll.' That's how big she was. . . . It only took me about a couple of seconds to get over it, . . . and then I felt this overwhelming sense of love. . . . Like I would spend six to eight hours there a day (for) five months. . . . I haven't really ever gone over the emotional roller-coaster of what you're supposed to go through. . . . Yeah (the medical professionals) would say "Well. . . . You will go through denial. You will go through this one and this one. And then you'll go to acceptance." . . . Everybody was trying to tell you how you should feel and I felt like saying to them "Why don't you get over this side and you see how I feel."

Even though Xena spent five months in the hospital and Zwhaun had participated in a parent training programme at Homai, Zwhaun did not find out her daughter was totally blind until Xena was a year old.

> A lady came down from the Foundation for the Blind from Auckland from Homai. And she said we could actually qualify for a loan . . . to help with the renovations for Xena . . . because Xena was 'totally blind.' . . . Because (Xena) smiled at me I actually thought she could see. . . . They said that there was a condition in one of the eyes that would come and go. I assumed that (vision) was there. . . . And she said "No. She is totally blind without light perception." And you could have just blown me over with a feather.

Xena's blindness was due to faulty hospital equipment which administered too much oxygen. Xena, herself, said that as a child at play centre and kindergarten she was not worried about her blindness because she did not understand it. However, later during her interview she associated her blindness with something that she and the doctor had done wrong:

> I'm not sure how I found out but I did. . . . Well it didn't really worry me because I didn't really understand most probably. . . . It just means that I was born 15 weeks early and I wish I hadn't because it was my fault because I came out early. . . . I should have waited 9 weeks because then I wouldn't have had to have that operation and if I hadn't have had to have that operation I wouldn't be blind right now. . . .It was the doctor because they had this really stupid equipment. They should have tested it out first and then they could have said "oh its faulty." But I don't think they really minded as long as they got it over and done with.

Unlike Davania, Xena was referred early for educational services from the visual resource centre's teacher, Catherine. Catherine saw her role as a support for Xena's family and felt that it was important to see blind children at an early age:

> It was a learning process for all of us because Xena and Kip, another little boy, . . . were born within a month and so that really made me start focusing on what was my job. . . . So I'm very involved right from the beginning so things just flowed on right with all the children because I've known them.

Xena attended a non-local play centre and kindergarten which were both next to the visual resource centre and Xena's future primary school. Zwhaun thought that this helped Xena's transition to primary school because professional support and continuity were easily maintained.

Blair

> *Joanne: The only thing that doesn't work for Blair is his eyes. . . . He can socialise. He can play. He can run. He can jump. He can laugh. I mean why put him away to a school.*

Blair, the youngest participant , also spent about five months in the hospital because he was born prematurely. His mother, Joanne, actually "lived at the hospital" during this time, and recalled that it was a difficult time:

> They told me that he was very sick. And when I seen (the doctor) poking and prodding , to be truthful, I just kept thinking, 'oh leave him alone. Leave him. . . . Don't make him keep trying to struggle and survive.' . . . They would take blood gases every hour. He had more needles than a voodoo doll stuck in him.

Joanne found out about Blair's blindness just before she took him home. However, despite the difficulties which Joanne encountered at the hospital, unlike the other mothers in this chapter, she said that the medical professionals were friendly, warm, and involved her at all times in Blair's care:

> Oh (they were) excellent. Yeah. They really were. Before they were going to do something, they always told you and even when they were working with him they were telling you what they were doing.

Joanne was relieved to be home but thought that her husband had difficulty coping with Blair's blindness:

> Because of the fact that men always want sons and Arnie would always go "Blair can't do this and Blair won't be able to do that." Arnie does diving and he wanted Blair to go diving and all men activities. . . . (Arnie's) brothers and sisters have mainly had all their children and they were all quite healthy children. Arnie found it quite hard to accept that there was something wrong with Blair.

Blair was referred immediately to the RNZFB, the hospital's neuro-developmental clinic and the Visual Resource Centre. Joanne was glad to have this flotilla of professionals because her son benefited from their advice:

> I still do have the neuro-development (clinic). I had two visits from paediatrics. . . . A lot of the staff from the resource centre came. I had (the RNZFB) social worker and I had daily living skills and I had mobility, and I had another one too. . . . We had Hilda (from Homai) and we had Jane, (the vision teacher), visit. . . . We had about nine visit us all within a month. . . . You wanted to know what would be out there for your son because you wanted the best for him at the early learning stage. Even now I think 'yeah good' that they're coming. Because I mean it's what's best for Blair. . . . I've never felt that they've taken over because it's always what's best for Blair and they're giving you helping suggestions.

Unlike Davania and Xena, Blair attended his local play centre and kindergarten. The local early intervention teacher from Specialist Education Services was Blair's co-ordinating teacher. She was able to procure teacher aide hours for Blair for home, play centre, and kindergarten. His teacher aide, Tracy, at kindergarten was his teacher aide at primary school. She described her perceptions of Blair's kindergarten experience:

> He gained a lot of tactile experience because he really hated touching anything new or being in a new environment. . . . He gained a lot of

> awareness. I think awareness of (things) around him and awareness that there are other people out there. . . . I wouldn't say he was social. The kids would interact but he didn't follow through or he didn't initiate. . . . He did tend to ignore and withdraw into his own wee world. . . . I think there's probably a lot of things that he did miss out on . . . because he was withdrawn for an hour and we would work intensely even before he got to school. It was quite hard on him. But he did need it to get to (primary) school.

Tracy was also involved in his life at home. She worked six hours a week in "share care hours", and tried to give Blair natural and varied experiences which he chose for himself.

'Naturally' moving on to the special school

Davania was the only participant who attended Homai Vision Education Centre at the time that data was being gathered for this study. The discussiong group for this study thought that similarly to the participants in the previous chapters, Davania's educational life seemed to be too routine, too safe, and too 'unreal'. Joanne, Blair's mother, was considering sending Blair to Homai as suggested by Homai in order to access the expertise which were available there:

> We're thinking we'll put him to Homai for six months. There's differing opinions about that. . . . I don't want him to go. I mean nobody wants their child to go away. Arnie really doesn't want him to go. And then the school kind of says "We've got him going in school and it would be a shame to take him out." . . . And things that we're getting as well. You know like the mobility and the speech . . . We wanted it for the brain side of it . . . for the learning and the reading.

She seriously considered moving the whole family from their rural town to another city for a year where there was a large visual resource centre attached to a primary school. However, the principal of that school thought that accessing the other resources besides the visual resource centre would be too difficult:

> I talked to the principal and he said we're better off where we are. . . . And then (the) disadvantage that we couldn't just send him because there's no hostels and we would have to shift. So he really advised us

against it.

In the end though, the year after he participated in this study at his local school, Blair was enrolled at Homai Vision Education Centre as a residential student.

Xena never returned to Homai after her mother's initial parent training programme, and all of her assessment and educational services were provided by her city's visual resource centre. For Davania, Homai had become a second home where she was safe and secure. Stacey and Junior had only praise for their daughter's school which they felt was a welcoming place as illustrated by Stacey's statement below:

> She's learned heaps from there and I've learned heaps. . . . I see it as a place where the kids could go because they didn't have anywhere else to go. And so at least they had this school that could cater for their needs and they wouldn't be judged . . . They were just a child needing to learn. . . . Homai actually means 'come here, welcome.' . . . It's like a school that has just opened its arms to children with these disabilities. . . . So it's excellent and I know that the people at Homai . . . just want to do everything they possibly can for each individual child. So it's fantastic.

Blind people need to be controlled

The control in the Homai hostels which the other participants experienced in previous chapters was not part of the experiences of the participants in this chapter. None of the blind children in this chapter at the time of this study were residential students at Homai and in general the hostel experience did not seem to play as large part in the educational experiences of blind children in the 1990s. In 1996 only six of New Zealand primary students with vision impairments boarded at Homai (see Table 9). However, the hostels played a role in my experience in this study. I stayed in a hostel when I observed Davania's class during my two visits. It had been converted to accommodate visitors and families of children who attended Homai or were being assessed at Homai. Below is my first impression of the hostel and Homai:

> I take the train for a thirty five minute ride south and arrive at Homai.

> The train stop is just across the street from one of the back entrances. . . . Kitch, the deputy principal, is in a meeting so the receptionist shows me to the visitor's hostel where I will be staying. The hostel is sunny, bright and newly furnished. There is a lounge, playroom, kitchen, and laundry for common use. There are about 12 rooms. . . . My room has a single bed. It is a new slat bed with a new foam mattress and the bedding is quite fresh as well. I then get directions and go off to the classroom. . . . My initial impression of Homai is quiet, very quiet. You can hear the birds and the cicadas.

The Homai grounds were an oasis of 58 acres in an otherwise noisy industrial zone of a working class city with a high population of Maori and Pacific Island people. On my evening excursions to the fish and chip shop across the road though I never became accustomed to this difference. A Maori taxi driver also later told me that she had lived near Homai all her life but had never been inside its iron gates. I rarely saw children or the Hostel workers on the grounds after school.

However, in the morning the hostel workers guided some children to Davania's classroom and passed messages to the teacher about their behaviour and health. One staff person seemed quite angry on the second morning:

> A student arrives with a hostel staff person. She helps him to hang his coat up and put his lunch box away. She is in her late 40s or early 50s, and looks like she is tired. She says "Now you are going to go and sit down." She tells the teachers that the boy has been awake all night screaming. So "please don't let him go to sleep during the day so he will learn." He screamed and yelled and kept everyone awake till 1:30 am. Then he was moved to "the dorm" where he wouldn't disturb the other children. She seems angry. The teacher reassures her that he will not be allowed to fall asleep during class.

On another morning, a different hostel worker showed more concern about this student:

> The student arrives with his hostel worker who states that he is going to have an ultra sound at 1 p.m. and asks "Can he drink three to five glasses of water at noon."
> Teacher: No problem. Can he eat?
> Worker: Oh I don't know. They didn't say. I'll ask. If he can't we'll call you.

Like in the other chapters, the children at Homai seemed to have developed a hierarchy. This was based on vision, cognitive ability and gender. In Davania's class more power seemed to be held by the boys. Davania's classmate, Sammy, a Samoan boy, held the most power. He was the biggest child with some vision in the class of twelve students whose ages ranged from five to twelve. He exercised his power consistently throughout my observations by asking for adult attention; by teasing the other students; and by also helping the other students and the teachers. He and Davania seemed to be especially competitive but were very affectionate towards each other as this observation note below illustrated:

> Sammy gets on the bench and pushes Davania down a bit. She gets up and goes back to where she was sitting. She then pushes Sammy back. Sammy says, "I'm going to hit you with this chair. Now move." Davania tells him to leave her alone and She stays put. . . . Sammy sighs and starts playing on the piano. Davania then gets angry and says "Leave it. Leave it." . . . (The teacher) goes to the supply room. Sammy and Davania are left to sit alone together. They sit close touching shoulders. Sammy announces that "We're going today to do hide and seek. And Davania and I are going to play some rap." . . . Davania gets up. He asks "Who wants to sit on my lap?" Davania says, "Me."

Davania, herself, was also interested in gaining status within the classroom hierarchy. She always volunteered to help her teachers and during my observations seemed to be very concerned that she did not come last in any activity:

> 1: 55 p.m.: The teacher and Bev tell them all to go out and line up at the staff room door. It is time for PE. . . . One by one they head towards the staff room. Some children are guided out and some run out. When everyone has reached the door, Bev announces who is first in line, second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth. Davania is third in line but then asks very loudly, "But who is last?"

Lee, the classroom teacher of many years, seems to hold the most power in the classroom. At the beginning of my observations another teacher, Sandra, was also a teacher in the classroom but there appeared to be some professional differences:

> I ask Sandra if she would like to be interviewed, but she says that Lee is really the one to interview as she knows the children well. She also feels that she herself is having difficulty in the class finding her place. . . . Later on in the week Sandra hears that she has gotten another job. . . . She says she needs her own space.

Lee said that there were simply too many adults in the classroom and that she and a teacher aide were all that were really needed for such a small class. Otherwise, she believed her students who were already stressed because of their blindness would experience additional stress. Bev, the teacher aide, also shyly declined to be interviewed for the study because Lee knew the most about the children's educational programmes.

During my time at Homai I rarely heard any cross words used and only saw encouragement and calm patience from the adults in the classroom. Lee complimented the children for their good work, nice clothes, and helpful actions. The older children in the class also willingly helped the younger children with their activities or by guiding them and Lee commented that she in fact had many "teacher aides." There was only one time when cross words were used and Davania became upset:

> Lee asks, "What is the name of your story going to be Davania." . . . Davania does not answer. . . . The whole time that Lee is talking Sammy talks as well. . . .. Lee gets up and comes around to Davania. She (sternly) says, "Ms. Higgins is going to think you can't do anything. Now what is the name of your story Davania?" Davania answers, "Sports." Lee says "Good name Davania. . . . Now you can write it." Davania goes ahead and writes but does not return the carriage at the end of the line. Lee then asks, "What is the matter Davania. Are you sick?" Davania says, "Yes" as she sniffs. Lee then comments "Oh Dear. Yes you have been sniffing and coughing. Come and lie down then." . . . Davania lays down and starts to laugh out loud . . . but there are also big sad tears streaming down her face. . . . Later Lee says that perhaps Davania heard a comment from Sammy about how they had to write while Virginia could draw something. . . . I also wonder if Davania might have reacted to Lee's verbal chastisement.

Blind people need to be watched

Davania's mother, as well as Blair's mother, spoke about some of their and their children's brief encounters with the sighted public and how these encounters were invasive and, at times, insulting. For example, Stacey was aware of people judging her when she pushed Davania's pram which had an oxygen tank attached to it:

> I used to get looks from other people, you know, especially when I took her out in the pram and had the oxygen tank. And people would look at me as if to say, "What are you doing with that child out in public?" . . . And like I wasn't going to put her in cotton wool because I felt fresh air was better for her than anything instead of being stuck in a room depending on oxygen.

Stacey and Junior stated as well that Davania was pitied because of her blindness:, Joanne, Blair's mother, was insulted by a patronising woman in public:

> I remember when Blair was little we went down the street and a lady . . . said to me, "For god sake, girl, he looks tired. Why don't you take him home to bed." And of course I turned around and I said to her, "He is blind. He's got no sight." And then she turned round and said, "Oh oh the poor wee guy. . . . I hope you get your fair whack out of the government." And then she said, "Is he in a loving family?" And I thought, 'God, I'd love to run you over with his pram.'

During my observations at Homai there were regular visits from sighted children from other schools. These visits were organised by Homai's Reverse Integration Programme in which different regular classrooms of primary or intermediate school students moved their class to Homai for a week. Bill, Homai's principal, believed that the programme was beneficial to the students at Homai:

> The children have that opportunity to experience the normalising effect of normal children's noise, play, to be involved, even alongside in that play. Which they wouldn't normally get if they were totally segregated.

However, I found that Davania and most of the other students with a vision impairment did not play with their visiting peers. At the beginning of the week on

Monday the students with a vision impairment were mostly alone on the sidelines watching or listening to the children play:

> The adventure playground is where the reverse integration children are playing. There is lots of noise and running and screaming. There are eight children with vision impairments in this area. Some are in wheelchairs lined up and watching from the edge. One child is lying down. Davania is alone on the swings off to the side and Sammy is the only one playing with the sighted children. He is pushing the roundabout for them.

On Tuesday, all of the students at Homai were gathered for a fifteen minute music assembly. During this time, the reverse integration class then watched the students with a vision impairment:

> 10:02 a.m.: All the students are now in the music class with the reverse integration group. The reverse integration class is sitting on the floor in the front of the room. All the children in wheelchairs are lined up in the back. The more mobile blind children are sitting on the floor in the middle. . . . They start singing with two teachers, one on the piano. "If you're happy and you know it." Each child in the back in a wheelchair has an adult sitting next to them. The adult helps the child with the motions of the song through physical or verbal cues. . . . The reverse integration class is noisy in between songs. There is lots of talking and clapping . They also look around at the Homai children during the song with big eyes. One stares at a child who is banging her head against her wheelchair.

Once Lee used the reverse integration children to point out to Davania that she ate lunch differently and perhaps she would like to try eating like them. Davania resisted this change:

> Lee asks whether Davania would like her apple cut today or eat it like the reverse integration children do?" Davania says "I'd like it cut please." Lee, "OK I'll cut it in a minute."

On Tuesday in the playground, Davania became more adventurous and approached the playground with her sighted peers but she still did not interact with them:

> The reverse integration children are yelling, running, jumping, climbing all over the adventure playground. I spot Davania. She is actually swinging on the swings with a sighted child beside her on another swing. They are not interacting. (12:55) Davania gets off the swing and slowly walks towards the rest of the playground and children. In the playground there is another blind child playing on his own and poking his eyes. Davania wanders around the playground on her own. No one talks to her and she does not talk to anyone else.

According to Davania's record, she was previously teased by some visiting sighted children and therefore was not interested in interacting on the playground. Lee, her teacher, thought, however, that she was coping better with such teasing. Davania did not have an opportunity to play with her sighted peers on Wednesday because they had gone swimming during lunch, and by Friday they had left.

Blind children learn best with other blind people

During my observations, Homai Vision Education Centre had a number of programmes which were on and off campus. In Model Services, which was the centre's educational programme for children, there were five classes, including Davania's class which was called the assessment class. Another class was for deaf/blind children, and the other three classes had three or four students with multiple impairments. Also on campus, there was the Early Intervention Programme, the Assessment Programme for children in the mainstream, the Reverse Integration Programme, The Kick Start programme on campus which was a residential transition programme from school to work for young adults, and the Education for Living Programme for teenagers with multiple impairments. Off campus, Homai Vision Education Centre was responsible for James Cook High School's unit for children with vision impairments, Manurewa Intermediate School's visual resource room, and Manurewa High School's visual resource room. The grounds at Homai included the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind's Transcription Services and their Guide Dog Training Centre.

The purpose of Davania's class, the assessment class, was to provide a transition class for students who were in the process of changing schools. They were either on their way to the mainstream or to another class at Homai. Primarily, the class, as well as Homai, focused on helping children prepare for attending mainstream schools. Davania, however, had been in the same class for five years. Some of the other children in her class were expected to only be there for a month, a term, or a year. The class during my observations of Davania had three girls and six boys. It is interesting to note that five of the nine children spoke English as a second language and three of these five had a moderate to severe hearing impairment. These language difficulties, according to the teachers, were the other factors besides their vision impairment which made it difficult for them to attend their local schools.

Davania's Individual Education Plan stated the curriculum areas in which she was working were maths, self care skills, recreation, work habits, language, and orientation and mobility. During my observations of the class, Davania participated in most of these activities. In general, her six hours (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) of school each day were divided in the following manner: two hours in total for morning tea, lunch, travelling to and from activities, and recreation; one hour of physical education; one hour of language including music, poems, and news; and two hours of braille reading and writing. Orientation and Mobility instruction was to occur in the future during school hours but had occurred in the past after school. The class also went on a weekly outing into the community. Davania was primarily taught alongside Sammy, Wing, Virginia, and Albert. All, but Albert, were within a two year age grouping. Her other classmates formed another learning group which was younger and not yet working in braille.

Davania's teacher, Lee, noted that the advantages of Homai were the time which was taken to develop individual programmes and the quiet environment:

> There's a lot of time in all of the kid's programmes . . . . It's quiet and it's deliberately quiet. They can't work in a noise. They can't work in a noise because they're dependent on their ears. Just the normal buzz of busy kids is noisy if you're relying on your ears.

Lee said that she was following the National Curriculum, adapting it, and focusing on its functional aspects. The Homai professionals all agreed that the curriculum at Homai was more "hands-on" and taught in smaller steps. For example, the principal, Bill stated:

> It's very much hands on and you're doing micro-teaching, small steps, you're not teaching two plus two but you're teaching the basic, very basic skills in some cases. Pre-number, pre-reading, pre-braille. All those things which often people just don't understand.

In my observations, Lee, for example, spent 20 minutes teaching the children about an avocado:

> Lee: Now we have an avocado. Which we better eat or it will go rotten.
> Davania: It has a seed in it .
> Lee: Yes it does. Do you want to have a look at it. What is it's shape? Is there another fruit with the same shape? . . . (Davania feels the avocado. There is a long pause. . . .)
> Sammy: Mango
> Lee: No. A mango is fatter. What is it Davania? What kind of shape. . . . Is there another fruit like that with the same shape?
> Davania: No. . . .
> Lee: Oh OK. Steve you have a look. (Wing has a look as well. Lee takes the avocado around the group. Each person feels it.)
> Lee: What fruit has the same shape. It begins with a 'p'.
> Sammy: Banana. (No one seems to know the answer . . .)
> .Lee : A pear. It's a pear. (The students are quiet). Now we'll see the stone of the seed in the middle. (Lee shows everyone the stone of the avocado. They feel it as it passes around. Some have a quick feel and then pull their hands away just as quickly. Lee has told me that this avocado actually comes from a tree which was planted at Homai from seed twelve years ago. They will plant this seed as well today. . . . Everyone gets a piece of avocado to eat)
> Lee: Davania here is a piece. Wing here is a piece. Avocado. Avocado
> Wing: Avo Avo
> Lee: Cado Cado

Kitch, the deputy principal, also noted that there were many items, such as body language, in the curriculum at Homai that were additional or hidden within the national curriculum guidelines and that these were unique to students with vision impairments:

> Obviously we have got . . . a special curriculum for children with vision impairment, . . . the orientation and mobility, the braille skills, the reading through low vision aids and low vision equipment, the use of tactile senses, the training of residual vision, the social skills and . . . the most vital, the inter-personal skills. I mean sexuality and all those sorts of things. . . .. (I remember a) very very bright girl, (with) very, very minimal sight. In order to use the sight, she had to hold her head up and look down her nose. And she looked terribly arrogant and she wasn't in the least bit. We put her into mainstream education because she was doing so well and she failed miserably because she was just hated by her peers.

Unlike the participants in the previous chapters Davania had no regular contact with blind adults at Homai even though there were blind employees at Transcription Services and Guide Dog Services which were on the same grounds. During my two observation periods at Homai I mostly noted a change in Davania's social relationships with her blind peers. During the first observation period, she spent most of her time alone or interacted occasionally with Sammy. However, during my second visit, a new girl, Virginia, had by then arrived in the class. She was a similar age and had become Davania's close friend. During class they sat next to each other and during play time they spent all of their time together. They were also cohorts in their interactions with Sammy:

> Davania bounces out and down the hall singing "If you're happy and you know it.. " Virginia waits ahead for her. When Davania catches up they hold hands and head down the halls to the soft toy room. In the room, Davania jumps up and down on her own. Her shoes are off. Virginia comes over and leads her to some soft squares and stairs. Davania is happy. She jumps with both hands up in the air. Virginia finds a ball to bounce to her. Sammy is there as well. He starts banging Davania with a big soft toy and knocks her off a ball she has been sitting on. She laughs and gets back on it. Sammy wrestles with Davania and Virginia. . . . Virginia picks up another soft toy and retaliates by hitting Sammy with it.

The participants in this chapter who were at regular schools also had limited contact with blind adults despite the fact that most of the professionals in this study stated that meeting other blind people was important for blind children so that they would not think that they were alone. Raquel, Blair's teacher, also thought that she, herself, could learn from talking to blind people:

> I went to a course at the Foundation of the Blind. And there was a blind man at the counter. . . . Apart from TV, that's the only experience I've had of blind people. . . . I said when I knew Blair was coming. I said, "I need to meet a blind person and just talk to them about their schooling." And nothing happened. . . . I said it to my Principal. I said it to Jane. I said it to my Board of Trustees. Although I must admit that they did send me to the Visual Resource Centre (in another city).

Xena's mother, Zwhaun, noted that Xena's interaction with Julie, a local blind woman, had positive effects. Julie was going to teach Xena some skills which Zwhaun was unable to teach. Zwhaun also noted that Xena had similar attitudes as Julie towards her white cane in that she preferred to use a guide dog. Catherine, Xena's vision teacher, made a point of bringing together all of her braille students so that they could be with each other once a term:

> They love it. . . . We have a shared lunch with the class and when we have (an) in-service here we usually get the kids over and . . . while we're taking the in-service, we have the kids just being together with (the RNZFB social worker) and last year (the O&M instructor) came down. She did a session with the teachers and teacher aides and then she took all the kids for a swim and then (the social worker) was there just to sort of supervise them while they played out on the adventure playground. . . . The children just being with each other with other children who are blind. Talking. . . . They need it.

Davania, Xena, and Blair also all had attended camps for children with vision impairments. Blair and Davania enjoyed these camps. Davania was also involved in sports for children with vision impairments. Xena attended one camp but according to her mother, Zwhaun, did not enjoy the experience. Zwhaun was uncertain about why Xena was unhappy at the camp but noted that there were no other blind girls who were her age or older there. Zwhaun thought that generally having such a companion would be of great a help to Xena:

> I think it would probably be good if she had someone her own age. . . . But a girl as well. Not so much a boy. . . . . I'm not being sexist. It is just they

> could share how they're feeling like especially if they both gone through puberty. . . . And maybe someone older whose actually been going through the school system. Something to show her that this isn't all bad.

Liz, Xena's teacher aide, believed that if Xena had a blind classmate that she would better understand that she was unable to perform visual tasks:

> Ah just to know that there are other people like them and like in the classroom programme there are some things that Xena can't do. And it's good for her to realise that everybody whose blind can't do those things because she wants to do everything that everybody else does and she can't.

In conclusion, the discussion group and I thought that Davania was safe and protected at Homai but one member of the group stated that this was not "what the world was about." The group felt that she should have left Homai years ago and did not understand why she, or some of her classmates, were there. They generally did not get the impression that Homai was a happy or adventurous place, nor did they think it was a centre of expertise. They felt that Homai was no longer a school for blind children but for children who had multiple impairments. They also felt that Homai was having difficulty finding its place within the education system and they were confused about its purpose.

Part Two: Finding Other Places

The participants in this chapter, Xena and Blair, who did attend regular schools had similar experiences to that of the participants in the previous chapters in that their teachers, their peers, and other professionals were unable to fully include them. Some of the principals and teachers stated that they encountered system barriers which undermined their confidence and ability to teach blind children. When adequate specialist support systems were available to the school, though, the school seemed to be more inclusive. However, Xena and Blair, like some of the participants in the previous chapters, had a limited social life in their school and within their community.

Getting away from the block

Davania's weekly class trips into the community seemed to bring enormous enjoyment to the students. I went on one trip with her class to McDonald's and was able to document this excitement:

> Bev collects the children from the soft toy room and tells them to go to the main door. She will then go get the bus so we can go to McDonalds to play in the indoor playground. . . . Sammy and Albert wrestle with each other. . . .. Davania has claimed a chair for herself. Every now and then she stands up and jumps up and down in excitement as we wait for the bus. . . . Once we are on the road, Sammy, Davania, Albert and Virginia break into a spontaneous Samoan song. They sing "praise god hallelujah. Shine Shine Shine." . . . Davania claps along. The bus then breaks into Christmas carols.

Davania spent her school holidays in a local children's holiday programme and had no difficulty adjusting to, or being included in, this programme despite her mother's worry that Davania may have been a burden:

> Davania and (her sibling) just catch the bus. . . . And they do that for two weeks, Yeah. People that run it just love her. I was a bit reluctant at first to send her there because I thought she might be a bit of a burden. Sometimes she does need that extra eye to make sure she's not going to hurt herself. . . . She adjusted perfectly. In fact at the end of every holiday they ask you if she's coming back because they want her back and they say that she's the best out of all of the children that are there.

Davania also was involved in a community athletic club and spent a significant amount of time socialising with her whanau (family) and her whanau's friends:

> Stacey: And in the summer she's got the athletics. So there's girls her age that she runs against. They always thrash her but they talk. You know they sit there and talk together in a little group before the race and that. . . . And there's like the sisters that come and watch their siblings playing . . . that sit there and chat. They're not interested in the game. And my friends at (sports) always talk to her. (She stays at) her cousins from time to time and sometimes she goes up to my friends place. We've been friends since I was six and she was seven. So we're like family. . . . And

> plays with her daughter who's five. . . . She's not stuck at home and she's not always just stuck with us or with Robin (her sibling).

Davania's parents expected that Davania would attend a regular intermediate school the following year. Her mother was a bit apprehensive about changing schools and felt that Lee understood Davania's educational needs best and would, in the end, make the final decision:

> Stacey: When Lee first talked about it.. It was a couple of years ago. Totally flipped me out. I could not picture myself letting her go to school without me standing outside the gate. . . . But as she's gotten older, I know she's ready for it now. But because Lee teaches her, Lee knows her abilities. She'd be the better judge I think. It was just that mother thing, that 'cling on'. But I think for her to be mainstreamed now would be fine.
> Junior: And we just go by Lee. We might as well say she lives there, sort of thing. She's her second mother.

Lee was cautious about placing Davania in a mainstream class and preferred, as did Davania's parents, that she be placed in a school with an attached unit for children with vision impairments:

> Our next big step is to move her into a mainstream setting of some sort to build up her social interactions because that it is out of kilter. Although she does get a lot of social interaction because of her parents' involvement in (sports). . . . So we're just in the process of trying to find a setting for her which is appropriate. Intermediate school level but looking at hopefully a small unit based programme where she can go in for interaction in the mainstream at things she's good at so that she doesn't feel threatened. When she feels threatened she just falls apart.

Heidi, Davania's O&M instructor, believed, however, that Davania was too protected and would be positively challenged in a regular class at a mainstream school:

> I'd actually like to see her slowly supported and weaned into mainstream so she's dealing with real kids, in real situations, and just to challenge her really. Because she's got a heap of potential and I just see her stopped because . . . she's not out there in reality. . . . I'd like to see her mainstreamed but with good support.

Smart blind children can go to mainstream schools, but may not feel supported, or included

Xena and Blair both attended regular primary schools. Xena attended a non-local school with an attached visual resource centre and Blair attended his local school. Xena's enrolment was a natural progression from the kindergarten next to the school. All of the professionals who worked at the school stated that if they had a blind child, they would send their child to Xena's school. The principal explained that the easy access to the visual resource centre along with the supportive school community were the reasons for sending blind children to his school:

> I think the model that we use here is probably the envy of the rest of the country because we do get on well with each other. . . . Plus the fact that we go to great pains to support them with their needs. If we believe that what they are asking for is definitely right, we'll battle to the end to achieve it.

Blair, the youngest participant in this study, attended his local primary school. Joanne, Blair's mother, felt that this would lead to Blair's participation in his community and advocated for Blair to be treated similarly to other children:

> I think he's got the normal side of it. He hasn't got the anti-social of if he came back here to do his high schooling and he wouldn't know anybody. No one would know him. I want Blair to be as normal as possible. We also got offered the taxi to take him to school and I didn't want the taxi because I thought well that's another way of singling out Blair from the other kids. I see the mainstreaming a really good way to make children be included as much as possible.

Blair's principal also noted that Joanne's educational philosophy was one that the school adopted as well even though there were concerns about whether Blair would be able to cope with school and vice-versa:

> So the concerns then were very physical concerns about his eating patterns. . . . There were questions in terms about toileting and about getting to and from school and about having the facility he needed and

> the room he needed and so on. . . . But his mother was particularly good at vocalising, . . . "My child is entitled to the same thing as any other child. And other parents don't have to come to school at lunch time to supervise their children. So I'm not doing that for my child. You will. . . . Other children come to school on a school bus so why shouldn't my child?" She was very clear . . . It was a very good . . . approach to educating Blair because we had to. I had to go to the Ministry and say, "This boy is real. He is at school and we need this and this and this."

Blair's classroom was made up of sixteen boys and four girls, one teacher, and two teacher aides. During this study it was Blair's second year in the class. The planning for Blair's initial attendance at school was thorough and began quite early. He was eased into the full time school schedule over a few months. However, the school had enormous difficulty finding the resources, equipment and specialist support which Blair and they felt was needed. All of the adults who were a part of Blair's life mentioned that this was the primary barrier to Blair's inclusion. For example, Raquel, his teacher, said:

> Resources is the biggest 'bug bear' down here. It's frustrated me in the respect that I really wanted to treat him as just the same as the other children and I wanted to treat him as part of the class and I've been hampered really in that way.

According to the principal one of the reasons obtaining resources seemed to be difficult was because the educational bureaucracy did not have a fund that the school could immediately access for essential equipment:

> The time commitment to acquire services for this child have been pretty demanding on me . . . and it's been costly to my Board because we've tended to say, "Well if there's something that he needs. We will buy it and argue afterwards." It took us a long while to get a Brailler funded because of the difficulty of getting quotes and sending it up and getting it approved and referred back to the local Ministry and coming to us and then getting the funding through.

Xena was in a combined class of seventy one children and two teachers. According to the professionals at her school, they had no difficulty obtaining funding or resources because her educational needs were easily provided by New

Zealand's Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) and not the Ministry of Education because of the medical misadventure which caused her blindness. Xena had funding for a full time teacher aide and this job was shared by two teacher aides.

During my observations at Xena's and Blair's schools it was evident that the classroom layout greatly affected their inclusion in the class. Xena's class layout consisted of a rectangular room. The children sat at their desks on the east and west side of the room facing an empty space in the middle. The teachers' desk was in the middle of the room against the north wall. Xena sat opposite in a line up of four children against the south wall facing the empty space and the teachers. Her bookcases, printer, brailler and paper were behind her. Her best friend Sue sat to her left and another girl sat on the other side of her. On the other side of Sue sat David, 'perpetual bad boy.' Sam, Xena's teacher, acknowledged that this seating arrangement was not ideal for Xena because she was separated from the class. However, Sam believed that there simply were too many children in her class and not enough space to accommodate Xena's equipment in any other place. Xena was not happy with her desk placement and said that her desk had been changed this year which confused her and negatively affected her status in class:

> Sue and I are both sitting by a boy called David. I reckon he should be expelled because he's being so naughty. I don't think I should have sat beside him but my desk has been moved and like sometimes when my desk is moved to a different place it's totally confusing. Well I didn't know where it was moved and I thought it was at the normal place where it normally was but it wasn't it.

Blair's classroom consisted of a number of large square tables placed around the classroom. The children sat at these tables in no particular place. Blair had a bookcase in one corner of the classroom near these tables and tended to sit in the same chair for orientation purposes. He was also physically separated from his class by a square and portable half-metre piece of carpet on which he sat. Whereas the other children sat directly on the mat on the floor in front of the teacher:

> Blair is led back to room with his 'special mat'. Blair has a special square mat so "He will stay in one place." Or, according to Tracy, he squirms around. The mat is believed to create tactile boundary for him.

By the end of my visit though, the classroom teacher, after explaining the purpose of the mat to me, came to the conclusion that it was not needed anymore because Blair no longer squirmed like he did eighteen months ago and did face her voice during mat time. His classmates readily accepted the mat's disappearance and he seemed to better blend into the class without it.

Xena was also not encouraged to join in with her classmates on the mat which was the empty space in front of her. She stayed at her desk during these gathering times and sat above her classmates who sat on the floor in front of her. She also sometimes chose to do different activities from the rest of the class:

> 2:50 p.m.: The teacher says, "everyone on the mat." Sam passes out various stitched up mats and cushions that the children made last year. All the children are on the mat. Xena is organising her braille and getting her cane. She does not go to the mat. She faces her bookcase and stands with her back to the teacher as the teacher shows the various cushions and waits for people to claim them.

Her teacher and Ann, her teacher aide, believed that Xena was actually listening to her teacher and that she was able to do two things at once:

> Ann: She knows what she's supposed to be doing. . . . Her hearing is so good. Like if she's reading and she's talking to her friend and the teacher has just said something that they are supposed to do. If I went and asked her, she would know exactly what it was. And she does that at home too. She'll listen to TV (and) she'll read a book at the same time, and be doing a little bit of her homework.

However, her other teacher aide, Liz, believed that Xena could not do two things at once and, like her classmates, should not be allowed to do different activities:

> She thinks that she can either not do what she has been asked or that she just can start talking about what she wants to talk about while the teacher's talking or giving instructions to the class. I'm trying to get her

> out of doing that because I don't think it's very good because the other children are not allowed to continue reading. She can get away with it because the teacher said "look at me," so she just needs to put her head up but she can still read. But she can't concentrate on two things at once.

Blair always sat with his teacher aide except during play times. She directed his activities which when he was in class were the same as the rest of the class' but perhaps modified because of his blindness.

Socially, Blair rarely responded to his classmates or their initiations. He also never initiated any social contact with his classmates. When Blair had free time, he mostly spent his time alone spinning. Occasionally, he would be spoken to by others but he did not respond. The following excerpt from my field notes depicted this:

> 8:45 a.m.: Everyone has gathered near me because a boy had discovered an earwig on the table. . . . Blair is singing to himself in his corner. An older child is still leading him around, dropping off his lunch box, etc. . . . There is lots of activity and lots of yelling about the earwig. . . . Blair's 'gold medal' necklace appears and an older child puts it on Blair's neck. . . . Blair is now spinning. . . . Tracy says "Don't spin please." Blair keeps on spinning. He is on tip toes . . . Blair jumps up and down. He spins and flicks his gold medal, makes noises. . . . A girl shows him a flower. She says, "Flower, Blair," as she tries to get him to take it. Blair pulls his hands away and spins away from her. She leaps about trying to encourage him to take it. About eight times she tries. He doesn't take it.

Tracy, his teacher aide, noted that his behaviour reminded her of a child with autism. His teacher and Tracy also stated that his behaviour prevented him from making friends and wasn't considered socially acceptable. Blair would echo what other children said to him and this was taken advantage of by some of the boys in the class:

> Three boys gather around the table. Slowly they lean over Blair as the game they begin to play gets more fun. A boy says," B." Blair says, "B." Boy: "L. R. S." Blair: "L. R. S." All the boys giggle and continue saying various letters. Then one says, "Poo time." Blair: "Poo time" This is repeated a number of times, and all the boys are laughing. . . . Blair is smiling as well.

Despite Blair's limited social skills the adults around Blair commented that the children in his class had increasingly been willing to interact with Blair. His teachers stated that his classmates from last year had at first been apprehensive about interacting with him but that this improved with time. Tracy also hoped that as Blair developed more language and communication skills that this would also help him socially. Raquel, Blair's teacher, had attempted to implement a buddy programme during play times so that Blair would not become isolated. However, she found that this did not work because it was a "chore" and the other children also became authoritarian:

> You don't want children to have to be put into a buddy system where they have to take him (to) such and such a place. Because he gets to be a chore. They're all boys. . . . Their highest priority is getting out at play time and getting out to the garden and finding bugs. . . . They're five year olds for goodness sake. . . . We did have older children doing it to start off with but it back-fired on us. We skilled them up, told them what to say, and how to say it. But when we monitored them, we found that they were being very dictatorial.

Raquel's strategy instead became to simply have someone guide him to the sand pit where he liked to play and where his classmates seemed to voluntarily interact with him. I observed this strategy in action during one lunch time and it did seem to decrease the amount of time that Blair spent alone but his peers seemed to be interacting in a maternal manner:

> The teacher asks "Who wants to lead Blair to the sandpit?" A girl . . . guides him down the steps and then physically picks him up over a small kerb. . . . There are three children in the sandpit with him. One boy takes Blair's toy horse away from him. Blair says, "Horse" and it comes back. A girl hugs Blair from behind and moves him around. He smiles. . . . An older girl comes over and talks to them. . . . They physically lift him out of sandpit together. . . . They bring him to the concrete area in front of the class. He starts spinning on tiptoes. They sing to him the 'a b c's' as he spins. . . . They lift him up over logs and bring him to the tire swing and leave him. . . . One comes back and lifts him up into the tire and swings him. . . . She then lifts him out of the tire, takes him along toward the sand pit but she gets distracted and leaves him spinning on the bark chips alone with his horse. . . . Later, she comes back with another girl and they sit in sandpit and watch Blair spin. She gets up and adjusts his clothes.

Xena seemed to have one good friend in her class, Sue, who sat next to her. However, the adults around Xena noted that Sue was also Xena's helper and teacher. They also thought that Xena had few other friendship relationships:

> Ann: It's not like you'll see a child come over from the opposite side of the class and say, "Would you like to do such and such?" . . . Like you'll get children in the class who are helpful to her but it doesn't necessarily mean that they are her friends. . . . I think Sue and Xena like each other, but I never hear Sue saying "would you like to stay over my house'. That kind of friendship, a deeper kind.

Xena noticed that sighted people helped her and she said that she wished that someone else would become blind so that she could help them instead of feeling that she was always being helped:

> Well I would rather somebody else get blind than me and then I could help them instead of them helping me. I'm not saying I don't want them to help. It's just I'm getting bored. I'm just getting bored of waiting . . . to see.

Sue was an Asian immigrant and Zwhaun, Xena's mother, believed that perhaps Sue's culture was more caring and more willing to do "good deeds." One of Xena's teacher aides, Liz, was worried that Xena's friends, like Xena, tended to be on the margins of the class:

> That's one thing I've noticed (is) that her friends are children that are on the outer of class as well. Perhaps because they are of a different race. But she's good friends also with an Indian girl in the class. . . . And so that's another different race perhaps where the other children don't want to be with them.

Liz also felt that Xena's social skills were not age appropriate and that, because she spent so much time watching television, she seemed to have difficulty understanding how to interact with others:

> And she lives in a bit of a fantasy some times. She watches a lot of

> television early in the morning. . . . I said to her the other day cause she's was just complaining about everything. . . . "Xena you're complaining an awful lot and I'm getting a bit tired of it." And I said, "Are you unhappy or something?" She said, "But (the girl on TV) complains and talks like this." So she's trying to be like she envisages other people to be. . . . With (this programme) anyway she thought it was real. . . . So she thinks that's how a real girl was.

Xena spent the majority of her time outside of school alone. She either watched television, read, or participated in recreational activities which did not involve her classmates or friends:

> Zwhaun: Piano is a one-to-one on her own. Ballet is a one-to-one. Horse riding . . . is sort of children with various disabilities but Xena is the only blind person. . . . Tai-chi, when we start that there will be the three of us doing it. . . . She does singing. That's one-on-one as well.

Zwhaun believed that her involvement in these out of school activities helped compensate for her limited friendships, and that her friendships were limited partly because of other parent's lack of knowledge about blindness:

> And see she does a lot of things outside school hours but I've done that mainly for social contact because she doesn't very seldom get asked to someone's place. . . . I think a lot of it is fear of the unknown or what to do for her. You know there's not enough education out there either for other parents whose children are okay.

Joanne, Blair's mother, said that Blair had an active social life because of his out of school activities. He participated in horse riding and swimming lessons and through these activities knew more people in the community than Joanne said she knew. Joanne and her husband also lived in the same town as a number of their family members and spent a significant amount of time with them:

> There's something like seventeen nieces and nephews and they don't think of Blair as any different. In fact Blair's (had) one of them in his class at school. . . . She's seven and she thinks it's quite neat to have Blair at school. She is on the same bus as Blair so she takes him on the bus and sits with him and puts him off.

However, Blair did not have any friends whom he invited home. Joanne, like Tracy, thought that this was partly due to his limited language abilities and his interest in toys which were "babyish."

Zwhaun, Xena's mother, stated that Xena was fully aware of her limited social life, and Xena proclaimed in her interview with me that if she could not have friends visit, like her sibling did, then she would like to have a horse:

> When Lindsay's friend comes over I don't really have anyone my age to play with and I feel left out. You know because like they're not my age, they're younger than me. . . . Like if I had a horse it would be so great because when they play together I could just you know go around with the horse. Give it food. Canter with it, whatever. I know exactly where I could keep it. . . . And Lindsay would not be able to play with my horse because it's my horse.

Blair's mother, Joanne also believed that one of the reasons that Blair had few friends at school was because he was reluctant to participate in activities when there was a lot of noise around him:

> I think it's the noise factor too. When there's so much noise Blair's not that keen to participate. It's too much going on for Blair in the class. And sometimes that's a lot for Blair to take in. Because the noise. You know yourself sometimes, you think "oh goodness please be quiet " and I mean to have no sight and to sit there and listen to that. It must be overwhelming.

Zwhaun, Xena's mother, also said that Xena was fearful of unexpected loud noises and described a frightening incident in the past which she had on the playground:

> She hates loud noises. Yeah she was at school and her and (another blind child) were on the playground and the tractor that mows the lawn was coming and they thought they were going to be hit by the tractor and just blew her straight out of the water. It's been months well actually years since that happened but she still remembers. They were screaming and they said it took a while for someone to come but it probably seemed like ages to them.

Xena had also been subject to sexual abuse by the boys at her school. Xena's fear of noise and her blindness was used by a boy who assaulted her. Zwhaun believed, however, that Xena blamed herself for the assault because she could not be visually warned about it and thus could not prevent the attack:

> A boy in school used to yell in her ear and he would touch her in the wrong place type thing and she found that very difficult. .. What she was more upset about wasn't the fact about what he did. It was the fact that she didn't have a chance to say no. You know how you are always saying "no" in these keep safe programmes. You know, say "no." Well she said "Mum I didn't get a chance. I didn't know it was coming." And so she found it really difficult. . . . So it was her fault.

Zwhaun also explained that Xena was also told by a boy that she was ugly because she was blind and that Xena had believed this comment:

> One of the boys she liked told her she was ugly because she can't see. I don't blame the kid. I think it's just kids in general but she takes it to heart.

Zwhaun said that these abusive situations contributed to Xena not accepting her blindness.

The discussion group for this study thought that Xena's educational experiences were dominated by her emotional struggles to be part of and the same as the rest of her class. Xena, herself, consistently indicated that she would rather be sighted. She knew a blind peer who had gained some sight and then lost it. She also had heard that Stevie Wonder's sight was going to be restored. She thought that it was her turn to see:

> I think that Kip is very very sad because he could see a little bit and now he got sick in his eyes. So I don't think he's got the sight and I don't think it will ever come back. And like it would be nice if that could happen to me but it hasn't yet. . . . I know everyone's doing their best for me but it's getting boring waiting. Because there's trees, very beautiful trees. There's our dog. I haven't seen him. I can feel him but I would rather see him to get the picture of him. You know how he's black.

In my four days of observation in Xena's classroom, there were a number of times when Xena's classmates explored blindness and braille but it seemed to be in a joking or teasing manner. For example, some boys pretended to read and write in braille:

> Cory and another boy come over to work with Xena and Sue. The girls ignore them and they go back to playing. They rip the pages in their book and giggle. "Hey Xena is that an 'I'? Cory takes her hand and moves it around his work book. Xena says "Go away I'm trying to work." Cory: "Is this an 'O'?" He puts her hand on the page again. He has been poking holes in the page with a pen. Cory: "This says all." And he is correct. It does say all in braille. . . . The boys now bang on the page and make grunting noises as they do it.

On the second day when the class went to the library I noticed some girls found a book about how eyes work which they noted was not about Xena. Later, the entire class were read a story about a boy's guilt and a blind fox:

> 10:15 a. m.: The story which the teacher just read was about a fox and a lemon tree. . . . Lemons which fell from a nearby tree created the body of a fox whom a boy found in a closet. The boy would get lemons for the fox and he then came to life bit by bit. The last thing to get were two lemons for his eyes. The boy felt guilty because the lemons had been mulched up by his father and . . . the fox would be blind. He had failed the fox. Eventually, two new lemons formed on a new lemon tree. . . . The story is a bit over the top about blindness especially the boy's guilt and sense of failure. Blind is definitely not a thing to be in this story.

Professionals include and exclude blind children

Xena and Blair had both inclusive and exclusive experiences in their mainstream school settings. Their principals and classroom teachers were very important contributors to these experiences. Blair's principal, Chip welcomed Blair to his local primary school and Joanne, Blair's mother, stated that she always felt included in the decisions which the principal was making:

> I think I have an equal input. . . . When he first started school they went over his weekly planner. So I could say, "Yes. I agreed with it" and "no I

> didn't." They include you a lot. And if I want to know something I can ring the school at any time. Or I've gone in and (the principal) is really pleased to see you.

Chip had over forty years experience as a teacher and principal and had witnessed a number of changes in the education sector. His experience allowed him to network for the students in his school.

> You'd have to be prepared to go out there and push all the time. Persuade. I've a good network of contacts with people and I've a lot of respect for the people who work in the Ministry and in other places. So I know how to pull the wires as well as anybody and also you have to have the time to do this

However, with recent educational system changes Chip felt that it did take him quite a while to understand what networks he should be using when advocating for Blair. He also said that his rural school was disadvantaged because in the past there was a local person who could make direct funding decisions and this had now changed:

Xena's principal, Thornton, felt that under the present system he was in more control and not dependent upon the decisions of individual education inspectors:

> It all evolved sort of piece meal because each visual resource centre developed under the umbrella of the district senior inspector for their area. It wasn't co-ordinated over the whole country. . . . But having worked under both of the systems I feel the Department was very much in control and now the school is very much in control. It's better today than it was before because where it was before if the people in the department didn't want to support you, . . . they just didn't write the letters.

Thornton said that Xena was welcomed at school and taught the other children important lessons. He believed that she received a better education there than at Homai:

> She's probably done tremendously well here. Placed in some institutional situation I doubt that she would have made the sort progress that she's made here. But it has also been good for the other students because I mean

> they just get used to having someone like her around here and the considerations that they have to make are good lessons to be learned for them and it means that blind people actually aren't oddities. They do have an understanding of them and what their needs are and so that that's good lessons to be learnt for everyone.

Zwhaun, Xena's mother, said that the principal of Xena's future high school was one of the reasons she would choose that school over another. The high school principal was involved with the local chapter of Parents of the Vision Impaired (NZ) and Xena said that "she knows what we're talking about."

The visual resource centre at Xena's school was in a sense a separate facility. It had it's own tea room, offices, photocopier, secretary, and teachers. Catherine, Xena's visual resource teacher, explained that in the past the centre was used by Xena and her friends and that there was a danger that it could also become a separate place for Xena and other children with vision impairments:

> We've bought games, scramble, braille games and we let them use this place at lunch time with her friends. As 'littlies', they wanted to come over every lunch time. . . . They would have been every lunch time if they had their way and it was hard on me because I wanted them here too because I knew they were safe. But we had to work in the social aspects with the other children and with five year olds it's a big thing out there in the playground. So there was a lot of supervision of their play and standing back and encouraging and working with other children.

Catherine saw herself as a specialist teacher and an educational co-ordinator:

> I see my role with Xena is to provide her specialist needs, her braille needs, her Nemeth needs, and within a team situation assess her needs for equipment. . . . To co-ordinate the other specialists, like the O&M instructor. There's a child and family social worker. . . . Yes so the two jobs are the specific one-to-one teaching because of her specialised needs and our specialised training. . . . And then there is the co-ordination of her IEP which all these specialists are brought together to discuss where we're at, bring their reports, bring their data, their assessments together three times, four times, a year, generally to meet with her family

Blair's itinerant vision teacher, Jane, like Catherine, thought her role was to co-ordinate educational resources and to teach with the teacher aide:

> Well my job there is to support the teacher in whatever he or she requires me to do and it's usually working hands on with the teacher aide with Blair. Often the teacher aide is doing it and I'll be there chipping in or I do it and release the teacher aide to do her braille because there's been a couple of teacher aides in at the moment and they've had to go through the braille process. They just get paid hourly. So they really need support time in school to do their braille.

Most of the professionals in this study thought that the instruction and support which they received from the vision teachers were helpful and facilitated the inclusion of blind students within their classrooms. Xena's classroom teacher and her teacher aides, Liz and Ann, appreciated the immediate support which the on-site visual resource centre gave to them.

> Liz: I think its probably easier with the visual resource centre here because if you have a problem we can just go over there straight away. Like with me I just started with her in the mornings this year. I had been doing afternoons and so I hadn't been involved in her language programme or her maths programme . . . and especially with maths I didn't know the nemeth code. There's support for me as well. . . . If I need them they're there and they're quite happy to help with training. So that's good.

While I observed Xena's class, Catherine visited the class once. Xena was taken from the class twice; once for braille instruction and once to meet her RNZFB counsellor. However, Xena dropped into the visual resource centre every morning to pick up her white cane, and every afternoon to drop it off. She also visited a few times during lunch time. She thus had daily contact with the centre, and had the opportunity to talk to the centre's staff about her educational activities at any of these times.

Raquel, Blair's teacher, who did not have on-site specialist support felt she needed more support and more specific directions from Blair's vision teacher and other professionals. She thought that the professionals in her area were inexperienced and she was critical of the education planning process which did not take this inexperience into account:

> I don't get on a hobby horse very often but that does frustrate me. The fact that people know these sorts of children are coming to school. That they are something totally different. That the classroom teacher has absolutely no training in. . . . They know that they're going into a situation where the so called 'expert' who's going to be controlling the situation has no experience whatsoever. And yet the child arrives and then everyone fluffs about and says "Oh we're learning as we're going." And I don't think that's good enough.

Tracy, Blair's teacher aide, was also worried that Blair's educational programme was not planned well enough and wished that Homai would intervene:

> I just feel that it would be really good if say Homai would teach braille or whatever. Someone would ring up and say "okay, let's do this programme this week." Do you know what I mean? Someone who's done it before. Someone who knows what they're doing. . . . It's just willy nilly. . . . He's getting very much taught like a sighted person. . . . It can't be just giving him a piece of paper and saying "Draw that line." . . . So what's the next stage? How do you get him to do it himself? Is this normal for a blind child? Is that how blind children learn?

Raquel searched for information about blind children. Her principal was supportive but was initially frustrated in his efforts to help because there was no support for such training:

> Raquel needed the reassurance of what it was like to have a blind child in the class and what are the things you have to do. And she got a bit freaked when Blair started . . . She said, "I've just got to go and talk to somebody who's got a blind child in their class and watch them and see what happens and what they do and just how things function." And I said, "Fine." . . . The (local) Ministry got in touch with Wellington and Wellington came back and the message was "Well there is funding for training for a teacher who is going to work in a class for the blind . . . but there is no provision for someone who's just getting a blind child admitted to their class." . . . So I thought 'Oh well the Foundation for the Blind then. That's what they're there for.' . . . And they were rock hard about it. . . . Their funding wasn't for children in the education system. . . . Our Board just paid the money and did it.

In the end, Raquel spent time at a distant visual resource centre and said that "it made all the difference." She gradually accepted that Blair was just another child and began to feel more comfortable with him:

> When I first got Blair I struggled with this and that and I got really hung up about things and what not. And in the end I just sort of thought. 'Right. He's just a kid. So okay I just treat him like the rest of the kids.' I smile at him and I give him a wink and all the sort of things that I do to the other kids. Even though he can't see. And I tease him and what not . . . once I realise that they've got a bit of sense of humour . And I use the words like "look" and "see" and things like that. I'm not sort of pussy footing around the issue.

The other teachers, though, at school had difficulty being around her and Blair:

> What happened when he first came . . . I felt as though I had Aids. I felt as though I was a leper. I did. Because people would look at me with a look of concern and then back right off. The other teachers. And I was talking to (the Education College's lecturer) about that and he said that's quite a common response. It's a fear on their part of what they're going to do when they get this child. I had a lot of help my husband

In my observations at Blair's school, I noted that another teacher had difficulty understanding Blair's needs. She did not allow him to move close to the sound of a nature video which was mostly visual and he then became disruptive:

> The video is about plants. . . . Blair is sitting in the middle of the room . He gets up and starts heading towards the sound of the television. The teacher tells him to sit down. He doesn't. . . . The children all watch him. . . . Blair makes quacking sounds and does another animal noise. . . . The video is all visual about plants opening up and sending out seeds. Blair reacts to sound effects only. He is now up and feeling around the room making a 'ch ch ch' sound . The teacher puts him back at his table. He says "The birds, the birds." Blair is still making noises and now starts spinning in the middle of the room. The teacher takes him away from the middle of room and brings him to the back. Tracy comes in with his chips. Blair is banging on the table. A child says "Blair don't climb on it." Blair stands up and jumps around.

It was also interesting to note that Raquel, despite her willingness to include Blair, had him spend about half of his five hours of class time each day separated from his class in another room with his teacher aide or specialists. This separation usually occurred for a small part of the morning and most of the afternoon. Raquel initiated Blair's morning lessons and this participation seemed to be only because he was able to participate without accommodation:

> I feel that's what the rest of the class are doing and I couldn't see any reason why he couldn't fit into that pattern. Right, so when we start off with the roll, he can answer the question at the roll. . . . He used to practice what he was going to say for his morning talk before school and then come in and do it for Buzz Group. And then back to the news board and helping with the letters. He's always been good with letter identification. Very quick on that. Being sort of very oral . . . And then the routine of story writing. Him telling me what he's going to write just like the other children. . . . Tracy helps him refine it, and then he tells me and then away he goes and does it.

Joanne, Blair's mother, thought that Blair was included as much as possible. She felt that he needed time out because of the noise around him, and because he worked so hard. She also did not think the class withdrawal stigmatised him:

> They accommodated him really well. They've been really good, the school. In fact, they're marvellous. . . . He's been included in news time, and story time, and mat time, in their swimming and their sports time. Sometimes you think it must be a hassle when you've got to wait for Blair to run around and around the track but the kids never worry they just help him along and the teacher she's got a lot of patience. She'll sit and wait for Blair to give the answer. . . . Blair he's got to take a lot in a day and I think his wee brain must just go "blerrrr!" . . . So yeah, he's taken out to have time out . . . I don't (think it stigmatises) because . . . he gets sometimes to have a buddy (in) those kind of things with him.

His teacher aide, however, was concerned about the amount of time which was spent outside of the class room. She felt that both she and Blair needed more support and that she was left on her own too much. She felt that she had most of the responsibility for his educational programme:

> We can't keep (him) taking out and withdrawing. . . . I do feel that he needs more input. . . . I think last term they were doing a study on emotions and feelings and there was some things he could participate in but you see a lot was drawing. . . . It doesn't interest him. So we have do

> it a different way. . . . Basically I have done the majority of his programme. Yeah I basically say, "Does this sound all right?" and then we have this meeting and we discuss it with Jane and Raquel. Or Raquel will come back and say, "Aw we'll try this." So I adapt something to try it. . . . So she comes in and gives me a little bit of input. (It) is what the teacher is supposed to do. But the likes of moving on and assessments and things like that, I do that myself. . . . I mean Raquel is brilliant . . . and so's Jane. They are really really good. It's just I think that a lot of it is that they just leave me to my own devices and sometimes I think, "Oh god."

Raquel stated that her own attempts to plan ahead and secure accessible curriculum resources were ineffective and she was surprised to find that Homai did not have all of the resources which she was seeking:

> If a child does something well or tries their best, we reinforce with positive reinforcement, maybe verbally or it might be . . . stickers. I think we'd got a visit from some people from Homai and I said "Okay where's your stickers, where's your tactile stickers." (They said), "We really haven't got any." . . . And it was just so frustrating. . . . I wanted him to be treated the same as the other children but I wanted him to realise what the sticker was. . . . Because it's a big important part of their life is to (say), "I've been good at school and here's the proof." Here's a sticker on my hand or a stamp.

Blair's parents, as mentioned previously, were considering sending Blair to Homai or to a school with a visual resource centre at the time of this study for specialist instruction. His teachers and principal held various beliefs about this. His principal thought that his school could best meet Blair's needs without disrupting the family:

> I would judge that probably with an appropriate teacher aid and a visual teacher . . . that for the next couple of years we might be able to meet Blair's needs. . . . If you say he needs intensive instruction in orientation on mobility. Then for how long and can that be delivered here or can it not? And you'd have to say it would have to be a pretty special programme if it's worth disrupting a family for six months to go and live in Auckland to deliver this. . . . And it's probably nothing to do with Blair so much as where the skilled person is.

However, Tracy felt that Blair's needs may be better met at Homai or a school with a visual resource centre where there were resources, specialists, and concrete learning experiences. Raquel had no particular feelings about his possible attendance away from his local school but said that his family and a local teacher should accompany Blair if he went away so that there could be follow up when he returned.

The teachers at Xena's school felt that they had all the resources and support which they needed at the school's visual resource centre. Some of Xena's previous teachers and teacher aides in the past had also met with Xena's vision teacher every week during their lunch to discuss issues about Xena's educational plan. Xena's principal thought that Xena's inclusion was demanding on classroom teachers and on the other children in the class:

> Until just recently there used to be regularly weekly planning sessions for Xena where the teachers and the teacher aides and the visual resource teachers all came together for an hour at lunch time and worked out the programme for the next week. I mean think of all that professional time going into one child's programme. Okay it was probably necessary but you can't provide that for all the other children and while that attention is going on that child it's not going to the other children. So it is a big ask in terms of the demands that it actually places on the classroom teacher because they have got to give that time. There's the ongoing liaison on a daily basis with the parents, the visual resource teachers, the teacher aide and it does put tremendous responsibility on the classroom teacher.

Zwhaun had some difficulty with teacher aides but felt that they were integral to Xena's education:

> I found that you are lucky if you get a good teacher aide . . . I think nothing's more detrimental than (an unsuitable aide). Like we've had one run in with a teacher aide and I actually ended up going to take Xena and put her in a different school until they moved the teacher aide. You don't call my child stupid. . . . And that's what made me start really looking at the teacher aide. Do they have qualifications? But I know that sometimes qualifications don't mean anything. It's the rapport they have with the kid.

Zwhaun also believed that Xena would be included more at school if Xena had teachers who were experienced working with children with disabilities and could directly adapt the curriculum without a teacher aide. She also thought that teacher aides needed more training. Xena's and Blair's teacher aides had no qualifications in education or teaching. They received their training through experience. Blair's teacher aide had eight years experience as a teacher aide, and Xena's two teacher aides had three years and one year of work experience. Only one of the teacher aides, Ann was considering an educational career of teaching. It was also interesting to note that Ann's mother was also Xena's classroom teacher.

Xena's teacher aides spent most of their time helping the classroom teacher with the roll, helping her check the students' work, monitoring the students if the teacher was out of the room, and working with other students. Occasionally they would work with Xena by reminding her about directions which the teacher had given or by helping her organise her braille materials for an activity. On average, they spent one hour a day doing one to one work with Xena in maths or in braille. Both teacher aides thought their role was to help Xena access the curriculum but to support the teachers as well:

> Ann: Basically helping Xena with her work. But also as a teacher aide, if one teacher asks me to do something to help with the whole class, I do that as well. . . . Like you help with other children if they ask you to help proof reading or something like that. I heard it's best not to (sit next to her) all the time so that she can develop her friendships . . . and have her own private time. Because I'd hate to be in the way. . . . But I guess my job is to just check up that she has listened to the instructions. She usually has. . . . And to check up that she's got the resources to do (activities).

Their work was valued by Xena's classroom teacher and visual resource teacher. Sam, Xena's classroom teacher, believed teacher aides were needed because lessons could then become spontaneous:

> Because there are lots of things that come up out of the blue. . . . Lessons can divert or explore an unexpected avenue and that's when you need that sort of support. And some times at maths the lesson can go in a different direction because of perhaps a need that has arisen. So you haven't got all that Brailled for her. So you need somebody there to braille examples. .

In addition, Sam felt that there was an opportunity for teacher aides to be innovative whereas classroom teachers had little time for innovation:

> They can be the innovators. Because of the (class) numbers we haven't got time to sit down and think 'Now what can we possibly do. Da de da'. Usually the teacher aide who is working one to one thinks, for example, when they are doing collage 'We could do this. We could use this. We could do that.'

Sam has enjoyed having Xena in her class and accepted her without reservations or anxiety because Xena had full time support. She also had experience working with children with a vision impairment in her classroom in the past. Sam also explained that her mother was totally blind as well and was quite independent:

> My mother was blind. She lost her sight with hardening of the arteries when she was about 50. So she was blind before I went to high school. . . . Oh heavens no, (I have no prejudices) because, "Mum where's my singlet?" and she would go away and find your singlet. To think back I was a terrible girl. No I was. "It's in here dear." Yeah. Mum would find it.

Sam and her other teachers described Xena's educational programme as being the same as the other children in her class. However, there did seem to be some difficulty in providing accessible lessons to Xena.

During my time in Xena's classroom, I mostly observed that Xena did not have braille for her lessons, but that her teacher aides or Sue read her directions from printed work sheets:

> TA tells Xena to get ready for maths. . . . They all have a book called *School Mathematics 4*, except Xena. . . . Sam: "Round the clock." All the children say together "1 x 9=9, 0 x 9=0, 2 x 9=18, etc. Xena brailles this as they go. . . . Sam then reads out some problems for them to do. . . . Xena says "She's going too fast." TA says "I'll tell you. You keep going." TA & Xena try to keep up. . . . TA writes the print over Xena's braille, and checks the answers. Xena is still working on her problems when the other children have finished. She hasn't been able to catch up with them. Then it's time for the problems. Sam gives out tests for people. She gives a print

> one to the TA for Xena. . . . One of the problems is 532 X 463. The sighted children have 'cheat sheets' on which they can see what 3 X 2 equals, etc. Xena does not.

Xena said that she felt left out when there were visual assignments which she could not do in class, and thought that the teachers should change these to assignments which she could do:

> We had to look at something or and label them or something. . . . I really I felt a bit left out when they did that . . . Yeah because I mean like Sam should have just thought and said "Right class we can't do this because of Xena."

The classroom teachers thought that one of the biggest barriers to Xena's education was simply the class size. One of the two teachers for Xena's combined class of seventy one children would take separate smaller groups of children who had difficulties in certain subject areas. This left the other teacher with up to fifty six children for their lessons. Another barrier which was mentioned was the behaviour challenges of some of the boys in the class. The teachers said they were more concerned about what they could do about the boys with behaviour difficulties than they were about Xena's education which they felt was progressing. In my observation notes, I noted that after one particular day when there was a fight between two boys the teachers felt particularly stressed:

> This has been a noisy day with lots of male violence. The teachers stay behind and have a big discussion about it. They say that they are stressed out about it all. They have tried mediation programme, rewards, meetings with the parents, etc. They feel it is the poverty in the area, the number of children in the class, and the culture of the parents as well who perpetuate the violence. They say they feel worn out and spend most of their time controlling and managing the numbers. They also do not feel supported by their principal as he allowed one boy to watch the rugby after he was violent. They think that the boy should have been sent home. They feel that since the principal is male he does not understand the problems. They feel that he may think that they are hysterical women and over react to boys 'just having fun' or 'just being boys.'

The fight, itself, went unnoticed by Xena and it did not seem to directly affect her as much as it did the rest of the class and her teachers:

> (8:55) The boys are running around the room as I write these notes. No teachers have arrived yet. (9 a. m.) Xena is here reading braille at her desk. Sue is there as well. TA arrives and says the teachers are all in a meeting. Essie is reprimanded for swearing by the TA. I continue writing my notes. The TA goes over to Xena. The boys continue to run around the room screaming. Essie goes over to the white board. Essie and Sam tussle in front of the white board. Essie pushes Sam . Sam leaves. Essie follows pushes him again. He then grabs Sam by the neck and flips him in the air. Sam lands with a bang on his head and I watch as his neck is wrenched as he hits the floor. There is lots of yelling and noise. The TA spots the fight. She checks Sam and tells Essie to sit down. The teacher arrives. She sits everyone down and yells for quiet. Xena is still reading her braille.

Xena was considered a good student and Ann, her teacher aide, thought that she was not given enough rewards (early birds) for her good behaviour because the teachers instead praised the "naughty" children who demonstrated good behaviour: Xena said that she liked her teachers, and in my field notes, Sam did praise Xena for being a good student and Xena responded to this praise:

> Sam comes by and says "I want to see you put your braille away." Xena does this. Sam says, "Looking good." (2:25 p.m.) Sam rings a bell and asks to hear the retells of a story from the following children.. She says a number of names including Xena's. . . . Xena reads her retell: "Maui had four big brothers. Maui had magic powers. One day the brothers wanted to go fishing in their canew dis they did not know know that Maui was on the bottom of the canew. The brothers laughed because Maui wasn't there. Suddenly Maui sprang up. A lot of things happened after that. Finally Maui fished up New Zealand." Sam says, "Good girl. Some of you only wrote two lines. I need you to write more."

Part Three: Places to Learn are Hard to Find

Homai Vision Education Centre (Homai) offered braille, Orientation & Mobility, physical education and tactile development instruction to Davania. However, Davania did not seem to be receiving an age appropriate social education as she and her class spent a significant amount of class time saying and singing younger children's rhymes. On the other hand, Blair's instruction in tactile development, braille and O&M was limited because of budget restrictions on the itinerant vision teacher's travel and confusion about who should provide these services. Blair's school seemed to struggle in their attempts to find ways to provide him with an appropriate education. Xena's educational support services were on-site in her school's Visual Resource Centre, but there still seemed to be difficulties for Xena in maths and Orientation and Mobility. Also, there seemed to be a limited number of braille books which were readily available for her to read. For all of the participants in this chapter, like the participants in previous chapters, music played seemed to be an important part of their education and recreational activities.

Braille is literacy for blind children

At Homai, Davania spent approximately two hours of her four hours in class reading and learning braille with her classroom teacher and one or two other students. She also would spend her free time each morning from 8:30 to 9 a.m. before class exploring and reading braille for enjoyment:

> 8:40 a.m.: Davania arrives. . . . She searches through the braille books near by and picks one called *White Balloons.* She whispers to herself as she reads it. . . . She also squeezes her eyes together in concentration when she comes to difficult words. . . . She goes back a couple of pages and checks something. She is coughing and seems to have a cold. . . . (8:45 a.m.) Another child arrives and puts his pack away. Davania finishes her book, gets up and goes across the room. . . . She explores the baskets on the shelves. She sniffs a big sniff, adjusts her pants, scratches her leg, and moves to the piano. She explores what's on top of it. She then moves quickly down to the bottom of the bookshelf where there are more braille books in a basket. She flips through them and reads the titles of every book. There are about 15 books in this basket. She puts the basket back on the shelf when she has finished reading the titles.

Lee, Davania's classroom teacher, said that once Davania's tantrum behaviour as a young student had ceased that she quickly responded to learning braille.

Lee described Davania's present braille reading abilities as continuing to improve:

> We're continuing to build up her braille knowledge. She still has some braille to learn. . . . She's got quite a few contractions, the rules and things but we're just gradually introducing them so that she's really secure before something new comes up. And (introducing) what arises, I mean yesterday . . . we were doing the word 'rabbit', so double 'b' came up, so we introduced double 'b'. And she got it. Yes.

Lee believed that Davania's braille reading skills were delayed by her literal and linear language skills:

> You'd do the same activity for three weeks before she would actually do it. You had to talk her through every step. Brailling a story. She knew all the braille. She'd tell you the sentence but she'd have to say, "Braille 'I'. "What are you going to braille next?" "Went." "All right do 'went'." "Right what's next?" And we went through that for weeks and weeks and weeks. Probably months. Just every word. And before that it was every letter of the word.

Lee pointed out a story to me that Davania had written which was literal, but it also did show some imagination:

> She points out a story on the wall. It says "I went to the park. We had morning tea in the rain. We sat under the tree. We sit in roots. We sit in the root of the tree and on the seat and under the tree. I had raisins in the rain. We go back to school early.

Similarly to Blair's classroom teacher, Lee had a news time which was mixed with a song at the beginning of the day to help her students develop their language skills. However, Davania and half of her classmates were 6 years older than Blair:

> Lee starts playing on the piano "Good morning. Good morning. Good morning. A very good morning to you . . . Wing is sitting in room five." Wing sings back: "Hello. Hello. " Lee: " Steve is sitting in room 5. Will he let us hear him say hello?" Steve: "Hello. Hello." All the children sing at the right time and the piano waits for them to say hello. If it takes them a bit longer, everyone patiently waits until they say "Hello, hello." Sammy says "I went to a party last night. My uncle was coming to the hospital." Lee corrects him, "Coming from the hospital." Sammy: "Coming from the hospital. I played in a band last night. I played piano." . . . Lee: "It sounds like lots of singing and dancing. Excellent news. And good morning to

> Davania in her flash red shirt." Lee sings, "Davania is sitting in room five Hello hello hello hello hello." Davania sings along. Lee: "Good. Any news today?" Davania: "No." Teacher aide: "Where did you get your shirt?" Davania: "From mum."

Lee also had a lesson when she talked to her older students about what they had done the day before and asked them later to write a story about it. Similarly in Xena's class the teacher had her students, who were a similar age to Lee's older students, talk about and then write topical stories. Unlike the other classroom teachers Lee used rhythm from the same rhymes each day to encourage her students to interact and speak:

> Davania says, "I like sausages. I like stew. I like me and I like you. Lee: "Davania who will you pass the poem to?" Davania: "Sammy." Sammy: "There's only one me. There's more than one bird. But there's only one sun, one moon, one valley and one me." Lee : "Who will you pass it to?" Sammy: "The person with the red jersey." Lee : "Oh me." . . . Now it is Virginia's turn. Virginia: "I like pop corn . Yum, yum, yum. Virginia likes popcorn in her tum." Lee asks, "What do you like Davania?" Davania: "I like cheezels." Lee and class: "Davania likes cheezels. Yum yum yum. Davania likes cheezels in her tum."

Blair at his local school would not initiate conversations but would answer questions and repeat words which were spoken to him. There were also times that he spoke without necessarily understanding the meanings of his words:

> Blair is working out his story. Blair says, "Like a horsy. Bandage is going around at the Olympics." Raquel says, "That doesn't make sense Blair." Teacher aide begins to work on the story with Blair. (9:40 a.m.) Blair says, "The bandage is going round the tree at the farm." Tracy asks, "Why does he have a bandage?" Blair does not answer. He repeats the word "bandage." Raquel advises Tracy to go and get a bandage and says that he may change his story once he feels the bandage. Tracy gets a big bandage and wraps it around Blair's arm. Tracy: "Why is the bandage going round the trees." Blair is not able to answer why. Tracy asks "Why do you wear a bandage? When your arm is sore or it hurts." She explains the purpose of a bandage a number of times. (10:00 a.m.) Blair finally says "Trees are sore." Tracy: "Right ok. Let's wind the paper in the brailler."

Sometimes his teacher aide was actually writing some of Blair's stories for him:

> Tracy asks Blair to sit and say a story. Blair says, "The workmen." He talks to himself about the big black bear and says various words. Blair then says, "The workmen are going to mobility to play with gold and silver." Tracy asks, "What are they doing? That sounds funny, gold and silver. How about jumping or walking?" Blair: "Walking." Tracy: "Good story." Blair: "Like a dinosaur." Raquel: "Stand up and tell us your story Blair." Blair stands up and says "The workmen are going to mobility and walking." Tracy cues him by whispering to him from behind. Raquel asks what is mobility. Tracy answers, and Raquel says "No. Blair, what is mobility?" He says, "Skipping."

At other times, Tracy successfully taught Blair the meaning of words through concrete exploration:

> Tracy: "What are you going to draw a picture of Blair?" Blair: "Workman." Tracy: "Sit on your chair properly." Tracy actually draws the picture with a Sewell tactile pen. Blair feels it as she does this. Tracy: "Where is his eye Blair?" Blair: "On his feet." Tracy: "On his feet! Is your eye on your feet? Where are your eyes, Blair?" Blair touches his eyes. Tracy: "Are they on your feet?" Blair touches his eyes again. Tracy: "Where are they?" Blair: "On feet." Tracy points out Blair's feet. Tracy: "Are your eyes here? No. They're not on your feet they are on your.." Blair does not answer. Tracy feels and touches Blair's face. Blair says "On my face." Tracy: "Yes, your eyes are on your face, not your feet."

Raquel, Blair's classroom teacher, was concerned that Tracey was untrained and yet had an enormous amount of responsibility for Blair's learning, and, more specifically, his literacy instruction:

> What happens is that people think that "right, this child's got special needs. Let's get teacher aides." The teacher aide is untrained. The teacher aide does not know the milestones in educational development. What that child should have is a trained teacher who has taught at this level, who knows the milestones, the readiness for reading, for maths, for story writing, for language. We are palming this child with specific needs off on to an unskilled person. She's doing very well. . . . I don't think it's good enough. I think that they are entitled to trained teacher's time.

The discussion group for this study stated that the instruction which Blair received in braille seemed to be of an inadequate quantity and quality. They felt that his experience was indicative of the rural educational experience of blind children and the limited understanding which the Ministry of Education had about the educational needs of blind children. Jane, Blair's vision teacher, visited twice a week to advise Raquel and Jane. Raquel felt that these visits were not enough and even offered to learn braille so that she could be a specialist teacher within the school for his reading and writing as he went from class to class:

> I did offer to learn braille and be the teacher that was in charge of his reading and writing and that he would come back to me. Like a specialist teacher. But no, (the Homai Braille Advisor) went on and on about Jane being a specialist there and what not. And at that stage they were busy talking about cutting back her visits. . . . And I thought, 'Well two days a week is not very much for somebody who's a specialist in his reading and writing and that's the priority in junior school.' But oh well, you can't solve all the problems of the world.

Jane also felt that her visits were inadequate to meet Blair's literacy needs, but she was limited by her budget and her work load:

> I should be visiting three times a week but I've only been visiting twice a week because of funding difficulties. . . . I'm not my own boss of course. I am run by my school's Board of Trustees.. . . . My employers have pointed out it's not just the financial aspect. . . . I just don't have the time. And I don't actually. . . . I work between sixty and eighty (hours) a week. . . . There's a lot of report writing and accessing of equipment . . . and IEPs and meetings

Jane said her role was to support Blair's class programme and to teach him the mechanics of braille with his teacher aide. She also believed that it was her role to co-ordinate the braille resources:

> (Teaching braille) has been a joint thing between the teacher aides and me. . . . The teacher would say what she wanted the child to do in reading and the teacher aide and I would enact that. And the city's volunteer Braille Group and also Blair's town volunteer tactiling group has been just superb in making the tactile braille books. So I go to Blair's teacher for the reading books that are required to be done . . . and take them to the (city's) volunteer Braille Group or the (local) tactile group and the books will be done.

Raquel perceived that Jane did not have a thorough understanding of the reading curriculum. Raquel said she had "taken over as far as the direction of the reading (was) concerned and the story writing." Raquel had also initiated a flash card reading system for Blair so that she could be certain that he was actually reading and not memorising words.

Tracy, like Jane, also spent a significant amount of time organising texts which were accessible. She believed that this work prevented her from feeling that she was the teacher aide:

> I feel I am assigned to Blair. For sure. Definitely. . . . I'm answerable to the teacher but I'm not really assigned to the teacher. . . . Because there's his teaching or his bits and pieces that (I) do with him but it's also the resources that need to be done as well. Books and getting the maths things organised and the games. . . . Because there's nothing. We had nothing to start off with so we had to make them all up . . . from scratch really. So Probably if I didn't have to do that I probably would be doing a few a things for her. . . . But a lot of it is revolved around Blair, around braille, and getting his books done.

All of the participants in this study felt that teacher aides had to learn braille in order to perform their job duties but this same requirement was not given to the classroom teacher because it was thought that the teacher aide would be with the blind child from year to year. Blair's mother explained also that the teacher aide works individually with the child:

> I think as long as his teacher aide has learnt braille then (it's) quite adequate in having sufficient braille being taught to him. Because the teacher aide is the one who works with him constantly. Raquel's only there to the do the side of knowing what's what next to do for the class and what Blair should be doing next. Whereas Tracy's the hands on person and the one who's doing his reading and his spelling and his story writing and all that kind of stuff with him.

All of Blair's teachers were concerned about the difficulty in obtaining braille books for Blair. Like Jane, Joanne worried that Blair needed to depend on volunteers to obtain his educational texts, and Raquel noted that books were not readily available which would help her include Blair:

> (Homai's transcription services) had a tremendous list of tactile books . . . and I put down a list of about thirty and sent away and of course I only got a handful back, didn't I? Because they're all out in the other schools. And a lot of the ones I'd asked for were the ones that we had in the classroom already that the kids knew really well that we would read co-operatively . . . There's another good idea I couldn't enact.

In my observations, Blair had some exposure to braille every morning in the class discussions. His classmates were similarly exposed to print material. However, during these times Blair's difference was emphasised through the close proximity of his teacher aide, his seating place, and his reading behaviour:

> Raquel: "OK everyone back to mat." Tracy steps in to adjust Blair clothes and leads him to a side table where his braille is. Raquel is talking about the days of the week. . . . Blair is talking to Tracy about days of week as well and feeling them on his cards. The teacher writes on the board 'Today is Thursday.' She starts talking about the 's' in Thursday. Blair says "s." The teacher says showing her thumb, "What other letters are in Thursday?" Tracy takes Blair thumb. Tracy: "Other words starting with Thursday?" Raquel emphasises "Th." Blair repeats "Th." "Th" says Tracy as she directs Blair to the words which are in braille. Raquel: "What goes at end of sentence?" Blair raises his hand. Raquel: "Blair." Blair: "Full stop." Everyone reads together: "Today is Thursday." Blair stands while he reads his braille sentence. No one else stands when they read.

Like Davania, Blair had daily braille lessons. Tracy would work with Blair on braille lessons for about 15 minutes each day in the classroom by asking him to identify words on flash cards. He also had lessons for about another hour alone in which he was asked to identify words, to type braille letters and words, and to read braille sentences of familiar words and unfamiliar words with hand over hand guidance. During my observations, Jane visited once, relieved Tracy, and did a similar lesson with Blair.

Xena who was older needed no further braille lessons at primary school but when she was Blair's age, she was withdrawn daily by Catherine who, unlike Jane, believed that it was her role to teach reading as well as the mechanics of braille:

> Initially you can't separate (braille and reading) at the beginning level. . . . I don't believe you can separate it. Never have. Maybe now when Xena is a competent braillist . . . and so right we might look at the letter sign and just little parts of the braille code that she's either forgotten or we need to revisit. I can do that now but I couldn't do that at the beginning. I had a reading programme and I had to teach it to her in braille while the classroom teacher was teaching the other children print, their literary skills, literacy. Xena was part of that too but she had to have a period of withdrawal every day for braille. And I didn't, and none of the other teachers involved, ever just taught her 'b' says 'but' and 'c' says 'can.' It was taught in a way that that the classroom teacher would be teaching the other children. I made my programme . . . with the classroom teacher.

Catherine said that Xena was taught in an ideal situation where she could have literacy lessons once a day. However, blind children at other schools without attached visual resource centres needed to rely on teacher aides who were usually more than willing to learn braille and facilitate its instruction. Catherine noted though that there was a danger of the teacher aides taking on too much responsibility, and that she thought that there should be less teacher aide time and more teacher time:

> But you know we put teacher aides in there who have had no experience and you might have one visual resource teacher for a whole area and responsible for 50/60 children and trying to oversee their programmes and that teacher aide is in there every day. And whether it's ideal or not (they) are going to make decisions and are going to get more and more involved and more and more emotionally involved. . . . I know it happens. . . . And they're not teachers so they don't know what comes next. They've got to find out what comes next and that puts a huge ask on them. I think that's one area that needs quite a bit of addressing. And the lack of resources is again an enormous problem. . . . The Ministry will give them a large amount of teacher aide time and feel well 'they've done their bit', but in actual fact maybe we should be looking at less of that.

Xena's teacher aides transcribed print material into braille and there were also other braille books and resources which were available at the visual resource centre. Catherine, like Jane, thought that it was her job to co-ordinate these braille resources for Xena, and she commented that her receptionist, who also transcribed braille, was "flat out brailling books that (she) couldn't get from (Homai) transcription." Catherine also was involved in the high technology needs of her students after they had become competent braillists. She believed though that literacy was dependent upon braille because technology could break down and that reading was a "human right."

> I think braille is like the pen to a sighted child. . . . We're giving the children choices. I know some students choose to use the computer, but I don't know many adults who are blind who don't still prefer braille. I mean they use technology in their laptops because it's wonderful and they're going to university or continuing study. It's great. But they still like to read their braille books. . . . I think we must always have braille teachers.

Xena had recently been introduced to a Braille-N-Print which was a printer that could be attached to her brailler. As she brailled, she could read her braille and a print copy would also be produced from the printer for the teachers. The use of this machine seemed to ease the sighted teachers' workload more than it did Xena's.

Xena loved reading. In my time in her classroom, whenever she had a chance, she started to read her braille books. One book which was particularly interesting to her that week was a six volume book called, *The Story of New Zealand:*

> Sam talks above the class noise about the journal. She then checks her directions with the students. She asks them questions about what they need to do. . . . Xena is still reading her braille book while the other children answer the questions. . . . Liz comes over and talks to Xena about whether or not she's got the braille for the activity. Xena doesn't seem to know. "What group is she in?" Liz asks Sue. Sue: "Three." Liz: "Oh you could read the print to her then." . . . Xena stays in her seat and continues to read her braille book. Liz gets out her other books and sorts out what Xena needs to do with particular papers. Xena seems to be ignoring what the rest of the class is doing as she continues to read the same book. . . . Liz tells Xena to grab her brailler. She slowly puts her book away but keeps her hands in the book until the very last second as she slides it under the cover of her desk.

Xena stated that she did not think that there were enough braille books for her to read:

> I used to go the library at lunch time and get out books . . . but most of them I've already read and they're probably going to get pretty boring as I read them again. They're pretty easy.

Catherine thought that there were enough books for Xena and had just finished ordering a number of books for her. However, in my observations Xena's choice of books was limited to those in a crate versus all those contained in the school library:

> The library is a big room with books along four sides of the walls . . . Xena is guided to a shelf where the braille books usually are with Sue. Sue has a goose bumps book and she is passing this around and showing it to other children. There are no books on Xena's shelf. She says "but I'm supposed to have a book to read." Xena sits down at the back of the room. . . . Callum sits near Xena and says that he's got such and such a book out. Xena asks how many books he has. He says one. . . . Sue says "I know where the braille books are." . . . Xena is led over to a green plastic milk crate by Sue. The bin has some braille books in it. They both look through the braille books. . . . Xena picks a book and starts reading it alone. Xena sits down on a bench. Callum is on the floor in front of her. She moves to him to look at his book.

The discussion group were surprised to find that braille books were not more readily available for Xena to read. Subsequently, they thought that Xena had developed a "fantasy" interest in print books. The group noted that braille for Xena signified difference and blindness, and that she wanted to see instead and read print books.

Xena also believed that print books were more exciting because they had pictures in them whereas braille books did not. She would thus spend hours flipping the pages of print books trying to imagine what they said and what pictures they held:

> I just flick through the pages and imagine it. . . . You know thinking 'Ah yeah this is this picture of a horse' or whatever. One of these books I got out with stars and there were three pictures that I could feel. They weren't tactile they were just (raised) a little bit. One of them was a horse jumping over something.

Xena also said that she believed that print books were faster and easier to read than braille books. Xena's preoccupation with print books at school was worrying to the adults around her, because she would spend a significant amount of class time flipping the pages of these books. Zwhaun believed that this was because Xena was beginning to realise that she was limited by her blindness in a fast and competitive school environment. She did not have ready access to the curriculum and competition in the classroom:

> She would tell me "Guess what mum I could read a book today and I could see the picture," . . . I said to her, "Look love you can't see. If there was anything in the world I could do for you I would do it all right." And she burst into tears, "I can see. I don't want to be blind." . . . I think it could be a gradual build up. Like everything has to be adapted. Everything takes longer for her and there's a lot of competitiveness in school. (She) wants to be first and when they've had speed tests, Xena still can't get under her four minutes because she's brailling but the other kids can.

Ann, Xena's teacher aide, explained that it was acknowledged at school that she was reading print books because she did not want to be different, but that she was not doing her class work and like her classmates Xena was placed on detention for such behaviour:

> She told me she wanted to flick through the print books and have print books because she wanted to be like everyone else. So we decided here that since she wanted to be like everyone else, she could go on detention like everyone else if she wasn't doing the right thing at the right time. And we told her that and she had had several warnings about it.

Xena did not seem to understand the reasons for her detention and did not think that Ann was being fair:

> When Ann put me on detention I didn't think that was fair because I didn't have anything to read at all except for this book about the wild ponies of Asiteg Island and that wasn't really fair because I had read it about fifty thousand times.

Blind people need and want to be taught specialist curricula

All of the participants in this chapter felt that instruction from Orientation and Mobility (O&M) instructors was necessary for successful inclusion in mainstream schools. The parents in this chapter had positive relationships with their children's O&M instructors. They found them helpful and supportive. However, Joanne and Zwhaun, whose blind children went to a regular school talked about issues which revolved around the amount of support their children received from O&M instructors. Joanne considered relocating her entire family so that her son, Blair, could attend a school with a visual resource centre in order to receive more O&M instruction. Blair had received O&M instruction as a young child but had waited for two years before and during primary school while funding was sorted out for his instruction. At the time, the RNZFB felt that it was the Ministry of Education's responsibility for funding instruction because their funding was for blind children at Homai. However, the Ministry thought they had funded the RNZFB for mainstream O&M instruction. In the end, the RNZFB received only some travel money from the Ministry to provide O&M instruction to Blair. Blair's principal explained that he believed that there should be a pool of local money which could be accessed when O&M instruction was needed:

> That was the one that got up my nose. There needs to be a way for that tap to be turned on when it's needed . . . because I don't wanna run into again the Foundation for the Blind saying "We are not funded for this." And the Ministry of Education saying "You are funded for this. It's part of your contract." And while they're fighting it out, Blair is disregarded. There is no one (here) with the discretion to say "Well there is a pool of funding here and the money's there. Do it."

Jane, Blair's vision teacher, felt that the Ministry of Education did not want to fund O&M because it would set a precedent for other blind children in regular classes:

> I'm not sure why they haven't hooked into the O&M thing. I'm not sure whether they see it as the thin end of the wedge and opening up too much need throughout New Zealand . . . because there is O&M need beyond just blind children. The low vision children, -there's quite a bit of need out there. . . . So they don't want to make a precedent. But they should at

> least (provide) for the totally blind children. I feel that's almost scandalous it's not provided.

Joanne, Blair's mother in the end did not care who paid for O&M instruction just as long as Blair received it:

> In the end I was getting quite confused and thinking, 'God I wish this would hurry up and work out.' Yeah. It didn't worry me who paid for it as long as we damn well got it.

Daphne, Blair's O&M instructor, thought that the Ministry of Education did not understand the educational needs of blind children, did not have sufficient resources, and were willing to "pass the buck:"

> Ignorance. Passing the buck and ignorance. . . . Lack of resources, lack of resources, lack of resources. That's why I think that passing the buck comes into it.

Joanne worried that the O&M instruction which Blair received could stop because it was dependent upon charity and because the RNZFB did not have separate programmes for children in the mainstream. She also believed that Blair had been educationally disadvantaged for two years and feared moving in unfamiliar areas.

Daphne, Blair's O&M instructor, was qualified to teach adults but did not have qualifications to teach O&M to children. She said she worked in a client centred manner, and she initially felt "inadequate" but later her confidence improved as she worked with Blair:

> And then my input is, I feel, inadequate too. I haven't had any training with children. My experience is all with adults . . .. I don't know where to start sometimes. . . . But as I am working with him more my confidence has built up and what I'm willing to experiment with . . . . I also listen to other people and just getting lots of different ideas. . . . I've read quite a bit of late, really.

Blair's classroom teacher, Raquel, again felt that Blair was not receiving experienced professional instruction and, because Daphne was employed by the RNZFB, she was uncertain about what she could expect from her. Raquel also said that she rarely saw Daphne who came on a day when she was busy with another child and that she felt some of her consultations with Daphne had not been taken seriously because Blair had had an O&M assessment at Homai which Daphne said that she was following instead:

> I said to Daphne, "We want him to be more independent in the play ground so he didn't stand out." That was my focus for her. But no. Homai have said something different. So I don't know.

However Raquel still felt that Blair needed to receive O&M instruction, and that initially he should have been seen three times a week instead of once a week because "it was a high priority to be able to get about." In my observations of Blair, he explored his environment but did not travel to many destinations within the classroom independently. He was guided to the coat rack, his bookcase, his chair, outdoors, etc. He did know the way to the toilet and travelled to and from the toilet independently. Daphne was teaching Blair spatial and body concepts and got the impression that Blair's teachers expected her to "work miracles":

> Hurrah the mobility instructor's here! We're saved! He's going to be running around the classroom in two days." That's an impression. I don't know if I imagine it (or) if I put on myself.

Xena also had difficulties obtaining O&M instruction and free movement was difficult for her. Zwhaun spoke about the frustrations of finding an O&M instructor who could work with children when Xena was a young toddler:

> I actually asked (the Foundation) for assistance to come down because . . . like she was trying to climb up the stove or she was hanging out those windows. . . ... I do know that the person they sent told me that they couldn't really help me because . . .. they dealt more with adults as opposed to children.

Zwhaun also said that movement was an issue in Xena's social life and that Zwhaun would have liked to have more information about how she could have helped Xena in O&M:

> Like she would love to run and play like the other kids but she was too scared because she couldn't see what was in front of her sort of thing. Yeah it is part of mobility. So there is gaps in any system. But for me I would have liked more information on how I could help her.

Xena received sporadic O&M instruction and only had instruction when an instructor was available from the RNZFB. Catherine, Xena's visual resource teacher, explained that for ten years Xena had had a variety of instructors but that trained instructors who could teach children were difficult to find and that there was no funding for O&M instruction:

> We've got a good three people here at the moment who are wonderful but none of them trained in children('s) O&M . . . We were told last week that by the Ministry (of Education) that the Health are going to pay. But whose going to do it? . . . We have had a marvellous O&M who was a teacher . . . and he also worked with (her) teacher aide. . . . Then he went and we had this great gap of a year. . . . If we had a contract with the Regional Health Authority or the Ministry to say that Xena needs three times a week for half an hour, . . . well that would be a start. I hope that's what is going to happen. I mean ideally we would like to have an O&M instructor based here for part of the time.

Bob was Xena's O&M instructor at the time of this study but was not actively working with her. He had worked with her previously and, like Daphne, had not worked with a totally blind child before and wanted further training. Bob did not have a lot of time to work with children because the area which he covered was large and he had a waiting list. However, he did try to see children soon after they had been referred and would schedule once a week lessons with them although this wasn't ideal:

> Ideally it would be twice a week as far as that but I suppose I just know that won't happen. At college they said you should do it twice a week. . . . It depends on the back up you get as well. . . . Like Xena I believe when I wasn't there was still going to the letterbox each day to collect the mail at the end of the drive.

Like Blair's O&M instruction, Xena's instruction was reliant on RNZFB charity money and Bob thought that this was asking the blind child to beg.

Bob taught Xena how to travel to her letter box and back, and to be aware of a route which she travelled with her father but she was anxious:

> Regularly she went to the park with her father. So I thought well that's important that she knows that route even if they're not expecting her to go on her own because at her age I wouldn't really be expecting any child to be going to that particular route on her own. It's just a totally dangerous road you've got to cross.. . . . When I first went out with her she was very nervous, . . . and I just reassured her and said "You're never going to cross that road on your own. . . .. You will only ever do it with someone. " And after that she relaxed.

At the time of this study Xena had since moved and was not travelling to the park or letterbox any more. She also did not travel around school independently despite her knowledge of the area.

Zwhaun explained that Xena resisted using her white cane because she did not want others to know that she was blind and would only used it on lessons with Bob:

> Xena doesn't really use her cane much either. . .... She doesn't want to use her cane because then people will know she's blind. . .. Yeah but then she likes Bob. She will do anything for Bob. Oh yeah. If Bob came she would have it out she'd be wandering around with him.

Xena stated that she really would just rather see than use the white cane:

> Using the cane is all right but sometimes I don't like using it because I want to be like everybody else, you know not using the cane. You know pretending I can see. . . ...Well I would rather see and I would rather Bob come visit me and ask me what I thought about being blind before I could see.

Zwhaun and her teachers noted that one of the barriers to making friends was

Xena's reliance on them for her orientation and mobility. During my observation period at her school, Xena was guided by Sue or another classmate throughout the school day. Liz, her teacher aide, noted that this dependency had become a habit and that Xena would not venture to the playground because she was not confident:

> If she heard a lawnmower it would frighten her. If she heard a car it would frighten her and that's what we need the O&M for. For that sort of practice and she's a lot better now but I still think it needs to be an ongoing thing. She goes from the (visual resource room) to here. She doesn't seem to get out in the playground. . . . I think it's a habit because the kids have always come to get her.

All of the parents in this study believed that O&M instruction should come from professionals. Some parents believed that they could also assist in this instruction as well. Zwhaun considered becoming an O&M instructor and she stated that "with a bit of work and probably a lot of love you can turn your hand to anything" even if professional help was not available. Joanne was worried though that she might teach Blair the wrong skill.

> We don't know how to teach mobility. It's gotta come from a professional and so (the school) didn't want to try and teach Blair to do something when it wasn't the right way and to undo.

Davania's parents encouraged Davania in O&M by not "putting her in cotton wool." They stated that they allowed her to fall and hurt herself so that she could be the same as other children:

> Stacey: At first his family used to think I was the worst mother because if she'd fall over and hurt herself and that, I'd just pick her up and do the normal thing like you would for a child. And they'd used to think I was very cruel. . . .
> Junior: Well we have to treat her the same. We had to treat her the same as any other kid otherwise she won't get anywhere. She'd just be like sit in the corner sort of thing. We didn't want that to happen to her. And now she's running all over the place.

Davania's movement confidence, according to her parents, surprised the staff at

Homai:

> Junior: She was more or less running to every class or running straight to the playground and they've never seen it before. She only has to stalk it once. . . . She starts getting grumpy if you hold her down. So we just let her do her own thing. She knows to take it easy at the start and once she gets going you can't stop her. She just keeps going. And she took that part of her to school. . . . And the teacher's jumping up and down cos she's running
> Stacey: And they would tell her to slow down
> Junior: Yeah they would tell her to slow down but as soon as they yell out she really knows straight away to stop and go around a pole and just keep running again.

Davania's family were all involved in her O&M lessons. Her sibling, Robin, was mentioned as being very supportive and important because Robin was given a monitoring role when she travelled. Davania's O&M instructor explained:

> She's got a (sibling) too, who's really great. Really wonderful. Robin often does the monitoring while she goes down for the fish and chips. Very sensible- Robin. Very interested too. I mean one of the interesting things I had was Davania was never allowed to take her cane home until we started working. It was only allowed to stay at school and I thought 'She doesn't need it in school.' So . . . I gave her a folding cane for the first time. 'Wow she worked really hard to get that cane.' The first time she'd ever had a folding cane. And Robin was really interested and had a go and just really supportive. And we'd done some work in her bedroom and Robin'd come in and want to join in.

Stacey believed that O&M instruction was a positive experience for both of her children.

Lee, Davania's teacher, stated that Davania, unlike the other participants, had access to O&M instruction whenever it was needed. There were O&Ms who worked with children in the area who contracted to Homai and there were two O&M instructors who worked in other programmes at Homai. Lee, herself, also taught movement and O&M as part of her daily class curriculum:

> I worked with that (O&M) teacher and actually took her job for six months. . . . And we're following the national curriculum guidelines so

> there's certain things that need to be learned and you just adapt. . . . They're needing a lot a work on how to run and how to jump and positioning themselves and going over and under.

In my observations at Homai, I also noticed that a significant amount of time was allowed for the children in Lee's class to travel independently from one activity to another. For example, it took twenty minutes to walk with the younger students from the pool to class, whereas it would have perhaps taken me two minutes:

> There are three boys and three adults (including me). We all go sighted guide. One adult to each child. The children are slow walkers and the adults walk at their pace. . . . Lots of encouraging words are given on the way to "Keep walking, good walking. Oh you dropped your bag. Oops you lost my arm." etc. The classroom is up a footpath to the main complex, and then the children are led to rails which they follow. They are told to, and do, square off at different set points, and are encouraged to cross over halls to sound cues. . . . The teachers mostly let them do it themselves but do encourage them to keep coming etc. by verbal cues and occasional physical cues.

Davania moved freely and was an independent traveller around Homai without a cane and almost danced from class to class.

Davania had been receiving O&M instruction from Heidi for one and a half years, once a week. Heidi had a significant amount of experience as an O&M instructor for children and was completing her Masters degree in special education. She saw her role as a family support person. She taught Davania routes in her community, orientation skills, and personal safety:

> I work in a family system model. The family own the child. I believe O&M, physio, teachers, everybody are secondary support. We're support people with the family. . . . And if the family doesn't follow up once a week's going to be nothing which is the other aspect about Davania's programme is her family does a lot of follow up. Once we got into the home, they were just rapt. And they would monitor.. She would go up and buy the fish and chips and she's doing supported independence in that someone's coming round behind you.

The other specialist instruction area, Techniques of Daily Living (TDL), which was mentioned in this study's previous chapters was not mentioned as much by the participants in this chapter. Catherine, Xena's visual resource teacher, thought that TDL should be taught at home. Joanne, Blair's mother, mentioned though that not having TDL instruction has led to some delays in his personal care skills, and that she did not feel confident to teach him:

> (The TDL instructor's) petered out. We haven't had her since he was about two and a half. Yeah, non existent you may as well say. How's that hindered him? He's learning to a point. (He) undresses himself as in his shirts. As far as putting them on, he gets too impatient. I mean I can just spend all day trying to teach him to put his shirt on and off but there is right and wrong ways of teaching him.

Davania's parents felt that some of Davania's late and traumatic acquisition of daily living skills might have been avoided with some advice from a TDL instructor:

> Stacey: You know you learn the most important things in the first five years . . . I think in a way (early intervention) might've helped because there's still a few things that we still find hard to drill into her, like eating properly. . . . But I think if we would've had just a little bit more training in a few areas it wouldn't have taken so long. She was so scared of the toilet. . . . Because there's nothing underneath her. . . . And if I would've had a few tips on that it might've made it better for her. A better experience for her anyway.

Lee, Davania's teacher, included TDL instruction as part of her daily classroom activities. Davania and her classmates were taught and were expected to wash and dry their dishes after lunch in the sink. At home Davania's parents were able to teach her how to care for her menstrual needs:

> Stacey: All of sudden she decided that she was gonna get her period. . . . It happened for the first time. And so I thought, 'Oh no the poor girl.' But that comes along with being a girl.' And I thought, 'She's going away (with her team), representing (the city) for the first time' and we weren't too sure if she understood. Like I'd been warming her up for it for about just under a year when it happened. So it had taken a year.
> Junior: Yeah. Lee and the teacher aide got a surprise how quick she clicked on
> Stacey: Yeah they were surprised
> Junior: Thought that we did a good job.

Class withdrawal for O&M or TDL instruction and for other special instructional activities was regarded by all the participants as appropriate. Liz, Xena's teacher aide, said that they withdrew Xena when they were giving special instruction to Xena or the class, and that withdrawal occurred for other children as well so it was not stigmatising:

> If we think that some thing's not going to apply to Xena in the classroom, (the teacher's) happy that we withdraw her and go and do something else also. . . . Once in a while they used to have to talk to the kids in the class about her being blind and what they could do to help especially when they've got new kids in and. And so she had to be withdrawn then . . . They have in the past done (O&M) during PE times. So that fits in. There are kids going out for reading . . . The (others) might just think "Oh Xena's not here." They don't even think anything of it . . . because she's out doing this or that and yeah they just accept it.

Similarly, Xena's principal thought that class withdrawal was necessary for her to learn because of the noise in the class and the fact that certain environments were equipped to teach certain subjects. He also did not believe that withdrawal would stigmatise her:

> I think it's absolutely necessary for the education to progress. . . . I would probably say if it's convenient to do it in the classroom that's fine, great. But when you've got such a well stocked well resourced visual resource centre a few metres away, what difference does it make? And let's face it when kids get to intermediate school and secondary school they've got to move from point A to point B.. . . . They can concentrate on it better. Because it's in an environment where it's all organised to take place. . . . . So when Xena is having her braille what's important is the braille teaching and learning. . . . 'If they're not in, they are not going to develop socially and other children are going to develop negative attitudes towards them?" What a lot of bull . . . Excuse my language. That's a purist's viewpoint. They probably have no data to back it up on. You judge each case on its merit. It's a common sense approach.

Catherine, Xena's visual resource teacher, pointed out that she thought that younger blind children were more sensitive to noise and that class withdrawal was appropriate. Nevertheless, teacher aides needed to go with the student during withdrawal lessons:

> They got so tired and we felt it was the noise level and they got disorientated too, mobility wise you'd just see Xena lose it as a 'littlie.' You would just know she was overloaded with sound. . . . So we'd let her come over to a quiet place, have 10 minutes just to do whatever. . . . Because that's the sense they are using, their sound.. . . .. I've encountered it with all the children that I've worked with now in the mainstream who are blind. That the sound levels are very high and disturbing. And I've come to the conclusion that one to one in specialised instruction is perfectly okay . . . I don't believe in taking children out, putting them back and no-one knows what you have done. And that's when we also asked the O&Ms if they minded if that the teacher aides . . . went with him.

Similarly, as previously mentioned, all the adults around Blair mentioned that he needed a quiet place to work.

The O&M instructors in this study were aware that instruction from them would mean that their students were not involved in some other activity. They had different ways of coping with this awareness. Daphne, Blair's instructor, stated that at least he was receiving O&M instruction. Bob, Xena's O&M instructor, preferred to see his students during class time and not break times and he left it up to the teachers to determine when the class withdrawal would not disrupt the student's lessons:

> (O&M) is part of their education. I just think children get tired and fatigued and why are they having to do this during their lunch break? . . . The breaks are there for a reason. I would like to do it during a class period. You just have to be careful. . . . I always ask the teachers, "What's a good time to come" and they always tell me.

On the other hand, Heidi preferred to work on Saturdays to avoid withdrawing her students from any classes. However, she acknowledged that she was able to do this because she did not have a significant number of students. Her next preference was to work with her students after school, but then was concerned about fatigue like Bob.

Blind children can learn music, but not other parts of the ordinary curriculum

Like the participants in the previous chapters, all of the participants enjoyed music. After school, Xena took individual piano and singing lessons. She had half hour recorder lessons at school on three of the four days when I was there and was also in the top recorder group. She would play by ear with another child who would read the music to her if necessary:

> Sam comes in and says "Now we were doing our slurring tune. Let's warm up, pge 38." Xena takes her recorder out and plays with the others. She is sitting alone. She hits all the right notes. Mrs. M. "Do it one more time. Hit the top note gently." One of the girls goes over and sits next to Xena with her print book. Mrs. M. says "Early bird for you." She smiles. It is the end of this song. Xena and the new girl start talking together. Liz, the TA, arrives. . . . Sam goes over with the class visually how to read the music. Xena sits and listens.

Sam, Xena's teacher, praised Xena for her musical efforts and stated that Xena was going to learn braille music next year. Liz, Xena's teacher aide, was also able to help her in music because she was a music teacher after school.

Blair was also considered to be talented in music. He enjoyed his keyboards and recorder at home but did not take music lessons. At school, Raquel, his teacher, said she used music to encourage his movement. His enjoyment of such activities, which were done on average for about ten minutes each day, was evident in my field notes:

> Music plays: "Do the monster walk." The children grunt and stomp around in a circle making scary faces. Blair is in the middle stomping and dancing. He also spins and jumps. He is making claws as the other children do. He is very happy. "Do do do do the monster walk" and then everyone growls including Blair.

Lee, Davania's classroom teacher at Homai, used music to encourage language development and movement. At least one hour a day was spent singing or saying rhythmic poems as a class or with other classes at Homai. Lee was also quite proficient on the piano and would accompany the class. In the mornings Lee would begin each day with music for half an hour:

> 9:03: Lee starts to play on the piano: "Good morning, good morning a very good morning to you. Hello Steve." Steve: "Hello." Lee and class sing, "Hello hello hello.' The song is sung to everyone around the room. . . . Lee: "Sammy, would you like to help Chin Chin?" Sammy helps Chin Chin sing. He sings for him and holds his hand while he does this. Chin Chin sings a bit. Davania sings with them as well. Lee: "OK. Stand up and find a space." A new song starts: "Stamp stamp stamp your feet, stamp your feet together. . . . " Lee sings: "Virginia what shall we do next together." Virginia: "Clap your hands." Everyone sings: "Clap clap clap your hands, clap your hands together." Lee. "Davania . . . what shall we do together?" Davania: "Hop." Lee: "Hop. Oh this is your favourite for the moment. Stand-up. Let's see if you can hop on one foot. . . . Hop hop hop hop together." . . . Another song starts on the piano: "We're going up up up up up (everyone stands with their hands in the air) and then down down down down." . . . Another song starts up: "Love somebody yes I do. Yes I do but I won't tell who. . . . Hope somebody loves me too.." . . . Another song. "Willaby wallaby with you."

Some of the children had twenty minutes of music therapy once or twice a week as well. Lee stated that Davania did not have therapy, but in the past had music lessons but was not musical:

> She enjoys music. She doesn't have an ear for music. Whatever she learns it's got to be taught, note by note. And it takes a long, long time. She had music for about a year until the music teacher (left). . . . She was doing a variety of instruments. There was a music teacher here and she just exposed the children to every available instrument, the harp recorder. Everything through to the piano. Davania found it very hard work.

Maths was a subject that all of the children in this chapter, like most of the participants in the previous chapter, had difficulty learning. Raquel, Blair's teacher, said that he did not understand the maths which the class was doing and so he was withdrawn from class. However, if he could do the maths then he did come into the class:

> You see the afternoon session is maths . . . like halves and things. Jane had him in for that but I didn't really think it was very applicable. . . . We were

> doing patterns with beads one day and okay there's no reason why he couldn't have stayed for that so he stayed for that sort of thing. . . . One of the curriculum achievement objectives is to count to fifty. So okay we started off by rote counting to five and then ten and fifteen so there's no reason why he couldn't join in that. So he joined in that.

In my week of observations, Blair was not included in maths lessons:

> Raquel: "How many chocolate bars will I have if I give Little Red Riding Hood two (Raquel shows them four blocks in her hand). The class answers two. Tracy arrives to take Blair for a walk. . . . Tracy tells him to get his jacket on. Blair can be heard in corridor talking about chocolate bars and Little Red Riding Hood as he gets his jacket on. I wonder if Blair may get something out of maths. The rest of the class stays and continues with maths.

Xena was included for her maths lessons but she had difficulty keeping up with her peers on tests. The nemeth code, the tactile maths code, was also considered difficult to use by her class teachers. Sam stated that eventually she thought Xena would just use a calculator as long as she understood the maths process: During my observations, Xena had as much difficulty writing the braille problems as she did calculating the answers:

> Sam: "Don't do anything until your name is down on the top of the paper." To Xena Sam says, "Right your first one is 485-72." Xena begins to write it down. A boy says to another, " She can start cause she's blind." Sam says that they all need to write "assessment check one" on their paper. Xena is working on the first problem. Sue tells her something . . . Liz comes over and says "Have you written that?" Xena: "No." Liz "You need to write assessment check one." Xena does this. Xena asks Liz a question about the first problem. Liz says that she cannot answer it as it is an assessment. Xena groans loudly. She is given a second problem to do by Liz who has the assessment in print. The other children copy the problems down from the paper onto another paper. . . . Liz tells Xena to write the braille again as she did not write the problem out correctly. . . . Xena is doing about three out of four problems. Xena asks "Why are you skipping some?" Liz says "Because it takes you a bit longer so we'll skip some." Xena does not seem to like this answer and argues a bit. Liz corrects her test . . .. Today she ends up with 3 out of 8 correct.

Liz was seeking help for Xena from the visual resource centre in maths. She felt that

Xena was beginning to lose her confidence in maths and was comparing her achievement to other members of her family.

Davania's parents noted that maths was Davania's weak point in school. Lee described Davania's programme as functional, but that one of the strengths of Homai was that she would not feel inadequate if she compared herself to her classmates:

> Functional maths and language. . . . Communicate with people to organise her budget . . . if we can ever get her to add. . . . We're working on addition. You see it comes into so many things. And it's a real problem. It's a concept she's having real difficulty with. So we just keep going over it. . . . Hopefully she'll pick it up. Rote. Rote work. Just coming into the understanding that one more than two is gonna make three.

In my seven days at Homai, I only saw Davania participating once in a maths lesson which was about repeating patterns:

> Sammy and Davania are making patterns on velcro. . . . Davania's pattern is big rod, counter, animal, little rod. Sammy is very quick and finishes quite quickly. . . . Davania is having difficulty with her pattern. She is unable to distinguish the long rod from the small rod. So she has her patterns mixed up. Lee gives her the pattern again and tries to reinforce the fact that the rods are different. Davania does it again but makes mistakes again. Lee walks away and leaves her to try the pattern again when she comes back she says that they will need to work on this.

Davania's notes on her last IEP said that she had a "good working knowledge of months of the year, time, and understands the concepts of half and a quarter." It was also noted that Davania had literal and concrete conceptual skills. The IEP said that she could "name objects but finds it difficult to move beyond the name of the object."

Like in the previous chapters, the participants had some difficulty either participating in or being included in curriculum areas such as physical education, sports, and home economics. Home economics was not offered to the students in this chapter because of their age. However, all of the participants took part in physical education activities at their school. Blair gladly participated during physical education lessons which also became a time for him to interact and play. However, he had difficult performing the activities which were taught and his teacher aide was always at his shoulder:

> Blair is given a partner, David, who is very quiet. . . . Blair has his own ball with a bell in it. The others have tennis ball. Raquel: "'Roll the ball in your hand. Don't let it fall." . . . "Up over to your shoulder and down our arm." Blair has trouble with this and Tracy helps. "Down your tummy." . . . They then sit facing each other with their legs apart. "Hold still again, let the ball drop and catch it." Blair is smiling. Tracy catches the ball for him. . . . They then move closer to their partner to roll a ball back and forth. . . . Blair and David have a hard time moving it back and forth. Then they are told to throw it back and forth. Tracy from the back helps Blair throw it back and forth. She also attempts to help David interact with Blair but Blair and David do not respond. . . . David watches Blair but does not smile or talk to Blair the whole time.

Xena also took part in physical education and was assigned a peer guide to help her through the lesson. During my time at her school, these involved doing a circuit of activities. However, the adults would at times discourage friendly interactions:

> Liz asks Miri to take Xena with her. . . . Their are 6 places to stop where they will practice different types of rope jumps. Each place has a print sign which will tell them what to do, . . . e.g. circuit 1 says 'backwards, 2. running skip, etc. . . . Miri wants Xena in her group but Xena is assigned to another group. Another girl is told to "take care of Xena." The girl gives Xena the first try at a circuit: "Xena can go first." She helps Xena. They are at the big skipping rope with a girl turning the rope on each end. . . . Xena doesn't seem to be able to jump in time. Someone says: "OK my turn" . . . A whistle blows and everybody changes position. Xena is taken then to the next circuit and given a rope to jump. Xena is not as fast as the other children and is having difficulty jumping over her rope. She puts it over her head to the ground, pauses, and then does a jump while it lays on the ground. She gets over it sometimes. . . . The girl "who is taking care of Xena" guides her inside. Miri runs up and takes her inside instead and drops her off at her seat.

Zwhaun thought that one of the reasons that Xena did not have many friends was because she was unable to participate in visual games. In addition, like the participants in the previous chapters, her peers were beginning to participate in competitive sports:

> Because she can't play a lot of the games they play. . . . Like some of them I think have joined the netball team and she wanted to join but the kids told her that it would be useless because she couldn't catch a ball. It separates them.

At school during my observation period, there was a rugby game which Xena was initially interested in attending. However, after a few minutes she realised that she could not really participate and was not interested:

> Mrs. M. says "When your record books are handed in then you can go out to watch rugby." The TA asks Xena, "Do you want to watch or stay here?" Xena: "I'd like to have a run." TA explains she can't really have a run because they are playing rugby on the field. Xena says, "Oh well we'll go out to watch for a bit and then run." Xena is not interested in the rugby at all. The rest of the school is though and they are all out there, including the little ones on the sidelines cheering their team on. The TA runs with Xena a bit and then she takes her over to some of the other girls who are waiting for the game to start. . . . The TA says that she will leave her but Xena asks, "How long? Will you be back in 30 minutes? I might go with you and read." The TA asks, "Don't you want to stay? ." Xena: "Not really." She goes back to the classroom to read.

At Homai Davania was experiencing success in sports with her classmates. Lee, her classroom teacher, stated that she would probably be chosen to be part of the New Zealand team of children with vision impairments to compete in Australia:

> She's had a programme here. Limited programme but it's still a programme that will have given her body awareness. . . . She took part in the sports for visually impaired and I think (she) will be offered a place in a team to go to Australia. . . . She's quite good at running. . . . She's good generally at the sports for visually impaired - the running, throwing, jumping. You know, she was good.

Lee also involved the entire class to help prepare for her students' sports days. While I was at Homai there was also a sports day for the children with multiple impairments and all of the hoopla that accompanied such an event:

> They are all sitting down on the benches now. Eight yellow t shirts on the bench. Lee shows Davania the room five sign on a stick. It is written in

> gold glitter. . . . Lee : "When the sports start Sammy, Davania, Albert, and Virginia will came back here." (They are not participating in the official games because they have already been involved in a sports day) . . . The games are internal games for the children with multiple impairments at the school. . . . The gym is full of children and adults. Each group has a different colour on. The teams are introduced and cheers are given for each team. . . . There are about 20 children in wheel chairs. .. The school is led in a song to the twinkle twinkle star tune but there are different words about sports. . . . There is lots of clapping.

Davania's class also spent a significant amount of time in physical education classes or activities: one hour a day. They would go swimming on campus and even had a bowling alley on campus which they used. They also spent time doing exercises and non-competitive games. Below is an excerpt from their activities with one of their teachers from my first observation at Homai. It was not a competitive activity. However, Sammy seemed to be bored by the activity:

> Everyone is told to sit on the floor and . . . listen to the overhead fan go round and round. . . . It gets quieter as they listen. Sandra: "Ok it is time to stand up and stretch up on tippy toes. "Now everyone take big steps around the room. Big steps." . . . The children move cautiously and their big steps are really not that big, except for Sammy who takes . . . very very big steps . . . Everyone is giggling and making noises. . . . A tape is put on "bananas in pyjamas" to march to. The children march around the room. Sammy is running around the room. Some are going sighted guide around the room. . . . They are asked to sit down in a circle with their legs outstretched and touching. Sandra gives a ball to Sammy. Sandra: "Who are you going to pass to?" Sammy says, "Wing." Sandra: "Wing here comes the ball." They roll the ball back and forth. Wing encourages the other children. Otherwise, they are quiet. Sammy seems bored and sighs every now and then. . . . Sandra says it is now time for stretching and sitting down. They lie down and . . . everyone has a stretch as more floating music is put on.

Part Four: Places for Blind Adults

It is interesting to note that all of the children in this chapter were expected to grow up and hold down jobs and perhaps have families. The professionals in this chapter all saw a future for their students. However, some of the professionals saw their students in stereotypical jobs. For example, Blair was expected to become a musician. They also saw societal barriers which would limit the futures of their students.

Blind children's futures are limited

Some of the parents in this study could visualise their children with a vocational future. However, Joanne said that she had difficulty thinking about the future and could only see ahead one day at a time because each day brought surprises:

> I take every day as it comes. Because it changes so much. Like Blair may come home from school and say (he) needs this today but we can't get it because it comes down to dollars and cents. Or we need braille paper but we've gotta wait till the Ministry can put in. So I never think too far ahead.

However, she felt that Blair might find a vocation in music or animals because he loved each but she was aware that another blind person had difficulty finding employment even with a Masters degree:

> With just listening to what the guy from up (country) gone through, you think "Oh my god what hope is there." And he's applied for everything that's going and I mean he had that many doors slammed in his face. And you think, 'Oh my god, if that's what somebody with a big high education (gets)."

Xena's mother expected Xena to attend university and wanted her to be anything which she wanted to be:

> She can do what she wants. She can be a bum for all I care as long as she's happy. She can be an artist. She can be anything. I think the most important thing is that they have confidence in themselves and what they're doing is right for them. Bugger what the adults think mate.

Davania's parents, on the other hand, had no indication of what type of job Davania would be able to do and said they would leave it to Homai and her high school experience to help her decide:

> Stacey: What's she going to do for a living? She's never indicated, eh?
> Junior: No. I think it's a bit too early to say at the moment.
> Stacey: . . . We all need to see how her developing is going to go. . . . If she's just gonna stop at having the speech of a seven year old or if it's gonna develop as she gets older. So if she's fifteen and she speaks like a ten year old, when she's twenty she speaks like a fifteen then it's obviously gonna get better for her. . . . Yeah but it's hard to say. Probably Homai will help us in that in that area.
> Junior: People might be able to tell later on once she's at college. . . . And by that time she will know the difference between jobs and what jobs are all about and all the rest of it.
> Stacey: She does chores. She knows what chores are, but nothing (about) real work. . . . Yeah with Davania it's just too early to tell.

Lee, Davania's classroom teacher felt that Davania was employable but also felt uncertain about what type of vocation she might have:

> She hasn't shown any particular vocational interest in anything really. I think if she keeps going she'll be employable. Whether she'll be happy with the kind of job she gets or is able to get, I don't know. I think she'd probably be quite good in maybe a warehouse or a packing area. You know something like that. Depending how she goes. Once (she) gets through puberty she may spurt ahead educationally and there could be a lot of options open to her. But just at the moment it's not known really.

Heidi, Davania's O&M instructor saw undeveloped potential in Davania and thought that she could be more than someone who worked in a workshop if resources were available and if her environment encouraged her development:

> Don't really know enough about her likes or dislikes . . . But really I sort of feel like that unless she gets more travel skills that's just going to limit her. . . . Unless there is a lot of quality input I guess in lots of ways she's just going to be a workshop type person. . . . She's got much more potential than that. I'd like to see her be able to get herself, and there's no reason why she can't with good instruction, to work using buses and trains and all that kind of stuff. . . . And she has the potential to think laterally, problem solve. But she just chooses not to. I think there are some jobs that she'd be good at doing, but I think her environment has to allow her to do work towards that.

Raquel, Blair's teacher, felt that he would not be able to work with the public but would be able to work in the computer industry with modified equipment:

> I don't know if you've got computers that have got braille symbols on them. I could imagine him working in some field like that. Not necessarily sort of public type things but things with more individual type things. . . . If he's intelligent enough, he could programme computers.. . . . I'm sure he will (work) and he would just need to have the tools modified to suit his needs.

Similarly, Blair's teacher aide, thought that he would be a withdrawn adult and would need to work on his own. She suggested that Blair might become a musician. Blair's principal also thought that he would work in the music field. Jane, Blair's vision teacher, thought that he could work with other people:

> I'm just not sure where his career options would lie. But he's got a lovely little personality and he'll be able to get on well with people as long as he can get language and the socialisation skills. I wouldn't have a clue but I think he could have a very happy future. As long as he's happy that's the main thing.

His O&M instructor, Daphne, also stated that if Blair developed more language skills that he would have more vocational options but that there would be societal barriers for him to overcome.

Xena's principal thought that Xena could be whatever she wanted to be because her parents would help and support her. However, Sam, Xena's teacher, imagined more traditional occupations for Xena which she associated with blind people:

> She could well be a writer of some kind. Ah she loves her animals. . . . She is quite into music. . . . . She can sing beautifully. . . . . So she could pick up in the singing line. Plenty of blind people have done that and become pretty good in their field haven't they? . . . I think you know she could be quite a talented writer. . . . If she took an interest in the psychology she might find that she was able to move into doing a social science degree. You see if she did something like that she could eventually perhaps even make an excellent welfare officer for the blind.

Xena's teacher aide thought that she could work in computers or as a counsellor because she was blind and would be good with other people:

> I think she could probably be good at like keyboards and computers because she's learning those skills and she's been learning them since she was young. Yeah I was just going to say psychology or counselling. Yeah because she is blind and I can imagine that she would be good with other people.

Bob, her O&M instructor, said he only saw Xena as a child and had no predictions about her future. Catherine, Xena's vision teacher, said that Xena could do whatever she wanted to do. Xena said that she wanted to work with horses:

> Maybe a famous equestrian. Maybe like Mark Todd . . . That's what I'm thinking of doing. . . . I would really like a horse.

Xena also surprised her mother in her interview and said that she did not want to get married and have children, but that she wanted to be in a lesbian relationship with Sue, her best friend, but acknowledged that a boy in her class did like her:

> I might not get married. I might have a lesbian partner instead. I love Sue but you know she's (moving). I mean she's going off to (another city) so what's the point of being a lesbian with her. . . . There's this boy in the class I think he actually likes me. . . . He can get a bit silly some times but mostly he's nice.

Zwhaun, Xena's mother, thought that Xena was not interested in getting married because she wanted to travel but Zwhaun thought that it would not be difficult for Xena to find a partner because the stigma of blindness was gradually disappearing.

Unlike the female participants in the first results chapter and like Sue in the second results chapter, Davania and Xena were expected to have children. Xena's teacher and teacher aide thought that Xena would have a family. However, her teacher thought that she may have children with a vision impairment but was socially limited by the recreational activities which were available to her:

> Well I suppose we have to say that we have seen (another woman) who

> is totally blind. She got married and had three children. But the three children have all had sight impairments to varying degrees. ... She may have some difficulties and restrictions socially. But then you see again it depends what her interests are. She loves the horse riding but . . . she would have to have a sighted person for (helping). They do have the bowls and things that they can play. She may take an interest in that. Perhaps some of the other team sports might be outside her sphere but then she's got the dancing.

Xena wanted to have children but said she did not necessarily need a male partner for children:

> And I would rather be artificially inseminated or what have you. . . .
> Yeah. That's easier.

Davania's father, Junior, stated that he expected her to have a "normal" future and plenty of children:

> Junior: Sort of going out and living like other normal people I suppose. Just having her own family. Enough kids to take us in. Probably twelve of them so we got one to go to every month.

Stacey, her mother, however, worried that Davania's children may have a vision impairment but stated that this might not be difficult for Davania and like Junior she really just wanted a "normal life" for her

> Stacey: Well start it off easy and just let her go out flatting first in her own place. Hopefully she'll meet a man that'll treat her right. Nice, you know, nice guy. Rich would help. But if he's not, never mind.
> Junior: As long as he's got a good heart. . . .
> Stacey: Yeah. And looks after her. . . . Hopefully her disability will not um end up being hereditary. . . . That's what I hope for because then it'll make it even harder for her to cope. It might then again be so easy because she knows what it's like. . .
> Junior: Well we just hope for
> Stacey: a normal life.

And like any parent they would screen her potential partners:

> Stacey: he's saving up for a nice big baseball bat for when she starts

> dating.
> Junior: No I'm not like that.
> Stacey: No. He reckons it'll be me that's doing that when the guys come around to pick her up
> Junior: You'll be the over-protective one.
> Stacey: "Who are you and what's your name?" And "How much do you earn?" And the poor kid'll be only thirteen. -- "What?" "Right, sorry, not enough."

In terms of developing friendships, the participants in this chapter expected various developments in that area as Xena, Davania, and Blair became older. Zwhaun hoped that Xena would develop more friendships, and Xena's principal noted that in the future Xena's present exposure to the adults in her life would help her socially:

> She's had a had a lot of adults around her more so than what most children would have had at school time. There's always that teacher aide right beside her. So I think she will grow into adulthood without any trouble. She will be able to relate to other adults very well because she's doing it already.

The adults in Blair's life, on the other hand, believed that Blair would continue to have difficulty making friends. Raquel, his teacher, was so worried about Blair's future social difficulties that she recommended to Blair's mother that a psychologist see Blair:

> I said to Joanne, . . . "I think Blair needs a psychologist. Not for problems that he's got now. . . . I feel that when he starts getting to puberty and he starts getting into self-esteem ideas, I think there will be problems. Then we need somebody who knows Blair right from the beginning and understand blindness and the problems that can occur. And (not) someone . . . coming in off the (street) sort of just meeting and suddenly greeted with this blind boy who's twelve and having great hang ups about the way he looks and the way people treat him."

Tracy, his teacher aide, felt that Blair would be a withdrawn adult because society would not be able to accept him.

Lee, Davania's teacher at Homai, felt that Davania would have a normal social life despite her hesitancy to interact with others because she participated in social activities:

> I think she'll probably have a fairly normal social life. She's interested in people. She's a little bit reserved , a bit lacking in confidence at times although she's a lot better than she was. . . . She'll just suss things out a little bit and then she'll be quite open and happy to interact. . . . I would think (she'd marry). She's a nice girl. And she's an attractive girl. I would see her just following her peers really. . . . She goes to the youth groups in the holidays and she's meeting people there. And I can see her just following the usual pattern.

Despite Davania's attendance at a special school, Davania was considered included in society by her parents and her teacher. Lee said,

> I think she feels very included. I think she would quite like society to run around her so she wouldn't have to fit into society sometimes. . . . I think she has parents who will help her take advantage of what is available and who encourage her to go out and do things so. And I think she will fit into society quite well.

Lee, however, did think that Davania's literal and linear language abilities may be a social barrier to her inclusion in her community.

There is a community of blind people

Some of the participants in this chapter said that there was a separate community of blind people. Lee and Jane thought that blind people had similar concerns and perceptions of the world. Jane, Blair's vision teacher, stated that if she had a blind child that she would like to have that child be exposed to a community of blind people to help that child develop an identity:

> (I'd want) the exposure to the blind culture. But possibly if I had a child who was blind, I wouldn't be aware of all that anyway. But knowing what I know now that's what I'd want. Just knowing that there were other kids around like me. That I wasn't something frightfully different That I wasn't the only one in the world and I know that if I was blind I'd probably think differently from everyone else to a degree. I'd have

> different perceptions of everything and it'd be such a relief to find other kids like me, especially as you became a teenager I think. It must hard to find a self identity, just thinking you were some sort of oddity.

Lee thought that Homai offered a community to her students and that they could develop long lasting friendships. Tracy, Blair's teacher aide, felt that Homai or a school with a visual resource centre could offer Blair a peer group and community which would understand him:

> (The school with the visual resource centre) is a mainstreaming school but it's more designed for blind and there's more communication with other blind children there too. . . . I mean sometimes I think to myself "He thinks he stands alone." . . . Sometimes I think he really needs to know that there's other people out there that're blind just like him really.

Bill, the principal of Homai, saw a huge gap in education mainstream services because it was difficult for blind children to know other blind children. He believed that Homai could help develop peer support programmes:

> It's fine that they're with their family but they don't know their blind peer group. And there's a need expressed by individuals: "I wish I could meet another fifteen year old blind student, girl." And it is an actual case, "The only people I know of are boys and they're all geeks." So I think there there's a need within the system to ensure that young people growing up have the opportunity to, particularly if they're in an inclusive situation, to meet the peer group in some way. . . . I'd like to see some arrangement develop between the Foundation and the other providers around the country where regional courses could be set up with common funding. . . . Because I still see Homai as the prime resource. Just per nature of it's population and the population of Auckland. It's where most people tend to live in New Zealand unfortunately.

Zwhaun thought, as mentioned previously, that her daughter, Xena, could benefit from having a blind girlfriend her age, but she didn't think that the blind community, which she associated with the RNZFB, would interest Xena because they were generally older and not congenitally blind.

Some of the participants in this chapter stated that blind people were perceived by society as different than other people and were ascribed stereotypical characteristics. For example, Lee said that

> I mean you still get the people who shout because they can't see you. And the number of times that people say, " Oh. You work with the blind. Oh they're really good at music." . . . Because the world is a seeing place.

Davania's and Blair's O&M instructor stated that they would always run into people who would link blindness and deafness together and who wanted to discuss whether it was better to be blind or deaf. Blair's O&M instructor, Daphne, also noted that the public did not fear blind people because they could imagine what it would be like to be blind by just shutting their eyes:

> Less of a fear than I found with working with people with intellectual disabilities. People tend to come up and offer help a lot more or go up and shake their hand or something like that. Introduce themselves especially if they've got a dog. I don't know what it is but I sometimes think that it might be because people kind of shut their eyes and imagine. Whereas there's not very many other disabilities you can imagine just by . . . something like that.

Davania's deputy principal thought that blindness was misunderstood by the general public and that it was in fact an isolating impairment:

> I feel that it's a gravely misunderstood disability. .. I think it can be a handicapping condition and usually is because of the difficulty in gaining accurate and effective concepts. . . . I think it can be an isolating impairment. . . . I think people who don't have much to do with it think of it in terms of being just sight or no sight. They can't think of anything in between. . . . They don't recognise the social implications of being blind. . . . And in my little group of expert panel on NZQA some of the things I've said they sort of look at me, "Oh I didn't think of that." Things like the sexuality issues. People just don't think of the difficulties of people in interpersonal relationship. And how you form them when you don't see. Because 90% or more of our communication is non-verbal. And if you don't have vision, I mean how do you make personal relationships.

Raquel, Blair's teacher, said that she would rather be deaf because of the social isolation which blind people experienced and because she would not be able to see beautiful things. However, she held the belief that blind people were all musical:

> If I had a choice of being blind or deaf, I'd rather be deaf. I do value sight. I get a lot of appreciation just looking at the country side and feeling good as a result of it. And for me it was the worst possible disability you could have. The social thing is that you can't see people's expressions when they're talking to you and you couldn't see if you're dressed right. I suppose blind people, they're all musical, like Ray Charles. The music just pours out of them.

Blair's vision teacher thought that blind people were very special but they were limited by their blindness and would not be able to fully grasp some concepts which were visual despite attempts to make these concepts accessible:

> They really are a special category. . . . It's the images of things. I mean never to have seen a tree. A low vision child can at least have some concept of a tree. But a blind child. . . .. It's a whole rich world that they miss out on. The colour world. . . . And socially it can be difficult for them too. . . . But to have no concept about anything. . . . I mean even feeling a tree and putting your arm around it and smelling it and feeling a model of tree. It still gives you no idea of how the leaves come out.

Bill, Davania's principal, thought that actually most people did not think about blindness but that societal attitudes were moving ahead. However, he thought that the "Institute" and Homai were still thought of as the place or school for blind people. However, he pointed out that Homai was now an education centre with a variety of programmes and not a traditional school. Bob, Xena's O&M instructor, thought that New Zealand society did not understand the environmental access needs of blind people:

> Barriers? . . . I find New Zealand (has) a car mentality. . . . Cars don't have the understanding of what a white cane means or how tolerant you need to be when somebody's standing at the crossing. And basically they don't see the crossing as the pedestrian's area. They still see it as part of the road. . . . And the laws need changing. . . . Generally pedestrians aren't considered particularly highly especially if you look in suburban areas, like quite often you will only get a footpath on one side of the road. They are not prepared to give the pedestrian a footpath on both sides of the road.

Davania's family who were of Maori ancestry, unlike Hine's family in the first results chapter, did not consider themselves or Davania to be actively involved in the Maori community and culture:

> Stacey: No. Doesn't really interest me. Like my Dad's real in. I'd rather just flag it. As far as that is concerned. Junior's pretty much the same. We're just New Zealanders. Like being a Maori pops up when I play rugby because I play for the Maoris as well. Yeah. So that's about the only real tie. Yeah. And with the kids ethnic background it pops on their sheets. That's about it.
> Junior: We still get to the occasional maraes and all that.
> Stacey: Every now and then but we're not totally committed to the family marae and stuff like that.

However, Davania's community did seem to centre around her family and sports activities:

> Stacey: Like her cousins always come around and we always see them up at the club anyway because they all play sports It's just like a normal family situation. If there's cousins in the area then obviously you're going to see your cousins. That's just what it's like really. Um Davania's got . .
> Junior: Five
> Stacey: Five and one on the way. Yeah. And there's one in Rarotonga that she's never met. And there's two in Australia she hasn't met yet. . . .
> Junior: My family's from (Rarotonga) . . . I'm a kiwi boy. Everyone says it's a nice place but we're still trying to get over there.

At Homai, Davania did not participate in any Maori cultural groups and Maori was rarely spoken or sung in class.

The participants have something to say about educational policy\practice for blind children

Some of the participants in this chapter thought that they could influence educational policy and practice, and others did not. Most of the professionals at Homai Vision Education Centre thought that they did have some influence. Bill, the principal, felt that his influence came from his position and from history:

> I feel I can influence thinking. Whether I get the results I want is another matter. Since I've been here I've had more than one opportunity to sit down with the policy makers and shakers in Wellington and put a point of view which is listened to and acknowledged. My help is being sought by the Ministry in some some areas so perhaps that's an acknowledgement that, yes, I've got something to say and they're listening. . . . This position is Principal of Homai and Manager - Education Services for the Foundation. You're in a position to be able to advocate strongly and because of the recognition of this place and the Foundation in New Zealand society, people listen. . . . The Foundation for the Blind or the Institute for the Blind goes right back to last century.

Kitch, the deputy principal, noted that her assessment team mostly had an influence on education practice, but the team did affect policy as well through their submissions to various reviews:

> We try to influence policy, very definitely. It's never ending, our trying, and when I came it was the Homai review and then next it was the Picot Report. Next it was SEPIT and then it was Homai Strategic Direction and Plan. . . . And now it's NVET.

Heidi, Davania's O&M instructor, felt that she influenced policy by advocating to increase O&M instruction to children:

> In general I think. I think we and other O & Ms have made quite (a) lot of moves in trying to get O&M for kids. Starting from 1990 when we were all advocating. . . . So I think, yes we do have an influence. I think it's making a big difference.

The professionals who worked at the RNZFB did not feel that they influenced education policy and practice. Xena's O&M instructor said he only had an influence in the provision of local O&M service:

> No. I don't personally feel I have (influence). Locally, I certainly feel my input is valued at any meeting that is held.

Blair's O&M instructor also felt that she had a local influence. She had not attempted to influence national education policy or practice, but felt that she could:

> I haven't written any letters to the Ministry or anything like that and had any negative or positive feed back. And that's not because I think they wouldn't listen to me or anything like that, it's because there hasn't been any issues come up that I've felt strongly that I should actually write to the Education and try and change something. . . . But I certainly wouldn't not try something because I'd think, "Oh there's no point because it's just little old O & M from (my city)."

All of the classroom teachers and teacher aides thought that they had no influence on national education policy and practice. They instead believed that they influenced local education practice and policy. Xena's teacher explained that she helped write a policy for her school's Board of Trustees:

> We have input into policy making. I mean it's usually the staff that meet in groups to formulate the policy before they go to the Board. The Board approves them but the Board doesn't actually write them. We do the policy writing.

Catherine, Xena's vision teacher, felt that she did not have much influence but she needed to think positively. She considered Xena's educational experience a success, and she noted that there was a greater awareness of the needs of blind children by the Ministry of Education:

> I mean we worked hard for many years to write policies and have them adopted but nothing really has come about, except we have got documents that have been written. . . . I guess if I were to think about it more carefully, certainly there's an awareness in Wellington that there never was. I think we're such a very small group of service providers . . . that it's always overlooked. . . . It is a big battle and I look around here now and I think, 'well yes we've achieved a huge amount and it's easy to get negative but in actual fact we should be positive .' And that's the only way I keep going . . . and then you know to specifically look at Xena. I feel given the resources and . . . to have been totally mainstreamed right from birth. It's okay. It's not perfect but nothing ever is.

All of the parents of the participants in this chapter who attended regular schools had to battle for resources for their child. Joanne's advice to other parents of blind children was to expect no support from the Ministry of Education, be prepared to fight for everything, and have broad shoulders. She also said:

> You've always got to fight. . . .You fight for them when they're born. You fight for them when they're pre-school age. You fight for them to get what they need in school age and if we didn't as parents fight for them then they would be sitting on the line thinking "Oh yeah. He's just another child with a disability."

Zwhaun advised families with blind children who were moving to New Zealand to live near Homai or a school that had a visual resource centre where there were resources and where residential schooling would not be needed. Zwhaun was not optimistic about Xena's future in that she expected that services would not be as available when Xena went on to Intermediate School without a visual resource centre. Davania's parents, Stacey and Junior, advised families with blind children to get in touch with Homai Vision Education Centre because of the resources and expertise. They also stated that they never needed to advocate for services and were thankful for these services:

> Stacey: Straight away I'd just give them Homai's number and Lee's name because she's the one that I've mainly dealed with the whole time.
> Junior: And things aren't bad as you think. Sort of thing. Yeah.
> Stacey: Yeah. I'd say they'll look after their child. They've looked after Davania all along. . . . Because usually everything we've needed it's been there.
> Junior: We're sorta used to just having what's there in front of us. Like it may not be big but at least we got it.
> Stacey: Yeah just thankful.
> Junior: Just thankful that we've just got that little bit.
> Stacey: Yeah we don't want more and more and more and more. We're just thankful to have what is given and we're quite happy with that. And what extra gets given is a bonus.

The participants in this chapter all thought that there was a need for Homai Vision Education Centre. No one in this chapter thought that it should be disestablished. However, there were a variety of suggestions as to what its purpose should be. The parents of the participants in regular schools thought that it offered expertise but was really a school for children with additional disabilities. Joanne, for example, said that even though she was considering sending Blair to Homai, that she felt he was not like the other children there:

> To Homai? Well I've been put off that quite a lot lately because two people have said that Blair's too far advanced for the (assessment) class. We just did an assessment in August. . . . And we felt that he would pick up too many bad habits. They're different. They're more disadvantaged than Blair. Like Blair doesn't do the rocking and the squealing and the everything else that's going.

However, by the end of this study, Blair was attending Homai. Kitch, Homai's deputy principal, explained that over the years because of inclusion, Homai was beginning to focus on providing services to children with additional impairments:

> I suppose it would be true to say that the majority of blind children came to Homai. . . . We had full classes of children who were just blind. And I think gradually as the mainstreaming influence increased, there was a significant shift in the needs of the children who came to Homai. So gradually the ones who had a single disability were catered for in their mainstream schools and those who had significantly additional disabilities were the ones that came to Homai.

Zwhaun, Xena's mother, thought that special schools offered parents another educational option for their children, and she felt that Homai could offer parents courses as well:

> Those schools are good for ones who have more than like one disability . . . where schooling is not an option for them. They do have their place. But at least give parents a choice. . . . Like it would be good if Homai had maybe . . . (a) one year special ed paper or something. . . . We do need their expertise.

Xena's teacher and Davania's teacher thought that Homai offered students a quiet and safe place to learn in small classes. The two itinerant vision teachers, Jane and Catherine, said that Homai was part of a continuum of options which parents needed. Although, Catherine thought that Homai could be better utilised for short term specialist and holiday programmes:

> I do see a place but it is a short term placement for lots of reasons. . . . I

> mean sometimes parents choose to go in live in such a remote area that you can't provide the sort of service (which) maybe a term at Homai can provide. . . . I personally would like to see it bulldozed over and start again. That's what I would like. . . . It's not functioning in a way that's probably as effective as it could be. . . . The funding . . . we feel it's badly needed in other parts of the country. There's no doubt about that. . . . Homai could be used for a holiday programme. Say a student is having difficulty with the Nemeth code, . . . the student (and) maybe the teacher aide go up for a few days to have that. The specialised skills like O&M, nemeth, music, braille music, ... that's how I see Homai, using it as a specialised place for holiday programmes and again for just getting the kids together.

The O&M instructors in this study also saw Homai as an educational option which should be maintained. Xena's O&M instructor also commented that Homai was an assessment centre and that some children would not be successful in the mainstream because educational support was simply not available.

> I think there will always be a place for Homai for those children and as an assessment centre as well. . . . And I know it looks good if you say that everyone's mainstreamed and we're all nicely integrated but in reality (if) it's not working for that child then I don't really see the point in it.

The principal and deputy principal at Homai explained that even though Homai was still perceived as a special school, it was not. They said it was instead an educational centre which was changing and attempting to establish a new identity. For example, the principal said:

> Yes, we're a school. . . . But we are more than that as well because of the nature of our services. It's very broad from early childhood through to itinerant support through to in-class programmes, through to specialist programmes for multi-impaired students. . . . There's still a debate whether it should be Homai College or Homai Special Education Centre. Blind people say what's wrong with being blind. We like Homai College. It's a brand. That's what we are. I think it's trying to find an identity. It has an identity but we've yet to determine or define its current identity. We've got a strong history and I think we've got a strong future but it's trying to determine what we are.

They also commented that the grounds were inappropriate. The deputy principal commented:

> The plant is totally inappropriate. Everybody would admit that. But what we have done is actually try and make the best use of the space we've got. . . . Funny although it looks as though we're rattling around like peas in a pod, when it comes time to find a space for people to work, it's not easy.

The mainstream schools' principals talked about economics, Homai, and inclusion. Blair's principal noted that it was economical to maintain special schools where experts were grouped but that he would prefer to have similar funding allocated to regular schools which included blind students and for things such as teacher training. Xena's principal noted that the Ministry of Education was aware of the fact that children with disabilities needed more specialist teacher and classroom teacher support, but that the Ministry tended to instead provide teacher aide support which was cheaper. He thought that the Ministry should provide the same type of funding which was given to classrooms in special units or schools:

> The reality is that it is more economical to perhaps put seven or eight kids with one teacher than to say lets spread those children out and provide them all with some teacher time. . . . So they say, "Well let's provide some teacher aide time because it's much cheaper. Isn't it?" So you are getting untrained people having to do the, quote, the teaching. . . . It means there's actually more work for the classroom teacher not less. It's more because the teacher has got to liaise with the teacher aide and that takes time, got to do a lot more liaison with the parent. That takes time. Special programming for that child takes more time and those children don't come with a special ratio of saying "well because that's a special child that child is equal to .1 of a teacher or something like that." . . . The ratio of blind children per teacher as I understand it in a classroom (at Homai) is something like one to six or one to eight. . . . I mean you stick them in a mainstream class and the school gets absolutely no recognition do they? Not that sort of resource.

All of the participants in this chapter thought that inclusion was the ideal educational model. Davania's parents expected Davania to be mainstreamed in the future and thought she, as well as her sighted peers, would benefit from this:

> Stacey: I think it's good to be mainstreamed because then they do get the

> opportunity to interact with children that can see, obviously. . . . Children that can see are obviously more progressed . . . in some areas and so they can teach. . . . I see children teaching Davania how to talk properly. They correct her English like I do. . . . The ones that are sighted they learn patience and they learn that there are children that have got something wrong with them and not to be scared.

Xena's and Blair's mothers thought that inclusion was not well planned or resourced by the Ministry of Education, and Joanne thought that the Ministry in practice did not support inclusion:

> I mean the government says "Yeah mainstream." But I think if the government had their way no children would be mainstreamed children. . . . They make it as hard for you as possible. So, no, I don't think the government would mainstream if they could help it. . . . See it's something they don't want to spend money on even though they say they do.

Some also said that inclusion depended on the child. Xena's principal thought that children with multiple or intellectual impairments may not benefit from inclusion:

> We've had multi handicap children here and once again they are not easy to cater for. . . . Isn't it the philosophy of inclusion that . . . lots of those special classes and so on have closed down and then some specialist schools have closed down. And so you've got to ask yourself where have those children gone? Gone into mainstream schools and those schools have got to make the struggle to provide a programme for them. . . . What I am saying is that your most valuable resource is your trained teacher. And if you still got the children with special needs with the class because they are intellectually handicapped . . . to expect every teacher in the school to take that child on as they pass through the school is a big ask. And their programme needs are so different to the rest of the class.

All of the professionals in this chapter, however, felt that inclusion brought the most benefits to blind children but that if it was not resourced then inclusion would not be successful because blind children would be handicapped:

> Heidi: I think that the environment and society does impose some handicaps on people with vision disabilities. (Blindness) is obviously a disability because there are functional implications to the physical loss of not having sight. And I think in most cases it's a handicap because there's not enough funding to provide support for the parents. . . . There's not

> enough support in the education system. So I think in a lot of cases kids are not reaching their potential because of the outside factors.

The classroom teachers in the regular schools said that inclusion policy and practice meant that some children did not receive an adequate education. Sam, Xena's teacher, thought that mainstreaming had been sneakily introduced:

> Sneaky I reckon. It has sort of been eased in and was objected to because we knew that this would happen. "Oh no the hours would be provided" but.. . . . It's kind of an invasive type of action that's been introduced. . . . You really have to battle now to get anything. Now they say, "Oh but there's no hours. You go and ask your the Board of Trustees which has been given an allocation." That allocation goes nowhere.

Raquel, Blair's classroom teacher, thought that support for inclusion was a pipe dream:

> The philosophy on mainstreaming, I don't agree with mainstreaming. . . . I agree with mainstreaming because a child is entitled to the best education possible. But I don't think that the teacher is supported enough. It's like they have decided to take all these Resource Units and these IHC Centres and ban the funding there (and) just throw them into school. . . . I think you need somebody skilled, a skilled teacher to work alongside with you. I really do. It's a pipe dream. I can't see it happening myself.

Blair's teacher aide similarly felt that more support was needed in order to successfully mainstream or include Blair. It was interesting to note, though, that Jane, Blair's vision teacher, was "keen on mainstreaming" and Blair's principal also advocated strongly for inclusion with resources:

> He shouldn't have to be institutionalised to grow up. Although she probably has never used those words but that what, that's the message that (his mother) is saying. And that's and that's the message that we're taking on and are saying about Blair too. . . . This is a child who needs to learn, not to be molly coddled, but we've got to deliver the resources so that learning and that growth in the broader sense takes place.

All of the professionals at Homai advocated for inclusion but were all concerned about resources.

The deputy principal at Homai was disturbed because she was noticing that young blind children in regular schools were exhibiting "autistic tendencies" and thought that one factor causing this may be the noise and the expectations in school:

> The lack of interaction with those around them, including peers, but also to a certain extent adults; their repetitive, obsessional behaviours; echolalia; the inability to see the self as 'I'. . . . It's all those tendencies which one can see are built into autism but one would hesitate to say that they are 'autistic'. . . . I think blindness itself can be a very large contributing factor because of the lack of ability to perceive and to build up concepts. . . . But my own theory is . . . that for some of our children early kindergarten experiences can be very, very frightening. And I think there can be a contributing factor with the noise and the expectation on them that they behave normally.

She felt that inclusion was for some children but not for others:

> I'm saying that mainstreaming, special education or anything in between can be appropriate for some children, some of the time, but not for all children all of the time. It really depends an awful lot on the child, the parents, the family, the social situation, the school, how good the intervention is, how welcoming school is. . . . I think it can work wonderfully and does. For some children it can work beautifully. For others it's a total disaster. Because none of the appropriate things are in place. So I would say that for some children it would not be appropriate. My whole criteria would go on whether that child's individual needs, and the needs of the family, can be appropriately met.

The participants in this chapter, like the participants in previous chapters, had various thoughts about who was ultimately responsible for the education of blind children. All of the professionals in this chapter thought that the Ministry of Education was responsible for the education of blind children, and that other agencies such as the RNZFB were service providers and advocates. All of the parents believed that there was a team responsibility between parents, the Ministry of Education, and the RNZFB, but Xena's mother thought that the Ministry of Education was ultimately responsible for the education of blind children because they provided the resources. However, she also felt that the Ministry was not in touch with the actual needs of blind children and their educators. Davania's parents thought that parents were ultimately responsible for the education of their children:

> Junior: We have to do it for us.
> Stacey: Like we have the responsibility and Homai do it for us. . . . Yeah. It's our responsibility to make sure they get to school, to make sure they have everything that they need for school and make sure that they have breakfast before school. . . . Once he gets to school the teachers are responsible to give him an education and to do what they're there for. . . . And then once they get back home, we're responsible to make sure they do their homework and get enough rest to go to school.

Some of the participants also mentioned other agencies which they thought shared responsibility for the education of blind children. Liz, Xena's teacher aide, and Sam, Xena's teacher, noted that the Accident Compensation Corporation were responsible for Xena's education. Blair's teacher mentioned that Specialist Education Services (SES) were responsible for Blair's education.

A few participants were aware of a proposal to establish a Vision Education Agency which would have the overall responsibility for the education of blind children throughout the country. This proposal was being explored by a national working party. Bill, Homai's principal, advocated for this agency. He felt that it would be able to co-ordinate services and set national standards. Blair's vision teacher was looking forward to the establishment of this trust so that there would be a co-ordinated body which could advocate for blind children and perhaps fund O&M instruction to blind children. Xena's vision teacher supported the idea of a co-ordinating group but did not think that the funding should go through the RNZFB and that the group should simply advise the Ministry on how the funding should be distributed. Otherwise, she believed that another bureaucracy would be established. She also thought that she should still be employed by her school and not by the RNZFB or the proposed trust.

Zwhaun, Xena's mother, did not support the proposed representation on the trust's Board of Trustees which she thought had too many parents on it who would have vested interests:

> You're going to end up with inequitable things happening. . . . From my point of view no set of parents should really have the overall power, because human beings being what they are like, if you're in a position of power you can't tell me that's not going to affect your judgement. . . . There's going to be power struggles. . . . (Instead), have somebody from (a visual resource centre), somebody from the Foundation for the Blind, have a parent, have a teacher aide, Ministry, everyone who works in the field of visual impairment. . . . You know have this network set up and then I think it may work.

Heidi, Davania's O&M instructor, suggested that ideally she would like to see an independent broker service established which would work with parents to help them through a confusing education system:

> That broker person comes in and knows about all the different options there are for the child. Based on the assessment, they work with the parent to decide what are their priorities for the child. .. I mean at the moment they get a bit from here, a bit from there. They don't know what the hell's going on. A broker has to be someone who can advise the parents on how they can make choices about what's best for their child. And it may be that because there's not enough resources in Eketahuna for a very multi disabled kid then he does go to a special school. I think there are values in many set ups and they need to be there for parents.

Chapter Nine

Social Constructivism, Social Dislocation, and the Social Places for Blind People in New Zealand

As the title of this thesis suggests the meaning of blindness within the New Zealand education system both included and extended beyond blind people and their families. 'Meaning-making' within the social constructivist approach is not an isolated activity but is a social process (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Maturana & Varela, 19992, Mishler, 1986; Schwandt, 1994). The meaning of blindness in this study has involved educational policy makers and practitioners who at times seemed to be blind to the social, developmental and educational needs of blind children. The meaning of blindness in New Zealand is also a personal construction and the experiences and thoughts of the blind participants in this study, Tom, Anne, Hine, William, Sue, Stuart, Joe, Xena, Davania, and Blair, fit well into social constructivism theory.

Social constructivism can connect the social and personal experiences of the participants in this study (Ernest, 1995) in that each of the participants has had unique lived social experiences which has led them to construct the meaning of blindness in different ways. However, all of these meanings have roots in the same place: in New Zealand culture and in its education policy and practice. Vygotsky (1994/1930) noted that education transformed people. Learning was a social activity which caused individuals to adapt as they learned about their culture. Adaptations were brought about through conflict or experiences which aroused strong emotions (Morse, 1996; Vygotsky, 1993/1931; Vygotsky, 1978).

Similarly Maturana & Varela (1992) noted that individuals adapt and change when recurring perturbances exist for the individual. Social constructivists agree, suggesting that individuals react and adapt differently to the same experience or the same cultural information (Dell, 1985; Vygotsky, 1994/1935). Thus, for this thesis it was important to fully document the individual participant's constructions of blindness as well as the cultural and social constructions which may have brought about these personal constructions. Both the personal and the social need to be acknowledged to fully understand the effect and meaning of an impairment such as blindness. This acknowledgement can also address the concerns which some researchers have expressed about the social model of disability (Crow, 1996; French, 1993; Morris, 1991; Morris, 1993a; Peters, 1996; Pinder, 1996). For example, Crow (1996) stated that the present social model of disability did not allow her to speak about the personal pain and fatigue which her impairment brought to her life. It also addresses the issues which feminist researchers have brought to the fore about including difference in theoretical discussions about disability (Fraser, 1997; Georgeson, 1994).

According to Vygotsky the meaning of words, such as blindness, are experienced socially and then are internalised by the individual (Knox & Stevens, 1993). Words are interrelated with thought and when spoken reflect socialised discourse and meaning as well as personal concepts which are derived from personal experiences (Kozulin, 1986; Vygtosky, 1986). The layers of personal experiences and the individual's internal sense of a word interact in social discourse and in turn alter the cultural meaning of words (Kozulin, 1986; Newman & Holzman, 1993; Vygotsky, 1986). The individual is not just the passive recipient of word meaning, but contributes to and changes discourse in regards to word meanings through their social relationships (Newman & Holzman, 1993; Vygotsky, 1986; Vygotsky, 1994/1930).

One pertinent example in this study is the different ways in which the female participants reacted to that which they learned about the social construct of motherhood and blindness. Anne and Hine, the older participants in this study, had learned in the 1950s and 1960s that blind women, like other disabled women (Asch & Fine, 1988a; Kallianes & Rubenfeld, 1997), could not be adequate mothers. Anne said that she had thus decided not to have children because of her maternal concern that her children may not have the opportunity to participate in a variety of experiences. Hine also was concerned about her children and, like the true mother in

King Solomon's story, said she gave them to non-blind members of her family to raise whom she believed could be better mothers. Anne and Hine thus demonstrated that they were nurturing women who could be loving mothers. Sue, Davania, and Xena, who are younger, had learned in the 1980s and 1990s that they could be confident and successful mothers. Nevertheless, as Allan (1999) suggested using Foucault's work, individuals can transgress assigned identities. Xena, the youngest participant, transgressed the traditional identity of wife and mother by noting that she did not need a male partner for this task because artificial insemination and lesbian relationships were options for her.

In his writings on defectology Vygotsky suggested that, overall, an impairment meant social dislocation (Vygotsky, 1993/1924). When I read all the data in this study according to the themes which had been developed, I found that most of the participants' experiences and thoughts are evidence for the kind of social dislocation of disabled people which was suggested by Vygotsky. For Vygotsky (1993/1924) being socially dislocated was linked to being out of place and unsupported. Vygotsky (1993/1924) stated that social dislocation was also about feeling disconnected and sensing pain. Such social dislocation has been felt by all the participants in this study.

The blind participants' personal experiences and thoughts about blindness are the focus of this research and, as other researchers have suggested, when marginalised people are included in the research then a fuller understanding of the evolving issues can occur (Bishop, 1994; Clough & Barton, 1995; Crow, 1996; French, 1993; Meyer, Park, Grenot-Scheyer, Schwartz, & Harry, 1998; Morris, 1991; Peters, 1996; Pinder, 1996; Tripp, 1993). In this study the blind participants and the members of the discussion group have generously and willingly shared their thoughts about their experiences of blindness in the New Zealand education system. It is hoped, as others have noted about research design (Merriam, 1988; Reinharz,1992; Stake, 1988; Yin, 1984), that the qualitative and case study method which was used in this study has helped to bring the participants' rich experiences to life.

Social Location and the Family

The lives of the participants in this study have brought to the fore one important divergence from Vygotsky's notion of social dislocation. Most of the life experiences of the participants do not support Vygotsky's (1993/1924) suggestion that the social dislocation of a disabled child firstly begins at birth in the family because a disabled child will have a different place within the family than that of a non-disabled child. For most of the participants in this study, their first social position within the family was the same as their siblings. Their memories of their time at home before they encountered the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind or the educational system were about being happily included in their family's lives. They did not feel difference within their families and said that they felt like any other child. They were supported; explored their surroundings with their siblings; and said that they fitted in their community. This acceptance is exemplified by some of the participants' memories about how they had learned that they were blind. They did not learn this within their homes but through their contact with others and it was usually considered a negative lesson.

Vaughan (1993) has suggested that blindness seems to be associated with a disaster discourse by those who are not blind. Lady B., the charity worker from the Foundation for the Blind, taught Tom that his blindness would separate him from his family. She told Tom's family that they were not expected, nor perhaps would be able, to care for their children, and that the children needed to be sent away to the Foundation. William learned from others who exclaimed over his ability to do ordinary tasks that he was inferior and not expected to accomplish much. Sue was told that she must have had something thrown into her eyes. Xena seemed to think that she had done something wrong and had caused her own blindness. She said that she was too impatient and this resulted in her premature birth and the subsequent medical intervention which caused her blindness. Also, as Wagner-Lampl & Oliver (1994) noted about other blind people, Xena seemed to believe that she somehow deserved her impairment because she was born prematurely. Despite this predominant discourse of disaster, some of the participants stated that they did not accept the views which others held about them and, like Jernigen (1966), said that when they initially learned about their blindness they associated it with alternative techniques of performing tasks. Anne said that she had learned that she had to read by touch instead of sight.

Oliver (1988) and Finkelstein (1991) have noted that some disabled children are taught that they are ill and different when they learn about their impairment. This is in part because they continually encounter intrusive medical professionals. Stuart could perhaps be such an example because he was hospitalised at age ten months and restrained for approximately two months so that he would not damage his bandaged eyes. However, perhaps because he was so young, he did not take on an illness related identity. His family rejected both the disaster and the illness discourse as well. He stated that his mother never thought it was relevant to read a book about blindness or to accept any explanations about her son's development which were based on theories about blindness. Stuart was simply Stuart.

Other families in this study also reacted outside of the disaster and illness discourse when they learned about their child's impairment. For example, Joe's mother said she was distressed for a few weeks but then got on with life with the rest of her family of pre-schoolers. She said that she simply had no time to be overly concerned with Joe's blindness. Davania's mother was actually delighted to hear that her daughter was blind because she had lost Davania's twin. She was now a mother and had a daughter and had reason to celebrate as Ferguson & Asch (1989) have suggested. Similarly, Xena's mother, after being initially shocked by her daughter's size, said that she only felt overwhelmed by love and that she did not experience any of the stages of grief which the professionals around her expected. A number of researchers have suggested that professionals in the lives of families with disabled children need to focus on adaptive responses and society's negative response to the impairment instead of labelling the family or focusing on the parent's grief response (Turnbull, Blue-Banning, Behr, & Kehrns, 1986; Lipsky, 1980; Wills, 1994).

One family in this study was, however, greatly affected by the disaster discourse and the negative societal response to their child. This was Hine's family. Hine left her family at age two to go to the Foundation's home for pre-schoolers where, after talking to a professional, her family thought that she would have more opportunities. Hine lost her family and her culture in a way similar to that of the indigenous people of North America and Australia who were taken to boarding schools (Bull, 1991; Ing, 1991; Kennedy, 1996; Urion, 1991). Hine said that as a pre-schooler she did not actually remember her family and like Kennedy (1996) was traumatically re-introduced to them at age four. Hine said that she was different from her siblings and did not fit into her family because of her time away from home. Hine is perhaps the only participant in this study who lost her social position within her family. However, this appears to be due to professional intervention and separation at a young age from her family. There also remains the question of whether or not Hine was separated at such a young age from her family because she was Maori. The other participants of her age, Tom and Anne, who were of European descent were separated from their families to live at Sunrise at about age four.

Kingi and Bray (2000) have noted that some Maori people believe that disability is related to their colonisation and the loss of their traditions and their language. Disability in the life of Hine seemed to include both her blindness and colonisation experiences akin to those of other indigenous people at residential schools (Bull, 1991; Ing, 1991; Kennedy, 1996; Kingi & Bray, 2000; Urion, 1991). Hine stated that she was raised as a European or Pakeha at the Foundation and did not accept the mores of her whanau (family) and iwi (tribe). At the community meeting place (marae) she also felt different. This situation was possibly exacerbated by her placement with a 'reputable family' who went horse riding and to their bach on holidays. In contrast her own family wore second hand clothes and at one point had twenty one people living in a four bedroom house. As Asch and Fine (1988a) pointed out, given Hine's race, disability, and gender, Hine would be expected to be poor. However, she was not raised by her family. Her life experiences as a child may be considered luxurious by her family. She stated that she was thought of as "a snob' and was not happy. Hine's experience sharply contrasts with that of Davania's.

While Davania attended the special school, Homai, she lived at home and had regular contact with her extended family. Davania was a part of the every day life of her family and was keenly and happily involved, like the rest of her family, in sports.

Despite Hine's separation from her Maori family and culture, it is interesting to note that later as an adolescent and as an adult, she did seem to attempt to reclaim her Maori identity and find a place in the Maori community. During high school her close and supportive non-blind friends who accepted her "as (she) was" were of Maori and Pacific Island ancestry. Her two husbands were of Maori descent and as an adult Hine was involved with Ngati Kaapoo. Ngati Kaapoo was an organisation of Maori and Pacific Island people and formed in response to the Foundation's limited awareness of Maori culture, with the goal that blind people who were Maori could speak and advocate for themselves. Similar organisations of disabled people have developed in other countries in response to calls to change the status quo and to obtain full civil and human rights (Asch & Fine, 1988; Barton, 1992; Driedger, 1989; Funk, 1987; Hahn, 1983; Hahn, 1987; Oliver, 1992). Hine, even though she lost her biological family, found her own place and found that she belonged within this organisation of Maori families with blind members.

Social Dislocation and the Place for Blind People

Vygotsky (1993/1924) stated that social dislocation also occurs, not only in the family, but later in a child's life in the unusual environments in which they would live and which would be unlike other community settings. The segregated environments of special schools may represent such an environment (French, 1996; Galloway, Armstrong, & Tomlinson, 1994; Humphries & Gordon, 1992; Kennedy, 1996; King, Raynes, & Tizard, 1971; Mishne, 1979; Rindfleisch, 1993; Rindfleisch & Rabb, 1984; Sobsey, 1994; Swanson & Schaefer, 1993). Special school settings have been under critical scrutiny for a number of years (Aldis, 1932; Blatt & Kaplan, 1974; French, 1996; Humphries & Gordon, 1992; Oliver, 1988; Rindfleisch, 1993; Sobsey, 1994; Tizard & Tizard, 1974; Wooden, 1976). Vygotsky argued that segregated schools were antisocial and discouraged full societal participation (Vygotsky, 1993/1924; Vygotsky, 1993/1925) while others have criticised their function as a place to regulate people who were thought to be unproductive (Oliver, 1988; Oliver, 1989). The only special school for blind children in New Zealand was administered by the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind (RNZFB) (also called 'the Institute for the Blind', 'the Institute', 'the Foundation for the Blind', and 'the Foundation') and according to the RNZFB Act of Parliament, the RNZFB was, and is still, responsible for the education of all blind people in New Zealand (Catran & Hansen, 1992; New Zealand Government, 1979).

The experiences at the special school for the majority of the participants in this study greatly contrasted with their experience at home in their families. Of the ten participants in this study only two, Joe and Xena, did not attend the special school at some time. Also, in 1996, according to the demographic figures which were obtained by this study, half of New Zealand students who used braille as their literacy medium had attended the special school. Some of the older participants in this study also boarded at either the special pre-school or the special school and their memories of leaving home were filled with trauma. Researchers in other countries have documented the all encompassing negative effect of leaving home and placement in an institution in other countries (King, Raynes, & Tizard, 1971; Mishne, 1979; Rindfleisch, 1993; Swanson & Schaefer, 1993). One participant in the Humphries and Gordon (1992) study in England compared this change in living environment with being imprisoned. Similarly, the participants in this study talked about being left; crying for days on end to go home; having little freedom or privacy; regimentation; and not understanding the reasons why they had to leave home just because they were blind. Some participants believed that they had to attend a special school because they needed to learn braille and this was not, or could not, be taught in regular schools. Tom's, Anne's, and William's families entirely uprooted and moved near the special school so that their children would be close to them.

In the residential institution, either at Sunrise or at Homai, Tom, Anne, Hine, Sue, and Stuart richly described lives which seemed to be under constant synoptic surveillance and control by the school's hostel staff. Anne felt safe only in her bed. Tom, Hine and Sue spoke about doing "everything by the bell" and lining up in "formations" for treats and also for travel purposes. Sue spoke about even having her words controlled during meal times when she had to say very specific sentences at prescribed times. Like Vygotsky (1993/1924), Stuart said that the special school was an alien environment where blindness was emphasised. The staff who worked in the hostels when the older participants attended the school also seemed to be at times blind to the emotional needs of the children in their care. Staff were described as "cruel, mean, not loving," and "not mothers." All of the blind adults in this study felt that the staff were uneducated, untrained, and resembled those found in other studies of special schools (Humphries & Gordon, 1992). Participants spoke about humiliation and physical and emotional punishment. Sobsey (1994) has suggested that the residential aspect of special schools may inherently be abusive. In this present study, no participant talked about their residence at the special school in a positive way.

Sullivan and Munford (1998) have suggested that resistance to a disabling environment can occur at the micro level. The blind participants in this study spoke about how they and other blind children at the school attempted to find and assert their own power. However, it is interesting that throughout all of the years of the participants' attendance at the school a hierarchy within the school developed which was based on vision. Children with some sight were at the top of the hierarchy. Anne said that she was encouraged to take advantage of these children as she recounted the saying "you eulogise the volunteers and utilise the partialees." The student hierarchy was also based on the number of impairments which a child possessed. Tom, who also had an orthopaedic impairment, was called "spastic" and William noted that children with multiple disabilities were last to be picked for teams.

Age also seemed to be a factor in the hierarchy. Anne stated that younger girls were not supposed to interact with older girls and she was entrapped by an older girl who took advantage of this rule. However, older girls became mother figures for Hine when they took her under their wing. Hine was very talented in music and she stated that this was the reason behind this affectionate attention. In my observations at the special school, Homai, gender also seemed to be an issue within the hierarchy much as in society (Brenner, 1991; Frankenberg, 1993; Fraser, 1997; Fraser & Gordon, 1994; Lorber & Farrell, 1991; West & Zimmerman, 1991). Sammy, Davania's classmate, who had some vision and was an older child in the class, continually exercised his greater physical power over the girls in the class and asked for the greatest amount of adult attention. Davania was also concerned during my observations that she display her physical and cognitive abilities and not "come last." The hierarchy of the special school thus could be thought of as an intense reflection of wider society where ability, age, gender, and race seem to be determinants for greater success, wealth, and power.

Some participants remembered incidents in the classrooms which were indicative of a kind of professional abuse of power and control, aspects of segregating settings which have been documented in other studies (Finkelstein, 1991; Oliver, 1989; Scott, 1969; Sobsey, 1994; Tomlinson, 1982; Vaughan, 1993). Sue said that her parents were treated disrespectfully by the principal at the time and thus felt "unworthy of his attention." William, who did not live at the special school, dreaded going to school for years because his teacher had forced his head under the water in the swimming pool despite his immense fear of the water. His parents had spoken on his behalf to the principal but William said that the teacher simply denied the incident and no action was taken. William's memories of the event and his feelings were not valued enough for change to occur. He and his family were powerless in this situation. Hine also experienced such lack of power. She had found two mother substitutes in her time in the Foundation residential schools who provided her with security and support. However, it seems that the school rules about maintaining a professional distance from students were enforced to Hine's detriment. Hine was traumatically separated from two more women whom she considered to be "mother" to her. She was prevented from continuing to see a nurse from Sunrise when she attended Homai because there had to be "a straight cut-off" and she said that she was prevented from developing a close relationship with a Maori teacher because "they didn't think (it) would be a very good relationship."

Some of the participants believed that they were controlled and disabled by rules about their mobility and movement while attending the special school. For example, Stuart said that Orientation and Mobility (O&M) instruction in the school was used as a way to regiment blind people and that this regimentation was indicated by the fact that they only travelled in the sighted community during O&M lessons. Tom and Anne were not allowed to travel off the grounds of the special school on their own. Stuart was also prevented from taking outside music lessons and joining the local tramping club. He felt that he was restricted to Homai's territory and required to socialise only with his blind peers. Tom stated that he was able to circumvent the rule which stated that he had to walk with other blind classmates from the special school to the high school which he was attending. On the other hand, Hine found that she was not allowed to travel when she went home from the special school because her family did not acknowledge her skills and abilities. Hine and Sue each talked about how they were prohibited from using their white canes and how not using the canes restricted their independent movements. Tom, Anne, and Hine also stated that they, at times, felt pressure from professionals to use a guide dog instead of a white cane, which they preferred. However, they resisted this control and made their own decision about how they would move within the community.

Surveillance

The work of Foucault is relevant to this study in that he has discussed how the body has been socially controlled and regulated but can resist such regulation (Branson & Miller, 1989; Hughes & Patterson, 1997; Turner, 1994). A significant regulation strategy which Foucault has identified is unidirectional surveillance (Fraser, 1989). Surveillance can occur synoptically through organisational observation arrangements of certain populations or on a more detailed level in which individuals are watched and cannot see their watcher. Resistance to such surveillance can occur by challenging disabling structures and disabling policy (Sullivan & Munford, 1998). The most obvious form of synoptic surveillance for the participants in this study occurred because they attended the only school which was organised to administratively separate and thus easily 'observe' blind children. None of the participants could see when they were being watched. However, they did seem to know that they were being watched and that it was invasive.

Tom spoke about how he found one place in the yard where he tentatively thought he couldn't be watched. He also spoke about how he was observed in the showers; how his personal mail was talked about; and how his "corduroy trousers" were talked about in the Foundation's Board of Trustee's meeting. Hine also had her letters read, and the staff were so concerned about their content that they brought her mother up for a meeting. Sue was greatly affected by the comparisons which the staff made about her body during observed bath times. Sue and William also stated that they felt powerless when staff or teachers watched their behaviour and they did not know that they were present. When William attempted suicide he had little control over his treatment and recovery. Because he was blind the societal discourse at the time constructed him as belonging more to the Foundation than to his family or himself. The Foundation was contacted against his will and a social worker visited. William stated that the Foundation's social worker also then broke confidentiality and that "half the blind people" knew about his suicide attempt. He was thus also observed by blind people themselves.

During my observations at Homai, the blind children were both observers and the 'observed.' From the sidelines they observed non-blind children from a visiting regular class as they played in the playground. During times when all of the students from the regular class and Homai's classrooms were together, the blind students became objects of interest and were watched as they sang songs together. There was little interaction between the classes and this seemed to be exacerbated by the fact that the regular class, or the reverse integration class, only visited for a short time and then were followed by another visiting group of students. Similarly, the blind participants spoke about how other groups were brought to the special school and watched them in their activities. Sue and Tom stated that they felt like freaks and animals during these times. As Lukoff (1972) pointed out, the participants' blindness dominated the public's responses to them and they were not seen as unique individual members of the community.

All of the blind participants and their parents spoke about how they also felt conspicuous when they were in public and that they were treated with disrespect. Stacey, Davania's mother, said that she felt disapproving stares from others that told her that she was not supposed to be in public with her daughter. Joanne, Blair's mother, was questioned about whether or not her son was in a loving family. Jenny was conscious that her son was stared at by others. Sue also felt that on her class outings that she and her blind classmates were even more noticeably different from other people and thus received additional unwanted attention. The white cane, the international symbol for blindness, also seemed to draw unwanted attention particularly for the female participants. Hine stated that she felt like she was "on show" when she crossed roads with her cane. Xena stated that she really would just rather see than use the white cane and thus avoided using her cane. Sue stated, though, that despite being more noticeable that she did not wish to appear incompetent and used her cane for this reason. Similarly, William pointed out that if blind children were unable to independently move around their regular schools they may be thought of as incompetent and then stigmatised. The participants' thoughts about the white cane fit well with Goffman's (1990) idea that stigma is associated with being on stage, incompetence, and social control. Goffman also noted that public encounters contributed to social control.

Xena resisted surveillance and stigma. She exercised control by using her peers as sighted guides. This helped her to avoid the stigma of difference which Xena associated with the white cane. Similarly, a participant in Allan's (1999) study resisted her teachers' unnecessary constructions of her as different by refusing to sit in a specified place at the front of the class. Finkelstein (1991) noted that it was logical for disabled people to attempt to appear non-disabled because of the negative societal constructions which came with a disability. Xena's teachers, though, thought that this practice placed her peers into the helper role too often and that this would negatively impact on Xena's friendships. This has also been suggested by the research (Bishop, Jubala, Stainback, & Stainback, 1996) and may be a dilemma which blind children encounter.

Each of the participants resisted and adapted differently to their personal experiences of regulation and surveillance. Tom felt that he was at the "bottom of the pecking order" so he determinedly decided that he would be different and become independent of the Foundation. He learned to "put up walls" around himself and to be deceptive. When his letters were talked about, this became the last straw for Tom and he moved away from the Foundation block. Anne said that she wanted to be the same as her brothers and sisters and this, along with her parent's drive, enabled her to achieve. She said that she needed to "learn to be sighted" in order to leave the special school behind. Sue who was a happy little girl at home, became shy and withdrawn at Homai. She remembered crying all night every time she had to leave her family for Homai after a holiday. Both Hine and Stuart became deliberately rebellious. As a young boy Stuart said that this was the only way for him to articulate how he felt about the system which had brought him to Homai and away from his family. He said he thus caused "more trouble than Homai was prepared to be bothered with." Hine, though, regarded her insurrection as adolescent rebellion against her family. She felt trapped and wanted to lead a "normal" life, so she left school and Homai, which she regarded as her family and home. However, unlike what may happen in the family home, Hine was not subsequently welcomed back at Homai and she in a sense became homeless and without a place.

Xena's and Joe's families resisted the social discourse which stated that the RNZFB was the place for blind children. For these families, their children belonged like other children in their communities and with their families. However, both families felt that their local educational system could not provide the education which Joe and Xena needed. Joe was thus sent away to board in another city and Xena attended a non-local school in her city but was able to live at home. Like the other participant who boarded, Joe remembered his departure from his family to attend primary school as traumatic. He hid in a shed to avoid going, and then when he was at school he fought with all of his classmates for the first year because he was so homesick. His mother, Jenny, also remembered that he withdrew emotionally during this time. Thus, although Joe was not attending Homai, he still experienced the traumatic separation which was experienced by the other participants because of the residential nature of his primary school experience. Participants in this study who attended a residential primary school were quite young when they left home, ranging in age from two to nine. As suggested in previous research, the participants' attendance at a residential school was remembered as a negative and perhaps a harmful experience which may have affected their ability to find a strong personal identity with a family history (Bowlby, 1969; King, Raynes, & Tizard, 1971; Mishne, 1979; Perry, Charles, & Matheson, 1986; Rindfleisch, 1993; Swanson & Schaefer, 1993).

Having a Place at Kindergarten

When the participants were included in their communities or families, they all felt like they belonged and had a place. For example, all of the participants at some time attended regular kindergartens and this experience was described as positive and happy. They also all remembered friends who helped establish their social places. Anne developed a close and reciprocal friendship with a boy with an intellectual impairment and said that she was his brains and he was her eyes. This reciprocal relationship is similar to a friendship which is described by Youniss (1983) in which difference is recognised, respected, and valued. Blindness at kindergarten thus did not mean entering into a difficult social position and was not considered a "defective condition, an inadequacy, abnormality, or illness" (Vygotsky, 1993/1924, p. 83-84).

Hine and William did not feel 'different' in the sense that they were not stigmatised at kindergarten and never felt left out. However, William's local kindergarten refused to take him, so his parents assertively found another kindergarten which would include him. As in other studies, parents could not always choose where to go, and they were not accepted everywhere (Booth, 1994; Slee, 1999; Sullivan & Munford, 1998). Nevertheless, Sue, Stuart, and Joe all stated that they were accepted and fitted into their kindergartens. The adult blind participants also stated that they were treated the same as the other children and no extra "fuss" was made about them. As Vygotsky (1993/1924) suggested, blindness was not a handicap, the focus was not on difference, and the participants were valued as children.

It is interesting to note that kindergartens are places where children are encouraged to explore their environment and learn through social interaction, play, movement, and music. These activities have also been documented to be effective tools in teaching blind children of any age (Daveson & Edwards, 1998; Erwin, 1991; Hatlen & Curry, 1987; House & Davidson, 2000; Lydon & McGraw, 1973; Nielsen, 1996; O&M Curriculum Working Party, 1993; Shaw, 1986; Stratton, 1996). The memories of the blind adults in this study were all indicative of this learning. They talked about their friends, the people, the objects and the activities at the kindergartens including nice teachers, my cousin, crank telephones, big ships, the sand pit, play dough, finger painting, slides, and climbing frames.

The blind children in this study who attended regular kindergartens had specialist support and adults around them. Xena did not attend her local kindergarten but instead attended one which was close to the visual resource centre and her specialist teacher. She also had teacher aide support at the kindergarten. Xena stated that she was aware of her blindness during this time. This may be due to the fact that she did have additional adult support. However, she also stated that her blindness didn't worry her then, and this perhaps indicates that her kindergarten experiences were happy and inclusive because her blindness was not an issue at the time.

On the other hand, Blair and Davania did not seem to have a successful kindergarten expperience. Blair attended his kindergarten with his teacher aide who recalled that Blair gained tactile experiences and an awareness of other people at kindergarten. However, he had few social experiences because, she stated, he withdrew into himself and because he also was withdrawn from class for some instruction. He thus did not fully participate in kindergarten activities. Blair also had language delays and thus may have had difficulty accessing his peers' play space through language (Corsano, 1979 (as cited in Smith, 1992)). Because of his blindness, he may have had difficulty engaging in parallel play or moving near the play area without adult support (Corsano, 1979 (as cited in Smith, 1992)). It also seemed that his kindergarten was unable to employ Erwin's (1996) suggestions that teacher aides should not be assigned to children and that instead unobtrusive assistance which provided contextual information about the environment needed to be used. Blair's teacher aide seemed to be fully attached to Blair. She worked with him outside of kindergarten hours at home and also went with him as a full time teacher aide to his primary school.

Davania, who also had language difficulties, attended her local kindergarten and her parents accompanied her to kindergarten in the same manner as a full time teacher aide would accompany a student. They provided extra and direct support to her on behalf of the teachers because they said they thought that the staff were unprepared and unable to cope with their daughter's developmental needs. Although, teacher aide hours were eventually "assigned" to Davania, when these hours ran out Davania left her local kindergarten and was enrolled at Homai's kindergarten programme where there were teachers who were prepared to cope with her needs. It seems that it was not her blindness or other impairments which caused Davania's segregation but the availability of specialist support and resources.

Similarly, when Davania was being considered for placement in a regular school at the time that I observed her at Homai, support and resources were considered the major barriers to her placement and a school with a special unit was considered the best option by her teacher and her parents. On the other hand, Davania's O&M instructor stated that she believed that Davania would be positively challenged in a regular class with some itinerant support. It is interesting to note that when Davania attended a regular holiday programme for children in her community she adjusted well and was included along with all the other children in the programme without extra support. The staff at this programme welcomed her and hoped that she would return to the programme the following year. As reported in other studies, staff beliefs about Davania seemed to be that she was like any other child and belonged in her community (Ballard & McDonald, 1995; Purdue, Ballard & MacArthur, 1998).

Striving for a Place in Regular Schools

Support and Resources

Support and resources were the primary reasons behind Joe's, Xena's, and Blair's parents' decisions about where to send their child to school. Parents with non-disabled children do not have this same concern and can choose between schools which can adequately meet their child's developmental needs. All of the parents in this study at some point have either needed to relocate their family or relocate their blind child away from their local community. This relocation occurred so that their child could attend either the special school or a regular school with a visual resource centre. These environments provided appropriate educational support for their child. This did not always occur at regular schools despite the long history of mainstreaming blind children and the provision of itinerant specialist services (Catran & Hansen, 1992; Erwin, 1991; Havill, 1972; Jamieson, Partlett, & Pocklington, 1977; Koestler, 1976; Spungin,1991). In 1972, Havill was pessimistic about New Zealand's ability to include blind children because of its rural nature and the difficulty to thus provide support. However, since 1972 the number of centres of expertise for blind children has more than doubled from five to thirteen (Mitchell & Mitchell 1985; Parents of Vision Impaired (NZ) Inc., 1996). The number of students on the roll of these centres though has also almost doubled since 1984 (see Table 9) and as Nagel (2000) has pointed out the student to teacher ratio is about three times greater than in other countries such as Australia.

Ballard (1999a) defined an inclusive education system as one in which disabled children "retain the right to be included as they wish, and to have the resources necessary to meet their needs" (p. 12). However, most of the participants in this study have had problems obtaining resources when they did attend a regular school and were thus not included. Without access to an appropriate education blind people are prevented from learning about their place and their culture. Without support teachers may view inclusion as a burden (Bailey, 1995; Vlachou & Barton, 1994). Vygotsky (1993/?) similarly wrote in his undated manuscript that blindness brings to blind people barriers to obtaining a social position within society and he thought that, unlike those with sight, blind people would need to continually strive to obtain a social place (Vygotsky, 1993/?). He further posited that blind children would find their place in regular schools and not in special schools which are artificial because the world in which they live is made up of mostly non-blind people (Vygotsky 1993/1924).

In this study, the participants' experiences in regular schools were indicative of the barriers and subsequent "striving" which Vygotsky wrote about (Vygotsky, 1993/?, p. 101). This striving was particularly evident for the participants who had attended the special school and were then later 'chosen' to attend a regular school. For example, Tom, the oldest participant, was prevented from participating in all of his regular high school activities such as sports and military drills. However, although Tom felt marginalised, he also mostly felt privileged to be going to a regular school and simply loved the ordinary things in the world away from Homai. Similarly, Anne felt that she should be praised more by her blind peers because she was learning "to be sighted" through her attendance at her local intermediate school. Hine also felt privileged. William felt like he was now very important and Sue felt like she had made the grade. They felt that they had accomplished a great achievement by being able to attend an ordinary school. Disabled children must often earn the right to education that is available without question to others in their community.

The participants' attendance at their local schools was not considered a right in New Zealand until the 1989 Amendments to the Education Act (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1989). Some of the participants in this study were also refused entry to regular schools. Stuart was denied entry to a number of primary schools but was accepted by his local primary school because there was a woman nearby who knew braille and could provide instruction in this. Choice was unavailable to Stuart's parents because, as happens elsewhere, schools did not want him (Booth, 1994; Slee, 1999; Sullivan & Munford, 1998). School attendance was determined by the availability of support and resources and again reflects the idea, as noted by other researchers, that education is a privilege for blind children (Ballard, 1996; Ballard, 1998; Slee, 1993; Sullivan & Munford, 1998). Joe's mother, Jenny, stated that she decided not to send him to Homai in Auckland but did have to send her child away to another city because there were not adequate resources or support for Joe at his local school. She had no school choice in her community but she was able to transgress the discourse at the time which stated that Joe had to go to Homai because the family was able to afford the costs of boarding. Other parents, however, may not have this option available to them.

For the younger students in the 1990s when choice was supposedly available to them, education seemed still to be thought of as a privilege and only able to take place in a special place because of resource availability. This was either at Homai or at a school with a visual resource centre. Xena's parents decided that they did not want to break up their family and sent her to the school with a visual resource centre away from their community but in the same city. This had a negative impact on Xena's social life. She was not in the same neighbourhood as her school peers and thus had virtually no interaction with them after school. Like other blind children, she spent most of her time after school alone (Hoben & Linstrom, 1980; Kekelis, 1992; Kekelis & Sacks, 1992; MacCuspie, 1992; MacCuspie, 1996; Sacks, 1992; Sacks & Kekelis, 1992; Skellenger, 1997; Wolffe & Sacks, 1997). At school Xena had only one or two friends and did not seem to be developing the strong friendship bonds which some researchers have spoken about (Higgins & Parsons, 1983; Youniss, 1983). Higgins and Parsons (1983) stated that primary school children usually spend many years together and subsequently develop many close relationships, while Youniss (1983) noted that children of Xena's age develop a group and peer identity which is enhanced by spending time with each other.

The Elusive Nature of Friendships

Xena's social life at school was limited but this situation was not unusual to the participants in this study even though the literature has noted that one of the reasons that children attend regular schools is to find friends in the community (Grenot-Scheyer, Harry, Park, Schwartz, & Meyer, 1998). As documented by others (G. Allan Roeher Institute, 1990; Hoben & Lindstrom, 1980; Karagiannis, Stainback, & Stainback, 1996; Kishi & Meyer, 1994; MacArthur & Morton, 1999; MacCupsie, 1996; Staub, Schwartz, Gallucci, & Peck, , 1994; Whitaker, 1994), most of the blind participants in this study spoke about how they had difficulty finding friends at regular schools and thus did not feel included. Of the few participants who easily found friends, Hine, who had accepting friends who were of Pacific Island and Maori descent, and Stuart who had very accepting primary school friends, said that they felt included and loved going to regular schools.

On the other hand, William said that he felt like he was a novelty at regular schools with his non-blind peers and preferred, and was closest to, his blind classmates. Sue withdrew again at regular school and felt, at times, out of place. Tom, Anne, and Xena seemed to have "different" friends who were on the margins. Tom and Anne had friends who were Jewish. Xena's closest friend was of Asian descent. Blair had few interactions with any of his non-blind classmates. The only participant in this study who did not have difficulty finding friends during his attendance at a regular primary school was Stuart. Stuart was also the only participant who had some sight which contributed to his ability to participate in play activities. Shared engagement in such activities has been associated with the development of friendships (Schneekloth, 1989; Sleewenhoek, Boter, & Vermeer, 1995).

There seemed to be a number of reasons why friendships were so elusive for the participants and these seemed to be linked to gender, as well as blindness related issues. For example, Anne and Sue spoke about how during adolescence they were unable to participate in some gender related activities. Anne had difficulty cruising the local shopping areas like her peers, and Sue was understandably not interested in television or in popular fashion which was displayed in magazines. They thus had little in common with their non-blind peers and had difficulty finding friends who shared their interests (Rosenblum, 1998; Rosenblum, 2000). Xena was interested in popular television programmes but seemed to be unable to learn acceptable social information and skills from them. For example, her teacher aide stated that Xena had difficulty distinguishing between cartoon and 'real' programmes and imitated the bossy behaviour of a cartoon character. She also stated that the target audience of these programmes were for children who were younger than Xena. Kent (1983) has suggested that the difficulty blind girls have in accessing visual information can have a negative effect on their ability to be accepted by their peers, and thus contribute to their social dislocation.

The female participants in this study did not have the same social experiences as other adolescent girls. Non-disabled girls receive emotional support from their friendships and a better understanding of their strengths and place in society as they spend more time away from home in the company of others (Grenot-Scheyer, Harry, Park, Schwartz, & Meyer, 1998; Higgins & Parsons, 1983; Meyer, Minondo, Fisher, Larson, Dunmore, Black, & D'Aquanni, 1998; Smith, 1996; Youniss, 1983). However, the participants in the present study were able to transcend some aspects of this dislocation in different ways. Anne specifically exerted control over her appearance by giving her sister in whom she had confidence the power to dress her. She also obtained significant recognition in her schools through her achievements. Sue withdrew and avoided going to new places but later became quite involved in disability rights movements and actively sought activities where she could meet people. Xena spent an inordinate amount of time flipping the pages of print books, imagining what was on their pages, and attempting to understand and be the same as the other children in her class. Erin and Corn (1994) described a similar situation.

Blind children in their study imitated the reading behaviour of their non-blind peers in an effort to find meaning in this behaviour.

Some of the blind male participants in this study also discussed gender related activities and their ability to participate in them. Tom spoke about how he was excluded from school during military drills; how he felt he was missing something because he was unable to drive a car; and how he felt out of place when his class was participating in sporting events such as rugby events which Messner (1991) described as 'doing gender'. Joe said that he found it hard during primary school to make friends. At intermediate school he would sit inside and study during lunch time while his peers played rugby outside, and at high school he preferred to be alone and spent most of his time at home. His mother stated that she thought that Joe had little in common with his peers in that he did not drive a car or play sports. She said he also avoided social activities where he felt that he was being helped. For example, a peer may invite Joe to an event but Joe sometimes interpreted the invitation as help rather than as an offer of companionship which is reciprocal (Youniss, 1983).

Some of the female participants also mentioned that they felt "different" when their peers helped them too much, a point described by other researchers (Bishop, Jubala, Stainback, & Stainback, 1996). However, the participants in this study also noted that they would be able to perform tasks like their classmates without help if the tasks were made accessible for them by their teachers. Xena wished that she had sight so that she would be able to help others instead of always being the one who is helped. My observations in Xena's and Blair's classrooms confirmed that it was important for teachers and teacher aides to be unobtrusive and to allow natural interactions (Erwin, 1991; Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli, & MacFarland, 1997 (as cited in MacArthur & Morton, 1999); MacArthur & Dight, 2000). For example, in Blair's class his teacher aide always sat with him. She also at times was unaware of student interactions which were taking place with him and interrupted them. His teacher attempted to encourage interactions by assigning 'buddies' to him but then his 'buddies' became very authoritarian and because they were mostly helpers did not have the opportunity to form reciprocal friendships. She speculated that his classmates were too young and were unable to appropriately take on a reciprocal but supportive role. However Kishi and Meyer (1994) warned that children in helping roles may model the behaviours of teachers and teacher aides, and Meyer, Park, Grenot-Scheyer, Schwartz, and Harry (1998) concluded from their own research that helping relationships are qualitatively different from, and therefore should not be confused with, friendships.

Vygotsky (1993/1924) pointed out that sighted children, not blind children, need to be re-educated in order to be able to fully interact and become social with blind children. During my observations in Xena's classroom the other children did seem to want to explore the meanings of blindness although it was in a playful or teasing manner. For example, some boys who were sitting next to Xena pretended to braille words by poking holes in a piece of paper. They then giggled as they took Xena's hand and rubbed it across the paper and asked her to read the braille for them. There were no planned education programmes about how to fully interact with blind children in the settings which I observed for this study such as those advocated by Bowden and Thorburn (1993) and others (Rogow, 1991 (as cited in Rettig, 1994); Scheffers, 1982). Bowden and Thorburn (1993), for example, designed numerous lessons for four classmates of a young blind girl which delved into the specific effects of blindness and positive ways to interact with her. The teachers in this study though seemed to be at a loss as to how to increase the social interactions of their blind students. For example, Anne described how as an intermediate student she was placed in a difficult social position when she mentioned to her teacher that her classmates made a lot of noise. Her teacher spoke harshly to the class and embarrassed her.

It is interesting that noise was mentioned by a few of the participants as a deterrent to their social interactions. Sue, Stuart, William and Joe thought that they made too much disruptive noise with their braillers. Blair's mother and his teacher aide mentioned that he could become overwhelmed by noise and would withdraw. Xena's mother and the professionals around her stated that Xena was afraid of loud noises such as a lawn mower or car. They also felt, along with the adults around Blair, that class withdrawal for specialist instruction was necessary because of various noises which made it difficult for teachers to teach and students to learn. Noise was also used in an abusive way by a boy who yelled in Xena's ear to frighten her. Despite the participants' concern about noise, there seems to be a dearth of literature about it's effects and the experiences of blind people with noise.

Some of the participants mentioned that they could not read another person's body language and that this contributed to their social difficulties. This is a point which is well rehearsed in the literature (Bullington & Karlsson, 1997; Eaton, Fuchs, & Snook-Hill, 1998; Huebner, 1986; McAlpine & Moore, 1995; Pring, Dewart, & Brockbank, 1998). Hine and Sue said that they felt socially disadvantaged because they could not initiate social contacts through eye contact. They also did not know who was in a room to speak with, or who was walking by that could be acknowledged. The participants also spoke about times when their body language was misunderstood. Joe said that he used to face people with his ear. Anne smiled at a man for singing so well and others thought that she was laughing at him. Hine felt that she was unable to show any body language which would be understandable to non-blind people and thus it was necessary for her to reach out and strive harder for friends.

Some non-blind children did seem to know how to interact with their blind peers and some were persistent in their attempts. During my observations in Blair's classroom a young girl continued to attempt to initiate an interaction with Blair while he was spinning, appearing unconcerned about his unique body language. It is interesting that no participant or professional in this study mentioned that sighted people need to learn to understand the body language of blind people as suggested by Bullington and Karlsson (1997). Only a few professionals and participants said that blind people needed to learn the body language of sighted people. The body language of the participants in this study did seem to be an important issue because at times it was misunderstood and it appeared to be a factor which interfered with social and friendship development.

Davania, Sue, Hine, and William felt closest to their blind peers whom they felt understood them best, and with whom they shared a bond and common experiences. Some of the participants also mentioned that they were still close friends as adults. It is interesting to note that some of these strong friendships were developed during primary school and they were the only friendships which lasted to adulthood, an observation also made by Higgins and Parsons (1983). Hine felt that two of her friends from Sunrise were like sisters to her. William's best man was blind and he felt part of a community of blind people. Sue's friendship with another blind girl provided support for her during her high school years.

During my observations at Homai, Davania's friendship with Virginia seemed to be reciprocal and filled with happiness and affection just like other friendships (G. Allan Roeher Institute, 1990; Harry, Park, & Day, 1998). William pointed out that these friendships needed to also be encouraged and valued by professionals. Such friendships should be valued and can lead to action which will challenge discrimination and oppression (Chapell, 1994). William said that he took note of the demonstrations in which blind people were involved and he also challenged exclusion when he and his girlfriend were the first blind couple to attend the high school dance which the school did not encourage blind students to attend.

Lessons from Professionals about Blind Children's Place

Social constructivism emphasises that children learn about their place in society through their social life and their direct encounters with adults (Resnick & Gall, 1997; Rogoff, Mosier, Mistry, & Goncu, 1993; Trent, Artiles, & Englert, 1998). Successful inclusion cannot come from a policy directive but needs to be initiated by adults and teachers who lead the social life within the school and classroom (Ballard & McDonald, 1995; Ware, 1995). However, the blind participants in this study also had to challenge the segregating attitudes and practice of the professionals in their educational experiences at regular schools. Some of the professionals in this study welcomed their blind students into the school and others did not. The principal's attitude and leadership style is recognised as crucial to a school's values and philosophies. The principal can also set the stage for inclusion to occur (Ballard & McDonald, 1995; Bogdan & Biklen, 1985; Fulcher, 1989; Sage, 1996; Thorburn, 1994; Vandercook & York, 1989; Zollers & Yu, 1998). For example, Stuart felt included at his first primary school and at the same time gave indirect credit to the principal for his inclusion.

The older participants in this study who lived at or near Homai College had a different experience. They went out from this residential setting to some adjacent mainstream schools. They reported feeling unwelcomed by those principals at mainstream schools who grouped them together, either in class or through exclusive language, so that they were identified not as the school's students, but as 'Homai' students. Tom did not feel the principal excluded him by his association with the special school, but stated that he was specifically aware of being separate from part of the school's identity which was rooted in the principal's enthusiasm for sports. Hine did not feel welcomed by her intermediate school principal as he was more absent than present and she "only saw him at assemblies."

For Stuart, although the mainstream schools he attended were not near Homai College, most of the time he found the principals were unwelcoming, unwilling to find professional support for him, and misunderstood his educational needs. However, as his school life progressed the foundations for his exclusion changed. Stuart felt his second primary school principal was not welcoming because he was concerned that blind students would negatively affect the positive image of his school which was located in a wealthy suburb. Neo-liberalism was also beginning to take root at this time in New Zealand and Ballard (1999) has suggested that disabled children may not be seen as attractive to schools which are competing with each other. Stuart's local secondary school principal was similar in that he was a "good news principal" and wanted to avoid change and challenges. For these participants, their principals perceived blindness as outside of their definition of 'student' and they did not have a place for blind students in their school. Blindness was something their school did not have to 'own'.

Xena's and Blair's principals, who were interviewed for this study, both believed that blind children belonged in their communities and in their school. However, both also noted that resources and specialist support are an important aspect of inclusive efforts and help to determine its success as well. Some of the literature and definitions of inclusive education also have noted that support and resources are critical to the success of inclusion and that 'main dumping' is not acceptable (Ballard, 1999a; Bishop, 1986; Jamieson, Partlett & Pocklington, 1977; Kekelis & Sacks, 1988; Kim & Corn, 1998; Krebs, 2000; Lipsky & Gartner, 1994; Norman, Sritheran, Ridding, 1984; Pijl, Pijl, & van den Bos, 1999; Searl, Ferguson, & Biklen, 1985; Vlachou & Barton, 1994). At the same time, though, it is important to remember that inclusion is a right and that children learn about their social place in society in the classroom (Ballard & McDonald, 1995; Resnick & Nelson-Le Gall, 1997; Rogoff, Mosier, Mistry, & Goncu, 1993; Trent, Artiles, & Englert, 1998). Placement in special classrooms and schools teach children that they do not belong in society but in special places (Vygotsky, 1993/1924; Vygotsky, 1993/1925). Thus, unavailable resources and supports cannot justify segregation and exclusion if we accept that in a democratic society that every child has the right to the culturally valued knowledge of that society (Ballard, 1998a; Ballard, 1999a).

Xena's principal stated that the visual resource centre which was located at his school meant that his school was easily equipped to meet the needs of blind children. All of the adult professionals who worked with Xena also stated that they would send their child to Xena's school if they had a vision impairment because it had the visual resource centre there. The school was constructed as the best place for blind children in that city and there was not much concern about whether or not it was their local school. They felt that the vision teacher was available whenever she was needed. Thus, Xena's educational programme was thought to have smoothly developed through the partnership between the classroom teachers, teacher aides and vision teacher, a partnership which Kekelis and Sacks (1988) have described as critical to the achievement of inclusive education.

On the other hand, Blair's principal spoke at length about the difficulty in finding resources and support for Blair who was attending his local rural primary school. For example, it took an extensive amount of time for Blair to obtain a brailler, even though this would be his primary literacy tool. Also, the Ministry of Education did not support Blair's teacher's efforts to obtain extra training so that she would feel more comfortable teaching Blair as is suggested by the literature (Bailey, 1995; Forlin, Hattie, & Douglas, 1996; Norman, Sritheran, & Ridding, 1984). Blair's principal believed that the recent changes within the education system had made it more difficult for rural schools to access decision makers within the new bureaucracy. Despite these difficulties Blair's principal was very positive about his school attendance. Blair's mother also felt that she was a partner in Blair's education because the principal welcomed her involvement in some of the educational decisions which were made. He stated that he took the lead from her, supporting her view that her son was entitled to the same education as other children in the community and in the same place.

Teachers with a welcoming and genuinely accepting disposition can create inclusive learning environments with common sense adaptation of the curriculum and support (Biklen, 1989; Orlansky, 1979; Searle, Ferguson & Biklen, 1985). In this study, Anne believed that the success of any educational endeavour hinges on the classroom teacher's skills and insight. The older participants in this study said they felt included by a number of their teachers, especially when the teachers' commitment to education included taking the time to learn braille. Adult participants also felt accepted by their teachers when their blindness was not considered an impediment to learning and achieving. When teachers approached their students with similar expectations to those held for others of their age, but with recognition and responsiveness to their particular communication and related needs, they thus constructed blindness as part of ordinary human experience.

The older participants also remembered some teachers who were unable to adapt their teaching practices for them and they thus felt "different" because of their particular needs. Anne's teachers at intermediate wrote material on the blackboard and had other children read this print to her. Most of these participants also spoke of similar difficulties about the use of the blackboard. Sue further explained that the teachers should have had "a list of what was going to be written up on the board already brailled so that she could feel "equal." Natural supports were used by the teachers as suggested by the literature (Jorgensen, 1992; MacArthur & Morton,1999; Mallory & New, 1994; Searl, Ferguson, & Biklen, 1985; Udvari-Solner & Thousand, 1995; Villa & Thousand, 1996; Ware, 1995). However, an emphasis placed on helping relationships meant that the blind participants felt incompetent, very different, and out of place. There were misunderstandings between teachers and the participants about braille which led the participants to believe that the teachers did not have an adequate knowledge about their method of reading and writing, even though one of purposes of education is to teach literacy (Cole, 1990; Cornbleth, 1990). These teachers, perhaps, were teaching that braille was not an acceptable literacy medium (Schroeder, 1989). Spungin (1989) has also pointed out that braille has not been enthusiastically taught and is thought to be too complicated to learn.

Some teachers believed that the blind participants did not belong in the classroom and that attention to their needs was not part of the teacher's role. One of Stuart's teachers refused to teach a Physics class because Stuart was in the class. However, Stuart challenged this and this teacher left the class while Stuart remained. Tom said that he encountered some teachers who felt having a blind student was a "nuisance" and that he was "left out". Similar feelings of abandonment were expressed by Hine about her secondary teachers. On the other hand, the amount of attention which the participants received also needed to be balanced. Sue and Anne sometimes believed that their teachers may have treated them differently by working too hard and helping them too much so that it was too noticeable to their classmates, a point which has received little, if any, attention in the literature to date.

The two regular classroom teachers of the younger blind participants in this study, Xena and Blair, were very different in regards to their thoughts about having a blind student in their classroom. Xena's teacher, Sam, said she accepted Xena without reservation or anxiety because of the resources which accompanied Xena. She had full time teacher aide support and the vision teacher was located on the school grounds. She had also had students with a vision impairment in her class before, her own mother was blind, and she had personal relationships with very competent blind people. On the other hand Raquel was initially very anxious about Blair's inclusion in her classroom and felt unable to teach him, a point which is well rehearsed in the literature (Bailey, 1995; Norman, Sritheran, & Ridding, 1984; Searl, Ferguson, & Biklen, 1985). She bravely sought support from the Ministry of Education and the Foundation for the Blind for training and a visit to a classroom with a blind student. However, this support was unavailable and not forthcoming. Despite Raquel's willingness to prepare for her role as a teacher of all children, there was no support for her. She did not encounter the "all for one and one for all" inclusive educational philosophy (Ruebain, 1996, p. 2) nor was an inclusive community being nurtured (Biklen, 1985). The school, itself, though, in the end, funded her visit to a visual resource centre in another city which she said was very helpful.

Raquel also felt unsupported and marginalised by her teaching colleagues whom she said were anxious about having Blair in their classes in the future. She said that she received most of her support from her husband who had no teaching experience. There were no co-teachers or collaborative meetings with other teachers as advocated in the research literature on inclusive education (Ainscow, 1995; Brantlinger, 1997; Falvey, Coots, Bishop, & Grenot-Scheyer, 1989; Rainforth, 1998; Schaffer, 1996; Slee, 1992; Ware, 1995). In contrast, at Xena's school there had been weekly lunch time meetings between all of her teachers to discuss her educational programme. None of her teachers felt alone or unsupported, although the classroom teachers seemed to still have difficulty adapting their lessons so that they were accessible to Xena. Xena mentioned, and I noted in my observations, that her teachers continually used print material which was not brailled for her. This resulted in Xena believing that the teachers were unfair and that she was different. Her teacher aides acted in a sense as interpreters and read to her any necessary printed material.

Xena's teacher stated that her teacher aides also had the opportunity to be innovative when transcribing material for Xena. She, herself, had no time for spontaneity, creativity, or transcribing because of the increasing number of students and the number of boys who had challenging behaviours in her class. Sam, thus, was constrained and unable to be fully involved in the creation of an inclusive school which, according to Skrtic (1991), is created through innovation. Raquel, Blair's classroom teacher, tried to be innovative and to procure accessible materials for Blair from the Ministry of Education and Homai, but was not successful. In the end, she seemed to rely on her teacher aide to present lessons in an accessible format to Blair in another room away from the class. Blair was usually only with his class mates in the mornings and was withdrawn in the afternoons. Blair's teacher aide, Tracy, thought that Blair was taken away from his class too frequently and that she should not have as much educational and teaching responsibility as was given to her because she was not qualified. This situation occurred despite the warnings about such practices which are given in the literature (MacArthur & Dight, 20000, New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1998) and may be a result of the inadequate support which was given to Blair's teacher.

In this study teacher aides in regular schools also seemed to have a great deal of responsibility for creating and sometimes for the teaching of accessible curriculum materials for blind children despite their limited qualifications. Stuart's, Joe's, Xena's, and Blair's teacher aides also helped them practice their braille skills on a daily basis. They in a sense were the link to literacy because they knew braille, whereas most of the regular teachers in this study did not know braille. Joe's mother, Jenny, commented that she actually paid for a 'top up' of Joe's teacher aide hours so that the teachers and parents would not think that it was a burden to have Joe in their classrooms because he needed curriculum materials transcribed. This situation was commented upon by a number of the blind adult participants in this study who were specifically concerned that teacher aides were replacing vision teachers and thus braille literacy would be affected as in other countries (Hatlen, 1996a; Holbrook, 1996; Schroeder, 1989; Spungin, 1991; Stephens, 1989; Tuttle, 1996; Wittenstein, 1994; Zago, 1996). They felt that blind children should receive literacy instruction from qualified and literate teachers who understand the literacy medium of their students and pointed out that non-blind children receive such instruction without question. William thought that the education system had negative social constructions about braille and subsequently about blindness and that this was indicated by the fact that braille literacy was not given the same attention as print literacy. This point is reflected in the North American literature about braille literacy (Schroeder, 1989; Spungin, 1991). In New Zealand there seems to be a need for further study of this issue and of the role of teacher aides in regards to literacy.

Finding a Social Place through Education

Literacy and Braille

Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1993/?) posited that education through braille literacy would bring blind children to their social place, and that blind children needed to be taught alongside other children in a similar manner, but with a different literacy tool (Vygotsky, 1993/1927; Vygotsky, 1991/1931). He argued that literacy tools, such as writing, mathematics, and language, were also cultural tools which helped children develop higher abstract psychological functions for participation in an active social life. Education in the classroom taught these tools and was the key to obtaining social standing and social esteem. It also would lead to the liberation and transformation of people who would be able to use their intelligent and physical work for the benefit of themselves and society (Vygotsky, 1994/1930). Thus, he posited that braille had done more for blind people than any other educational development (Vygotsky, 1993/?).

All of the participants in this study linked braille to what it meant to be blind and this is evident in that most of the role models for the blind participants in this study were blind people who demonstrated their love of braille. Anne mentioned a blind woman who taught her braille and thus showed her that she could become literate and live in her own home. Sue remembered a deaf and blind librarian who held a position of responsibility and who loved to read. William mentioned that he and his brother spent many hours together while his brother read stories to him in braille. The blind adults in this study all said that they loved to read braille and considered themselves to be literate. Xena, one of the children in this study, also loved to read braille and would sneak a read with her hands under her desk as the other children in her regular class listened to the teacher or did other work. Davania searched for and read braille books every morning before class.

Tom associated the type of braille and braille equipment which he was using with his educational progression. He remembered being in high school when he used a Stainsby brailler and at university when he used a Perkins brailler. William said that the division between the junior and senior classes at the special school was indicated by whether or not they double spaced their braille. All of the older blind participants, as does the literature (Hatlen, 1996; Spungin, 1996; Tuttle, 1996; Zago, 1996; Vygotsky 1993/1924a; Vygotsky, 1993/1928; Vygotsky, 1993/?), said that braille meant reading, spelling, literacy, achievement and success. Most of the participants noted that while high technology is a helpful tool, it cannot supplant braille in the same way that it has not supplanted paper, pens, and books. This point is also made in the research literature (Hatlen, 1996; Spungin, 1996; Tuttle, 1996; Zago, 1996).

Despite the social standing and place which comes with learning literacy, braille also brought social dislocation. Most of the blind participants believed that the need to learn braille was the primary reason for their attendance at the special school. Joe's mother said that Joe was sent away from their local primary schools because he had to learn braille on a daily basis. Stuart had to travel two hours each day alone by bus and taxi to his primary school where there was adequate braille instruction. Later, he was sent to the special school where he could learn braille music. Xena had daily braille instruction at her non-local primary school.

The participants who did receive daily braille instruction at regular schools were withdrawn each day from their classrooms by their vision teacher for lessons.

Yet, it is interesting that none of the blind participants felt that this withdrawal further stigmatised them as suggested in the literature (Oliver, 1989; Tomlinson, 1982). Some participants stated they welcomed such class withdrawal because it meant that they would receive the individual literacy instruction which they needed. All of the participants, including the professionals in this study, thought that braille needed to be taught away from regular classes without the auditory distraction of their classmates doing different activities because of its educational importance to blind children. However, there is a dearth of literature about how braille can be effectively taught in regular schools to enhance inclusion and this issue needs further investigation.

In this study, Catherine, Xena's vision teacher, said that because it was difficult to separate braille from reading that initially she was Xena's reading teacher instead of her class teacher. However, she developed Xena's reading programme in consultation with Xena's classroom teacher so that Xena would not diverge from the literacy programme of her classmates. In contrast, Raquel, Blair's classroom teacher felt that she was responsible for Blair's reading programme and that Jane, his vision teacher, simply taught the mechanics of braille and co-ordinated the necessary accessible materials. During my observations, Blair had braille reading and writing practice for fifteen minutes with the class and for one hour with his teacher aide in another room. This is in marked contrast with the experiences of Davania who attended the special school and had two hours of braille instruction with her teacher each day with the rest of her class. Jane only was able to visit Blair once a week because of the size of her roll and, as researchers have suggested (Kirchner & Diament, 1999a; Mullen, 1990; Nagel, 2000; Rex, 1989), she was concerned about the quality of the services which she could provide, given the quantity of her work. Blair's classroom teacher and his teacher aide felt that Blair was not receiving adequate literacy instruction. This situation was also exacerbated by the difficulty which the school had in obtaining braille resources.

All of the participants in this study said that they encountered inadequate support and resources for braille instruction throughout the New Zealand education system, both in the special school and in regular schools. Anne remembered worn pages and flat dots in the few braille books which were available when she attended the special school. Hine remembered that all of the blind children at a regular intermediate school near Homai were placed in the same class because braille texts had to be shared. Sue and Stuart relied on groups of local volunteers to braille material for them. Some participants commented that they had little room for their braille books in their classrooms and Xena complained that she did not have enough books to read and that this was partly the reason for why she was trying to read print books. Xena felt that this situation was unjust and certainly a number of scholars have noted that disabled people are continually confronted with injustice and inequity, and subsequently battle for their rightful education (Ballard, 1992; Barton, 1992; Fulcher, 1989). Despite the extensive scholarly research which has informed the education system of the need for literacy (Cole, 1990; Cornbleth, 1990; Holbrook, 1996; Schroeder, 1989 Stephens, 1989; Stratton, 1996; Vygotsky, 1993/1924; Vygotsky, 1993/1925; Vygotsky, 1993/1927; Vygotsky, 1991/1931; Vygotsky, 1994/1930; Wittenstein, 1994), blind people in some countries have needed to advocate for the passing of legislation which guaranteed their right to learn braille (Holbrook, 1996; Schroeder, 1989).

Orientation and Mobility

Another educational concern for all of the blind participants in this study was orientation and mobility (O&M) which has been defined as learning safe movement skills and spatial skills (Blasch, Weiner, & Welsch, 1997; Hill & Ponder, 1976; LaGrow & Weesies, 1994; O&M Curriculum Working Party, 1993). Both Vygotsky (1993/1924a; 1993/1928) and Lowenfeld (1975) wrote that educators needed to teach blind children these skills because they were naturally affected by blindness. The research suggests that instruction in orientation and mobility also contributes to free movement, developing concepts, social play and actively interacting with the environment (Frailberg, 1977; Hatlen & Curry, 1987; Lydon & McGraw, 1973; Nielsen, 1996; O&M Curriculum Working Party, 1993; Schneekloth, 1989; Sleewenhoek, Boter, & Vermeer, 1995), and is part of pre-requisites for literacy

(Frailberg, 1977; House & Davidson, 2000; Stratton, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978).

However, despite the prevailing belief of the participants that orientation and mobility instruction was essential for blind children, all of the blind participants in this study had difficulty obtaining O&M instruction. This situation has been documented for other blind children in New Zealand (Havill, 1972; Parents of Vision Impaired, 1998; Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind, 1998a) and in other countries (Kirchner & Diament; 1999; Kirchner & Diament, 1999a). For example, when Blair's principal attempted to find O&M instruction for Blair, he found that the Ministry of Education did not provide this service but that it was provided instead by a charitable organisation, the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind. Because of this experience, Blair's teachers, principal, and O&M instructor felt that the Ministry of Education did not understand the needs of blind children and wanted to 'pass the buck' and educational responsibility to someone else. Blair's mother felt that Blair had become socially disadvantaged because of the time it took to find O&M instruction. Similarly, Xena's mother and teachers felt that Xena was fearful of common environmental noises, and did not play or travel like her peers because she had not received early and consistent O&M instruction.

Raquel, Blair's teacher, felt that when Blair did receive O&M instruction she did not know what to expect of his O&M instructor because she was not working within the education system. She also felt that his instructor was not part of the school community and did not understand classroom culture. Raquel said that the O&M instructor did not acknowledge that Raquel was ultimately responsible for Blair's programme, and that too much weight was given to an assessment which was done at Homai away from the classroom. Blair's O&M instructor said that she was not adequately trained to teach children because her training programme had focused on working with adults. This situation made it difficult for Raquel and the professionals who taught Blair to work as a team which has been suggested as a way to enhance Blair's inclusion in his classroom (Ainscow, 1995; Dyson & Milward, 1996; Hatlen & Curry, 1987; Rainforth, 1998; Schaffer, 1996; Wittenstein, 1995).

When most of the older blind participants in this study were asked about the O&M instruction which they received, they had only positive comments about its curriculum. For example, after instruction, Anne stated that she was delighted to move with her cane and without the control of non-blind guides. Hine felt that she could now travel like her peers whenever she wanted to the shopping mall and on the buses after instruction. As an adult, Hine stated that she did not like to depend on her partner or others to be her guide and preferred to travel on her own because she was then in control of her own body. Havill in 1972 suggested that O&M instruction in New Zealand needed to move away from the special school and into regular education.

However, in my observations for this study in 1996, O&M instruction seemed still to only be readily available at the special school. The children in Davania's class were given all the time they needed to move from place to place, plus one hour of movement time in physical education each day, and access to O&M instruction whenever it was needed. Thus, Davania moved freely and travelled easily throughout the school and in her home. Her family also encouraged Davania's mobility through their enthusiasm for movement and sporting activities. Moreover, her O&M instructor directly involved Davania's family in her O&M instruction and mobility practice. Similarly, Davania's classroom teacher at the special school involved them in discussions about Davania's educational programme. Davania and her family thus did not feel misunderstood, patronised, or unwelcomed at the school by professionals, as other parents have talked about in the research (Ferguson & Asch, 1989; Lipsky, 1989; Munford, 1994; Nixon, 1991; Turnbull, Blue-Banning, Behr, & Kehrns, 1986; Ware, 1998; Wills, 1994).

Techniques of Daily Living

The participants also mentioned another specialist curriculum area which they had difficulty obtaining. This was techniques of daily living (TDL), a curriculum area in which non-visual techniques for personal and home management are taught. The participants who resided at the special school were able to obtain instruction in some of these techniques, but stated that they were not taught how to cook. Tom stated that the hostel staff actually refused to let him cook even as an adult. Hine and Anne learned to cook from members of their family but stated that they would have preferred to learn this from TDL instructors or Occupational Therapists who would have more information about non-visual techniques. Sue who did have cooking lessons while at Homai enjoyed her TDL instruction. Stuart though was not satisfied with his instruction and stated that he, like Tom, was not allowed to actually cook or clean in his living environment. Like the O&M rules which constrained the students at the special school, TDL rules regulated the blind participants' activities, and could be interpreted as a form of professional control (Finkelstein, 1991; Oliver, 1989; Scott, 1969; Sobsey, 1994; Tomlinson, 1982; Vaughan, 1993).

The younger participants all had some TDL instruction, but for Xena and Blair who did not attend Homai it was not consistent. According to Blair's mother, Blair was unable to dress himself or eat without assistance because of this. She also did not feel confident teaching Blair these skills because she did not have the knowledge about non-visual dressing and eating techniques. Davania's parents did not have the same concern about obtaining instruction because it was provided in Davania's classroom. However, they felt that if TDL instruction was also provided before Davania attended school then some of the emotional trauma and early difficulties which she had with toileting, for example, could have been avoided. Thus, as Hatlen (1990) warned in America, blind children in New Zealand may not be learning how to safely care for themselves. Nagel (2000) has advocated for the acceptance of a core curriculum for blind children by the Ministry of Education in New Zealand which would include O&M and TDL instruction. The research, however, points out that non-blind people hold a social construction that blindness is a disaster and that vision is needed to perform such daily activities as travel, personal care and home care (Carroll, 1961; Koestler, 1976; Monbeck, 1973; Scott, 1969; Vaughan, 1993). Perhaps the limited education which is available to blind people in New Zealand is a result of this social construction. Further study of non-blind people about their constructions and beliefs about blindness may be needed to fully understand the resistance to providing educational services to blind children in New Zealand.

Other Available and Unavailable Curriculum Areas

A curriculum area which seemed to be readily available at the special school in this study was language development. Davania's language was encouraged through music and rhythm activities. Daveson and Edwards (1998) posited that such activities also encourage spontaneous environmental interaction and movement development. At Homai these activities occurred for at least one hour a day but there were poems and songs which were perhaps more appropriate for younger students. In Blair's class there was little focus on using music to develop appropriate language skills but it was used for movement development lessons for about fifteen minutes each day. His mother also mentioned that she was not able to procure adequate speech language therapy for Blair. Developing language is associated with developing literacy by the research (Cutsforth, 1951; Daveson & Edwards, 1998; Lydon & McGraw, 1973; Recchia, 1997; Vygotsky, 1993/1931; Vygotsky, 1986; Warren, 1984). It is the social tool through which an individual learns about their culture (Vygtosky, 1993/1931; Vygotsky, 1986). It allows the individual to learn concepts, objectify their experiences, transcend the present, and apprehend, as well as actively change, the world (Anderson & Goolishan, 1992; Berger & Luckman, 1967; Coelho de Amorim & Cavalcante, 1992; Cronen, Pearce, & Tomm, 1985; Freedman & Combs, 1996; Gergen, 1996; Gergen & Kaye, 1992; Kozulin, 1986; Newman & Holzman, 1993; Prawat & Floden, 1994).

In Davania's class, there were specific lessons about objects which were felt and explored by all of the children such as the avocado lesson. This was evidence of the concrete and activity based leaning experiences which the literature states can be of benefit to blind children because learning may not occur incidentally through vision (Cutsforth, 1951; Hatlen & Curry, 1987; Lydon & McGraw, 1973; Nielsen, 1996; O&M Curriculum Working Party, 1993; Recchia, 1997; Warren, 1984). In contrast, Blair's teacher had difficulty adjusting her curriculum to meet the functional and concrete learning needs of her blind student. Blair's teacher aide attempted to provide some concrete learning experiences but these were not well planned and regular teachers in general in this study had difficulty adjusting the curriculum to fit the needs of all their students as suggested by the literature (Collicott, 1991; Falvey, Coots, Bishop, & Grenot-Scheyer, 1996; Searl, Ferguson, & Biklen, 1985; Searl, Ferguson, & Biklen, 1985; Thorburn, 1997).

Also, it was interesting that for all of the blind participants in this study maths seemed to be a curriculum area with which they all had difficulty. The older participants, Tom, Anne, and Hine, stated that there was a social construction that stated that blind people could not do maths. However, some of the participants mentioned that they knew blind people who did excel at maths. The older participants felt that another explanation for their difficulty at maths was that the tactile writing codes for maths at the time were not adequate. Later though when the Nemeth Code was developed for maths and when William, Sue, Stuart and Joe were attending school, the participants said that the Nemeth code was difficult to learn and thus they still had difficulty accessing the maths curriculum. Sue felt that this was further exacerbated again by the construction that maths was difficult for blind people, and by teachers who continually used the blackboard and did not provide braille worksheets because reading math problems out loud was cumbersome and unnecessary. Stuart did not understand the visual aspects of maths in regards to three dimensional objects which were drawn in two dimensions. Joe took functional maths at school because he felt that he was not able to do complicated maths, but also said that his maths' programme was too easy for him. Again, the regular and vision teachers of these participants seemed to be unable to provide the support or accessible curriculum described in the literature as elemental to inclusive education (Collicott, 1991; Falvey, Coots, Bishop, & Grenot-Scheyer, 1996; Hatlen, 1996a; Jamieson, Partlett & Pocklington, 1977; Searl, Ferguson, & Biklen, 1985; Searl, Ferguson, & Biklen, 1985; Thorburn, 1989; Thorburn, 1993; Thorburn, 1997).

In the younger participants' experiences of maths, there also seemed to be difficulty in accessing the curriculum. This is certainly evident for Blair who was taken out of his regular class when maths was taught because his teacher, Raquel, believed that the lessons would be too difficult for him. If Raquel believed that Blair was able to participate in her lessons then he was included. Raquel did not change her lessons for Blair and based decisions about his participation in her lessons on his ability. This is indicative of the social construction that disability is a private and individual trouble as described by Tomlinson (1982) and Fulcher (1989). Similarly, there are studies which noted that blind children have to have certain abilities before they can be successfully included (Bishop, 1986; Jamieson, Partlett & Pocklington, 1977; Kim & Corn, 1998; O'Brien, 1989; Orlansky, 1977). During my observations at Xena's school, Xena was in class during maths lessons but did not have the material provided to her in braille. She also had difficulty with the Nemeth Code and said that she did not enjoy maths. It was thus no surprise to me that her teacher said that she received low scores in maths. It was also interesting that where accessible instruction was available, Davania received only one hour of instruction specifically in maths during the week of my observations at Homai. Further research and investigation in this area may be needed to fully understand this issue.

Physical education was another curriculum area in which most of the participants did not easily participate. This may be related to their difficulty in receiving movement instruction in orientation and mobility. However, in this study it seemed that physical education teachers were unable to adapt the curriculum for blind students. The older participants stated that they did not participate in physical education classes when they attended regular schools and instead had a study period. The physical education curriculum was competitive and visual, and Anne stated that when she did participate she did not feel competent and did not enjoy always "coming last." However, when sports and physical education classes were not visual, the participants felt successful. Anne enjoyed water skiing and Tom enjoyed 'blind cricket'. William and Sue said that they were eager to play the 'braille games' which were adapted physical activities at Homai. Anne also mentioned that the camaraderie which comes with playing with peers was also very important to her. Zanadrea (1998) and Macks (1992) noted that when accessible regular physical education programmes are available, then blind children feel safer and included, and develop a better self image. For most of the participants in this study though, physical education and sports were not positive experiences and they were out of place in them because their teachers were unable to appropriately adapt the curriculum.

It is interesting that the curriculum areas in which most of the participants did find a place were related to music. This may be due to the fact that there exists the false construction that all blind people are musical (Scott, 1969; Vygotsky, 1993/?; Wagner-Lampl & Oliver, 1994). However, it may also be due to the fact that it is an accessible curriculum area and is thus easily taught to blind people (Rosenblum, 1997; Shoemark, 1991). All of the blind participants who attended the special school had piano lessons at primary school. Joe and Xena also took music lessons after school when they were regular primary school students. William and Sue stated that they also had music appreciation class in which they listened to classical music during primary school. Anne, Hine, William, Sue, Stuart, and Joe all stated that they got great pleasure from music and, at times, from various music teachers. Hine and Stuart were musicians, William did some work as a DJ, and it was thought that Xena and Blair were musically talented.

However, like braille, it seems that music also brought social dislocation because the blind participants were stereotyped and stigmatised through their association with music. Tom said that when he was at the special school it was thought that this instruction would lead to a restrictive career in piano tuning. One of the primary reasons for Stuart's reluctant and traumatic attendance at the special school was to learn braille music because he was musically talented. He also said that later when he played for audiences that they would become annoyed if he did not know any Stevie Wonder tunes. Xena spent an inordinate amount of time in different types of music and dance lessons after school to compensate for her lack of social activities with her peers. At the same time, opportunities to socialise with her peers, an essential prerequisite for developing friendships (Grenot-Scheyer, Harry, Park, Schwartz, & Meyer, 1998), was now limited.

Places for Blind Adults in the Community

Despite the prevailing trend towards social dislocation in the lives of the participants, some of the participants were able to participate in tertiary study, find employment, build meaningful relationships and partnerships, and actively participate in their communities like anyone else. However, they did encounter barriers. The female participants had more difficulty finding a social place than the male participants. As discussed earlier, the negative social constructions about blind women and motherhood affected their lives. They seemed to have more difficulty finding a partner than did the males in this study, an experience reported by blind women and disabled women in other studies (Asch & Fine, 1988a; Deshin, 1987; Kallianes & Rubenfeld, 1997; Kent, 1983; Kent, 1987).

Anne and Hine said that they both initially learned that non-blind partners were more valuable than blind partners, and thus in a sense learned that they were not valuable as partners. However, Anne later found a blind partner and stated that she has since learned that relationships are essentially about love and respect and not about disability status. Hine had a succession of unsuccessful and sometimes violent partnerships with non-blind and blind men, and felt unable to fully commit herself in any of these relationships. Her insecure early experiences of social dislocation and her subsequent feelings of homelessness may have affected these relationships because there is evidence in the research which has suggested that early insecure attachments may result in difficulty in forming intimate relationships (King, Raynes, & Tizard, 1971; Perry, Charles, & Matheson, 1986; Smith, 1998).

The younger female participants, Sue, Xena, and Davania, all expected or were expected to form intimate partnerships. Sue did encounter obstacles to finding partners because, she believed, disabled women, are not viewed as sexual beings and are not considered valuable, an issue addressed by others in the research (Branson & Miller, 1989; Kallianes & Rubenfeld, 1997; Kent, 1983; Quicke, 1985). Xena's mother also stated that Xena was told and believed that she was unattractive because she was blind. Hine, Sue and Xena, though, viewed themselves as sexual beings and, as Asch & Fine (1988) and others (Allan, 1996; Allan, 1999; Branson & Miller, 1989; Sawicki, 1991) have suggested, resisted this dominant 'de-sexing' and thus dehumanising discourse. Hine was sexually active in school. Xena said that she would like to be in a relationship with her best friend whom she loved. Xena's mother said that Xena also was sexually assertive with a boy in her class whom she took behind a shed to kiss. Xena's mother also said that Xena had been assaulted by a boy who took advantage of her blindness in that she was not forewarned of the assault and could not say "no" as suggested by safe sex programmes. The research states that disabled girls are more likely to be sexually assaulted than their non-disabled peers, and that such assaults are very likely to occur (Kennedy, 1996; Pierce, 1998; Rindfleisch & Rabb, 1984; Sobsey, 1994). Educationalists need to be aware of this (Green & Stone, 1996; Kennedy, 1996).

In contrast, most of the male participants in this study stated that they had no, or did not expect any, difficulty in finding a partner. However, like the female participants, William's sexuality was not accepted by his regular high school or Homai. He and his blind partner were not expected to attend the school ball. However, he also resisted this construction, took ballroom dancing lessons with his girlfriend and on the night they arrived in a limousine. During his adolescence, though, William said that he felt unattractive because of his blindness. He felt unworthy and said that, no matter how hard he tried, society was not going to allow him to have a social place and a successful life because of his blindness. He twice attempted suicide. William's social and educational experiences had thus not permitted him to obtain a social standing and full social esteem as described by Vygotsky (1993/1927). However, through this telling of his personal experiences and pain, it is hoped that a fuller understanding of the meaning of blindness will occur (Asch & Fine, 1988; Clough & Barton, 1995 Crow, 1996; French, 1993; Morris, 1993a; Peters, 1996; Pinder, 1996).

William believed that blind people, themselves, could work together to help to eliminate societal barriers and negative constructions which blind people uniquely encountered. He found a common bond with blind people and suggested that in New Zealand there is a strong advocacy history and a strong movement which he associated with the Association of Blind Citizens (New Zealand) in that it has helped to bring about legislative changes and changes to the Foundation for the Blind which is documented in the literature (Catran & Hansen, 1992; Newbold, 1995). The disability rights movement in other countries have also sprung up in response to negative societal constructions (Driedger, 1989; Funk, 1987; Hahn, 1983; Hahn, 1987; Oliver, 1992) and to human rights issues such as the right to an education, work, vote, and have a family (Funk, 1987).

Anne and Sue were also actively involved in advocating for blind people and most of the older participants believed that they had an emotional tie to other blind people. Some cited similar experiences, common understandings and constructions, and a common language. For example, Hine stated that other blind people who attended Homai with her were her family, and that blind people use auditory or tactile imagery and not visual imagery. The link between a common language and culture has been identified by various scholars within social construction, social constructivist, feminist, and disability theories (Bruner, 1994; Harre, 1985; Frankenberg, 1993; Groce, 1992; Kingi & Bray, 2000; Lane, 1992; Lorber & Farrell, 1991; Mullings, 1994; Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991; Vygotsky, 1993/1931; Vygotsky, 1978; Wiener & Marcus, 1994; Youniss, 1983).

Most of the specific language and words identified by the participants in this study were derogatory towards blind people. As the literature has mentioned (Corbett, 1994; Corbett, 1996; French, 1989), could contribute to negative attitudes towards blind people. For example, blind people lived at the "Foundry" or in "Wally's Zoo." Along with some writers in this area some of the participants have suggested that the culture of blindness in New Zealand was more linked to social dislocation, living at the special school, working in the Foundation workshops, and the Foundation for the Blind rather than to blind people themselves (Corn, Bina, & DePriest, 1995; French, 1993c; Jernigan, 1996a; Lane, 1992; Small, 1998). Subsequently, Tom aspired to leave the Foundation for the Blind and had little contact with blind people. Anne said she worked at the Foundation to change both the Foundation and wider societal barriers. All of the older participants said that when they were children they were frightened by the blind adults at the workshops who were a warning of what they may become if they stayed at the Foundation and with other blind people. Oliver (1989) also noted that segregation in institutions were a societal control mechanism for people who were considered economically unproductive.

The older blind participants who mainly attended regular schools did not believe that blind people, themselves, had a common culture or bond. Stuart and Joe stated that they saw no reason to be with other blind people. However, the parents and professionals around the blind children in this study believed that contact between blind people and blind children would help to negate feelings of isolation which blind children had in regular schools. During her attendance at a regular high school, Sue stated that her older blind friend understood her and supported her through difficult times. Most of the older blind participants, professionals, and parents felt that blind adults could become role models or mentors for blind children in regular schools. Some said that role models and blind adults could also contribute to a better understanding of the educational needs of blind children, as the literature has noted about disabled adults in general (Morris, 1993a; Clough & Barton, 1995).

Within the research positive role models in children's literature have also been mentioned as a way to better understand the experiences of disabled children and reduce negative social constructions (Hume, 1982; Quick, 1985; Kent, 1987). Others have noted that real role models may be difficult to find (Crudden & McBroom, 1999; Gillies, Knight, & Baglioni, 1998; O'Day, 1999). In this study this seemed to be the case. The participants in regular schools, Stuart, Joe, Xena, and Blair, had little contact with blind adults and did not have blind role models. In addition, Xena and her class were read a story about a blind fox which emphasised the disaster discourse about blindness. Hine's offer to be involved in a blind child's life was not taken. Tom and William, though, stated that they were actively involved with blind children as role models and enjoyed the experience. However, William said that he felt vision teachers dismissed his ideas about the education of blind children and thus they were not seen as valuable.

Vocational Places

The research has stated that role models can contribute to the vocational achievement of blind people (Atmore, 1990; Gardner, 1983; Kendrick, 1993; Kendrick, 1998; Kent, 1983; Koestler, 1983; Sandhaus, 1983). However, in this study only the blind women talked about receiving vocational inspiration or support from blind role models. For example, Hine always found employment through her network of blind people or worked in music. Anne was employed, but both she and Sue said that they encountered discourses which indicated that blind women were not expected to vocationally achieve above that of being a typist or telephonist, as suggested in some of the research (Asch & Fine, 1988a; Packer, 1983). Anne resisted this discourse and explained that she had no intention of answering any director's phone unless she was the director. Sue said that she knew that she did not want to work in the areas which were expected of her. Their parents had high expectations of them and they felt that this was essentially what helped them to achieve. McConnell (1999) and Crudden and McBroom (1999) have noted this in their studies as well.

Xena's mother, Zwhaun, expected her daughter to attend University and then be whatever she wanted to be. Similarly, her principal and vision teachers had high expectations of Xena. Her teachers, however, identified stereotypical occupations for Xena. They saw her as a musician, computer operator, or possibly a counsellor working with other blind people. Music was also identified by his mother and teacher aide as a strong career option for Blair. Joe's mother stated that Joe would not be able to find employment in the community and needed to attend a segregated residential programme at the special school to learn about careers for blind people. This was despite the fact that Joe expressed a vocational interest in agricultural and stock brokerage and had demonstrated that he was able to make money in both of these fields. Davania, who was not musically talented, was the only participant for whom no particular vocation was identified by her parents or teachers. Her parents thought that her language skills needed further development before she could be employed. Her teacher and O&M instructor stated that Davania had potential for employment but only identified sheltered workshops or a warehouse as places where she could work.

Most of the older blind participants who attended the special school also felt that they were expected by societal discourse to work in segregated workshops. The words which Hine used to describe this discourse was related to animal management in that blind people were "herded" into the workshops and rarely "broke out" to have a "real life". However, all of the blind adult participants said that they overcame this expectation without support from the Foundation for the Blind. Tom found work through non-blind volunteers at the special school. William stated that he found the vocational services at the Foundation dismissive and restrictive. Similarly, Stuart thought that vocational services within the Foundation held the belief that blind people were not employable.

All of the blind participants said they encountered this belief from employers when they searched for employment. They also encountered other negative constructions of blind and disabled people in media images and in members of the public who, they said, pitied them; patronised them; thought of, and portrayed blind people as incompetent and without a meaningful life; and did not understand their environmental and informational access needs. They thus encountered the social construction, referred to in the literature, that disabled people are unproductive (Branson & Miller, 1989; Luborsky, 1994; Oliver, 1990), dependent (Lunt & Thornton, 1994; Oliver, 1989; Schneider & Ingram, 1993; Symonds, 1998), and likely to only find work in low status and low paid jobs (Beadles, McDaniel, & Waters, S., 2000; Beatson, 1981; Gillies, Knight, & Baglioni, 1998; Lunt & Newbold, 1987; Thornton, 1994).

Conclusion

Despite the dominant discourse that blind people had few places in New Zealand society, most of the blind adult participants in this study have found some social places. Tom, Anne, Hine, and William had intimate partners and some had children. Tom, Anne, William, and Stuart were able to secure employment in respected careers. Sue later found employment as well when this study was being written. Hine was the only participant to remain unemployed and her experiences as a Maori blind woman reinforces the writings of many feminists which state that her experiences and the barriers which she has encountered may be the result of multiple axes of subordination and oppression (Asch & Fine, 1988a; Fraser, 1997). All of the blind adults, except William, reported though that they had a limited social life in the community but for different reasons. Stuart and Anne felt that this was due to their extensive work commitments. Tom said that he was a loner, and Sue said that she had few opportunities to meet new people because she was not working.

Nevertheless, each participant said that they could take steps to become more socially active if they desired. In the past they each had been able to resist dominant discourses and social constructions which placed barriers in their path on their way to finding a full social place. They were able to construct different meanings to blindness in their lives and, like Sawicki (1991) postulated, offered multiple sources of resistance to disabling policies and practices. They, perhaps, could be identified as the strong disabled people who have been asked by other scholars to share their stories (Barnes & Shardlow, 1996; Shakespeare, 1996). Social models of disability need to take into account the participants' experiences of their impairment in their lives and on their body (Allan, 1996; Branson & Miller, 1989; Crow, 1996; French, 1993; Hughes & Patterson, 1997; Liggett, 1988; Morris, 1991; Peters, 1996; Pinder, 1996 Sullivan & Munford, 1998), as well as the differences between disabled people in regards to other axes of subordination, such as gender and race (Asch & Fine, 1988a; Fine & Asch, 1988; Fraser, 1997; Morris, 1991). The blind participants in this study stated that the effects of their impairment could not be completely solved at the social level but needed educational solutions as suggested by Vygotsky (1993/?) (1993/1924a) (1993/1928) and others (Cutsforth, 1951; Frailberg, 1977; House & Davidson, 2000; Lowenfeld, 1975; Lydon & McGraw, 1973; Recchia, 1997; Spungin , 1989; Stratton, 1996; Warren, 1984). For example, they argued that they needed to learn literacy which included learning braille, safe movement skills, and alternative personal care techniques.

While suggesting changes needed in educational provisions, the participants in this study identified some significant dislocations which were part of their educational experiences. This marginalisation, similar to that identified by Vygotsky (1993/1924), occurred first when they had to leave their families and communities as young children in order to attend the special school. They then experienced the surveillance and control which existed at the special school and they encountered unwelcoming principals and teachers in regular schools. They did not have access to the educational support, instruction, and resources which would be available to other children as of right. They met others who lacked perception and understanding about societal barriers and the social effects of blindness and they learned that blind people can participate in some activities such as music, but not in others, such as maths or physical education. Finally, they encountered the prevailing discourse which stated that blindness is a disaster and that blind people subsequently cannot become valuable citizens. In marked contrast, when the participants were a part of their family, their schools, and their community; when they felt supported, understood, welcomed, and valued; and when others accepted that blindness was a facet of their humanness and not a disaster, then they felt that they had a social place and belonged.

Chapter Ten

Constructing a Place for Blind People in New Zealand

The experiences of the blind participants in this study have led me to the conclusion that the personal experiences of disabled people need to be acknowledged in order to understand the meaning of disability. A number of researchers have explored the educational effects of blindness but have not addressed the societal barriers, dominant discourses, social constructions, and the social difficulties which blind people may encounter. It is also evident that a number of researchers have explored the social difficulties and barriers which disabled people may encounter in Western societies but have not considered the daily effects of impairment in the lives of unique disabled individuals with different genders and ethnic identities.

This thesis submits that social constructivism and Vygotsky's notion of social dislocation (Vygotsky, 1993/1924; Vygotsky 1993/1925) allows researchers to explore the personal and the social when researching disability. Social constructivism acknowledges that individuals construct meaning within their own lives through language and their experiences. According to Vygotsky (1993/1931) (1994/1935) (1978) (1986) education transmits cultural meanings through social interaction. Thus the social meanings of blindness for the ten blind participants in this study were shaped as they interacted with their families, professionals, teachers, and their peers. These encounters led to unique meanings, but they coexisted with negative social constructions and discourses which dominated the education system. These negative constructions seemed to be related to Vygotsky's idea of social dislocation in that the blind participants had difficulty finding a social place within their educational experiences. All of the participants were lovingly accepted by their families. They also felt accepted in kindergarten where sensory and movement activities are predominately used as educational tools, and, perhaps, where their peers had not yet learned the prevailing negative discourses on disability.

When the participants first encountered segregation, they spoke about trauma and pain. Some of the participants stated that they were controlled and under constant surveillance at the special school but each resisted this in various ways. Some of the participants achieved academically, others withdrew, some rebelled and some left. When the blind participants attended regular schools some thought they had to learn to be "sighted" and "normal." This reflects Vygotsky's (Vygotsky 1993/?) proposal that blind people must strive to overcome obstacles throughout their lives to secure a social place in society. Some of the obstacles which were encountered by the participants at regular schools included a lack of understanding about the unique effects of blindness on literacy, movement, and communication. Support and instruction in these areas were limited and, at times, led the participants back to the special school and away from their family because they were unable to secure an appropriate education in their communities. They also encountered unwelcoming and unprepared teachers and principals who saw them as different and did not accept them as part of their school.

In order to fully participate in society, Vygotsky argued that social segregation needed to cease and that education needs to emphasise full social and societal participation through a regular education system and not a special education system which he saw as anti-social (Vygotsky, 1993/1924; Vygotsky, 1993/1925). Of particular interest is the common view of all participants in this study that an inclusive education was the educational philosophy to which the educational system should aspire. Their voices need to be heard and acknowledged. Some participants did also believe that the special school needed to be retained because the Ministry of Education could not or, perhaps, would not adequately provide for blind children in regular schools. Blair's mother said that she had to constantly battle for Blair's inclusive education. Stuart and William also stated that if they had a blind child that they would home school the child because of their mistrust of the education system. Home schooling in general has increased because parents are unhappy with the neo-liberal changes within the New Zealand education system (Kerslake, Murrow, & Lange, 1998).

Some participants also mentioned that their mistrust had sprung from the belief that the Ministry of Education was more concerned with money than with the education of children. They thought that this was partly a result of the neo-liberal economic ideology which had recently overtaken New Zealand and its educational policy and practices, a belief supported in some of the literature (Codd, 1993; Grace, 1990; Johnston, 1999; Olssen, 1997; Snook, 1997; Thrupp, 1997). Some of the blind participants stated that a special school was necessary because they believed that the Ministry of Education had little knowledge of blind children's educational needs, and that the number of blind children was thought to be insignificant. They also believed that their thoughts as blind people would not be taken seriously by the Ministry of Education.

Some participants said that the Ministry of Education's lack of concern about blind children could also be partly a result of the *Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind (RNZFB) Act of Parliament* which gave the educational responsibility of blind children to the RNZFB which is a charitable organisation. Thus, a blind child's education could be thought of not as a right but as a charitable gift or privilege. It has been pointed out by Ballard (1998; 1999a) that disabled children in New Zealand have been denied a rightful place alongside their peers in their community. Others have stated that lack of support within regular education perpetuates the belief that disabled children do not have the same right to an education as non-disabled children (Ballard, 1996; Ballard, 1998; Slee, 1993; Sullivan & Munford, 1998). Tom, William, Stuart, and Sue thought that the RNZFB Act should be repealed because it perpetuated the belief that blindness was a fault to be remedied. Also these participants said that the Foundation's Board of Trustees needed to be elected by blind people themselves. Joe, Sue and Stuart called for the Ministry of Education to take full responsibility for educating blind children by disestablishing the special school.

Interestingly, all of the parents, teachers and professionals in this study, stated that the special school should be retained because it offered a reliable and economical centre of expertise and a place for students with additional impairments.

The professionals at the special school further explained that they did not consider Homai Vision Education Centre to be a special school any more because it had a variety of programmes on site. However, despite these beliefs, the school has been re-established as a special state residential school by the Ministry of Education (Grieve, 2000).

The professionals at the special school further explained that they thought they could influence educational policy and practice because of their expertise, positions of power, and the school's history. In contrast, all of the teachers and instructors in this study who taught in regular schools believed that they, themselves, had no influence on education policy. Codd (1999) posited that teachers feel overworked, constrained, and under constant surveillance by an unconcerned bureaucracy. Xena's teacher, Sam, said that with the large number of students in her classroom that she could not teach or include all of her students. The blind participants and parents in this study were also quite concerned with the expectations which were placed on regular classroom teachers. At the same time, they and other participants stressed that it is the teacher who makes all the difference.

If blind people are to have a rightful place within New Zealand, it seems that the education system must change and the Ministry of Education will need to commit itself to developing an inclusive all encompassing education system where all students belong. This would replace the present system which is segregated into "mainstream" and "special" places, philosophy and practices. Any policy or practice developments need to firstly answer the question, "Will this development contribute to inclusion?" This study has found that attendance at the special school did not help the blind participants find a social place and it would seem important to consider this issue. The legislation which presently exists also may not enhance inclusion. This is the RNZFB Act of Parliament which some participants thought leaves the educational responsibility of blind children to a charitable organisation. Separate organisations, systems, and structures do not support the belief that all children have a right to participate in the public education system.

Thus, it is important for the Ministry of Education to take steps to bring blind children into the regular education system alongside their peers. The Wylie (2000) report on the organisation of "special" education resources in New Zealand suggests that vision teachers and other vision specialists could be a part of district resource centres under the auspices of the Ministry of Education along with all other specialist itinerant personnel. Presently itinerant specialist personnel who work in regular schools are employed by Specialist Education Services (SES) which is a Crown Enterprise, or business, and which must compete for Ministry funding with other organisations such as special schools or private consultants. The Wylie report recommends the disestablishment of this competitive and fragmented system, and this seems in keeping with the tenets of inclusion as suggested by other researchers which call for one education system, and not two, or three (Ballard, 1998; Bines, 1988; Lipsky & Gartner, 1996; Stainback, Stainback, & Bunch, 1989).

Despite the fact that the literature and the participants in this study identified teachers as being at the forefront of inclusion, there currently exists no requirement that their training include a study of inclusive education and its concomitant, school reform. In this research, classroom teaching practices observed in schools did not reflect the innovative and reformative approaches suggested by the literature on inclusive education. Another issue evident from the present study is the need for the education system to provide adequate and accessible resources to regular schools and teachers without 'dislocating' blind students. Braille literacy and orientation and mobility are areas which may need further attention in regards to their instruction and the role of the specialist teacher, teacher, and teacher aide. Further investigation in effective and inclusive maths and physical education instruction may also be needed because rarely did the blind participants in this study experience success in these areas. This study explored the experiences and thoughts of blind people about the meaning of blindness in their educational experiences. It may also be relevant to explore the meanings which non-blind people give to blindness so that a fuller understanding of the societal constructions of blindness can occur.

In the research literature the personal experiences of blind people and the dominant social constructions about blindness are rarely considered together. This thesis has attempted to address this gap. The study was the result of an initial query to some blind people in New Zealand about the type of research which would be relevant to them. It involved the formation of a discussion group which included two blind members and a parent of a blind child. This group in its regular meetings helped to negotiate the meanings within the study as the data was collected and written. I thus believe that this study will be of benefit to blind people. I also hope that, in particular, it will be of benefit to blind children who have given me so much fun and pleasure in my work as a teacher and researcher. I hope that this investigation will be a step towards their inclusion in a community that values all of its members. I have enjoyed this study and have learned more than can be conversed through the material written in these pages. I have also been able to make a few new friends and have found some new places for me on this journey.

HG Wells (1970) queried our assumptions in *The Country of the Blind.* A sighted man who had fallen into a country of blind people was sure that he would be king. "My time will come," he said. A blind person answered, " You'll learn . . . there is much to learn in the world." The man replied, "Has no one told you, 'In the country of the Blind the One-eyed Man is King?" The blind person wisely then asked the question, "What is blind?" (p. 179). It is hoped that this thesis has helped to begin to answer this question. Blindness was experienced in many ways by the blind participants in this study. Personally, it seemed to have an effect on their education and lives, but blindness also existed within the education system in that a full social place was not always readily available to all children. Through this documentation of the participants experience, I hope that positive change may occur and that many social places will develop for blind people in the future.

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