

REFUGE OR TURMOIL?

SOMALI ADOLESCENT REFUGEES IN CHRISTCHURCH
SCHOOLS:
Intercultural Struggle and the Practices of Exclusion

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ABSTRACT

Somali refugees have resettled in New Zealand since 1993. Yet, there is a dearth of information about their experience in this country. This thesis moves into uncharted territory by considering the adaptation of Somali adolescent refugees to secondary school in Christchurch. It argues that, just as Somali adolescents are struggling to cope with the New Zealand school experience, so too are Christchurch schools in a struggle to be inclusive within a constraining socio-political environment. As a result, school remains a continual site of intercultural struggle involving a complex interplay of vested interests, systemic biases, disjuncture, compliance and resistance.

The adaptation process through which Somali students travel is fraught with difficulties because they are situated at the intersecting point of two competing cultures at school. As the educational culture prioritises the interests, norms and values of the dominant group, Somali students are frequently asked to choose between educational adaptation and their cultural identity. Data gained from interviews with Somali adolescents, Somali parents and educators demonstrate that the students alternate between resistance and compliance to this demand, highlighting the conceptualisation of school as a site of intercultural struggle.

Schools are also experiencing difficulties in coping with the differential needs and culture that Somali adolescents embody, resulting in a dual process of adjustment. Nevertheless, because the power relationship between Somali students and Christchurch schools is unequal, educational institutions are usually able to contest the challenges that Somali students represent. Interview data indicates that policy/practice disjunctures and systemic biases within education constrain Christchurch schools and that they are consequently unsure of how to be inclusive of Somali needs and culture. Throughout the thesis comparisons are drawn with research involving refugees from other ethnic groups and it is clear that the difficulties Somali face reflect those experienced by refugees as a whole. However, such disadvantage is not inevitable and recommendations for improvement are an important contribution of the study.

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Once in a while a great one comes along. Wear it well, Louise, nurture it, then bequeath it to others.

Augie Fleras.

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

1 INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

Refugees, by nature of their migration experience, participate in a long and often painful journey. When they arrive in their new host country most expect this journey to have ended. The word 'refugee' implies that the new country is a refuge from the political, social and economic circumstances that have forced refugees to flee their own homes. Yet, many find upon arrival that their search for refuge continues as they experience the process of resettlement. Such a process inherently involves both positive and negative encounters as refugees make the transition between their past and present lives. There is often a sense of 'struggle' as refugees simultaneously resist and comply with aspects of their new cultural surroundings and as their new social environment reacts to the challenges that the culture and characteristics of refugees present to a host society.

This thesis documents the experiences of Somali refugee adolescents at secondary schools in Christchurch as they attempt to complete a journey of transition. It argues that the adaptation process through which Somali students travel is fraught with dilemmas and delusion as they grapple with their positioning between two lives and two cultures. Systemic biases within education often result in considerable discomfort for these students, because the educational culture and structures ask them to choose between their cultural identity and adaptation. The students alternate between resistance and compliance to such demands, but are at times able to situate themselves uneasily between the two extremes. The factors that enable and constrain Somali student adaptation to school, both academically and culturally, are the core foci of inquiry. Using literature relating to refugee adaptation and informal, semi-structured interview material as a basis, I have pursued numerous variables and conclude that the factors identified in international and local studies generally fit well with the Somali adolescent experience.

Furthermore, the thesis contends that schools are also involved in a complex period of adjustment, as they experience difficulty in coping with the differential needs and culture that Somali students embody. Schools are ill-prepared to deal with this diversity due to underfunding and a lack of direction from central

government. Although schools and Somali students are both going through a process of adaptation, they do not engage with each other on equal terms. As key institutions of the dominant culture of New Zealand, schools are able to actively resist the challenges with which Somali students present them. Interview material provides evidence that, good intentions notwithstanding, Christchurch schools do little to be inclusive of the needs and culture of Somali students and that systemic biases within education diminish their chances of successfully completing the transitory journey of adaptation. Thus, for both Somali students and the educators who play out everyday situations of contestation, school is a site of intercultural struggle.

RESEARCH GOALS

My intention in producing this thesis is to answer the four core questions that have guided the research process throughout:

1. **How well are Somali refugee adolescents 'fitting in', both academically and culturally, to Christchurch secondary schools?**

Anecdotal reports suggested that Somali adolescents were having some difficulties adapting to school and I wished to assess the truth of such comments by talking to Somali students about their educational experiences. To gain a broader perspective of this adaptation process, I also interviewed Somali parents and professionals who work with Somali students.

2. **How well are schools coping with the academic and cultural challenges that Somali refugee adolescents present to them?**

Despite recent rhetoric in policy documents promoting equity and the inclusiveness of cultural diversity within education, it was my suspicion that Christchurch schools were failing to be inclusive of Somali needs and culture. This situation was evaluated through information gained from interviews with Somali students, their parents and a small number of educators.

3. **What improvements can be made within the education system that might facilitate the 'fitting in' of Somali refugee adolescents at school and the ability of schools to 'cope' with diversity?**

Assuming that there would be room for improvement within education institutions, I gathered comments from students, parents and educators about the ways in which schools could become more

inclusive of Somali needs and culture. I asked them to highlight successful practices that should be continued or implemented.

4. What are the commonalities between the educational experiences of Somali refugee adolescents and those of refugee adolescents as a whole?

A review of refugee literature indicated that refugee adolescents from different ethnic backgrounds often share common characteristics. In addition, similar factors appear to influence both the academic and cultural adaptation of refugee adolescents in schools. Thus, I wished to explore the extent to which Somali refugee adolescents could be offered as an exemplar for the adolescent refugee experience in general.

RATIONALE

This study about refugees concentrates on a specific age bracket of a particular ethnic group and their experiences in one New Zealand institution, the education system. While this focus is narrow, it has been selected to provide an important and original contribution to a body of growing research on refugees in New Zealand. To date no other research concentrates on adolescent Somali refugees and their experiences of education. Yet this focus is of vital significance for the following reasons:

SOMALI REFUGEES

Somali refugees have resettled in New Zealand only since 1993 (Bell 1998:24). Consequently, there is virtually no documentation of their experience in this country. Most previous research, both internationally and locally, has focused on Southeast Asian refugees. Although refugees from different ethnic groups often share common characteristics, their cultural background is one variable in the refugee experience. The Islamic religion and African origin of Somali set them apart from the refugees that have traditionally resettled in New Zealand. On one level this thesis explores how well Somali fit the general conclusions made about refugees in a literature which has largely been based upon the Southeast Asian experience.

ADOLESCENTS

The majority of refugee research concentrates on adult refugees. There has been little specific investigation of young refugees because they are often considered mere appendages to adults (Sung 1987:1). It is frequently assumed that young refugees adjust more easily than adults to a new society,

because their participation in the education system often leads them to adopt the host language and culture at a faster rate (Field 1985:22). However, McCallin (1988:243) claims that, because young refugees receive greater exposure to the host culture than adults, they experience more direct confrontation between their home and host cultures. The coping mechanisms that adolescents develop to deal with this are not necessarily a sign of successful adjustment. Beaglehole (1990) provides historical evidence of this fact, in her study of Jewish refugees who came to New Zealand in the 1940s and 1950s as children or adolescents. Previous assumptions about their easy and rapid integration into New Zealand society are seriously disputed through the personal memories of such refugees. Yet, they shared a more similar cultural background with New Zealanders than most refugees arriving today.

This study focuses specifically on adolescents because there is significant international evidence that immigrant children who arrive in their host country by age six or seven are able to achieve greater academic success at secondary school than those who arrive at a later age. Gibson (1995:78) indicates that in the United States, older arrivals often fail to obtain the required skills needed to succeed in secondary school and are at greater risk for dropping out. New Zealand research amongst Southeast Asian refugees confirms that adolescents and young adults face greater difficulties than their younger counterparts, particularly those with little formal education and those who are placed in age-appropriate classes (see Pongudom 1995:303; Tan 1995:92-94). However, refugee adolescents have never been given the opportunity to *speak for themselves* about their experiences of resettlement in New Zealand.

EDUCATION

My interest in locating Somali adolescents within schools relates to changes in New Zealand education over the last decade. There has been a tentative move towards the promotion of policies that are inclusive of cultural diversity. For example, the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education 1993:7) states that education will "ensure that the experiences, cultural traditions, histories and languages of all New Zealanders are recognised and valued". Simultaneously, there has been a withdrawal of the State from all but policy making decisions in education (Boston et al 1996:83). Individual schools, administrators and teachers have been left with the responsibility for implementing policy, resulting in great variability and little accountability. While much research has assessed the institutional inclusion of some specific ethnic groups, particularly Maori, refugees have generally been ignored. There has been no educational research specifying Somali students of any age group. I surmise that the ideals set out in policy relating to refugees are rarely achieved and that Christchurch schools are not adequately inclusive of Somali needs and culture within their structures.

RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

Thus, the importance of this research is four-fold. In addition to expanding the general body of research on refugees, this study offers a largely 'unknown' refugee group that originates from Somalia a chance to speak. Somali refugees are culturally distinct from the Southeast Asians who have been the focus of most refugee research, so it is of vital importance that they are given this opportunity. The limited documentation on the relationship between the refugee experience and adolescence will be supplemented, while also broadening the scope of our understandings about refugees as a whole. Finally, research on the Somali experience in schools offers a chance to assess the capabilities of the New Zealand education system in dealing with differential needs that stem from both the refugee experience and cultural diversity.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This thesis consists of nine chapters, which are organised into four sections. Part one is an introduction to the research project I have undertaken and this first chapter has already outlined the goals and rationale for the research. The second chapter of part one moves on to explore the way in which the study was conducted. I begin by describing how the topic of inquiry was selected, the methodology and methods used and the groups of participants who so kindly took part in this project. Ethical issues have been a core component of the study, due to the face-to-face contact I have had with human participants who are of an ethnic group other than my own and vulnerable because of their status as refugees. Hence, I position myself within the research by considering how my own personal attributes may have affected both process and product and discuss the ethical dilemmas by which I have been challenged as a researcher. Emphasis is placed upon the compromise and flexibility that have been inherent features of the research enterprise.

Somali students and the schools that they attend are the locus of attention, yet neither exists within a vacuum. Thus, part two of the thesis sets a context into which their experiences can be placed. The third chapter provides a critical discussion of immigration, resettlement and education policy relating to refugees, arguing that there is a major disjuncture between policy and practice in this country. Many refugee needs go unmet as a result of little consultation or coordination between the agencies who make policy and those who implement it. I include interview data to illustrate this point by employing the words of Somali refugees and educators who spoke on these issues.

To continue the goal of contextualisation, chapter four explores the adaptational processes of refugees. It is stressed that the nature of adaptation is multifaceted and complex. The divisions between

economic and cultural adaptation are problematised before common influences upon refugee adaptation, as identified by the literature on refugees, are outlined. A distinction is then made between the adaptational processes of adolescent refugees and their older counterparts, for adolescents are often noted as finding adaptation particularly difficult. I then highlight the key factors that can enhance or diminish refugee adaptation to school. These relate to both the refugee experience and the school environment. I return to the major influences upon educational adaptation by using them as an analytical framework when exploring the Somali experience in chapter's six and seven.

Part three holds the bulk of the interview data that I have gained from my research. Entitled 'The Intercultural Struggle' this section of the thesis conceptualises the Somali refugee adolescent experience as a figurative tug-of-war in which both students and schools find that they must adapt. After clarifying what is meant by 'Somali culture', chapter five links Somali with previous discussion in chapter's three and four by indicating how the policy/practice divide affects the adaptation of Somali refugees in Christchurch. Their poor socio-economic positioning is noted, for this is one variable that influences the ability of Somali adolescents to fit in at school.

Chapter six considers the numerous factors stemming from the refugee experience that may enhance or diminish Somali educational adaptation. Many Somali have experienced large gaps in their previous education and are not familiar with the educational culture prevalent in New Zealand. These are both major factors in the present difficulties that Somali students face. The home environment of Somali students, particularly the parental support they receive in relation to education, is also taken into consideration. Finally, this chapter explores how the cultural background of Somali students affects their ability to fit in at school by illustrating the ways in which Somali culture acts as a barrier to positive interaction between Somali and non-Somali students.

Chapter seven considers the coping mechanisms of the Christchurch schools who are challenged by the differential needs and cultural diversity that Somali students represent. The main factors said to influence refugee adaptation in the literature, as outlined in chapter three, are again used as a structural device. The extent to which the needs and culture of Somali students are included within schools is assessed, before factors inside the classroom are investigated. It is noted that systemic biases within the institutional structures of education result in Somali students being prematurely and inappropriately mainstreamed. Additionally, interaction between Somali students, teachers and non-Somali students frequently results in Somali being excluded from the knowledge that could lead them to successful educational adaptation. These acts of social closure are performed to 'protect' the educational culture from the diversity that Somali students represent and may be considered an example of ethnocultural hegemony.

Part four completes the research journey with two concluding chapters. The first (chapter eight) documents the changes that could be made to ease the process of educational adaptation for Somali students and to encourage greater inclusion of Somali needs and culture within Christchurch schools. Improvements suggested by my student, teacher and parent participants are compiled and those that I consider to be the most viable are presented as research recommendations. Both short- and long-term improvements are noted and together they indicate that the discomfort Somali students currently endure in Christchurch schools need not be inevitable. However, the recommendations offered represent a major challenge to central government and educational agencies.

Chapter nine draws together many of the threads that have been woven through this thesis and provides resolution for the key research questions outlined in this introductory chapter. The first of three themes analysed reflects upon the ability of the Somali student experience to stand as an exemplar for refugee adolescents in general. Following this, the discussion moves on to contemplate the multiple and conflicting discourses that affect the confused understandings of equity that teachers display. A recurrent analytical theme relating to systemic biases and ethnocultural hegemony within education is also evaluated. This leads to a final assessment of the four research questions that have animated the study from gestation to completion.

2 METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This thesis is a case study of Somali refugee adolescents. It has already been noted that such individuals are involved in a journey of transition, as they adapt to Christchurch schools and, more generally, New Zealand society. I too have been on a journey, although its magnitude cannot be compared to that of the students I have studied. The following discussion recounts my travel from being an intending Master's student in search of a topic, to a researcher enveloped in the ethical issues of being an 'outsider' in every way to the group I have studied, yet regarded as an 'expert' on refugees within my academic setting. After clarifying the research focus, I elaborate upon my methodology and the methods used, highlighting the considerable 'adaptation' that has been required on my part. Although no research goes exactly according to plan, studying a vulnerable group who are refugees and of an ethnic group other than my own has required numerous adjustments and compromises. These have shaped the research presented here. Thus, in addition to exploring the ethical challenges that have evolved from studying Somali students, I also reflect upon the vulnerabilities I have experienced as a researcher in the field. I hope to foreground the particularities of the final product by making clear the complexity of the research journey undertaken.

THE RESEARCH FOCUS

Before discussing the methodology and methods of this study, it is necessary to consider how I came to be investigating refugee adolescents from Somalia, for the process of selecting a topic has shaped the completed research. In addition, clarification is offered on the three main terms – 'Somali', 'refugees' and 'adolescents' – used to refer to the individuals who are the main focus of this thesis.

SELECTION

Wishing to conduct a study that benefited not only myself, I actively sought community involvement in the formulation of the research focus. This came from my sponsor who, as an employee of the non-governmental agency Refugee Resettlement Support (RRS, formerly Resettlement Family Support Project), is aware that adolescent refugees have particular needs which are not being addressed. I then adopted what Hingangaroa Smith (1992:8) calls the 'power-sharing' model, by asking refugees in Christchurch to support the research enterprise (which was later narrowed to only Somali refugees). An

open letter discussing the proposed study was circulated, and the response gained from this indicated that the research was thought useful and would be supported by refugee communities. The Christchurch schools at which the majority of refugees are enrolled were approached in a similar way and again the replies were positive.

Believing that reciprocity within the research relationship is essential, I agreed to write a report at the end of my study, to assist RRS in lobbying the Ministry of Education. This report offered my participants an opportunity to channel their often frustrating and alienating experiences into a potential lever for change within the New Zealand education system, while government was given a chance to create policy informed by those whom it affects (see Nackerud 1993:5). In addition, I wrote an article for *Many Voices*, a journal for English-as-a-Second-Language (ESOL) teachers. This provided feedback to the educators I interviewed and made it possible for other teachers to understand the experience of their Somali students more comprehensively.

DEFINITIONS

Having selected my topic, it was necessary to be precise as to what I meant by 'Somali refugee adolescents'. Thus, I provide the definitions by which my Somali participants were selected:

Somali

In this study 'Somali' refers to those people who have been born in Somalia, a country in the Horn of Africa. The term 'Somalian' is in common usage in New Zealand, even by some of the students I interviewed, but my cultural advisor suggests that Somali is a more appropriate denotation. Upon the same advice, I use the word Somali in both the singular and plural form, rather than adding an 's' for the latter as is commonly done with foreign words in English.

Refugees

'Refugees' in this thesis refer to those determined as such by the 1951 United Nations (UN) Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol. Both international documents define a refugee as a person who:

Owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his [sic] nationality and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself [sic] of the protection of that country (Rutter 1991:12).

In New Zealand, individuals who have officially immigrated as 'refugees' are accepted into this country under the annual quota from refugee camps or granted asylum after arriving in New Zealand. However, many people who fit into the UN definition immigrate through the family reunification programme, in which already settled refugees sponsor relatives remaining in a camp or third country (Duncan 1992:36). They have usually experienced the same trauma, dislocation and hardship as quota or asylum refugees and exhibit similar resettlement characteristics. This study recognises such parallels and includes Somali who have arrived in New Zealand under family reunification criteria within the term 'refugee'.

A person who has been granted refugee status finds, upon arrival in New Zealand, that they are technically no longer a 'refugee', but a 'permanent resident' of this country. My continued use of the term refugee is a political decision. I am aware that this word acts as a 'marker' that separates those who have had refugee status from their host society peers, discouraging feelings of belonging and acceptance. However, I follow Lyon's (1992:16) lead and believe that the retention of the term refugee in resettlement can be justified when used to emphasise the continuing adjustment issues and needs of refugees.

Adolescents

'Adolescence' is a culturally defined term and the age range included within it can vary greatly. To aid my access to participants, I have interpreted adolescence broadly. Somali refugees aged between twelve and twenty are regarded as 'adolescents' in this study. Although Somali consider adulthood to begin at fifteen years of age, this is usually in relation to religious duties and people of this age do not necessarily take on what in New Zealand would be considered 'adult' responsibilities. Due to gaps in schooling, many refugee students at secondary school are older than their New Zealand classmates, so my broad definition is appropriate in discussing the school-based experiences of Somali. Even though it is problematic to use the words 'boy' and 'girl' to describe the older adolescents, I do so for the sake of simplicity.

METHODOLOGY

This thesis utilises document research and observation to contextualise informal, semi-structured and taperecorded interviews with Somali adolescents, their parents, and professionals involved in education and refugee resettlement. A triangulation of methods was crucial because it provided an opportunity to make an overview of differing personal perceptions and place them within a social and historical context

(see Lyon 1992:7-8). All three methods aimed collaboratively to view the world as Somali refugees encounter it by taking into consideration the multifaceted nature of their experience.

Interviews were chosen as the key tool for this research because I believe hearing Somali students speak for themselves allows the nearest understanding of the reality in which they live. Document research, by comparison, would have provided inadequate means for an indepth analysis of the Somali student experience, due to the lack of information regarding Somali in New Zealand. Observation of Somali students in a classroom situation may have been a successful technique but ready access was not available. Language difficulties would have made administering a questionnaire to my Somali participants impracticable. A negligible response rate would also have come from educators and resettlement workers, whose busy workloads make research participation a low priority. Although it would have been easy to toss out a questionnaire or to write brief but unhelpful answers, my professional participants found it more difficult to ignore my telephone calls and inquisitive questions!

Interviews were highly beneficial because they gave Somali participants a chance to express their opinions in their own words (see Etter-Lewis 1996:1). Both adolescents and refugees are commonly marginalised in academic study but the interviews I conducted allowed refugee adolescents, who are usually spoken for or ignored - and consequently misunderstood or misrepresented - the 'voice of experience'. The incorporation of direct speech from refugees also provides the thesis with more authority and persuasiveness than an impersonal commentary or interpretation (Slim and Thomsen 1995:1;73). The flexibility that *semi-structured* interviews permitted was also invaluable, for this method provided consistency across the different groups that I interviewed. An unstructured approach may have been successfully utilised in the Somali student and parent interviews, but not with the professionals who offered information in an official capacity only and had scarce time in which to do so. While the professional interviews may have suited a more structured style, this would have been inappropriate for my potentially vulnerable Somali participants and the informality in which their interviews were conducted. Thus, semi-structured interviews provided an excellent compromise that permitted me to tailor my questions to the timeframe and context of each situation, without leaving major issues uncovered.

While I had anticipated conducting only individual interviews, circumstances resulted in my interviewing more than one participant at a time on four occasions. I wish to emphasise that this was not a focus group situation, for I did not set a topic and then let my participants discuss this amongst themselves. Rather, I asked general questions and invited each member of the group to take a turn in answering. At times group interviews were unwieldy and difficult to record (see Fielding 1995:142). Participants often spoke over each other and I found it hard to encourage everyone to have a turn at

speaking. Some may not have offered useful information due to the risk of being embarrassed in front of others. If given the opportunity again, I would still prefer to utilise individual interviews but it is important to acknowledge that the group interview situation did have some positive consequences. For example, participants were able to remind each other of situations that illustrated my questions and often shared the telling and verifying of stories as they talked. Thus, group interviews may still be considered a successful method of investigation in this study.

METHODS

I began my fieldwork after reviewing the literature on the common resettlement and adaptation patterns of refugees and exploring New Zealand's immigration, resettlement and education policy. The fieldwork consisted of three parts: observation; professional interviews with educators and resettlement workers in an official capacity; and personal interviews in which I have had more indepth discussions with Somali students and parents.

OBSERVATION

On a purely informal basis I was able to observe three situations which helped to contextualise the comments of my participants. The most regular of these was my attendance at monthly meetings of the Refugee and New Migrant Forum, a group consisting of representatives from governmental and non-governmental organisations. There I was able make contact with those who have had considerable experience working with refugees, from which several fruitful but unrecorded conversations resulted. The Forum was also a valuable opportunity to keep up to date with local developments in refugee and immigrant services and assess the adequacy of current government policy. The unplanned observation of an after-school study class run by RRS and of a school foyer at lunch time are other situations which provided significant insight.

PROFESSIONAL INTERVIEWS

Interviews were at the heart of my fieldwork. My sponsor identified the schools at which the majority of refugee students are enrolled and after gaining a response to the open letter, I contacted the principal at each school. Most directed me to speak with the Head or Director of ESOL, claiming that they did not know enough about refugee students to comment. Others with professional knowledge of Somali students were discovered by word-and-mouth. I eventually spoke with:

- two secondary school principals
- seven ESOL teachers (written notes were supplied by four mainstream teachers also) from five Christchurch secondary schools
- one school counsellor
- the Ministry of Education's regional Secondary School Advisor for New Settlers and Multicultural Education
- a Christchurch College of Education ESOL lecturer and refugee advocate
- my sponsor, a senior social worker for RRS
- a Somali interpreter for RRS who acted as 'cultural advisor'
- a staff member from Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ, formerly Income Support)

These informal, semi-structured interviews lasted about forty minutes each with the exception of the discussion I had with my cultural advisor, which proceeded for two-and-a-half hours. It proved beneficial that most of this fieldwork was completed prior to speaking with Somali participants. Being aware of the programmes and assistance available for refugee students at each school, for example, provided a context within which the words of Somali students themselves could be interpreted.

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

Before I interviewed the Somali participants, however, I attempted to understand the cultural framework in which they are situated. Griffiths (1995:45) states that such a task takes time and trouble but can be done, if imperfectly. Certainly, my cultural knowledge of Somali was not as comprehensive as I would have liked. Available literature concerning Somali culture is dated and not always relevant to the New Zealand situation. I had proposed to consult with a cultural advisor before I undertook any interviews with Somali participants. Due to difficulty in locating a suitable person, consultation did not occur until after all of the Somali interviews were completed. This was useful for verifying the generality of cultural information given in interviews, but it would have been beneficial to discuss some issues prior to this time.

The second phase of fieldwork consisted of informal, semi-structured individual or group interviews with:

- seventeen Somali adolescents (eight girls and nine boys) from six Christchurch secondary schools
- three Somali parents

The interviews took place in a variety of locations; a room at RRS, the homes of two Somali families and the library of a school. Between one and five people participated in each interview, and these lasted between forty minutes and one-and-a-half hours. The 'refugees' involved arrived in New Zealand either under the

refugee quota or family reunification criteria. The ages of the 'adolescents' ranged from fourteen to twenty. All but two began their New Zealand education at a Christchurch secondary school. The parents interviewed were not necessarily relations of the student participants because, except in one case, parents and students were accessed separately.

As a result of the limited background material I had gained about Somali culture, many of my questions implicitly asked for further information. Instead of adopting a strict interview schedule, I began with open-ended questions so that I did not 'lead' the discussion only in the direction that I anticipated. Frequently, I was surprised by the diversity of answers this allowed. Hence, in the metaphorical terms that Kvale (1996:3-4) provides, I became less of a 'miner' and more of a 'traveller' in the interview process. Rather than viewing 'knowledge' as something buried that I must uncover through probing questions, analysis and objectivity, I allowed my participants to act as 'guides' in an unknown territory, where their own stories of the refugee experience represent only one perspective on knowledge.

ACCESS

I initially intended to interview refugees from a wide range of ethnic groups. The focus was narrowed to Somali refugees for a number of reasons. The majority of refugees arriving in Christchurch in recent years have come from Somalia and RRS, through which I accessed most of my participants, has a large Somali clientele. The age structure of other ethnic groups also played a part in restricting the research to Somali. For example, in March and April 1998 approximately fifty Kurdish refugees arrived in the city, but as none of this group are attending secondary school it was inappropriate to include them in my study. In addition, I found that when I spoke to secondary school teachers about refugees, they frequently prefaced their discussion by stating that they had mostly been involved with Somali and would not like their comments generalised to refugees from other ethnic groups. In hindsight, concentrating on one ethnic group makes commonsense. Griffiths (1995:43-5) notes that 'cultural tourism' - viewing minority groups as exotic and unrelated to one's own life - is best avoided by attempting to understand one ethnic group in depth, rather than a greater number superficially. Certainly, the experience of Somali in New Zealand was largely undocumented and required investigation.

Despite this more specific focus, accessing my participants remained a long and frustrating process. Lacking pre-established connections of my own to the Somali communities that I wished to study, it was necessary to have a sponsor who could facilitate the access procedure. When searching for a thesis topic, my sponsor was recommended as a person to contact about the research needs of RRS. Once it was agreed that the research project would go ahead, she proved invaluable in providing initial information,

distributing the open letters sent to refugee communities and arranging opportunities to ask Somali for their participation in the project. The benefits of having a sponsor went beyond the physical assistance to which she committed her time. While I independently accessed the educators involved in this study, I was facilitated on every occasion by stating that I had the cooperation of my sponsor, whom the professional participants knew through their contact with RRS. Thus, the credibility I gained from my association with a sponsor and the organisation she works for was crucial to the access process.

Nevertheless, having to rely on another person to make the first contact with Somali participants was a trial at times. As the open letter to refugees had been distributed through RRS, I originally planned to access Somali students solely through this organisation. However, time constraints upon my sponsor resulted in fewer Somali participants, particularly parents, than expected. Although I wished to avoid the ethical difficulties of accessing students through a school, where I felt they might be less inclined to talk honestly about their educational experiences, four participants were eventually contacted in this way. For the same reason, my sample of adolescents is less varied than I had hoped. Due to most of the students belonging to after-school study classes run by RRS, they are likely to represent Somali students who are motivated and put considerable value upon education. That they are still experiencing considerable difficulty in adapting to school highlights the significance of the problematic issues Somali students are facing.

TRANSCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Transcribing interviews undertaken with Somali refugees, for whom English is a second language, proved to be a time-consuming exercise. Consequently, only the first two Somali interviews (involving six participants) were transcribed in full. To make transcription easier, I made a policy of repeating the most important comments made by my participants for the benefit of the taperecorder and of making comprehensive notes immediately after the interview. Transcription was completed as the fieldwork progressed, so that unexpected issues emerging from my discussions with teachers could be addressed in the Somali interviews. The transcripts retain imperfect grammar but the frequent fillers 'you know', 'like' and 'um' have been deleted where possible. All other omissions have been noted by the use of ellipses.

Chances for self-interpretation by my participants were built into the interview session. Rather than taking statements at face value, I asked questions that allowed participants to analyse their own description of experiences (see Nackerud 1993:6). This process of analysis could have been extended if I had offered participants the chance to review their transcripts or this thesis. I did not, mainly because of the excessive time involved and possible difficulties with the reading of academic English language. I doubt

that my adolescent participants would have been interested in this extra aspect of the interviews, especially when they have their own school work with which to contend. As a 'safety measure' my sponsor at RRS reviewed and commented upon the final Ministry of Education report and the article I wrote for *Many Voices*.

In analysing the information gained from this study, I have worked thematically. It soon became clear that there were many commonalities in the remarks made by students, educators, and parents. These indicated that there is an intercultural struggle occurring between Somali students and schools, due to their disparate expectations and understandings of education. Right from the beginning, the Muslim religion was identified as a major cultural influence in the adaptation process of Somali students and in schools being able to cope with the diversity of Somali. Parallels have been drawn between the comments of Somali students and the documented experiences of refugees from other ethnic groups when examining the interview material gathered. In the later stages of analysis aspects of the Somali student experience were theorised in relation to systemic biases and ethnocultural hegemony within the institution of education.

ETHICAL CHALLENGES

I have indicated some of the surprises and disappointments, as well as changes in design, that have made this research more a process of compromise than the completion of the proposal I first submitted many months ago (see Kvale 1996:83). As well as compromise, this thesis has involved serious consideration of ethical issues. My position as an 'outsider' to all of the groups that participated in the research must be acknowledged. I am neither a refugee, from Somalia, Muslim, an adolescent, a teacher, nor a staff member of a refugee resettlement organisation. Before I began this study, I had never even met a Somali refugee. I *am* a New Zealand-born Pakeha, unaffiliated with any religion, in my late twenties and a feminist. These qualities emphasise my 'otherness' from the Somali participants interviewed and have clearly influenced the research process undertaken. This section deals with the ways in which I have tried to deal with such issues. In particular, I concentrate on the ethics involved when researching an ethnic group other than my own, which are compounded by the vulnerability that my Somali participants exhibit as refugees and adolescents. Focusing mainly on these more obvious ethical challenges, the following discussion also indicates the vulnerability of the professionals I interviewed and myself.

RESEARCHING AN ETHNIC GROUP OTHER THAN MY OWN

It has been argued that Western researchers cannot produce ethical research when working with participants from the 'Third World' because of systemic inequalities within the research relationship (Patai 1991:137). Fleras (1998:83) also indicates that cross-cultural understanding is difficult to achieve because misinterpretations are the norm, rather than the exception, when communicating with those of a different culture. Yet, minority ethnic groups often lack suitable researchers of their own and, if much-needed studies are to be completed, it is necessary for an outsider to conduct the research. In discussing research and Maori, Bishop (1996:18) highlights that dominant group support is frequently a prerequisite for successfully addressing the needs and rights of ethnic minorities.

Patai (1991:150) acknowledges that we need not wait for the perfect person or method before proceeding, but should cautiously employ those resources available to us. Credible results require a researcher of the dominant group to be acutely aware of - and take responsibility for - the ethical issues that arise when interviewing participants from other cultures. To achieve this, it is possible to apply one aspect of 'cultural safety', that which promotes the development of a level of awareness about other cultures, gained through recognising one's *own* cultural biases, attitudes and realities (Ramsden 1995:9). The personal characteristics of the researcher are an integral part of the research process and s/he must always be aware that differences in ethnic background can result in differing experiences of New Zealand society. Even the most 'ordinary' assumptions - that interviews will be conducted in English, even if there are no obvious linguistic misunderstandings, for instance - risk ethnocentrism (Larner 1990:35).

I have been conscious of this danger while studying Somali students, particularly in relation to my lack of religious affiliation and my feminism. Islam is of utmost importance to Somali and this religion explicitly influences their understandings of life and actions within it. I found it necessary to verify several issues connected to Islam with my cultural advisor because, as an outsider to this religion and any other major faith that might be comparable, I lacked required knowledge. I was also aware that my feminist convictions were often in direct conflict with the gendered relations that Islam promotes and so consciously worked at placing Somali experiences within an appropriate cultural framework. Inevitably my own beliefs regarding gender issues and religion have influenced the interpretation of Somali adolescent adaptation to school I offer in this thesis, but I hope to have reduced this affect through the measures I have taken.

By being sensitive to the difference of others and acknowledging that 'our' way is not necessarily the 'correct' way, I believe it is possible for dominant group researchers to study ethnic groups other than their own. In my case, being an outsider has allowed me to develop a critical interpretative perspective which might have been more difficult if had I been Somali (see North 1995:11). Larner (1990:35) indicates

that when a researcher's ethnic background is different than those being interviewed, this can also be an advantage because outsiders are often offered more details than insiders. Thus, researching a culture other than one's own is a double-edged sword, in which both the positive and negative aspects need to be considered.

RESEARCHING REFUGEES

Refugees are regarded as being particularly vulnerable in the research situation, due to the painful and traumatic experiences that they have often experienced (North 1995:9). However, the philosophy of sensitivity and awareness outlined above can accommodate this vulnerability. For example, to avoid causing unnecessary distress, I did not elicit information about pre-immigration experiences, except when asking the students to compare school in Somalia with that in New Zealand. As some refugees are suspicious of authority and of people asking too many questions (North 1995:9), I took this into consideration when applying for Human Ethics Committee approval. I indicated that written informed consent might be inappropriate for some participants and, due to dubious reactions in my first two interviews, I subsequently requested only oral consent on tape.

Recent refugees are new to our country and may be unsure of their rights, so it was important to fully protect the confidentiality and anonymity of such participants. Their names were removed as the interviews were transcribed, while tapes and transcripts were held in a secure place and then destroyed at the end of the study. Many immigrants, particularly refugees, refrain from criticising the people, support and services of their host country because they do not wish to seem ungrateful (North 1995:18). Somali students offered little explicit criticism of schools, but I believe this had more to do with their age and lack of expectations, for Somali parents did not have any qualms about highlighting grievances requiring solution!

Although refugees embody unique vulnerabilities, it is important to note that a research relationship involving refugees is not always a straight forward case of 'studying down'. In this study the majority of the students' parents were highly educated, middle-to-upper class professionals in their own country and student and parent attitudes reflect this status. Thus, the typical scenario of a participant from the 'Third World' being intimidated by university student credentials does not necessarily hold true. In addition, it has been documented that Somali are an intensely proud people whose pride is described as bordering on xenophobia (Samatar 1991:12), so it is possible that the often-cited feelings of inferiority that sub-dominant group members feel may be less relevant in this case. Although interviewing refugees was not always a straight forward instance of 'studying down', their particular vulnerabilities should certainly *not* be ignored.

This is certainly so when people such as myself, who have researched refugees yet never gone beyond the margins of this social group, are considered 'experts' within academia.

Finally, the research I have conducted stems from an explicit political motive: to provide RRS with evidence indicating that the needs of refugee students in secondary school should be acknowledged and addressed by the Ministry of Education. While conceding this fact exposes the study to criticism of bias, I believe that I reduce this hazard by being honest about my motives and by centring the research on the personal testimony of Somali students. Throughout the process I have emphasised my focus is the *whole* experience of refugee adolescents at school, rather than positive or negative aspects alone. Consequently, I have included statements that are contrary to my motives.

RESEARCHING ADOLESCENTS

As someone in my late twenties, I am an outsider to the experience of adolescence in the 1990s. My relatively young age enables me to remember what it was like to be a teenager and draw upon that experience in relating with my younger participants. Yet, it is difficult to tell if the cultural differences between myself and the Somali students have made this attempt redundant. Interviewing young people also brings with it another set of ethical issues to be considered. I had proposed gaining consent from a parent or guardian, as well as the adolescent participants themselves. It was soon evident, however, that I would not be able to meet the parents of most students and that interpreters were unavailable for parents with limited English. As many of the students were over sixteen years of age, this issue was not as major as anticipated. However, all student interviews were conducted either in the presence of a parent, or under the auspices of a school or RRS as a protective measure.

Slim and Thomsen (1995:73-4) note that the formal nature of interviews and the presence of strangers are often intimidating for young people and they may feel pressure to perform. In an effort to reduce the vulnerability of my younger participants, most were interviewed in small groups, with two or three others whom they knew. In one case, I talked with a parent and his children together. Both situations may have limited the information offered to me, for reasons of secrecy or embarrassment. The latter also reduced the opportunity to ask the parent for his view of his children's experience and to discuss the issue of intergenerational conflict. Ideally, I would have liked to conduct separate interviews, so as to compare their experiences, but the sense of security gained by both was a more important factor.

RESEARCHING EDUCATORS

Although educators were interviewed only in their official capacity, they are still vulnerable due to the inclusion of their views in the report I wrote for the Ministry of Education. I was open about my intentions and two teachers requested that I did not quote small sections of the information recorded. There may have been other instances where information was not offered at all for the same reason. In taking their vulnerability into consideration, I have chosen to identify neither the teachers nor the schools involved in this study.

RESEARCHER VULNERABILITY

Finally, it is important to discuss the vulnerability that I have experienced as researcher. As an outsider to all of the communities under research, I relied heavily on my sponsor, who works in a non-governmental organisation that supports refugees. Part-time hours and the hectic nature of her work meant that an extended game of cat-and-mouse preceded almost every telephone conversation or meeting. While she supported the need for and the actual process of my research, this came on top of other, often more pressing, demands. Consequently, I frequently felt powerless over the speed at which my research progressed and the course that it was taking.

In addition, interviewing educators and resettlement workers placed me in the position of 'studying up'. Considerably younger in years than all but one of these participants, I am also inexperienced in both occupational fields. On two occasions this naiveté was emphasised by professional participants and I was 'grilled' extensively in those interviews. My right to be researching refugees and an ethnic group other than my own, my methodology and my conceptual thinking were thoroughly questioned. On one hand, this challenged assumptions that I had made and forced me to consider certain issues from differing perspectives, for which I am grateful. Yet, at the time of the interviews and immediately after I experienced considerable doubts about my ability to complete this study or my thesis. These dips in self-esteem did not usually last very long, due to the excellent supervision that I have received. Yet it is important to acknowledge that the research process is not just a one-way power relationship, in which the researcher is paramount. Rather, it is a complex and convoluted journey in which power shifts and sways in relation to differing social and temporal contexts.

COMPLEXITY AND COMPROMISE

In this chapter I hope to have avoided depicting the research process I have encountered as logical or linear. Rather, my intention was to emphasise the complexity of studying Somali refugee adolescents and the often precarious nature of the research enterprise. The journey I have travelled has required the adaptation of my methods and forced me to deal with ethical challenges that highlight the vulnerabilities of both the researched *and* the researcher. It has been important to situate myself in relation to the research and my participants, for who I am has inevitably influenced the research process and product. Discussing these issues has offered a partial background to the experiences of Somali refugee adolescents, which will be extended more fully in part two where I explore policy relating to refugees and the factors that influence refugee adaptation.

PART TWO: SETTING THE CONTEXT

3 REFUGEE POLICY IN NEW ZEALAND: IMMIGRATION, RESETTLEMENT AND EDUCATION

To understand the school experiences of Somali refugee adolescents in Christchurch it is necessary to consider the current socio-political framework in which the students are situated. Nann (1982:2) indicates that refugees can not be discussed in isolation from larger social, economic and political issues because "[t]he successful resettlement of immigrants and refugees is a complex process involving variables at the societal, institutional, family and individual levels". This chapter places Somali adolescents within a broad context by exploring immigration, resettlement and education policy relating to refugees in New Zealand. It will become clear that there is a lack of coordination between the agencies making policy and the agencies implementing it. Thus, while a quota was established to aid the acceptance of refugees designated as such by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR), many continue to be processed under 'migrant' criteria. The New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS) has the authority to decide which and how many refugees come to resettle in this country, yet the majority of resettlement assistance is carried out by voluntary, non-governmental agencies who struggle to help all those in need. In addition, the Ministry of Education controls policy formulated about refugee students, but individual schools are ultimately responsible for engaging with the diversity of needs that refugees manifest. In the three areas of immigration, resettlement and education, such divisions between policy and practice constrain the ability of refugees to adapt to New Zealand.

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Refugee movements have occurred throughout history. However, the dividing up of the world into independent sovereign states and the twentieth century introduction of monitored frontiers, passports and visas have problematised the issue of those unable to continue living in their country of citizenship (Binzegger 1980:5). The UNHCR (1998) estimates that in 1997 there were approximately twenty-two

million refugees. In 1998 the American Council for Voluntary International Action (InterAction 1998) suggests that this figure diminished to around fifteen million, a six year low, due to border and asylum procedures being toughened and an increase in the forced return of refugees to their homelands. A similar number of people are displaced, due to war or civil strife within the borders of their countries. Approximately one per cent of refugees receive a chance to start new lives in a host country (Campbell 1995:29) and although women and children constitute the majority of refugees and displaced persons, they are the least likely to be selected for resettlement (Tremewan 1994:9). New Zealand is one of only ten countries to accept a regular intake of refugees as part of their immigration policy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade 1998).

Since World War II New Zealand has accepted refugees for resettlement in times of crisis. 838 Poles were the first group to be officially received as refugees in 1944. Following this, more than 6000 people, mainly from Eastern and Southern Europe, were given refuge between 1949 and 1956 (Brooking and Rabel 1995:40). New Zealand became a party to the 1951 United Nations (UN) Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1960 and a signatory to the following 1967 Protocol in 1973 (Palmer-Ororwujea 1989:137). War in Southeast Asia precipitated New Zealand's largest refugee influx, with more than 8000 Southeast Asian refugees having arrived in New Zealand since 1975 (Brooking and Rabel 1995:44; Wilde 1990:8). In the 1990s the majority of refugees come from Iraq, Ethiopia and Vietnam, with smaller numbers from Sri Lanka, Rwanda, Burundi and Bosnia. A total of over 20 000 refugees have already been resettled in this country (Statistics New Zealand 1997:149).

THE REFUGEE QUOTA

New Zealand immigration policy has maintained a separate refugee category for some years. In 1987, however, the traditionally *ad hoc* approach was replaced with an annual quota of up to eight hundred UNHCR-recommended refugees each year (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade 1998). As a result of the government having to pick up the bill for transporting refugees to New Zealand since 1997, the quota was reduced by fifty persons to accommodate the extra cost (Bradford 1997a). Even with this reduction, the quota has not been fully utilised since 1990. Between 1991 and 1994 only 663 people arrived under the quota (Trapeznik 1995:89), with 338 more refugees accepted in 1996 (Jamieson and Peters 1997:11). In the year to June 1997, only two per cent of all immigrants came under the refugee quota (NZIS 1997:5). Additionally, a rapid increase in asylum seekers (from twenty-seven in 1987 to 1200 in 1991) encouraged the government to make it more difficult for those whom they consider 'economic refugees' to get to New Zealand and to be accepted as legitimate asylum seekers (Jones 1992:2:3). Similarly restrictive policies

were introduced in Europe in the mid-1990s (Joly 1997:37). Yet, in New Zealand such moves occurred so dramatically that they were condemned by the UNHCR and Amnesty International, particularly when the already low approval rate fell below four percent in 1994 (Baskett 1995:3:8).

Yet, the figures on refugees accepted into New Zealand are misleading, for considerably more refugees - according to the UNHCR definition described in chapter two - have arrived in this country than they suggest. Under immigration policy only those who apply as part of the refugee quota, or arrive in New Zealand spontaneously and are subsequently granted asylum, are considered 'refugees'. Others, accepted on humanitarian grounds or through the family reunification programme, are considered 'migrants' (Jamieson and Peters 1997:11). The requirements for the latter - numerous copies of documents that many refugees do not possess, a \$700 application fee and the payment of airfares - are often difficult or impossible for refugees to fulfil (Brightwell 1996:66).

Traditionally, New Zealand's immigration policy has been based on meeting labour supply demands but since 1991 the aim has shifted to one of sustained economic growth (Ongley 1996:13-15;25). Consequently, the government is reluctant to accept the full quota of refugees because they are often a non-English-speaking, unskilled group who are less likely to offer New Zealand economic 'returns' than other immigrants; rather, they often represent considerable 'investment' (Greif 1995:15). Failure to accept the entire quota is often justified by a statement emphasising that the quota is "subject to availability of continuing community sponsorship for new arrivals" (New Zealand Working Party on Immigration 1991:3). Thus, blame for the unfulfilled quota is implicitly placed upon the non-governmental agencies that find or provide sponsorship, rather than on government policy itself. Central government also prefers refugees to apply for permanent residency under general criteria because 'migrants' are not covered by the government's obligation to meet minimum standards for refugee resettlement. As a signatory of the UN Convention New Zealand has agreed to ensure resettled refugees specific rights and freedoms, including unity of family and adequate housing, education and social security (Jamieson and Peters 1997:10).

The processing of refugees under 'migrant' criteria is problematic because refugee literature places considerable emphasis on the need to differentiate between refugees and other immigrants on the basis of both their immigration experience and their patterns of resettlement (for example, Stein 1986:5-7; Nguyen 1989:75; Rumbaut 1991:399). Immigration for legitimate refugees is not voluntary; nor do they have a great deal of choice over the country in which they will begin their new life. The considerable trauma, loss and instability that refugees have often experienced also distinguish them from other immigrants, creating a need for specific and comprehensive support to counteract such disadvantages. By accepting refugees into New Zealand under 'migrant' rather than 'refugee' criteria, the government avoids responsibility for meeting

the rights and freedoms guaranteed to refugees in the UN Convention, even though their differential needs are no less evident.

RESETTLEMENT POLICY

New Zealand ranks first equal in the world according to the number of refugees accepted per capita. This worthy fact frequently masks the tendency of central government policy to ignore refugees once they have arrived in New Zealand. Thus, of the ten countries who regularly resettle refugees, this country rates the lowest in post-arrival support (O'Connor 1998a:4). Jamieson and Peters (1997:10;13-14) stress, however, that the rights guaranteed in the UN Convention should be considered binding for both national and local government, not only in terms of immigration policy but also in relation to the treatment that refugees receive upon arriving in New Zealand. It is questionable whether this occurs, for central government has shown little initiative concerning resettlement issues and tends to respond only when under public pressure (O'Connor 1998b:3). Although the government, through NZIS, is responsible for accepting and rejecting refugees, no government agency has a specific or consistent policy regarding their resettlement (Jamieson and Peters 1997:13). Justification is commonly given through the explanation that, once refugees have entered the country, "they are no longer strictly refugees. They are now permanent residents of New Zealand" (Department of Labour 1986:6). This implies that refugees are not considered to need any greater assistance than that which is available to all permanent residents in New Zealand. One result of this attitude is a complete lack of statistics on refugees once they have entered this country, making it difficult to identify problematic issues or success stories.

NEW ZEALAND RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME

In 1997 three million dollars were set aside for resettling quota refugees in the coming year (Bradford 1997b), yet almost a third (\$945 000) was allocated for the transportation of refugees to this country (Bradford 1997a). The New Zealand government follows a front-loaded model of resettlement, in which refugees are offered aid upon arrival in the hope that economic adaptation, particularly employment, will occur rapidly (see Lanphier 1983:13;17). Thus, the remainder of the resettlement funding was used to provide quota refugees with limited, short-term aid, which includes:

- a six-week introductory orientation and English language course at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre;
- health screening upon arrival;

- a referral to the only national resettlement organisation, the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS, formerly the Inter-Church Commission on Immigration and Refugee Resettlement).

Beyond this, quota refugees - like other permanent residents - may be eligible for financial aid from Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) who indicate that such refugees might obtain:

- a \$1200 (increased by \$100 per child after the third) re-establishment grant per family from WINZ for major household items and adult English-as-a-Second-Language (ESOL) classes. Further Special Needs Grants of up to \$800 may be given for accommodation, bond or rent in advance, but these are recoverable;
- likely (but not automatic) eligibility for the Emergency Unemployment Benefit after a one month stand-down. This is at the same rate as the standard Unemployment Benefit, but the latter cannot be granted until an individual has been resident in New Zealand for two years or more.

It must be emphasised that only *quota* refugees are entitled to the above assistance. Refugees accepted under asylum or general humanitarian and family reunification categories do not attend the Mangere Centre. They are eligible to use RMS but their rights to the other provisions are hazy. Some receive health screening and some may be eligible for the re-establishment grant. WINZ state that such refugees must meet the usual criteria for permanent residents to receive the \$1200, but policy on this issue is not interpreted consistently. For example, the grant is usually made to families, but my sponsor tells of cases where it has been received by each adult in the family. Such inconsistency may be a result of the complete lack of specific training that WINZ staff receive in relation to meeting refugee client needs. Communication problems may also play a part, for although WINZ is legally required to supply interpreters for refugee clients, the staff member I interviewed suggests that office budgets do not often accommodate the services of an official interpreter. Refugees are usually forced to organise a friend or relative to accompany them for this purpose or cope by themselves. Lack of communication, combined with the inconsistent interpretation of policy, makes considerable confusion and anguish on the part of refugees inevitable.

Comparing New Zealand and International Resettlement Programmes

Many of the other countries that regularly resettle refugees also follow a model of front-loaded assistance but offer more comprehensive services than those available in New Zealand. In Europe refugee reception centres, like that at Mangere, provide support for between two and twelve months. Scandinavia and the Netherlands offer public or subsidised housing to most refugees, while the French and British governments allow some to benefit from public housing (Joly 1997:32). In Canada new arrivals are

transferred immediately to their place of residence but have a wide range of federally-funded resettlement services available to ease their transition, including vocational counselling and up to six months of English-language tuition (Neuwrith 1988:36).

Australia provides all new immigrants with 510 hours of government-funded ESOL tuition and refugees receive an additional 100 hours (Altinkaya 1998:4). Language classes for adult refugees are also free in Germany and the Netherlands, while Denmark has made attendance at daily language classes a condition for obtaining welfare benefits. The teaching of refugee children in their language of origin is compulsory in Sweden and Norway (Joly 1997:34-5). In comparison, the classes offered to quota refugees at the Mangere Centre are the only free language tuition directly funded by central government in New Zealand. Thus, most of the non-commercial ESOL courses available around the country have long waiting lists (O'Connor 1998b:3).

At least five host societies have also created specialised, State-funded facilities for the multidisciplinary treatment and rehabilitation of torture victims (Alimohamed 1989:24). In New Zealand there are two Refugees As Survivors Centres, in Wellington and Auckland, but they are not directly or completely funded by the State (D'Aeth 1998:1). Australia has a free Telephone Interpreter Service for emergency services (Lo Bianco 1987:36) but in New Zealand a similar scheme entails a cost to the user (D'Aeth 1998:3). Other countries also provide nationwide State-funded interpreter and foreign credential evaluation services (Heipel 1991:350), both of which New Zealand urgently requires (Waite 1992a:7).

It could be argued that the relatively small number of refugees New Zealand resettles each year should make the provision of a comprehensive resettlement programme for refugees manageable, but instead this fact is frequently used to justify inaction and minimal funding. Ironically, ignoring the need for a government-funded, long-term programme to orient refugees to New Zealand life and provide them with basic English language tuition creates costs further down the line. Refugees who speak poor English, have not adapted culturally to New Zealand and exhibit unresolved health problems, for example, are unlikely to provide the economic 'returns' government expects. Field (1985:53), in recommending the best refugee resettlement policy for the British government to follow, stresses that a well-organised and well-run resettlement policy might reduce costs in the long-term, particularly if funding was provided for employment schemes and training.

Jamieson and Peters (1997:10) state that the New Zealand government, unlike its British counterpart, has undertaken no major analysis and little research about the position of refugees in this country, although the 1987 Immigration Act does accommodate an Immigrant Resettlement and Research Fund. This is designed to resource resettlement programmes and research into the social and economic

effects of immigration on New Zealand, as well as the circumstances and experiences of immigrants resettling here (New Zealand Government 1995:328). Despite the existence of such a fund, the government has shown little concern for refugee and other immigrant issues and non-governmental studies suggest that the resettlement needs of refugees are hugely underestimated (Henderson 1989:285).

I interviewed an ESOL lecturer who believes that this lack of concern stems from the low priority that refugees represent for central government. Her work with the Southeast Asian refugee communities of Christchurch indicates that refugees are discouraged by government disinterest in their wellbeing. She states:

We have brought these people in to put them at the bottom of the heap, yet again. And they feel that. They come here with great expectations, great hopes for themselves and – nothing some of them have said to me, they would have preferred, now, to go back to the refugee camp. Now, really, that is an indictment of New Zealand, isn't it? Here they know that they will get food, there will be no bomb, but there is no hope. While in the refugee camp, there is no food, there is lots of bomb, but there is a hope, a hope of going somewhere to better yourself, a better life for the future

O'Connor (1998a:4) suggests that refugees from other ethnic groups would also prefer their war-torn homelands or a transit country to the life they have found here. These admissions demonstrate that the New Zealand government's current commitment to resettlement policy is inadequate and that this deficiency impacts significantly upon the lives of refugees.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL RESETTLEMENT SERVICES

As a consequence of the limited resettlement assistance available from central government, it is non-governmental, often voluntary, organisations that carry the load in attempting to meet refugee needs. They support refugees in the day-to-day aspects of resettlement, rally communities to support improvements in refugee policy and raise funds for refugee programmes (Wilde 1990:8). It has been suggested by Field (1985:12-13) in Britain and Brightwell (1996:24) in New Zealand that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are best able to provide to assistance for refugees. They are unassociated with the stigma of government assistance and can act as pressure groups because they are not bound by political policy. Their small size, in comparison to government agencies, is less threatening for refugees and workers are more knowledgeable and sensitive than government officials, due to their 'coal-face' experience and links with other refugee services around the world. Perhaps most significantly for the government, NGOs are able to run at a very low cost.

However, NGOs have also been criticised for their poor coordination of activities and lack of connection with each other, as well as the delivery of non-standardised service. High rates of staff turnover and a reliance on volunteers, who often lack adequate training, have produced complaints that such organisations are 'amateur' (see Field 1985:14; Brightwell 1996:28). On one occasion during my interviews this concern was expressed to me, in relation to the lack of knowledge voluntary staff have of mental health issues. The demands placed upon NGOs are tremendous. Although officially working only part-time hours, many staff take on full-time loads due to the increasing demands placed upon them. Uncertain funding both constrains and threatens the services offered, risking the relative success that NGOs have had at filling gaps in the national resettlement policy at a local level (Jamieson and Peters 1997:19).

The Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS) is the only national resettlement organisation in New Zealand, running local offices in main centres. The service provides information about interpreters, housing, furniture, health and education. Assistance with family reunification applications for the relatives of refugees is also given (Jamieson and Peters 1997:15). However, the bulk of the service's work involves finding sponsors - often church, Lions or Rotary groups - to provide friendship and non-financial assistance for refugees. To date it has supplied sponsors for ninety per cent of the refugees in New Zealand. Yet, in 1996 the operating budget of RMS was \$734 000 nationwide and, not surprisingly, the organisation had a shortfall of \$18 000. With only partial funding from governmental Community Funding sources, RMS struggles to meet the expanding demands for its services (Statistics New Zealand 1997:150). As the refugees arriving in New Zealand come from increasingly disparate ethnic backgrounds, RMS is finding it even more difficult to locate adequate sponsorship for them all (Brightwell 1996:83).

EDUCATION POLICY

I indicated in chapter one that I wished to determine whether the practices of Christchurch schools reflect policy statements espousing inclusiveness of and engagement with diversity. This section explores the policy/practice relationship by supplementing an outline of education policy relating to refugees with comments from the educators I interviewed. The tentative assessment of policy made here will be extended when the experiences of Somali students are explored in part three. I focus on policy as it relates to refugee and other Non-English-Speaking Background (NESB) students. It is possible that policy specific to Maori and Pacific Island students is more or less inclusive than that outlined here, but I make no attempt to judge if this is the case.

POLICY IN CONTEXT

Nann (1982:2) suggests that refugees cannot be discussed in isolation from larger social, economic and political issues. The policy that relates to refugees is certainly influenced by the context in which it is developed. Education policy is a prime example of this, for it has been shaped by changes made within the Ministry of Education due to the ascendancy of biculturalism as a political agenda and the neo-liberal reforms that have restructured the State since the mid-1980s. These shifts have considerably constrained the ability of the Ministry to respond to the needs of refugees through progressive policy.

Biculturalism versus Multiculturalism

Explicitly assimilative policies, whereby students are forced to conform with the dominant society at the expense of their own cultural identity (Gibson 1995:90-92), have been heavily criticised and renounced in recent years due to the inequity they create within education. Considerable research demonstrates that minority children socialised into one worldview have difficulty coping with a school system derived from and reflecting another, causing alienation and educational failure (Harker and Connachie 1985:35-39). The various forms of multicultural education have transformed international thought relating to ethnic diversity in education. At the most basic level, multicultural education is concerned with the right to have equal access to educational achievement, retain one's home culture and gain the skills that enable everyone to live with their neighbours and function effectively in a diverse society (Bassett 1983:3). It challenges the deficit model often found in education, clearly stating that what is *different* is not necessarily *less*.

Multicultural education is an ideal concept and by nature ideals are rarely achieved in full. Every education system exists within a social and political environment that influences which, if any, form of multiculturalism is developed. As a consequence of this, multicultural policy has been adopted to varying degrees around the world. Minority ethnic groups have had the numbers and political clout to demand an explicit multicultural policy in Canada from 1971 onwards and in Australia since 1972 (Pearson 1996:253). The situation in New Zealand has been quite different. The concept of ethnicity was not utilised in relation to education until the early 1980s. Since then the political strength of Maori has forced the Ministry of Education to move away from an unquestionably assimilationist policy and concentrate on the development of a much-needed bicultural focus to education. Obligations to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi make biculturalism an education imperative, yet have undermined the concerns of smaller ethnic groups, who hold little political power in New Zealand society (New Zealand Council for Educational Research

1987:88-90). Hence, vague references to multicultural ideals are made in policy statements, but the majority of attention towards inclusion and engagement with diversity has focused on Maori.

Neo-Liberal Reforms

In addressing the context in which New Zealand educational policy is formulated, it is crucial to understand how the central government adoption of a neo-liberal agenda has affected education – and other State institutions - since the mid-1980s. The government increasingly views education as a business that, like any other, is most 'efficient' through competition. Consequently, many of the services that the former Department of Education used to provide are now contracted out to privatised agencies and components of education are conceived as private goods to be paid for and run by their 'consumers' (see Lauder 1990:11). An emphasis upon decision making as close as possible to the place of implementation, thought to produce administrative efficiency and encourage quick response to consumer demands, is characteristic of the neo-liberal model (Boston et al 1996:5). Thus, the *Tomorrow's Schools* (Department of Education 1988) reforms have placed much of the former Department of Education's administrative responsibility onto schools and Boards of Trustees, while the new Ministry of Education concentrates purely on policy (Codd, Harker and Nash 1990:20).

Neo-liberal reforms have constrained the possibility of education meeting the needs of NESB students, including those who are refugees. Kincheloe (1995:17) notes, of a similar path being followed in the United States, that students have gone from being citizens with rights to a fair education to consumers of a product. McPherson (1991:25) suggests that the traditional notion of 'equity' is being linked to the 'choice' of the consumer, without the realisation that accommodating the needs of diversity and commodifying education are contradictory. Political leaders today rarely regard education as a society building exercise, concerned with teaching students how to be the kind of citizens that produce a fair and just society. Rather, school is framed as a technical activity that can be improved on through technical innovations to produce good workers (Kincheloe 1995:24). Yet, Olssen and Matthews (1997:11) cite a Treasury briefing paper on education to the incoming government in 1984, which stated that New Zealanders are too optimistic about the ability of education to contribute to both equality of opportunity *and* economic growth. It suggested that increased spending on education would not necessarily improve either of these results.

The National Education Goals (Education Review Office 1994:33) *do* reflect an awareness of the international dialogue about multicultural education. They suggest that education should have "respect for the diverse ethnic and cultural heritage of New Zealand people" and that barriers to equality of educational

opportunity should be identified and addressed, perhaps even by the development of "programmes to meet individual need". However, the possibility of New Zealand adopting multicultural philosophies in any comprehensive fashion has been seriously impaired by the reforms in education policy and practice. Since the advent of *Tomorrow's Schools* (Department of Education 1988), teachers and administrators are responsible, by default, for determining exactly how policy should be implemented (Glynn, Pongudom and McMillan 1990:43).

While broad policy statements allow for their interpretation in a wide number of areas, they provide no substance upon which educators can base practices and programmes that are truly inclusive of their students' diverse needs. Vague and general policy statements also create confusion about the concepts of 'equality of opportunity' and 'equity'. These words are often used interchangeably in Ministry of Education documents. Yet, the former infers that disadvantage can be overcome by treating everyone the same way, while the latter recognises that differential treatment may be required to achieve equal outcomes (Bassett 1983:2). If policy is not clear about these issues, it is unlikely that the 'service providers' – schools and their teachers – will find it easy to implement inclusive practices that represent a real engagement with diversity, rather than just assimilation in a multicultural disguise.

IDENTIFICATION OF REFUGEE NEEDS

The identification of issues relating to disadvantaged students receives particular emphasis in the National Education Goals (Education Review Office 1994). Yet, refugee students are rarely identified as a specific group at all. Refugees are most often encompassed within the very broad grouping of NESB students. This includes those who are new to New Zealand and have had no previous exposure to the English language or schooling. The NESB category also encompasses students who may have been in the New Zealand education system for some time but have difficulty with English language in mainstream classes or specific learning problems. The needs of such a wide range of students are clearly difficult to assess and provide for (Kennedy and Dewar 1997:36).

Over the past decade there has been some recognition of refugee and other immigrant needs. Yet, this has been rather *ad hoc* and has focused solely on the language requirements of such students, while ignoring the process of adaptation through which they must travel. Increasing immigration and the influx of a large number of Southeast Asian refugees in the late 1970s and early 1980s forced a response from the Department of Education concerning NESB students. In 1989 a national coordinator and six regional School Advisors for New Settlers and Multicultural Education were appointed (Jamieson and Peters 1997:13). Today they continue to assist in-service teachers of refugees and immigrants with professional

development, visit schools and help to establish ESOL programmes. The School Advisor I spoke to also meets with refugee families to make sure that newly arrived refugees and their sponsors are aware of the ESOL programmes available. In the late 1980s the Department of Education introduced a scheme by which one secondary school in each of four New Zealand cities was funded to act as a 'reception' class for new refugee students. There they could learn English within their own ethnic group before moving into the regular school system (Kaa 1989:245-246). This funding continues but only when there are a large number of refugees from one ethnic group arriving in a city at one time.

The Ministry of Education has funded additional initiatives to aid the teachers of NESB students. For example, the journal *Many Voices* provides a forum for discussion and information concerning refugees and immigrants. The Multicultural Education Resource Centre in Wellington carries out the coordination of multicultural resources for schools. In the past decade the Ministry has also commissioned two major studies that relate to the needs of NESB students. An external review (Gubbay and Cogill 1988) surveyed the educational resources – including those at a tertiary and community level - that assist the successful resettlement of immigrants and refugees. More recently, a comprehensive study (Kennedy and Dewar 1997) produced by members of the Ministry's Research Unit explored the programmes and support available to NESB students in New Zealand schools. Yet, the teachers I interviewed speculate whether Ministry staff actually read these reports, particularly the "wonderful" study by Kennedy and Dewar (1997). They suggest that recent policy changes to the ESOL funding procedure make it clear that policy makers have no idea of what it is like to learn another language. It must be noted, however, that the bicultural agenda in education policy and neo-liberal reform have made the implementation of many report recommendations politically and economically unviable.

ESOL FUNDING PROCEDURE

The Ministry of Education funding system for ESOL, which came into effect in January 1998, explicitly identifies refugees as a group with distinct needs in language learning. Schools with students who were accepted into New Zealand under the refugee quota are able to receive a supplementary grant of \$500 per student (Ministry of Education 1997a:1). This is a one-off entitlement, available only in their first year of New Zealand education, and is delivered in four instalments. Schools may be eligible for some discretionary staffing assistance if there are a considerable number of non-quota refugees enrolled at one time, but this is considered case-by-case through local Ministry of Education Management Centres (Ministry of Education 1997b:8).

The grant comes in addition to \$500 per year, for a maximum of three years, that schools will eventually receive for each NESB student who fits the ESOL criteria (Ministry of Education 1997a:2). This rate is being phased in over three years but the Ministry claims that it already represents a slight increase in overall funding. One of the ESOL teachers I interviewed notes that some schools with small NESB student numbers have received funding for ESOL for the first time under the new procedure, because they were not eligible for discretionary funding. Most of the teachers I spoke to are more cynical and believe that the new system is just the old one "in disguise", having been revamped and implemented four (formerly two) times a year.

The funding policy goes some way towards recognising that refugees have additional needs in comparison to other NESB students. Teachers are made aware of this distinction because refugee student funding must be applied for separately and a new centralised database offers limited statistics on the numbers of refugee students who receive funding at each school (Ministry of Education 1997a:2). The document outlining the assessment procedures for NESB students provides basic information on refugee students and the general educational status of various refugee ethnic groups found in New Zealand. Practical, although brief, suggestions on how to support refugee children in schools are supplied, along with contact details for organisations who deal with refugee issues (Ministry of Education 1997b: 8-12). Possible uses for funding and numerous references are provided in another part of this document (Ministry of Education 1997c:1-4). A handbook has also been developed for teachers of NESB students that offers information on all funds available. It provides guidelines as to what such funding might be used for, examples of good practice and procedures to assist in the development of culturally sensitive policies and supportive programmes for students (Ministry of Education 1997a:2).

Although refugees are identified as a group with particular needs through the funding policy, the methods of addressing such needs remain inadequate. In September 1998, only 158 individuals across the country were eligible for the quota refugee grant, while 21 619 students were funded under NESB criteria (Ministry of Education 1998a). Students who have been to school more than four years are automatically disqualified from eligibility (Ministry of Education 1997d:1). Thus, the School Advisor I interviewed estimates that there are another 40 000 *unfunded* NESB students receiving ESOL support in schools. The educators involved in this study claim that the three-year eligibility ignores considerable research demonstrating how long it takes to learn a language. Conversational fluency can take up to two years to learn, English vocabulary at class level takes approximately five years, while at least six to seven years are required to gain fluency and understanding of academic language and conceptual knowledge (Hawley 1987:71; Kennedy and Dewar 1997:30). Students are, therefore, being resourced for only the first stage of

their English language learning. In addition, the School Advisor I interviewed states that young adults aged eighteen and over are no longer eligible for funding at a secondary school. Yet, to gain secondary qualifications and prepare for tertiary education many NESB students of this age attend school, particularly refugees who have had gaps in their education. The adult programmes funded by the Ministry of Education, such as the Pasefika Education and Employment Organisation (PEETO) in Christchurch, do not fulfil the needs of all refugees because they are geared towards vocational training, rather than preparing students for further education.

The change to quarterly, rather than biannual, allocation of funding allows a quicker response to fluctuations in NESB student rolls, which is crucial when funding is not provided in advance. It also greatly increases the administrative load of teachers. All of the ESOL teachers I interviewed were critical of the Ministry for placing yet another burden upon them. *Tomorrow's Schools* (Department of Education 1988) has already made work-related burn-out and a lack of time common factors that restrict the ability of teachers to meet the needs of their diverse students. Now the ESOL funding assessment forms have gone from one page to five pages each and biannual updates for individual student files are required to justify why each student still needs funding. The teachers with whom I spoke indicate that such procedures are unrealistic because they simply do not have time for this extra administration, particularly when they deem it "useless" anyway.

This appraisal comes from their experiences in attempting to implement the new procedure. One of my teacher participants claims that having the same assessment forms for secondary and primary schools is inappropriate because students in these sectors are at different stages of learning. A Head of ESOL describes the new funding system as "of absolutely no benefit to me" because the terminology used for determining levels of language ability in the assessment procedures is contradictory and not explained clearly. For example, teachers have to decide if students are at the same level as the 'cohort', 'close to cohort' or 'below cohort' with little guidance as to what is meant by these terms. Yet, on the same assessment form advice is offered on how to help new students, including hints about "speaking slowly". The teachers I interviewed, who are specifically trained in ESOL, consider this insulting and one states emphatically that: "Ministry stuff is rubbish".

The same teachers also agree that funding provided by the Ministry "doesn't remotely begin to cover" the real costs of running an ESOL programme. In larger programmes, there may just be enough to cover the cost of a teacher aide, but certainly not a trained teacher. In smaller programmes, the Ministry funding is considered merely "pin money". An ESOL lecturer described the extra funding for refugees as "stupid" because the \$500 top-up for a refugee's first year is unable to make a dent in the cost of

addressing refugee needs, particularly in schools with only a small number of refugees. Consequently, most schools do not regard the Ministry as a reliable source of funding for an ESOL programme but rather as "a bit extra". This is the same problem that Kennedy and Dewar (1997:228) identified prior to the new funding system. Although the funding changes are proclaimed as part of the Ministry's commitment to providing sustainable, long-term funding for ESOL, teachers are dubious about how long the funding will continue. \$7.6 million was allocated to ESOL in 1998, with an additional \$5.5 million over the three-year period 1998-2000 earmarked for the implementation of the new policy and funding procedures (Ministry of Education 1997a:1). There is no indication of expenditure after 2000 and the funding has already been threatened by government cuts to education in June 1998 (Luke 1998:7).

RESPONSIBILITY FOR ESOL PROGRAMMES

When funding is generated by a set amount of money given per NESB *student* on the roll and this is inadequate to cover the actual costs of running an ESOL *programme*, school principals and Boards of Trustees are having to make tough, discretionary decisions. According to the neo-liberal model they have a 'choice' about whether to continue supporting an ESOL programme by using general funds, possibly at the expense of other areas of the school, or to discontinue running an ESOL programme. This logic does not only affect ESOL, for the new Special Education 2000 policy has created a similar dilemma for schools with an attached special-needs unit that must now be supported through the diversion of other funding (Iosefa 1998a:7).

Most schools have discovered that there is no real choice, for increasing numbers of NESB students each year make an ESOL programme a necessity. One teacher admits that she is manipulating the new funding procedure to ensure her programme is resourced. She works out how many marks students need on their assessment to keep the existing level of funding and then makes sure they receive these points. This teacher believes that many schools will be doing the same. Other resources are also used to run ESOL and some schools cover costs by actively marketing themselves to foreign students. However, O'Connor (1998b:7) suggests that this has resulted in an English-as-a-Foreign-Language approach to teaching, which does not necessarily meet the ESOL needs of refugee and immigrant students resident in New Zealand.

Since the neo-liberal reforms, the responsibility of actually running ESOL programmes lies with the educators and administrators of individual schools. Policy is so vague in relation to ESOL that this results in considerable variance in the interpretation of policy and quality of delivery. For example, ESOL students are said to be catered for under *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education 1994). Yet, this document scarcely mentions ESOL, let alone provides detail as to how NESB students are to be assisted and

what qualifications they can achieve. NESB students often find it difficult to complete the unit standards for English and because of this may be prevented from attending tertiary institutions. The ESOL lecturer who participated in this study indicates that the drafting of specific ESOL unit standards is in process, but these will be relevant only for those studying at Sixth Form Certificate level or above.

Consequently, there is great variance in the ESOL programmes run around the country and the content they cover. One Head of ESOL feels as if she is constantly "reinventing the wheel" because conferences are her only venue for consultation with other ESOL teachers. Great effort is wasted as many ESOL teachers face common problems but must deal with these on a school-by-school basis due to the government's increasing conceptualisation of schools as independent institutions. Altinkaya (1998:2) suggests that the competitive market-oriented educational environment discourages collaboration and sharing of materials. Hirsh (cited in Gordon 1997:67) noted cynically at a public lecture in 1995:

This is the only country that I know of that has taken the radical step of abolishing its education system. Rather than a system, it has a series of virtually autonomous providers of education.

The teachers I spoke to who are employed by such 'autonomous providers' certainly feel quite isolated from wider educational processes.

There *are* still structures in place that aim to ensure the quality of ESOL education in New Zealand but the educators I interviewed suggest that these are insufficient. For example, the School Advisor who participated in this study states that the Ministry employs educators such as herself to assist teachers with the professional development of ESOL programmes but the Advisors receive no specific direction on how to do this. According to Glynn, Pongudom and McMillan (1990:43) New Zealand teachers lack the level of professional advice and guidance from colleagues skilled in such techniques available to their counterparts in Australia, Britain and the United States. In addition, the Education Review Office (ERO) was set up to monitor the performance of schools in achieving the National Education Goals. Yet, the School Advisor with whom I spoke states that no ERO report has specifically concerned NESB students and that ERO recommendations tend to be ignored by the Ministry. Consequently, Syme (1995:37) suggests that ESOL "provision is often based more on pragmatic considerations than on soundly researched foundations" and some schools have advantages over others in terms of resources and the quality of their Boards of Trustees. This raises serious doubt as to whether equality of opportunity and equity issues are being addressed for refugee and other NESB students in New Zealand secondary schools today.

THE POLICY/PRACTICE DIVIDE

The ability of service providers to adequately meet the needs of refugees is clearly constrained by the division between policy and practice in relation to immigration, resettlement and education. New Zealand has signed a UN Convention protecting the rights of refugees through both the immigration process and resettlement. Yet, refugees are commonly accepted under 'migrant' criteria and the resettlement programme offered by central government meets only the barest minimum of needs. In practice, therefore, resettlement support is left up to NGOs who struggle for funding. Education policy in New Zealand has moved towards identifying the differential needs of refugee students within education policy, but the funding provided to accomplish this remains inadequate. The devolution of responsibility for the implementation of policy to individual schools also offers no guarantee against variability in interpretation and the quality of provision. In consequence, there appears to be little coordination or consultation between policy makers and policy practitioners where refugees are concerned. The next chapter notes that the socio-political environment in which refugees resettle is one factor affecting their adaptation. The disjuncture between policy and practice does, therefore, have real effects upon the lives of refugees. This will become clear in chapter five when the situation of Somali refugees in Christchurch is explored.

4 REFUGEES AND THE PROCESS OF ADAPTATION

Most refugee literature is concerned with the process of adaptation through which refugees travel as they resettle in their host society. The aim of this chapter is to emphasise the multidimensionality of adaptation by discussing numerous variables that affect the ability of refugees to adapt successfully. Reviews of literature are frequently separated into overseas research and studies conducted in New Zealand. Having found that similar findings are evident in both, I have chosen to break with tradition and explore the literature thematically. Beginning with a general discussion on the adaptation of refugees, I note that there is often a distinction made between adapting economically and adapting culturally. This is an arbitrary division and at times there are strong linkages between economic and cultural adaptation. Yet, one can also occur without the other. These facts make it difficult to assess exactly when or why adaptation has taken place.

Having indicated the complexity of adaptation, I then move on to examine the variables which influence this process in relation to refugees. Aspects of both the refugee experience and the host environment in which refugees resettle play a part in adaptation, as can variables specific to each individual. The discussion then narrows to refugee adolescents. The literature considers a differentiation between this age group and older refugees important because the adaptation of adolescents is complicated by their crucial stage of identity development. Adolescents also have a higher likelihood for intergenerational conflict and marginalisation, both of which make adaptation more troublesome. Finally, factors that influence the adaptation process of refugee adolescents at school are elaborated upon. Aspects of the refugee experience, such as previous education, home environment and cultural background, are all important factors. However, systemic biases and instances of ethnocultural hegemony within the institution of education, as well as misunderstandings that result from cross-cultural interaction in the classroom, provide evidence that the school environment must also be taken into account.

This chapter emphasises the multifaceted nature of adaptation because an understanding of its complexity is necessary for examining the lives of Somali refugees. Many of the factors highlighted in the latter section of this chapter will provide an entry into my discussion of the Somali adaptation experience in part three. While it is clear that multiple and overlapping factors are involved in adaptation, there appears to be many factors that commonly influence this process when focusing on refugees. Yet, as the majority of refugee research has focused on Southeast Asians, it is difficult to assess whether these are relevant for

all refugees. This issue will be revisited in the final chapter in light of my discussion on the Somali refugee experience.

THE ADAPTATION PROCESS

A distinction is frequently made between the economic and cultural aspects of the adaptational process. While I retain this division in the following discussion, it is stressed that a separation of the two is simplistic, for there is a complex relationship between economic and cultural adaptation. The focus is on refugees but research relating to the adjustment of immigrants in general has also been noted where applicable.

ECONOMIC ADAPTATION

Finding accommodation, a job and obtaining material goods, such as furniture and a car, are usually considered to be signs of economic adaptation. Gaining adequate education, particularly in the host country language, may also be included within this category. Due to the relative ease of assessing components of economic adaptation, it has been a common focus for researchers, particularly those in New Zealand. For example, Farmer and Hafeez (1989:172-179) analysed data for the 1983-85 intake of Southeast Asian refugees into New Zealand and found that they experienced higher rates of employment and of owning telephones, cars and televisions than refugees in the United States. Governments also tend to focus on economic adaptation when they provide resettlement assistance for refugees. Frequently concentrating on employment, government resettlement programmes infer that adaptation is complete when a job has been gained.

Yet, Heipel (1991:350), who has studied refugee assistance in Canada, notes that defining successful economic adaptation is not a simple task. Refugees may be considered to have completed economic adaptation if they get *any* job, or one suited to their qualifications and skills. Similarly, refugees can be viewed as economically adapted if they gain just enough English language ability to get by in a manual occupation or if they acquire reasonable fluency. He stresses a need to go beyond the superficial when attempting to measure economic adaptation. For example, the Farmer and Hafeez (1989:163-169) study described above found that while employment amongst Southeast Asian refugees was high, almost all were employed in lower status jobs than those they had left in their home country. This fact highlights Heipel's (1991) belief that defining economic adaptation is more complex than is often perceived.

Numerous variables influence the ability of refugees to adapt economically. These include the gender, previous social, occupational and educational background, English language ability and age of each individual (Hafeez 1988:75-77; Nguyen 1989:73-74; Liev 1995:112). The cultural characteristics of refugees can also play a significant part in influencing adaptation. In a study of Southeast Asian refugees in Dunedin, for instance, employment did not appear to be an issue and some cases of upward mobility were recorded (Andrew 1985:49-50). Farmer and Hafeez (1989:173-184) indicate that Southeast Asian refugees demonstrate rapid economic adaptation in comparison to refugees from other ethnic groups, due to the cultural priority placed upon disciplined hard work. Economic adaptation is also linked, at times, to how successfully a refugee has culturally adapted.

CULTURAL ADAPTATION

The terms 'cultural adaptation' and 'cultural adjustment' are often used interchangeably. Searle (1989:8) notes that whichever word is used, the meaning is often ambiguous in cross-cultural literature. Some authors use cultural adaptation to indicate a simple acceptance of the host culture. Others consider it to be freedom from social, environmental, physiological and psychological problems. Further yet, Stein (1986:17) regards such success as having learned the culture and behaviour of the dominant society, while retaining one's own cultural identity. This diversity in definition highlights the multidimensional nature of cultural adaptation (Montgomery 1996:687).

It is easy to see that the intricacy of this concept poses problems of measurement. Canadian researchers Berry, Kim and Boski (1988:63-64) emphasise this complexity by detailing what they consider to be the four *main* aspects to cultural adaptation. *Physical* change may encompass moving to a new country and living in an unfamiliar type of housing. *Biological* change also occurs, due to the modification in nutritional status that refugees experience or the new diseases to which they may be exposed. Linguistic, political, economic and religious alterations represent *cultural* change. Finally, *social* change takes place, as refugees experience different in-group, out-group and dominance patterns in their host society. They stress that the process of cultural adaptation occurs amongst groups *and* individuals, but usually results in those from sub-dominant groups changing more than members of the dominant group. Alternatively, Searle (1989:9) cites international research that differentiates between internal or external adaptation. The former relates to feelings of satisfaction, self-fulfilment and security or socio-cultural adaptation, while the latter involves quality of life and socio-economic participation within the host culture.

According to Berry's (1988:101-102) Canadian research, there are four *outcomes* of adaptation that refugees and other immigrants may achieve. Assimilation entails the relinquishing of the immigrant's

own cultural identity, in favour of adopting elements of the host society's culture. Separation, on the other hand, is when the immigrant's cultural identity is maintained and the host culture is ignored. Marginalisation occurs when an immigrant relates peripherally to both home and host cultures. Finally, when an immigrant retains his or her own cultural identity but also conforms to the basic tenets of the host society's culture, integration has occurred. The latter is regarded as the most favourable outcome for refugees and other immigrants and in this thesis 'successful adaptation' refers to integration.

Based on study in Canada, Montgomery (1996:687) claims that difficulty with cultural adaptation can create tension or conflict within and among refugees and between refugees and their host society. The varying degrees of conflict that refugees experience during the adaptation process are often termed 'acculturative stress'. In New Zealand, Liev (1989:1-6) has developed an integrated model indicating the causes of stress for refugees when they are adapting to a host community. Such stress can be experienced on an individual, familial, group or organisational level. At the individual level, acculturative stress can result from anxiety when cultural 'mistakes' are made, loneliness and isolation, a lack of host language, an inappropriate job or unemployment and a loss of social status (Liev 1989:9-26). Resistance, rejection and friction at the individual, familial, group and community level are common, Liev (1995:126) notes, when refugees are forced to assimilate into the host culture. The sixth and seventh chapters of this study consider the stress experienced both by Somali students *and* Christchurch schools, resulting from the intercultural struggle they are enveloped within.

Although economic and cultural adaptation do not always occur simultaneously, they may influence one another. Lanphier (1983:13;17), for example, states that in Canada gaining employment at an early stage of resettlement may enhance economic adaptation but full-time work allows little time for learning the host language and culture, which may diminish cultural adaptation. Yet, Brightwell (1996:23) cites research in the United States indicating that refugees who gain work early in the resettlement process experience greater interaction with host nationals, thus *enhancing* their cultural adaptation. There is clearly a tension between economic and cultural adaptation, one that can influence the overall adjustment of refugees either positively or negatively at different times. Key variables such as birthplace, age, gender, educational levels and previous occupation make it difficult to assign a fixed linkage between the two (Castles et al 1986:71).

The above discussion has illustrated the multidimensional nature of cultural adaptation and emphasised that it is difficult to pin down exactly what is required for successful adjustment and when it has taken place. New Zealand research (see Lee 1988:171; Lyon 1992:7-8) indicates that this situation is aggravated by the fact that the same person's degree of adjustment may be perceived diversely by different people. For instance, a Somali adolescent may be considered 'too Somali' by his or her New Zealand

friends, perhaps 'too old-fashioned' by Somali peers and 'too New Zealand' by his or her parents. Montgomery (1996:687) also suggests that the process of adaptation may take years to complete. However, the length of time required depends on the variables involved in the adaptation process.

VARIABLES IN THE CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF REFUGEES

Adapting to a new country and culture can be a trying process for all; but refugee literature provides evidence that cultural adaptation can take longer and is more difficult for refugees in comparison to other immigrants (for example, Stein 1986:9-10; Nguyen 1989:75; Rumbaut 1991:399; Cochrane, Lee and Lees 1993:19). It is possible that the refugee experience makes some individuals more assertive, progressive, innovative and willing to accept change in making a new life. Having already hit 'rock bottom', adapting to a host country may seem a relatively easy challenge (Stevens 1993:175; 189). However, for most refugees this is not so. The characteristics that refugees commonly share, the host environment into which refugees resettle and variables relating to each individual can all impact negatively on the ability of refugees to culturally adapt.

REFUGEE CHARACTERISTICS

Despite disparities in ethnic background, refugees often experience similar barriers to adaptation.

International and local studies indicate that the most common of these are:

- loss, grief and traumatic experiences caused by war, persecution and displacement;
- social and economic status inconsistency;
- a lack of material possessions due to an unplanned departure from their home country;
- the breakdown of family structure and guilt associated with leaving others behind;
- years spent in refugee camps, feeling uncertain of the future;
- accelerated modernisation;
- social isolation;
- culture shock accentuated by little previous knowledge of life in the host society;
- experiencing 'minority' status for the first time (Lin 1986:61-64; Barudy 1988:140-143; Liev 1989:223-226; Eisenbruch 1990:11-13).

Refugees do not necessarily embody all of the above characteristics, but are often affected by many of them. These experiences distinguish refugees quite markedly from other immigrants.

HOST ENVIRONMENT

Success in adapting does not solely rest on the attributes of refugees, for the host environment in which resettlement takes place also affects cultural adaptation. International studies show that the greater the cultural disparity between the home and host societies, the more difficult successful cultural adaptation becomes (Williams and Westermeyer 1986:2). The public attitude of the host society to refugees also plays a large part in how quickly they adapt (Joly 1997:36). Liev (1989:1-6) indicates that rejection, stereotyping and prejudice from the host community have been found to cause acculturative stress. Media portrayal of refugees and the kind of national resettlement policy adopted by host societies influence such attitudes. The ease at which immigration policy allows family members to be reunited and the process by which qualifications can be transferred to the host country may additionally affect cultural adaptation. The availability of comprehensive resettlement services, good quality refugee sponsorship and an established ethnic community are other factors that positively influence the cultural adaptation process (Nguyen 1989:76-78; Liev 1995:117-119).

INDIVIDUAL VARIABLES

While there are many general characteristics that refugees share as a group, individual attributes also play a part in cultural adaptation. Exactly how and when successful adjustment occurs often depends on personal characteristics, such as gender, level of education, socio-economic background and age. Female refugees in New Zealand find it more difficult to adapt culturally because they tend to have lower levels of education, less work experience, low social status in their home country and considerable pressure on them to maintain cultural traditions (Crosland 1991:118-119). Montgomery (1996:687) found the pre-migratory level of education of adult refugees in Canada to be the most important predictor of their socio-cultural adaptation but education was only the third most powerful indicator for economic adaptation. Others have similarly documented that refugees have fewer adaptational difficulties if they exhibit high levels of literacy and education in their home language and a positive perception of their progress in English (Hafeez 1988:75; Nguyen 1989:73-74; Montgomery 1996:687). Finally, a refugee's age at the time of immigration is important, with the elderly, single young adults and adolescents finding it most difficult to culturally adapt (Hafeez 1988:168; Nguyen 1989:73).

CULTURAL ADAPTATION AND REFUGEE ADOLESCENTS

This thesis focuses on the adaptation process of adolescents, the last category of refugees described above as finding adaptation particularly arduous. Field (1985:22) states that resettlement is easier for younger refugees because they are more open and adaptable to learning new ways than older refugees and because they experience the new culture 'full-time' at school. Yet, to the contrary, numerous overseas studies recognise that adolescent refugees need to be considered separately from other refugees, due to adolescents finding cultural adaptation *more* difficult to negotiate (see Barudy 1988:147-148; Lee 1988:167). This is due to three related factors that result from their age at the time of immigration:

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE

Lee's (1988:167-171) research in the United States highlights that, in addition to being confronted with social and psychological adjustment as refugees, adolescent refugees face physiological and emotional upheavals common to their age group in many cultures. The transition from child to adult, where an identity separate from the family develops, involves both exciting and traumatic changes (McDowell and Ziginskis 1994:2). This process is more difficult for adolescent refugees than for their non-refugee peers, because they tend to have fewer emotional connections on which to model their sense of identity (Lee 1988:173). Considerable unresolved suffering might also make it harder for them to find their way through this developmental stage (Thien and Malapert 1988:259). Nevertheless, Long's (1993:8) study of refugee camps in Thailand emphasises that some young refugees may gain a *strengthened* sense of self and collective identity from the experiences they have endured. Ho (1995:30), whose research involves Hong Kong Chinese adolescents in New Zealand, states that successful adaptation relies on adolescent immigrants not only gaining a sense of personal identity, but also retaining a sense of group identity with their family and home culture.

Individuals of the age we define as 'adolescent' in New Zealand are considered to be adults in some cultures. Many refugee adolescents find it difficult to be treated as children in New Zealand because their culture has no need for a long-drawn-out childhood. Others take on the role as 'adult' early because of the loss of one or more parents, or because they are able to speak English and adapt more rapidly into New Zealand society than their older family members. In some cultures this creates a crisis in family roles, for the child is attributed higher 'status' than his or her parents. The experiences that refugee adolescents have been through may also result in maturity beyond their age (Green 1989:128).

INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICT

Identity development can be inhibited or enhanced by the intergenerational conflict that frequently occurs between adolescent refugees and their older relatives. Such conflict is a factor in most adolescent lives, but it is often worse for refugees because they are simultaneously suffering physically and socially as the result of immigration and resettlement processes. Adolescent refugees are struggling to make sense of the world outside their home in an effort to fit in, yet find that they cannot rely on their parents for guidance as they would traditionally expect. Refugee parents are negotiating this process of cultural adaptation for themselves at a much slower rate and often wish to steadfastly retain the home culture (Beaglehole 1990:79).

Consequently, discord between refugee parents and their children is common. For instance, Lyon's (1995:43) New Zealand study of Cambodian refugee secondary school students found that eighty-five per cent thought that their parents did not understand them and ninety-two per cent had parents who believed that their children were too Westernised. If their own expectations of success in New Zealand have been frustrated, many refugee parents regard their children as vehicles for the attainment which would make the immigration experience seem worthwhile (Green 1989:127). These expectations put additional pressure upon adolescents and add to the confrontation between generations and cultures. Greater difficulty may also be apparent if the adolescents were separated from their parents and settled in New Zealand before them (Tan 1995:94).

INCREASED MARGINALISATION

Refugee and other immigrant adolescents commonly feel marginalised from both their home and host cultures and this may be aggravated by issues relating to identity development and intergenerational conflict. Beaglehole's (1990:11) participants, who came to New Zealand as adolescent refugees from World War II, describe "a kind of limbo world", in which the adolescents felt no real sense of belonging. As a Jewish refugee (cited in Beaglehole 1990:84) remembers: "[O]ne didn't have a single cultural background to retreat to. You had two which meant that in a sense you had neither". International studies reinforce this conclusion. McCallin (1988:243) states that young immigrants often experience a feeling of 'multiple marginality' (Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco 1995:168) more than their elders, because attending school constantly forces the two cultures into direct confrontation. Australian research (Rosenthal 1984:73) suggests that marginalisation is more likely to occur when adolescents try to reject their home culture. Nevertheless, Thien and Malapert's (1988:268) French study argues that adolescents have an advantage over younger children when forming their identity, because they usually have specific memories of their

home country. This means that they do not have to rely on the memories of their parents, whose perspective might not be very reliable. Consequently, they may identify with their home culture more easily than their younger counterparts.

CONSEQUENCES

Long (1993:8) stresses that positive aspects of the refugee experience are usually ignored. Adolescent refugees may display an enhanced receptivity to new ways and ideas, survival skills and a greater sense of altruism when compared to their New Zealand peers. However, virtually all of the research on refugees of this age group indicates that they find cultural adaptation particularly difficult and that this affects their future opportunities. For instance, Nguyen (1989:73) suggests that immigration at the time of adolescence is a predictor of subsequent alcohol and drug abuse and delinquency in Southeast Asia's resettling in the United States. While other individual variables must be accounted for, evidence attests to adolescents being one of the most vulnerable groups in adaptation. This conclusion has serious implications for refugee adolescents attempting to adjust to school.

EDUCATIONAL ADAPTATION AND REFUGEE STUDENTS

It is always troublesome to pin down exactly what factors enhance or diminish refugee adaptation and numerous variables affect the ability of students to adapt to school, both academically and culturally. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify two broad spheres of influence: the refugee experience and the school environment.

REFUGEE EXPERIENCE

Adolescent refugees have often experienced gaps in schooling. Many receive insufficient educational support at home because their parents do not speak the host country language or work long hours. In addition, young refugees have often experienced trauma and their cultural background may be vastly different when compared to the society in which they must now make their life. All of these factors stem from the refugee experience and can have effects on the educational adaptation of adolescent refugees.

Previous Education

Many young refugees have missed out on schooling while living in refugee camps and/or a transit country for some years. New Zealand research suggests that in addition to lacking literacy and academic knowledge, a large number of refugee students have no familiarity with the study and organisation skills required at school (Cochrane, Lee and Lees 1993:18-19). The age at which young refugees immigrate to their host country is an important indicator of successful adaptation, for the likelihood of catching up on lost knowledge diminishes as they get older. Gibson's (1995:78) research in the United States indicates that children who immigrate after the age of six or seven often fail to obtain the required skills needed to succeed in secondary school and are at greater risk for dropping out. Liev (1995:117-118) states that a lack of formal schooling has a more significant impact upon academic success than a lack of English language amongst Southeast Asian refugees in New Zealand. However, ability in English, fluency and literacy in the home language and the time spent in the host country all affect the educational adaptation process.

Home Environment

Refugee families often lack resources in terms of time and money. Their living situations may be crowded, so that finding a quiet place to study is difficult. However, these situations are not necessarily to the detriment of adolescent refugees for large families frequently provide homework support in terms of older siblings. Many refugee parents find it hard to be involved in their children's schooling or study, due to language or cultural difficulties (Liev 1995:117). Yet, Caplan, Choy and Whitmore (1992:21-22) note that they can continue to place value on learning, create a positive study environment at home and support academic achievement. This kind of parental involvement may act as an enabling factor in the educational adaptation of refugee students.

The attitudes that parents have towards education play an important part in both academic and cultural adaptation. Gibson (1995:80-87) states that refugee students are more likely to succeed if parents believe that school success comes from effort and persistence rather than innate ability; derive shame or status based on school behaviour/ability/success; and have high occupational aspirations for their children. Ashworth (1982:79) suggests that those who come from urban, middle-class and well-educated backgrounds find adaptation less problematic. However, Caplan, Choy and Whitmore (1992:22) claim that parental level of education is not necessarily important as long as parents have close emotional ties with their children, validate them culturally and place value on reading and learning. They suggest that children

are also more likely to succeed academically when there is a reasonable degree of equality and some role sharing between parents.

Traumatic Experiences

Many refugee students have experienced trauma and grief and this can affect their ability to succeed at school before they even enter classes. Thien and Malapert's (1988:255) clinical study in Paris of thirty Southeast Asian refugee children who had suffered significant trauma, found that twenty-two participants presented difficulties at school. Eth and Pynoos (1985:37) also indicate that children who have experienced trauma display a decline in school performance, usually due to a severe lack of concentration in class. Local research follows this trend. An estimated fifty per cent of Cambodian students in New Zealand have educational difficulties because of a lack of emotional support in schools and their home environment (Lyon 1992:45). Hence, it is necessary to recognise that refugee students may be in too much psychological turmoil and distress to exert themselves successfully school. Mental health services for refugees established in Australia have specialist programmes and staff catering for the needs of children and young people on the basis that early intervention is crucial to long-term refugee resettlement (D'Aeth 1998:4).

Cultural Background

While refugees share many common characteristics that make educational success difficult, their particular cultural backgrounds must also be taken into account. For example, overseas research (see Mesa-Bains 1993:2; Gibson 1995:83-85; Walker-Moffat 1995:12-13) indicates that some Southeast Asian ethnic groups often do well academically at school, despite being refugees. This relates not only to their home countries having a history of strong educational systems, but also the priority that such cultures place upon education. The parents of Southeast Asian refugees who are adapting academically frequently have high expectations, are heavily involved in education and are well-educated themselves. Cultural attitudes to gender roles may also account for differences between male and female academic success. However, the same success is not achieved by students from Southeast Asian cultures that do not prioritise education or egalitarian roles between the sexes, such as the Hmong (Walker-Moffat 1995:113).

It is also significant that, although certain ethnic groups may have enhanced chances of academic adaptation due to their cultural background, they do not necessarily culturally adapt any more easily or rapidly. While many Southeast Asian refugees have succeeded academically in English-only classes, Walker-Moffat's (1995:131) participants in the United States relate how painful this experience was

emotionally, especially when they were placed below their age or ability level. Liev (1995:126) also suggests that Southeast Asian refugee adolescents in New Zealand have not coped well in terms of cultural adaptation, as many have broken their home country's cultural mores to fit in and be successful at school. They now feel they have fallen between both cultures. Eckermann's (1994:221) Australian research bolsters this evidence, suggesting that in addition to feeling alienated from the new culture into which they have settled, students may also perceive a loss of identity and autonomy.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Although the refugee experience can significantly affect school success, it is also important to go beyond the 'personal resources' of each refugee individual or group. Blaming success or failure on the refugee experience or, worse, refugees themselves, ignores differences between ethnic groups, families and individuals. This attitude also fails to take into account that it is the responsibility of education providers, rather than ethnic minorities themselves, to identify the barriers to educational success and provide circumstances in which disadvantages can be overcome (Ramsden 1995:6; see Kalantis, Cope and Slade 1989:73-79).

Institutional Inclusion/Exclusion

Considerable international data demonstrates that the extent to which a student's language and culture are incorporated into the school programme is a significant predictor of academic success and cultural adaptation. This is because, Cummins (1988:138-141) claims, students are empowered if they feel that their ethnic identity is valued. Nicassio (1985:164) also cites overseas evidence attesting that immigrants show better mental health and less acculturative stress when situated in a multicultural setting where integration is favoured. Conversely, pressure to conform culturally can cause difficulties for refugee students in school which may be labeled in psychological, rather than cultural, terms. Students resisting assimilation through direct confrontation may be labeled aggressive, while those who withdraw are often considered to be depressed (Green 1989:127).

The ways in which educational institutions diminish the likelihood of successful adaptation in refugee students are not blatantly explicit. However, everyday aspects of the institutional structures of schools can act as barriers to academic and cultural adaptation. Additional course or material fees may restrict the opportunities for refugees to opt for some subjects, while uniforms that do not accommodate cultural norms of modesty may alienate refugees from school (see Education Review Office 1995:16). The teachers and administrators of fourteen New Zealand schools note that inadequate policy, funding, and

inappropriate curriculum and examination design restrict the ability of Non-English-Speaking-Background (NESB) students to learn English (Kennedy and Dewar 1997:21). The type of instruction offered to refugees is also a factor, although there is a great debate as to which method of instruction best assists NESB students in successfully adapting to school. Immediate mainstreaming, intensive English instruction, transitional classes, bilingual and partnership teaching and peer tutoring are all methods utilised internationally. The advantages of one method over another appear to depend on further variables, such as the extent to which refugee students have experienced previous education or the cultural background of refugees.

Educational Culture

Due to their lack of former education, refugees are unfamiliar with the routines, customs, roles and institutional organisation of schools (Eckermann 1994:221). Research on Southeast Asian refugees in New Zealand found that many students are inexperienced in following a time-driven schedule, analysing problems, concentrating and applying themselves to tasks (Cochrane, Lee and Lees 1993:18-19). Refugees may also have very different experiences of movement and restraint based on their experiences in refugee camps. For example, they might not be used to sitting in a classroom all day. However, refugee students who have not experienced major gaps in education also find it difficult to adapt to school because the educational culture differs to that present in their home or transit country schools.

By 'educational culture' I refer to the ethos that is present in all formal aspects of school life, dictating the norms, goals and organisational practices of educational institutions. Although staff and students in schools are largely unaware of it, the educational culture significantly influences their everyday practices. Thus, school rules reinforce the behaviour expected from students and staff through punishment and reward. Ceremonies and rituals, such as school assemblies and staff meetings, make clear the values and hierarchy that schools explicitly and implicitly embody. The way in which 'success' is defined affects the expectations teachers have of students and that students have of themselves and each other. If the educational culture values achievement gained only through credentials, students are expected to focus solely on study, while sporting prowess, musical ability or leadership qualities will not be considered a high priority. Similarly, the teaching and learning style adopted will place expectations upon student behaviour. For example, an educational culture based on the egalitarian, child-centred model will expect students to learn independently from the teacher or interdependently with other students. If priority is placed upon a stratified and curriculum-centred model, teachers will be regarded as the knowledge providers to whom students defer. The values reinforced by the educational culture also affect the subjects taught, the time

spent in activities that are not curriculum-based and the content prioritised within each area of learning (Harker 1984:119).

Systemic Bias

As educational success is defined according to the values foregrounded by the educational culture, students must embody these if they wish to 'succeed' as school. This is problematic, for the educational culture reflects only the beliefs, interests and norms of the dominant culture in society. Dominant group students, therefore, have an advantage over those from sub-dominant groups because they already possess the required cultural knowledge for school. Conversely, sub-dominant group students are put at serious risk of poor educational achievement by the mismatch between their home and school cultures (Nixon-Ponder 1998:56).

The organisation of educational institutions based on a culture that is perceived to be the 'normal', but in fact represents only the dominant culture, may be considered a situation of 'systemic bias'. This term relates to inequities evident within institutional structures that act to disadvantage those from sub-dominant groups, but are difficult to identify by those who benefit from them because they are taken-for-granted. There is generally no explicit intent or motive to exclude those outside the mainstream from institutional rewards or success. Rather, the needs and experiences of sub-dominant culture students are ignored through the maintenance of universal standards, the enforcement of neutral rules and the promotion of equality of opportunity within the educational system. The unintentional character of systemic biases make them no less real. Teachers who are personally free of prejudice, for example, still practice and defend institutionalised rules and procedures that represent dominant culture experiences and interests as normal and necessary. Students who do not understand these rules, because their culture does not incorporate the values on which they are based, experience considerable discomfort and are inadequately prepared to cope with the demands and routines of educational institutions (Fleras and Elliott 1996:81-82; see Eckermann 1994:33).

Ethnocultural Hegemony

The concept of systemic bias may be related to that of 'ethnocultural hegemony'. Abel (1997:3) states, in discussing the media, that sub-dominant group members are assimilated to the dominant view of culture through its reflection and prioritisation in the national institutions of society. By portraying only one context of reality, the relations of domination are maintained by habitual, taken-for-granted practices and ideologies (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc 1994:13). Gramsci (1971:245-246) coined the term

'hegemony' to describe how the dominant group is thus able to pursue its own interests within society by consensus rather than coercion. Education, a key institution which individuals in most societies are obliged to experience, has been a particular focus for this type of analysis. Regarded as a means for socialisation, rather than merely knowledge acquisition, education is commonly viewed as aiding the exclusion of sub-dominant group members from the processes and positions of power (Reid 1986:61).

Such analyses are usually based on the concept of class inequalities (Reid 1986:58). For example, Bourdieu (1974:32-37), one of the key theorists in education, concentrates on the dominance of the middle class. His concept of 'symbolic violence' explains educational hegemony, whereby the dominant class is able to exert its power, not physically but culturally, by imposing its own perspectives on everyday thought and practice. Bourdieu (1974:41-42) goes on to consider how this results in differential school outcomes for students: as the characteristics, values and priorities of schools ('habitus') resemble the culture of the middle-classes, students who are middle-class automatically have the 'cultural capital' upon which school success is based. Working-class students, however, lack this cultural capital and consequently have less success at school.

I recognise that my definition of the educational culture is similar to Bourdieu's (1974:41-42) concept of 'habitus'. However, by emphasising the word culture, I wish to move away from a focus solely on class inequalities and make it clear that Somali students are not the only group to bring culture into schools. Rather, numerous cultures exist within individual schools but only that which represents the dominant group is considered the 'official' culture (Reid 1986:59). Others are depicted as exotic, out of the ordinary or different from this middle-class, white dominant norm. As a consequence, culture is discussed quantitatively, as a degree of difference from this standard (Jacob 1995:359).

To take into account the cultural variables based on ethnicity that play a part in differential school success, I borrow Bullivant's (1987:1) interpretation of the Weberian concept, ethnocultural hegemony. Bullivant (1987:21) indicates that this form of hegemony is carried out everyday in the school context through 'social closure', defined as the dominant culture gaining power and control over dominated groups through strategies of inclusion and exclusion. These strategies utilise 'boundary markers' - often group attributes such as cultural symbols, race, language, status, class and gender - to name sub-dominant culture members as outsiders. When 'mistakes' are made due to a lack of awareness, feelings of shame or embarrassment may develop. Such exclusionary tactics aim to maximise the economic and social rewards for the dominant group's own members, who are considered 'insiders'. Everyday practices reinforce dominant values in a way that those from the dominant group consider them 'normal', while sub-dominant

groups commonly attribute their failure to fit in at school as the result of their own personal characteristics (Jones 1991:94).

However, Bullivant (1987:2;21) stresses that non-dominant group members are able to resist social closure and that disadvantage in the face of hegemonic practices is not inevitable. This explains how some sub-dominant group members are able to succeed educationally, despite lacking dominant group status. Hegemony requires the 'consent' of the dominated majority, and thus can never be permanent, universal or given. As tensions, contradictions and inequalities within institutions are often evident to members of sub-dominant groups, they constantly struggle with those who wish to maintain dominance (Apple and Weis 1983:19). Such contestation is often carried out in day-to-day interaction. The cross-cultural misunderstanding that occurs in the classroom between refugee students, teachers and dominant culture students is an explicit example of the intercultural struggle that severely affects refugee educational adaptation.

Classroom Inclusion/Exclusion

Refugee students often experience considerable 'culture shock' when they enter their host society school. This is due to their limited previous education, the unfamiliar educational culture and linguistic difficulties. They are frequently unaccustomed to the non-verbal communication, use of jargon or slang, patterns of speech, rules, conventions and appropriate behaviour used in the classroom and playground. A lack of knowledge about all of these things can lead to fear and anxiety, confusion as to what to do and withdrawal (Eckermann 1994:221). Teachers find it is easiest to focus on language needs and often ignore these other aspects of the student role with which students might need assistance (Driver and Beltran 1998:36). Clearly, accommodating cultural differences, explaining school rules and instructions to students and their parents, and encouraging the latter to participate in the classroom and school can help increase success rates (Kennedy and Dewar 1997:22; Joly 1997:33). Programmes such as Preparing Refugees For Elementary in the United States have been developed to teach refugee children the linguistic, academic and interpersonal skills needed for successful entry into elementary school (Corey, Pflieger and Hamayan 1988:11).

Cross-Cultural Misunderstanding

Many of the difficulties that refugee students face in the classroom relate to their lack of familiarity with the behaviour expected at school and, more generally, in the host society. The 'cultural scripts' that they follow differ to those of their teachers and host country classmates. This makes it virtually impossible

for cross-cultural communication to occur accurately. Ambiguity is inevitable because when humans interact they try to 'explain' each other's behaviour by considering the reasons, motivations or intentions behind it. In cross-cultural interaction, the observers of behaviour are often unaware of the context in which it takes place. Unless there is an understanding of the ideology – religious belief, for example – behind behaviour, it can often appear to be bizarre or inappropriate (Argyle 1983:63-69). It is common knowledge that non-verbal communication, such as facial expressions, eye contact, bodily contact or distance, and gestures differ in meaning from culture to culture. Deviations in how conversations are structured and what constitutes polite usage of a language are common. There are also diverse rules for appropriate behaviour in attaining goals or satisfying needs; eating and drinking; and social relationships from one culture to the next (Argyle 1983:71-72).

In situations where the cultural context of interaction is lacking, teachers and host society students often explain behaviour through dispositional characteristics. For example, if a student is not doing well at school, a teacher may attribute this to insufficient ability, feel sorry and employ remedial strategies. On the other hand, if the teacher attributes a lack of motivation, they may feel angry and disappointed and punish the student. Such an explanation is often vastly different to the actor's own perception of the behaviour (Bochner 1983:12;19-20). Attributions tend to be faulty because they are based on cultural misinterpretation and character weaknesses, rather than culturally appropriate responses to situations (Cordell 1994:57). Cross-cultural interaction is, therefore, the perfect breeding ground for tension between cultures. Nevertheless, Cordell (1994:62) stresses that intercultural struggle need not always be deemed an evil or a creator of inequality, for it may also result in an awareness of difference that produces personal growth and a change in practice.

Teacher Expectations

Driver and Beltran (1998:34), in their Australian study exploring the impact of refugee trauma on children's occupational role as school students, note that teacher expectations play an important role in the success of refugee adolescents. The expectations that teachers have of students are usually based on how they attribute student behaviour. It is problematic, therefore, that culturally specific behaviour is frequently explained through dispositional attributes. Some teachers of refugee children assume the need for assistance habitually, so students are not necessarily pushed to their full potential. Cummins (1988:143-144) also notes that assistance for 'at-risk' and English-as-a Second Language (ESOL) students in Canada often relies solely on transmitting information in a way that encourages passivity and 'learned helplessness'. Teacher attitudes and beliefs, such as 'teacher knows best' and ethnocentric ideas about

aspects of other cultures, can create feelings of dependency or powerlessness and eventually withdrawal. Thus, the behaviour, attitudes and interaction that occur in the classroom can have a considerable affect on the adaptation of refugee students. Yet, it is important to acknowledge that teachers and host society students do not usually intend to disadvantage refugee students. Rather, their actions are both a product and agent of the systemic biases and ethnocultural hegemony evident in schools.

EDUCATIONAL 'SUCCESS'

The literature concerning refugees in education constantly refers to the 'success' of students. Despite the difficulty of defining educational success, this concept is rarely problematised in the refugee literature. Success is usually correlated with academic achievement, as determined by the grades or qualifications gained, although on occasions the retention and participation rates of refugee students are also taken into account. The few studies that claim evidence of refugee student *over-achievement* (for example, Bullivant 1987:19; Caplan, Choy and Whitmore 1992:51-67) measure school experience only in terms of academic results, retention rates or educational aspirations. Such research ignores the variables of country of origin, gender, cultural priorities, home support and cultural differences in defining achievement, which can all influence educational adaptation (Walker-Moffat 1995:xv).

Considering academic achievement as the sole component of educational success offers only a partial understanding, for this definition does not take into account a student's cultural adaptation. Yet, this is both a mediating construct influencing academic performance and an outcome variable itself (Cummins 1986:23). It is very hard to judge academic outcomes without considering cultural adaptation, because academic failure may result from difficulties adapting culturally (Castles et al 1986:5). On the other hand, students may have problems with cultural adaptation but succeed academically. For example, emotional factors, such as perceptions of happiness, are one component of adaptation. Ho et al's (1996:14-5) Auckland survey of five hundred Asian adolescent immigrant students found that this group display very positive attitudes towards school, believing it more useful and often demonstrating more academic achievement than their Pakeha counterparts. Yet, Pakeha adolescents are more likely to indicate that they are *happy* at school.

Defining educational success is clearly a complicated task. The Ministry of Education (1998a) states that students are successful when they reach their own optimal social and personal development, make a successful transition to work and adult life and contribute actively and fully to society. However, Castles et al (1986:1;5), while discussing the difficulties of defining disadvantage in relation to immigrants and their children, emphasise that such a definition is hard to analyse and that any conclusions drawn from

it will directly reflect the social standpoint of the assessor. They propose that terms such as disadvantage and success not be used as absolute categories but in comparison with other groups and persons within the same context.

Yeabsley (1997:6-7), who considers what factors create successful immigrants in New Zealand, demonstrates the complexity of Castles et al's (1986) proposition by offering numerous examples of how this might be achieved. He states that success can be judged complete when immigrants reach average levels of achievement in the host country *or* their country of origin. Alternatively, immigrant success might be determined by their net contribution to the host society, *or* the immigrant's own ideas of success. The latter definition could be relative to the immigrant's aspirations, the opportunities available to his or her descendants *or* what the immigrant left behind. Clearly, the complexity of defining success is beyond the realms of this thesis. Thus, I have chosen not to offer a concrete definition of educational success but rather, explore the factors that are thought to play a part in influencing educational adaptation, both academic and cultural.

REVISITING THE MAIN FACTORS INFLUENCING ADAPTATION

Chapter four has demonstrated that there are numerous and often contradictory factors which play a part in the adaptation of refugees. The aim has been to emphasise the multidimensionality of adaptation, for acknowledgement of the inevitable complexity of the adaptational process is a crucial prerequisite for understanding the experiences of Somali refugee adolescents, which are detailed in part three. Due to the density of the information provided in this chapter, I summarise the main themes most pertinent to the Somali context:

- The adaptation process is more difficult for refugees than other immigrants, due to the involuntary nature of their immigration and the experiences of dislocation, trauma and hardship that they have often endured.
- Three main areas of influence affect the adaptation of refugees: the characteristics that refugees share as a group; the host environment; and individual variables, such as gender, age and socio-economic background.
- Adolescent refugees find adaptation particularly difficult because their stage of development brings with it increased chances for intergenerational conflict and marginalisation.
- The educational adaptation of refugee students is influenced by both institutional and classroom factors. The former relate to the systemic biases within school structures that disadvantage refugee

students and may be considered an example of ethnocultural hegemony. Within the classroom, the cross-cultural interaction that occurs between teachers, host society students and refugee students can also influence the adaptation process.

PART THREE: THE INTERCULTURAL STRUGGLE

5 NARROWING THE FOCUS: SOMALI REFUGEES IN CHRISTCHURCH

Jones (1991:78) states that the educational experiences of minority ethnic group members depend on where their community fits within the New Zealand social and political economy. The adaptation process of refugees is certainly affected by the host society environment and one aspect of this - central government policy regarding refugee immigration, resettlement and education - has already been outlined. Chapter five builds upon that general discussion by narrowing the focus to Somali refugees in Christchurch. It describes the process of immigration which brought Somali to this country, the non-governmental organisations that aid their resettlement and the educational institutions which adolescent Somali attend.

I argue that the disjuncture between policy and practice, noted in chapter three, is apparent in the local work of resettlement agencies and schools. This has real effects upon the lives of refugees in Christchurch and Somali consequently face considerable disadvantage in relation to housing, employment and health. That positioning serves as a barrier to their economic, cultural adaptation and, in the case of Somali adolescents, educational adaptation. An understanding of the status that Somali hold in Christchurch acts as a vital tool in contextualising the more detailed analysis of Somali student experience found in chapters six and seven. Chapter five thus acts as a bridge between discussion of New Zealand policy and the Somali refugee adolescents in Christchurch whom such policy affects.

Before proceeding, however, I wish to clarify what is meant by 'Somali culture', a term I refer to frequently in part three. For the purpose of this thesis, I borrow the broad understanding of culture that Novitz (1989:282) provides. He states that culture is a collection of behaviour patterns, institutions, values, bodies of knowledge and systems of belief. Each culture is influenced by the particular nature of these ingredients, as well as the way they 'hang together'. Upon this basis, I use the term 'Somali culture' to describe the common values, beliefs and behavioural norms of Somali *in Christchurch, at the present time*. The latter qualifiers are vital. While aspects of the culture they left behind in Somalia still heavily influence Somali in Christchurch, the act of living in New Zealand in the 1990s has required them to make significant

cultural modifications. The refugee experience has also strongly affected the culture of Somali in Christchurch. It is important, therefore, to include the characteristics that result from their refugee status when discussing Somali culture.

Culture is a system of meanings that are in constant evolution which individuals use to make sense of their world (Harker and Connachie 1985:23). Individuals within the same culture can experience it differently, depending on variables such as gender, class, age, religion or vocation (Ritchie 1992:99-100; Cordell 1994:57). Despite these variations, our attitudes and behaviour *do* reflect the priorities and norms of our particular culture and we each follow a 'cultural script'. Some cultures require considerable uniformity to the script, while others accept a fair amount of 'ad-libbing' (Walker-Moffatt 1995:113). Somali refugees in Christchurch appear to follow a similar cultural script, as becomes clear when aspects of this script are considered in chapter's six and seven. Somali students are finding that living within two cultures requires them to juggle differing cultural scripts and they experience great difficulty in meeting this demand (see Jones 1991:181).

Nevertheless, the Somali who live in Christchurch come from a mixture of clan affiliations and are not a unified community with one spokesperson to represent them. As a result, the characteristics I denote as stemming from Somali culture cannot be assumed to represent everyone who is Somali and lives in Christchurch. This will disappoint those who, like the educators I spoke to, want to know more about 'Somali culture', envisaging a set of characteristics that they can learn and then apply to all Somali. Culture is not a tangible object which is fixed in time and place. Thus, there is no single unitary Somali culture except in a very abstract sense (see Ritchie 1992:99). My knowledge of Somali culture has been inferred from the descriptions and actions that I have heard and observed during the course of this research. As a consequence, my understanding of it reflects my social background and positioning as an outsider from the Somali communities.

THE ARRIVAL OF SOMALI REFUGEES

Somali come to New Zealand as refugees from the civil war and resulting famine that their country has experienced in the last decade. Somalia had been colonised by Britain, Italy and France, due to its strategic importance when the Suez Canal opened in 1869. In 1960 the newly independent British and Italian Somalilands merged to form the Somali Republic. A military coup nine years later stunted the fledging democracy and twenty years of internal strife, violence and persecution followed. Fighting between clan militias and government troops finally forced President Barre, who had led the coup, to flee

the country in 1991. Somalia collapsed politically soon after and clan violence escalated, forcing many Somali to escape to Kenya and Ethiopia (Bell 1998:23). In 1992 civil war and constant drought produced a famine which killed an estimated 300 000 people, seventy per cent of the livestock and devastated the farmland belt in the south (Patman 1996:1-2). The United Nations (UN) withdrew from Somalia in 1995 but war has since flared up again (Hopkinson 1996:2).

The first Somali refugees arrived in New Zealand in 1993 (Bell 1998:24). This was an unplanned, *ad hoc* and controversial occurrence. In the early 1990s Don McKinnon, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, was asked by the UN to resettle a group of mainly 'at-risk' Somali women and children, who were without close family to protect them. He readily agreed because New Zealand was keen to be seen as an active participant in the international community (Campbell 1995:27). Ninety-two Somali were subsequently resettled in what was expected to be a one-off event. Upon arrival, however, it was found that many of the refugees *did* have close family and subsequent applications for their spouses, children and other close relatives were made (Bell 1998:24).

Two explanations are usually offered to explain this discovery. First, some Somali claim that the local interpreter employed by the New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS) or the UN in Kenya told them that they would be more likely to be accepted for resettlement if they did not declare children or other family members (Brightwell 1996:65). It was suggested that once in New Zealand, they should inform the authorities and their relatives would be sent out on the next plane. Not surprisingly, the refugees experienced considerable anger and anguish when this did not eventuate. The second explanation appears to emerge from misunderstandings between the NZIS and Somali refugees over the definition of 'family'. As Sunni Muslims, Somali men can be polygamous, thus having up to four wives and numerous children by each. Somali families also consider orphaned relatives raised as their own part of the immediate family, while New Zealand definitions do not (Campbell 1995:28).

Nevertheless, a 1995-6 mission brought 299 Somali from Kenya to reunite them with spouses and children in New Zealand. At least another five hundred have also immigrated to New Zealand under family reunification criteria (Bell 1998:23). It is troublesome that such misunderstandings marred the arrival of Somali in New Zealand, for considerable media attention at the time appears to have convinced some New Zealanders that Somali are not trustworthy and are 'liars'. This was certainly the impression I gained from a small number of the educators that I interviewed.

SOMALI RESETTLEMENT

The resettlement of Somali in New Zealand was fraught with difficulty, due to the unplanned nature of the intake. In addition, Somali come from a vastly different cultural background in comparison to the Southeast Asian refugees that New Zealand has commonly resettled. When the first Somali refugees arrived in New Zealand there was not a single interpreter in the country who could speak both Somali and English. Thus, explaining even basic issues such as currency, accommodation and transportation was a major trial (Hopkinson 1996:9). The sponsor of a Somali family in Hamilton, cited in Brightwell's (1996:59) research on Somali adaptation in New Zealand, is critical of the lack of preparation made by central government for the arrival of the Somali refugees:

The government has done the whole Somali thing extremely poorly. There wasn't enough backgrounding done – what their needs were going to be and how they were going to manage it, not just assuming they can do it the same as always. The government shouldn't bring them if they aren't going to give the resources to resettle them properly.

Due to this deficiency, non-governmental agencies have been the mainstay of Somali resettlement in New Zealand. With the exception of the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS), the non-governmental organisations that assist Somali and other refugees have developed on a regional basis. Hence, the following description of the resettlement assistance available to Somali refugees is relevant only to Christchurch.

RESETTLEMENT SERVICES IN CHRISTCHURCH

Between 450 and 500 refugees from Somalia have come to live in Christchurch since 1993 (Wellwood 1998:3; O'Connor 1998a:5). It was not until 1995 that a Somali Induction Course was funded by a grant from TrustBank, later picked up by the Christchurch City Council (CCC), to provide a large number of Somali with the 'survival' knowledge needed for living in Christchurch (Hopkinson 1996:8). This was imperative, as the Somali parents and students I interviewed indicate that they knew virtually nothing of life in New Zealand when they arrived. Most of the students did not even know where New Zealand was on a map, but had been told that "it's at end of the world" and that it was very small. Some students expected the housing to be like that in Somalia and others thought everyone in New Zealand was rich. Even those with relatives already in this country were no better informed. I asked one parent if he had any

expectations of life in New Zealand, for example what the houses or schools would be like. He notes that when you are a refugee your first priority is to find a safe place to live, where there is food and no war:

Then, you see what happens with the other [life in New Zealand]. So, nobody can think about how that sort of thing, you didn't choose when you choose, you [can] say what kind of house

It is clear that many Somali refugees found the way of life in New Zealand very foreign and frightening. This was exacerbated by the lack of interpreters and Somali-specific resettlement assistance available.

Christchurch is currently responding to Somali and other refugee needs in several ways. The three main refugee organisations - RMS, Pasefika Education and Employment Training Organisation (PEETO) and Refugee Resettlement Support (RRS) - now share the same building and a newly established database of information for refugees and immigrants. The Christchurch RMS supports one part-time coordinator and several volunteers, is the major organiser of sponsors for refugees and is often the first point of contact for new arrivals to the city (Jamieson and Peters 1997:15). PEETO, a local initiative, provides free courses to refugee and immigrant adults under the Training Opportunities Scheme, which is funded by the Ministry of Education via Skills New Zealand (formerly the Education and Training Support Agency). Many adult Somali have benefited from these reputable courses but PEETO students must be resident in New Zealand for six months or more to be eligible (Jamieson and Peters 1997:18). Recent government funding cuts for refugee resettlement have also affected PEETO particularly hard. One English language training programme for Kurdish refugees is being completely run by volunteers because of a lack of funds (Smith 1998:4).

Another local organisation, RRS, does the bulk of the work in assisting Christchurch refugees. It provides advocacy, social work services, support for families and free adult education, literacy and pre-employment training programmes. RRS runs a variety of initiatives specifically for Somali, including a basketball team for boys, three after-school study classes for secondary students and another for the parents of adolescents. Established in 1993, RRS has three part-time coordinators, two full-time social workers and three part-time bilingual community workers, plus many volunteers (Jamieson and Peters 1997:16). My sponsor indicates that Community Funding provides around thirty-five per cent of the RRS budget, while the CCC and charitable grants make up the remainder.

Other assistance for refugees is available from organisations that provide more general services. For example, the Community Law Office offers free legal advice to refugees and immigrants and the Christchurch Polytechnic runs the Community English-as-a-Second-Language (ESOL) tutors programme, whose graduates voluntarily act as home tutors for refugees, including Somali. The latter is funded

indirectly by the Ministry of Education, through a diversion of resources from the Polytechnic's fee-paying School of ESOL and its interpreter-training scheme (Jamieson and Peters 1997:17-18). The CCC also plays a significant part in the resettlement of refugees, funding a variety of *ad hoc* ventures. One example is the Refugee and New Migrant Forum. This was initiated in 1996 by RMS, CCC and Crown Public Health (CPH) to raise awareness of refugee and immigrant needs, as well as to develop and improve services for them. Representatives of various non-governmental and governmental agencies meet regularly to discuss issues pertinent to refugees and immigrants (Jamieson and Peters 1997:16). The CCC has also provided the building in which the newly opened Refugee and Migrant Centre is housed (Hoby 1998:7).

SOMALI ADAPTATION

Research undertaken in Christchurch suggests that the resettlement services described above are not sufficient to counter the considerable disadvantage that Somali refugees face in Christchurch. The Leisure and Community Services Unit of the CCC has carried out two small studies that feature refugees since 1996. As Somali make up the majority of recent refugees to Christchurch it can be assumed that the studies provide a fair indication of their socio-economic circumstances. A sub-sample of forty refugees was surveyed as part of a Social Monitoring Programme in 1996 and all refugee participants displayed many indicators of hardship. Sixty-two per cent had net weekly incomes of less than \$301.00, with forty per cent of those living on \$151.00 or less. Seventy-eight per cent were on welfare benefits and forty-six per cent said that they experienced financial strain all or most of the time (Jamieson and Peters 1997:21). Half of the refugees were in debt and eighty-eight per cent did not have any savings. Ninety per cent lived in rental accommodation. Fifty-one per cent said that they and/or their family go without meals usually or sometimes because they cannot afford food. In conclusion, Jamieson and Peters (1997:22) state that refugees were more likely than most other disadvantaged people in the study to be experiencing strain and deprivation across many hardship variables.

The second study focused specifically on the characteristics of refugees and their resettlement experiences in Christchurch. All of the fifteen refugees who participated in the indepth interviews had fled from war and on average had spent seven years in transit and/or a refugee camp. The majority came to New Zealand speaking no English and more than half had 'major' health needs. Jamieson and Peters (1997:23-25) summarise the most pressing needs of refugees as expressed in order of priority by the participants in their study:

- reunification with their families
- access to interpreters

- appropriate accommodation and functional household effects
- training and employment opportunities
- access to health care
- access to English classes
- practical information about living in New Zealand
- information and instruction on the legal, health, welfare and education systems
- information about New Zealand customs and practices
- friendliness and support from the Christchurch community

Hopkinson's (1996:12) brief study of Christchurch Somali resettlement also indicates that Somali are finding it difficult to adapt. She claims that rental accommodation is hard to secure because Somali are not viewed as financially reliable or able to look after a home 'properly'. Houses that are large enough for extended family and which can be organised so that men and women have separate common areas are rare. Employment opportunities are also scarce for Somali. Recent figures indicate that the unemployment rate for Somali refugees is approximately ninety-five per cent (Iosefa 1998b:1). The majority of employed Somali are working in seasonal or part-time jobs in primary industries, often as Halal butchers in the freezing works, on production lines or in the fishing industry. A small number work as interpreters. Those who have tertiary qualifications are not working in their professional field (Hopkinson 1996:10). A survey conducted by the Employment Sub-Committee of the Refugee and New Migrant Forum (1998a:3) suggests that employers in Christchurch are unwilling to take on refugees and other immigrants due to perceived problems relating to language, the lack of experience they have with the New Zealand work environment and the extra time needed for training.

Some of the Somali students I interviewed speak of these employment difficulties, which appear to be particularly prevalent in their parent's generation. A nineteen-year-old Somali girl notes:

.... it's not easy to get jobs ... like my mother she used to work in Somalia, but now - she lives here, but she doesn't like here because she, she there is nothing, she only stay home all the time, cook us the rice, you know! (laugh) ... So, they find the old people more difficult than us; we are small, younger, we can still learn the language

The students tell that Somali women find it particularly hard to gain employment, because New Zealanders regard their clothing as both a physical and social hindrance to their work. A sixteen-year-old girl also explains that many professional Somali are unable to regain their former status in New Zealand:

Yeah, it's quite hard for the old people 'cos it's like if you were a teacher in there [Somalia], you can't get in here [New Zealand] a teaching thing, and like, if you were a doctor in there, you won't be a doctor in here

A postal survey of recent immigrants by the Department of Internal Affairs (1996:7) found that at least eighteen per cent of new immigrants have not had their overseas qualifications recognised and twenty-five per cent have had them recognised at a level lower than their home country. It is possible that such figures are greater for refugees than other immigrants, due to the high cost of the reassessment and registration of qualifications.

Many Somali have continuing health problems but are uncomfortable seeking help in New Zealand. This is particularly so for women who have undergone female genital mutilation, which can cause numerous secondary health complications but about which New Zealand doctors are generally ignorant (Denholm 1997:5). In an effort to bridge the link between refugees and doctors, the Pegasus Medical Group is offering refugees (including those who arrived under family reunification) a free first visit to the general practitioner with a paid interpreter. It is hoped that this coverage will be extended citywide (Refugee and New Migrant Forum 1998a:5). Many Somali are also suffering from mental health problems that result from their refugee experience. In October 1998 funding for a comprehensive mental health service for refugees was announced. This will come from the Health Funding Authority for a two-year period and the service will be jointly coordinated by RRS, Healthlink South, CPH and the Mental Health Foundation (Iosefa 1998c:2).

My sponsor suggests that collaborative initiatives such as this, in combination with the CCC's commitment to social issues, have resulted in Christchurch leading the country in resettlement services. Thus, refugees in Christchurch are likely to be in a better position compared to those in other New Zealand cities. However, many Somali refugees in Christchurch would find this hard to believe. Despite their committed assistance, resettlement agencies are unable to cope with the multiple disadvantages that Somali and other refugees face as they attempt to adapt both economically and culturally. The failure of central government to provide a comprehensive resettlement policy and programme has resulted in such agencies continually competing for short-term funds from charitable organisations and other sources to meet the real cost of assisting refugees. Resettlement agencies are inevitably unable to sufficiently meet the needs of their clients. It is not surprising, therefore, that after discussing the lack of information and support he has found in New Zealand, a Somali father indicates: "But for us it is better to go home".

SOMALI AND EDUCATION

The inadequacies of central government policy are also evident in the educational structures developed to meet the demands of refugees in Christchurch. Chapter three outlined education policy regarding refugees, noting that this largely consists of the ESOL funding procedure targeting quota refugees through an additional \$500 one-year grant. While the philosophy behind this policy acknowledges the differential requirements of refugees, in practice it affects only a small proportion of those in need. As of September 1998, there were thirty-nine individuals funded by the quota refugee grant in Christchurch, while another 1712 students received funding as Non-English-Speaking-Background (NESB) students. At the same time, two primary schools and no secondary school received discretionary funding for a total of twenty-seven family reunification refugees (Ministry of Education 1998b).

It is impossible to gain accurate figures for NESB students who are not directly funded by the Ministry but still receive ESOL instruction, for schools are not required to record this information. Nevertheless, prior to the current funding procedure, all NESB students in ESOL classes were documented. In 1997 there were 3690 NESB students in Canterbury. Assuming that most of the Canterbury NESB students were located within the city of Christchurch, it is possible to estimate that more than half of NESB students in Christchurch ESOL classes do not receive Ministry funding (Ministry of Education 1998c). This does not take into account an increase in NESB student numbers since 1997. Thus, schools in Christchurch - like those elsewhere in New Zealand - run ESOL programmes with only minimal funding from the government.

As a result of the lack of a comprehensive national policy relating to NESB students and the increasing devolution of responsibility for the implementation of education practice, ESOL programmes in New Zealand have developed in an *ad hoc* fashion. There is great variance across the country. As one of the four cities that used to receive funding for a reception class for refugees, Christchurch alone continues the reception class concept at both primary and secondary level. In Auckland, large numbers of NESB students spread across the city were too much for the small Intensive English Centre, resulting in most refugees and other immigrants being mainstreamed immediately. The School Advisor for New Settlers and Multicultural Education I interviewed tells how Auckland students are withdrawn from class for ESOL assistance and provided with a trained and funded 'mentor' to help with homework and academic issues.

In contrast, virtually all NESB students with limited English attended the Intensive English Centre at the reception secondary school in Christchurch until 1993. Most new learners of English continue to do so for at least one or two terms, before transferring to their local school. Refugees and other immigrants

are actively encouraged to go to the Centre in the first instance and bus funding has been available from the Ministry of Education in some cases to alleviate the cost of travel. However, the School Advisor indicates that travel money and one-off discretionary funding - for example, when the rapid settlement of a large number of Somali and Ethiopian non-quota refugees in Christchurch required extra resources in 1997 - have never been reliable. Regional variations are also evident in this funding and Christchurch educators are irate that the Ministry of Education resources orientation, ESOL and language maintenance courses for refugees in Wellington, yet not in other main centres of refugee resettlement (Altinkaya 1998:3).

Currently there are approximately thirty-six refugee adolescents - many of whom are Somali - at the Intensive English Centre but the school receives quota refugee funding from the Ministry for only six of them. The Centre places refugees in an intensive ESOL programme with other NESB students until teachers decide that they are ready to be mainstreamed. Due to its size and relatively high number of staff, the Centre is able to offer classes at three different levels of English language ability. There is a concentration on English language but some classes follow an adapted curriculum in full Mathematics, and partial Science and Social Studies (Syme 1995:13). Those with greater ability are able to take transitional classes in the mainstream school. For example, one class spends eight hours per week learning ESOL and students take mainstream subjects that they feel able to cope with. The Centre currently has a part-time, Somali bilingual teacher aide and has used Ministry funding for such assistance previously. However, the Head of ESOL indicates that at present the CCC funds the teacher aide.

Other secondary schools offer ESOL programmes but are unable to provide intensive instruction at different levels of ability due to their small size. Each employs between two and four staff, but it is common for some to be part-time or additionally teach mainstream classes. All five schools that I visited designate one teacher as Head or Director of ESOL, indicating that ESOL is considered seriously. The ESOL teachers I interviewed are uncertain how many refugee students in total they accommodate, but each school has between two and six Somali students at present. Three have previously run intensive classes when a few Somali have enrolled at the same time. Most offer ESOL English with other regular subjects until NESB students can be fully mainstreamed. One currently runs a withdrawal ESOL class for Somali and Cambodian refugees, which deals with basic level language and conceptual skills. Refugees are increasingly making the choice to send their children to local schools due to the distance they live from the Intensive English Centre and the lack of transport funds available. Yet, their children receive less English language tuition and support at such schools. The *Tomorrow's Schools* (Department of Education 1988) move towards funding based on student numbers encourages regular schools to enrol Somali students, yet they are unable to

provide the level of support they require. This latter fact will become obvious in the remainder of part three.

DISJUNCTURE

The goal of this chapter was to make connections between Somali refugees and the socio-political context set in part two. By doing this, it has been possible to see that the disjuncture between policy and practice has real consequences for Somali refugees. As a result of the lack of coordination and consultation between policy makers and policy practitioners, the current socio-economic position of Somali in Christchurch is one of disadvantage. This situation affects the ability of all Somali to adapt to life in New Zealand, but the adaptational processes of Somali adolescents are the particular interest of this thesis. Chapter's six and seven demonstrate that the poor status of Somali in Christchurch is one variable that influences the ability of Somali students to fit in at school.

6 "FITTING IN": SOMALI STUDENTS AT SCHOOL

My first research question concerned how well Somali refugee adolescents are adapting to secondary schools in Christchurch. The purpose of this sixth chapter is to explore that process of adaptation, which I often refer to as 'fitting in'. By this I do not imply that students should replace their own cultural beliefs with those prioritised in the educational culture through assimilation. Rather, fitting in relates to Berry's (1988:101-102) concept of integration, whereby individuals take on aspects of a new culture while retaining their old cultural identity. It will become clear that Somali students find the process of fitting in very difficult and do not appear to be adapting well to the New Zealand school system. This is because Somali students in New Zealand are situated between two cultural sites. Attending school requires the students to directly confront the differences between their home culture and that of New Zealand education. While it would be incorrect to state that Somali students are extremely unhappy at school, their positioning as ambivalent cultural 'go-betweens' does cause them considerable discomfort. Simultaneously complying and resisting to the assimilative demands of the educational culture, they find themselves caught in the midst of an intercultural struggle.

The first section of this chapter considers how the gaps in previous education that Somali exhibit affect their adaptation. Comparing the educational cultures of Somali and New Zealand provides a chance to contrast the expectations that Somali students have of school in New Zealand with the reality that they find, emphasising the transitional state in which they are situated. Following this, I consider the effect that the Somali home environment has upon educational adaptation, focusing mainly on the support that parents are able to offer their children. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to exploring how Somali students find their cultural background hinders positive interaction with Kiwi peers.

Chapter three emphasised that educational adaptation is a multidimensional process in which it is often difficult to separate the academic and cultural aspects. Consequently, I do not structure chapters six and seven upon this boundary but note the situations where one more than the other may be affected by the factors discussed. At times the decision about whether to place information in the 'fitting in' chapter or the subsequent 'coping' chapter has been dependent on arbitrary decisions, due to its ability to illustrate multiple points. This demonstrates the complexity of the Somali student experience in Christchurch schools. Throughout chapter's six and seven I also refer to the similarities between the Somali situation and that of refugees in general, stressing that Somali are not an anomaly. The remainder of part three utilises the main

factors in educational adaptation, mentioned in chapter three, as an analytical framework to emphasise this point.

PREVIOUS EDUCATION

Refugee literature indicates that there are both enabling and constraining factors which affect the chances of refugee students fitting in at school. The gaps in or lack of education that refugee students have often experienced is one of the most detrimental to their educational adaptation. It is common for refugees to have spent time in a transit country, often living in a refugee camp, before being accepted permanently by a host nation. In transit, young people frequently receive little or no schooling, due to a lack of facilities or the fact that education is offered in a foreign language. Both situations are true for most adolescent Somali refugees in Christchurch.

GAPS IN EDUCATION

Of the seventeen Somali adolescents I interviewed, each spent between one month and six years in transit. While the average was six months without attending school, one student experienced a break in education of about six years. In the transit country schools that students attended, instruction was in a foreign language and classes lasted for only two or three hours a day. It is unlikely that the students gained a great deal of academic knowledge in this time. According to my sponsor and the teachers I interviewed, considerably more Somali students have spent years without schooling and are experiencing great difficulty in adjusting to school. In their case, the gap - or "chasm" as one teacher expressed it - in knowledge that they display stems from insufficient socialisation into *any* educational culture. As a result, low literacy is prevalent amongst Somali students.

Low Literacy: "It's too late for me now"

Due to breaks in or a lack of schooling some refugee students are semi-literate or illiterate in their home language. This is so for many Somali students, especially those who have arrived in New Zealand most recently. A large number of current students in the Intensive English programme have low literacy in their own language, in addition to being innumerate. Although literacy is an issue for many refugee groups, it may be exacerbated by a peculiarly Somali dimension. Somali culture is based on an oral tradition and lacks a history of literacy in the Somali language. Although the middle- and upper-classes were usually literate in Arabic, Italian or English, Somali was not produced in written form until 1972 (Samatar 1991:5).

Teachers comment that Somali students often develop excellent oral English, but have a poor standard of written ability. It is possible that this relates not only to their lack of schooling, but also to a cultural preference for oral transmission of knowledge. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that low literacy is not just an issue for Somali refugees. Many of the Kurds who arrived in Christchurch in 1998 are illiterate in their first language also (Refugee and New Migrant Forum 1998b:2).

That many refugee students attending secondary school are not literate is highly problematic because literacy is assumed there. The educational culture of secondary schools makes little room for those who do not meet this standard. English-as-a-Second-Language (ESOL) teachers at secondary school are not trained to deal with students who are illiterate in their first language. Only one of the teachers I spoke to feels comfortable doing so and has strategies to achieve this, being a primary-trained teacher who has also taught secondary school remedial reading. Lacking appropriate teaching skills, teachers are frustrated by semi-literate or illiterate Somali because, as a Head of ESOL highlights: "ESOL teaching is based on transference, from the language you've got, to the new one. If you don't have one, you are really classified as special-needs".

Yet, special-needs teachers find the language barrier restrictive and ESOL teachers must usually help the students as best they can. One Head of ESOL tells of a two-year battle to have a Somali student assessed as having special-needs. Even after the evaluation found the student to fit within this category, the assessors would not sign the required documentation because, she claims, they refuse to accept a student as having both ESOL and special-needs. Rather, it is assumed that ESOL teachers are not doing their job and are trying to place the responsibility for such students upon someone else. She also believes that many of her refugee students have visual or hearing impairments, but they are not tested for these because it is presumed that language is their barrier to learning. Hence, it appears that teachers who can meet the needs of Somali do exist, but students are rarely paired with them. The current mismatch is frustrating for both teachers and students.

The likelihood of successful Somali student educational adaptation is severely limited by low literacy. One teacher cites research indicating that students cannot learn a second language beyond the level of ability they demonstrate in their first language. She believes it unlikely that students who have low literacy in Somali will reach advanced levels in English, which has serious consequences for their future prospects. Some of the older students are aware that they have little chance of getting a good education and this affects their self-esteem. An eighteen-year-old girl comments:

... it's too late for me now, it's not too late, but I didn't know everything, if you know everything well, how to start and where you are going, I guess you could, you will

get a good education It's really hard when you know you are a lot behind, you just start learn little by little and you don't understand the school language, it's really hard for your confidence, to have confidence to say I can be a doctor, I can be a lawyer, I can get a big job, you just try get a little job if you can! Something to support yourself on ... I am willing to work but it seems impossible.

A recent international survey of adult literacy indicates that this self-assessment may reflect reality, finding a strong link between levels of literacy, labour force status and income (New Zealand Press Association 1997:9). Hence, a school principal notes that "it's very soul-destroying to have to say to them [Somali students] 'It isn't a matter of how hard you work, it's just you don't have the background' ".

EDUCATIONAL CULTURE: SOMALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

Adapting to school in New Zealand involves Somali students coming into a worldview completely disparate from their own (see Harker and Connachie 1985:35). The dominant cultures of New Zealand and Somalia contrast greatly, particularly in terms of religion, organisational practices and the manner in which social relationships are conducted. Schools reflect the priorities and norms of the dominant culture, so the educational cultures of the two countries are also dissimilar, as the following discussion illustrates. In this section I use the past tense when speaking of the dominant culture in Somalia and the Somali educational culture. I do this to differentiate them from what I am calling 'Somali culture', in reference to that which exists in Christchurch, and because the memories of students and parents reflect cultures of the past rather than the present. It has also been difficult making a decision as to what term should be used when referring to dominant culture members in this study. Teachers and Somali commonly use the unsatisfactorily vague word 'Kiwi' to describe non-Somali, non-ESOL students, but it is often difficult to establish if they include sub-dominant group members, such as Maori, Pacific Island and Asian students, within this category. Hence, when my participants have made clear that they are talking about members of a particular ethnic group, I indicate this and at other times the term 'Kiwi' is used. I refer to those who are attempting to exclude Somali students from educational adaptation and success as members of the dominant culture.

Somali Students: Situated Between Educational Cultures

In Somalia, religion was such a central component of the national culture that Somali do not usually differentiate between their Muslim and Somali identities (Samatar 1991:10). Ninety-eight per cent of Somali are Sunni Muslims (Bell 1998:23) who believe in the orthodoxy exactly as the Prophet Muhammad established, with some modern interpretations (Hopke 1991:423). Thus, religious training was considered a

core area of educational knowledge. Half of the school day was devoted to religious study. Students went to regular school in the morning from 7am-12.30pm and to Islamic teaching classes in the afternoon from 2pm-6pm, or vice versa. Time for prayer was incorporated into the school day, including the requirement for boys over the age of fifteen to pray at the Mosque on Friday afternoons.

In contrast, State schools in New Zealand are explicitly secular and do not usually involve religious instruction or prayer. Implicitly, however, they reflect the Christianity of the dominant culture. Important dates in the Christian calendar, such as Easter and Christmas, are taken as school holidays and the weekend break is organised to include Sunday, the Christian day of worship. Somali students, who have different dates and days of worship, find that in New Zealand their religious needs are often in conflict with educational requirements. While teachers have come to expect that Somali boys will be absent from school on Friday afternoon and most do not consider this truancy, the boys are still missing out on a half-day's study each week. This creates problems academically for themselves and administratively for teachers. One boy tells how a teacher informed him that there would be a test set on Friday afternoon, in fourth period:

... and she said 'You have to make a time for this period, because [otherwise] you have to lose some marks for exam'. Sometimes, most of the exams are on Fridays, and she said 'If you can't make a time on Friday, I don't know what to do'.

This student chose to miss prayers at the Mosque in favour of sitting the test. This problem is neither unique to Somali, nor other Muslim students. Jewish refugees in Beaglehole's (1990:61) study also felt alienated when their religious festivals required them to miss school. Religion is clearly an issue of tension at school when Somali students are forced to choose between the values of their home culture and that of the educational culture. To resist social closure from the rewards and success (grades and qualifications) that the New Zealand educational culture prioritises, Somali students must at times compromise their religious beliefs. However, some of the Somali boys do not appear to view this attempt at exclusion as problematic. They suggest that New Zealand is preferable to Somalia because it is easier to be Muslim when they do not have to attend daily Qur'an instruction and visit the Mosque only once a week.

Religion also influenced the way in which males and females interacted at school in Somalia. Students were not officially divided by sex within the classroom but an unofficial segregation occurred because Muslim men and women generally socialise separately. The New Zealand ethos of gender equality results in boys and girls mixing easily in New Zealand classes and participating in physical education together. Many of the Somali students I spoke to were both surprised and perturbed by these situations. A

father describes his eldest son's reaction: "He was ... surprised, very, very, shocked, he couldn't say no, he couldn't understand it, so it was a surprise ... It's not our culture".

The school that the majority of Somali students attend may soon separate the male and female Physical Education (PE) groups because Somali girls are not comfortable taking part in PE when boys are present and will often just sit and watch. Teachers view the non-participation of the girls as a challenge to their ideals concerning gender equality. At smaller schools, however, segregation is not an option, so Somali students often miss out on activities. A seventeen-year-old boy tells of his experience at a coeducational school:

.... when they was in the gym, my teacher asked me if I got a gear and I asked my mother and said 'Gear, for swimming?', my mother said, 'Are girls going to be there?' and I asked, I came back to the teacher and asked, 'We are swimming with the girls?', 'Yeah', 'Oh, sorry I can't do that' and that was okay, he just crossed that ... thing and I don't go swimming.

For similar reasons strict Muslim families have been distraught to find that the two State, secular single-sex schools for girls in the city have not always been able to accommodate their daughters. As a result, they have had to enrol them at a coeducational school where mixed-sex interaction is unavoidable.

Religious emphasis upon respect for elders, particularly parents and teachers, was also strongly reflected in the educational culture in Somalia. Teachers were seen as the holders of knowledge in Somalia and students were given little chance to question this. In New Zealand there is an expectation of respect but students are also allowed the freedom to have their own opinion. A fifteen-year-old girl notes this difference:

Actually, in Somalia you had to give a respect to the teacher ... Yeah, if you get smart to them, they'll just kick you out Here you, you see teachers angry with students and all that but I think you can have your say, what you think of it..

The students generally prefer the more informal relationship between teacher and student where "[i]f you are right, and the teacher is wrong, you can tell them".

In addition, they find New Zealand teachers are more relaxed about school rules and more forgiving of mistakes. A seventeen-year-old boy who has had some experience of detentions in New Zealand tells that in the transit country in which he lived for three years:

.... I used to hate a lot of teachers hating you, you make a mistake at school and they hate you you tell about something to the teacher, and she's like, if you ask her, they start hating you. And it's much harder (laugh). In New Zealand, the punishment's a bit easier, like if you punished you have to write one thousand to zero backwards, really easy, for one hour or something, and there it's harder!

If students were continually late to school in Somalia they risked expulsion from school and punishment from their parents, so they much prefer the "talking to" they get from New Zealand teachers. Yet, Somali students remain ambivalent about the way in which other students in New Zealand treat teachers. They regard Kiwi students who are 'smart' or swear at teachers as highly disrespectful and believe strongly that "[i]t is good, good to give respect teachers, I think". This is one example of the way in which Somali students are caught in transition between the differing expectations of teacher-student interaction in Somalia and New Zealand. They are attracted to the New Zealand style yet continue to hold some reservations because it does not match the cultural script they know to be Somali.

The emphasis on strong teacher authority in Somalia also resulted in little student autonomy over subject choices at school: "You just have to do stuff, you have to do, and you take this, you have to take that". In New Zealand, students are encouraged to think for themselves and have some choice in opting for subjects that suit their interests. The Somali students enjoy this change. As many are in a hurry to make up the time they have lost and gain qualifications, the chance to choose subjects directed towards their occupational aspirations is valued highly. In addition, the students welcome options such as shorter, practice-based courses and work experience.

The curriculum content in Somali schools additionally reflected the dominance of the Muslim religion in Somali culture. Students were not given information about sexual intercourse or other aspects of reproduction because these issues were not considered suitable for adolescents. In New Zealand, instruction on reproduction and sexual health, while at times debated, is incorporated into the educational curriculum. As this directly conflicts with the values of Islam, Somali parents often choose to withdraw their children from these classes, including Science lessons on the biological aspects of reproduction. This means that the students are missing out on knowledge that may be used in exams and, as one mainstream Science teacher notes, it is difficult to teach related aspects of the curriculum when she is not even sure Somali students understand the concept of reproduction.

The Somali educational culture was also shaped by Somalia's position in Africa and the very hot climate in which schooling took place. The early starting time for school aimed to beat the heat and students spent the break between school and Islamic classes at home eating lunch and having a short

sleep, as is customary in hot countries. Consequently, one boy was very concerned when he heard New Zealand school continued from morning through to afternoon because "we thought it would be tough, school going on all day." The heat also restricted the place of sport at school. One of the older boys notes that at his previous school only a small space was allocated to soccer and sport was not played in school time:

In there, in Somalia, there's no sports, like PE I think the problem is that it's in Africa, that is very, very hot. Yeah, you can't go outside and play around, it's really hot.

In New Zealand, the temperate climate results in few weather restrictions upon sport and it is a crucial component of the dominant culture and of schooling. The emphasis on sport at New Zealand schools is viewed by male students as a very positive aspect of the different school culture they find here. One, a good sports player, repeatedly expresses his appreciation of New Zealand schools because "they have soccer team, sports team, you can play here on sports team for school, and I like there's lots of teams for basketball and soccer so that's good". However, the importance of sport in New Zealand schools has created difficulties for the girls, as they are uncomfortable having to change their clothes for sport and do not want to play games in front of males.

Finally, it is significant that, as members of the middle- and upper-classes in ethnically homogenous Somalia (Samatar 1991:6), the students were part of the dominant group whom the Somali educational culture reflected. In New Zealand they have had to adapt, not only to differences in educational culture but also their positioning within it. The racist comments that Somali students endure at school explicitly demonstrate their alienation from the New Zealand educational and wider culture. A sixteen-year-old, in noting how he is different from non-Somali students in New Zealand, emphasises the power relationship that he infers from his association with them:

Actually they so different, we not the same culture, we not the same religion, and sometimes they'll abuse you with the colour, you are not same colour, you are different colour, they say 'Fuck you go back to your country'. That's the difference.

Fewer than half of the students mentioned racist abuse, but it appears that many are experiencing colour as a major marker of inclusion and exclusion for the first time. The frequent comment "go back to your country you come from" clearly indicates that Somali are being excluded from the educational culture and from New Zealand society.

Sharp cultural differences exist between the countries of New Zealand and Somalia and these are reflected in their disparate educational cultures. Williams and Westermeyer (1986:2) state that great cultural disparity between the home and host societies of refugees makes successful adaptation less likely. The experiences of Somali students in Christchurch, who are making the transition between two very different educational cultures, appear to confirm this statement. It must be noted that the agents of the New Zealand educational culture – teachers, administrators and Kiwi students – similarly find it difficult to adapt to the disparity in cultures that Somali students represent. Yet, all of the educators that I spoke to, and presumably many of the Kiwi students who attend the schools I visited, are members of the Pakeha, middle-class whose values dominate New Zealand society. Thus, the effects upon educators and Kiwi students are not as dramatic or as significant in the long-term. Tending to regard culture as something relating only to dance or food, many dominant group members are unaware of how the New Zealand educational culture can be significantly different from that in Somalia. As members of an ethnic minority group in school, Somali students are forced to deal with discomfort and exclusion on a daily basis. In their view, cultural disparity is an obvious factor in their educational adaptation.

Concepts of Learning: "You don't know it's really problem"

Somali students find it particularly difficult to adjust to three main aspects of the New Zealand educational culture. The first relates to the way in which learning and teaching is conducted. The Somali educational culture privileged a stratified approach to learning that relied on the memorisation and recitation of notes taken under the teacher's instruction. Academic achievement was successfully gained by regurgitating information provided by the teacher. One boy explains that "in Somalia, there were less of this, no assignments or tasks, and ... just writing, when the teacher writes something, it was in the exam". In contrast, New Zealand education is based on independent learning patterns, lateral thinking, problem solving and group work.

Somali students have had little experience of this latter model of learning. For example, many are unfamiliar with completing exercises out of books by themselves because "Somalia don't have many books ... you can't keep the textbooks". Consequently, a twenty-year-old Somali student notes that he first went to school in New Zealand "expecting to write five page [of notes] for the day" and that was all. He and others were surprised to find that the information they write down has to be thought about and discussed in class. A younger boy explains:

.... you had to be, really, aware of what the teachers put up on the board, because they ask you, later on, questions from the board. So, yeah, if you get it wrong (laugh) then watch out!

A mainstream Mathematics teacher states that Somali students appear to have no background in logical or lateral thinking and prefer to rote-learn rules that they can then practice. Hence, confusion is created if there is even a slight deviation from standard methods.

As Somali students are unfamiliar with the learning concepts prevalent in the New Zealand educational culture, they are required to take a huge jump in language-learning *and* conceptual-learning at the same time. This is very difficult, for one usually requires the other. An eighteen-year-old girl suggests that understanding neither the language nor the concepts makes it is hard to know what should be written down in class and a lot of important information goes unnoted:

And you don't know it's a really problem, you don't think it's really problem at first, so you just – you don't know what it is, so you don't think you'll need it later and when you finish, or you almost finish and you didn't do your homework because you don't understand, then you just realise, how important it is, then it is ... hard, trying to learn all over again!

Without explicit tuition in the conceptual knowledge required to study in New Zealand, Somali students are aware that learning is achieved in a different way, but are not exactly sure *how* this is so. The result is confusion and uncertainty.

A twenty-year-old student believes that students should be taught such concepts when they first arrive because his own experience was so demoralising:

I think [I spent] two terms, three terms, most of the whole year, trying to understand what is really going on. Even if you up to them, it's really hard to understand, how things going on. Like, yeah, the second year you come along, I understand it a little bit, now I think it's more better.

The length of time that it took for this student to simply comprehend what was taking place in the classroom is troubling, for he gained little subject knowledge in that year. It is particularly difficult for students to learn new conceptual knowledge when there is a lack of books and teaching material suitable for Somali students. Many of the examples given in ESOL and mainstream books do not reflect their life experiences. A mainstream Mathematics teacher tells how she has to set lessons in a familiar context for Somali students because the written problems are difficult for them to interpret in relation to their own lives. Kennedy and

Dewar (1997:147) found a similar problem pinpointed by the teachers in their national study of provisions for NESB students.

Teachers are also frustrated by the lack of relevant experience that Somali students have in the methods of knowledge acquisition used in this country. At secondary school these ways of learning are taken-for-granted and teachers are often surprised and annoyed when they find such assumptions can not always be made. For example, an ESOL-Mathematics teacher indicates that when students are not used to working independently of the teacher in groups this disrupts the planned organisation of her classroom:

When I first started and I had two or three Maths groups, I would set a group a task, go to teach another group, look over and realise this group were all sitting there, waiting. They initially felt the need of someone being there.

At the beginning of the new school term, the same students had forgotten the concept of group work and interrupted her to ask questions again. Teachers comment that some Somali students will actually absent themselves from groups and work alone, resisting the new ways in which they are expected to learn. Cochrane, Lee and Lees (1993:18) note that Cambodian, Vietnamese and Lao refugees similarly find the concept of working in groups difficult to grasp. While a lack of experience using a communal approach to learning is the main reason for this, it is possible that 'survival tactics' learned in refugee camps may make group work even more difficult for refugees to adopt. However, some of the Somali girls I interviewed realise that group work is a tool through which they may gain advantage. They indicate that they like this method of working because it is a good way to get to know their classmates and by accessing the ideas of other students their school work becomes easier.

Teachers are aggravated by the frequent expectation of one-on-one instruction because the demands of teaching a large number of students make this difficult to achieve. In addition, the expectation of individual attention clashes with the assumption that educational equity requires teachers to treat all students equally. Many perceive Somali students as threatening their understanding of equity, by waiting to see tasks personally demonstrated, rather than actively listening to whole class instruction. Thus, mainstream teachers doubt students when they say "I do not understand", suggesting that this is an excuse for making no effort or for failing to 'concentrate'. It is interesting to link this with Bochner's (1983:19-20) statement that when an observer cannot contextualise an actor's behaviour according to their own cultural knowledge, they will often explain the behaviour through dispositional characteristics. The teachers in this study tend to attribute the behaviour described above to lack of motivation or laziness, rather than cultural or educational reasons. This is problematic because teacher behaviour is based on such explanations

(Bochner 1983:12). Teachers - particularly those in the mainstream – certainly lack knowledge of the kind of things students might have learned in Somalia or how they learned it and believe more information would be highly beneficial.

One school has complied with Somali student demands for greater individual attention. Five students were eventually placed into a class of their own because they appeared to “not know how to work with other students”. Their teacher complains that they were very demanding and expected one-on-one attention “to the point where they would almost act in a discriminatory way towards the other ESOL students”. This was because they lacked “the understanding of what it was to behave in a *fair* way within that context”. The school believes that segregating the students made it more likely for them to get one-on-one instruction and enabled their linguistic and academic advancement, without social and cultural barriers between students creating problems in the classroom. Yet, the sole criticism from one of the girls who took part in this arrangement was that she had little chance to interact with other students. When the educational and social needs of Somali students are at times in tension, it is hard for teachers to make the right decisions in these situations.

That the educational culture in New Zealand schools places emphasis on one method of acquiring knowledge over another is also problematic for students from other minority ethnic groups. Jones’ (1991:95-96) research on middle-class Pakeha and working-class Pacific Island secondary school students suggests that the latter also have difficulty participating in a model of learning which views teacher knowledge as a resource for their own independent study. The chances of Somali and other minority ethnic groups members achieving academic success are limited because teacher interaction, exams, tests and assignments reward only the learning that is valued by the educational culture. As students realise that their own ideas, words and ways are of no value in education, alienation is possible and the likelihood of successful educational adaptation diminishes (see Jones 1991:127).

Organisation and Presentation of School Work: “I don’t know if it’s a value thing”

The organisation and presentation of school work is the second aspect of the New Zealand educational culture with which many Somali students are unfamiliar. This is partly because they have little experience in the methods of assessment used in this country. Secondary schools in Somalia ran two sets of examinations each year, as is done here, but many of the students have experienced only primary school in Somalia. Assignments, which involve the independent researching of unknown topics, are completely new to these students. Poorly stocked libraries in Somalia resulted in assignment writing being an impracticable learning method and students find this a particularly difficult task in New Zealand.

Teachers note that Somali students are also unfamiliar with simpler organisational systems. Secondary school teachers can usually assume that students will know how to make class notes, organise them in a folder and use them to complete assignments. Similarly, if a Science teacher does an experiment, it is assumed that students know what an experiment is and the general way in which it is conducted, because years within the New Zealand educational culture will have assured most students of this knowledge. If they are not familiar with an organisational method, a quick lesson or demonstration is enough to pass on this kind of information to Kiwi students. Somali students, who are busy concentrating and struggling with the curriculum, tend to completely miss these lessons. Consequently, one teacher states that Somali students "have very few organisational abilities, they don't know how to keep folders, books, notes, there's no continuity".

Teachers are frustrated that they cannot make presumptions about Somali students having such basic skills. One teacher of Intensive English tells of asking her students to work down the page on a new work sheet, instead of across as they would normally do. The instructions were ignored, she believes, because they had no concept of how to do this. The same teacher indicates that it is common for a Somali student to rip a page of notes out of a Science exercise book to complete some work for English. Similarly, they do not follow one lesson on from another, beginning a new page even if the information given relates to a prior exercise. Reading diagrams and graphs is another area of difficulty. A Somali mother who has studied at the Intensive English Centre states that these mean nothing to Somali students and they do not know how to explain them in Somali, let alone in English. The very low standard of handwriting and presentation skills that Somali students exhibit enhances many of these issues. Teachers find it annoying that they must frequently repeat lessons on such skills because this takes up time allocated to learning subject content, yet many Somali students do not understand why teachers find the organisation of their school work so important.

The educational culture in New Zealand highly prioritises the presentation of school work. Teachers state that this is because presentation is intimately connected with learning. For instance, Somali students very rarely have a complete set of notes because their notes are not organised and often lost. Thus, when they come to study for a test, they have nothing to revise from. One teacher is uncertain why Somali students fail to realise this fact:

I *don't* know if it's a value thing, if they've never had it before and they don't see it as being important. I suspect that they don't see the connection between having a complete set of notes, having a folder and having it organised and success at school.

She notes that few Somali students seem able to make this association because they lack experience in the educational culture that makes it obvious to Kiwi students. Harker (1984:119) claims that a preference for style over content can be viewed as an act of social closure. By placing importance on the presentation of school work, the educational culture weeds out those whose cultural background does not preference the same style of organisation. That Somali students are unaccustomed to the need for such presentational and organisational skills is certainly acting as a barrier to their school adaptation.

Time Concepts: Teachers and Students as 'Culturally Unequipped'

The lack of familiarity that Somali students have with the educational culture in New Zealand also creates discipline issues because many have difficulty conforming to school rules regarding time. Teachers indicate that Somali students appear inexperienced with the time-driven school schedule:

The initial group of Somalis would come anything up to an hour late. And they'd say things like 'I had a long sleep'. So there wasn't the organisation of, say, having an alarm clock, to wake you up, that sort of thing.

One ESOL teacher tells that Somali students often find it hard to arrive in class punctually and to stay for a set period of time. For example, a Somali student who, upon discovering half way through a period that he did not have a pencil, thought nothing of walking out of class and interrupting another to borrow a pencil from a friend. Similarly, a mainstream teacher discusses how difficult it was to get her Somali students to ask for help with assignments early, rather than leave them until the day before they were due, because they had not learned to plan their time. These comments reflect others stated about refugees in general. Cochrane, Lee and Lees (1993:18) suggest that Southeast Asian refugees also have significant difficulty adjusting to the priority New Zealand places on time.

My cultural advisor indicates that the different understanding of time Somali students display is a recent phenomenon. Historically, Somali schools placed as much importance on time as they do in this country. However, years of disruption of and unreliability - resulting from civil war, a shortage of teachers and considerable corruption - created a situation whereby schools were no model for time-related discipline. The aimlessness of life in refugee camps accentuated this pattern and consequently some students are completely unfamiliar with time-driven life. Conflict is created between teachers and students because they are both culturally unequipped to predict the other's reactions in relation to concepts such as time (see Stockefel-Hoatson 1982:74). This demonstrates how individuals who follow disparate cultural scripts find it difficult to comprehend the actions and attitudes of those from a different culture.

Lacking an understanding of the cultural reasons for Somali indifference towards time, teachers explain the behaviour of Somali students through dispositional attributes. Teachers tend to believe that they lack discipline or are taking advantage of the more relaxed rules and punishments that New Zealand teachers and schools exhibit. One teacher is aware that Somali students understand time differently and notes that they think teachers are obsessed with time. Yet this awareness has not decreased her frustration because institutional and educational frameworks require students and teachers to complete certain tasks each day. She considers it impossible to be inclusive of cultural differences concerning time or organisation within these constraints.

HOME ENVIRONMENT

It was noted in chapter three that the home environment of refugee students can play a significant role in their educational adaptation. My interview questions relating to the home environment focused mainly on the support available to Somali students when dealing with school issues, particularly from their parents. Research indicates that strong parental involvement enhances the likelihood of educational success for refugee students (see Caplan, Choy and Whitmore 1992:22; Liev 1995:117), as do high levels of parental education, parental aspirations for their children and support for education in the home (Gibson 1995:80-87). A Somali mother reinforces these findings, commenting that the only really successful Somali student she knows has been able to achieve Sixth Form Certificate because his parents are well-educated and spoke English *before* they came to New Zealand. Thus, they have been able to support him both emotionally and academically in his adaptation to school. Many Somali parents, particularly those who were the first to immigrate to New Zealand, are well-educated, come from middle- to upper-class backgrounds and have high educational aspirations for their children. All three attributes are positive indicators of educational adaptation.

However, the same Somali mother indicates that while parents actively encourage their children to achieve academically, few are able to provide practical support in terms of helping with homework and assignments. Language difficulties and the different educational cultures in Somalia and New Zealand make this difficult, as a girl of fifteen states most succinctly: "Your Mum and Dad and stuff, they don't understand what the teachers are teaching you, if you ask for help, then they don't get it either". If students need assistance they will usually ask Somali friends or relatives and possibly Kiwi friends. Some are able to access extra support from Science or Mathematics teachers at lunch time and find this useful.

Teachers complain that it is hard to involve Somali parents in school activities, mainly because they are difficult to contact and interact with due to language problems. One teacher describes arranging a meeting between parents and teachers at school as a "nightmare", particularly if an interpreter is needed. Schools are not required to fund interpreters, and must decide if they are to use their limited funds to supply them for refugee students and parents. Most do not, relying on refugees to arrange a friend or relative to interpret. Caplan, Choy and Whitmore (1992:22) note that the inability of parents to physically help their children does not necessarily diminish the academic achievement of refugee students, if the parents actively support their education. Some parents are certainly encouraging their children to attend the after-school study classes run by RRS and appear to provide a supportive study environment. These positive influences may be particularly effective in the Somali case, as children are expected to show their parents considerable respect, follow their guidance obediently and avoid bringing shame upon the family by behaving inappropriately.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that many Somali families are dislocated, with some family members remaining in refugee camps, a transit country or Somalia. An eighteen-year-old girl, in noting why she wishes to go back to Somalia, demonstrates that those she has left are never far from her mind:

.... all of your family is over there, and your grandparents, your cousins, your nephews and all that you know and suddenly you remember them and you know they live there and they hungry and all that and don't have house, homes.

Familial dislocation causes considerable distress for the Somali who have made it to Christchurch. For some students, it also results in a lack of parental role models. Teachers and resettlement workers note that this is a particularly significant issue for Somali boys, as the absence of positive male role models appears to affect their educational adaptation.

Having arrived in New Zealand with no material possessions, the majority of Somali families are also experiencing a frustrating drop in socio-economic status. Chapter five indicated that a few parents are working long hours to support their families, but others must rely on Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) benefits. Private tutors and other forms of fee-based tuition are not an option for these students. The physical and social environment at home can also affect Somali outcomes. Most Somali students live in extended family situations and it is possible that they have difficulty finding a quiet space for study. However, what we in New Zealand may consider to be 'crowded' is the norm for Somali and the students gain help and support from their family members who are also at school. Such a home environment is not necessarily detrimental to educational adaptation and may in fact function as an enabling factor (Gibson

1995:80-87). Yet, research into the poor achievement of Maori and Pacific Island students suggests that overcrowding is frequently associated with lack of food, health problems and poor resources, all of which can be detrimental to a student's experience of school (Hark and Hill 1996:76-82). While it is extremely difficult to determine the extent to which aspects of the home environment affect Somali student adaptation, both enabling and constraining certainly exist.

CULTURAL BACKGROUND

The literature on refugees in education states that the particular attributes of a refugee's cultural background can influence the adaptation process. The Somali culture is certainly disparate from that of New Zealand and aspects of it both enhance and diminish the ability of Somali students to fit in at school. This study is largely based upon that disparity and many examples of the intercultural struggle which emerges from it have already been offered. In this section, therefore, I wish to investigate the interaction between Somali students and their Kiwi peers as a prime illustration of how differences in the Somali cultural script make it difficult for them to adapt educationally.

All of the students I talked to find it very hard to interact positively with Kiwi students, even though they realise that this would be beneficial for them. A twenty-year-old male notes how Kiwi students influence the school experience of Somali:

But the students make the difference, to be honest, the school you go, school there's the rules, but if the students are good, you get along with them

Somali students find it very difficult to interact with their Kiwi peers due to a myriad of cultural differences. Even though the latter are described by most of the Somali males as "cool" and "friendly", two students do not have any Kiwi friends and several others indicate that they have Kiwi "school friends, but not best friends". Few relationships extend beyond the classroom. When asked if she could see any similarities between Somali and Kiwi students, one girl emphatically cried:

No! (laugh) No I don't we are cultural different, different people your friends must have some commonwe don't feel as comfortable, and they don't feel as comfortable.

The male students appear to have less difficulty interacting with their Kiwi peers and can recognise that they share some similarities. Nevertheless, they also identify several cultural barriers that stand between themselves and Kiwi adolescents.

Religion: "The main difference is because we are Muslim"

A Somali boy articulates why he thinks Somali and Kiwi students find it difficult to be friends: "The main difference is because we are Muslim". Islam prescribes a lifestyle which is not compatible with that of most Kiwi students, making it difficult for Somali to interact with them. Much of the life of a Kiwi teenager revolves around talking about, if not actually participating in, drinking alcohol, smoking, dating and going to parties. When Islam prohibits these activities, it is extremely difficult for Somali students to find common ground. Some Somali indicate that: "If they drink alcohol or something like that, and they just drink, you can't just be friends".

The idea of even *wanting* to participate in such pastimes is strongly resisted. A nineteen-year-old girl tells how a Kiwi student was conducting a survey on drug and alcohol use:

.... and then she come to me and she said 'You ever use drugs?' and I say 'No, I never use drugs' and she says 'What about alcohol? Do you ever drink beers or something' and I say 'NO!' And so, 'Hooooo!' 'What's that?', and all sorts of surprise, and she say 'Why, how come, you didn't, you're not drinking yet?' or something like that, and I say 'Oh, that's not something I ever think about, I don't even, if you don't ever do it, you don't feel like you do it' [and she said] 'Ohhhh, you are missing the best thing'....

She found it difficult to explain the religious reasons behind her abstinence, because there seemed to be no simple answer. It is interesting to note that a refugee from Europe in the post-World War II period experienced the same feeling: "I found being Jewish hard to explain. There was no glib little sentence to sum up everything that Judaism was" (cited in Beaglehole 1990:58). The students admit that a few Somali adolescents have experimented with smoking and drinking but claim that they have not been tempted themselves. They stress that to do so would not only contradict their religious beliefs, but also bring severe condemnation from their own and other Somali families. The students do acknowledge, however, that it is easier for Somali to participate in these activities and to 'drop out' of school and community in New Zealand.

Somali students note that Kiwi peers usually respect their religious beliefs, even if they do not understand them. An eighteen-year-old boy describes how:

... most of them, good people, when we tell them that we don't drink, they won't mind, they're okay ... I wouldn't change my mind, about the need to drink, I wouldn't do it. They know, they don't make me do it ... they don't keep saying 'Do it, do it'.

However, the same boy, who is permitted to attend parties with Kiwi students, describes a tension between himself and his Kiwi friends. They may respect his decision not to drink or smoke, but as a member of a minority ethnic group fitting into a dominant culture he assumes that "the problem is, comes from my side, not from them". To understand hegemony it is necessary to recognise that the dominant group rule by *consensus*. When only one reality is presented as 'normal' in everyday practice, the dominated are convinced that if they do not fit the norm, they are at fault. The responsibility that Somali shoulder for the difficulties they experience fitting in at school and during cross-cultural communication suggests that ethnocultural hegemony is at play.

There is evidence that religious differences make it more difficult for Somali girls to interact with non-Somali students, unless they are other Muslims who are perceived to share similar values. Islam dictates that their lives be more closely prescribed than boys and that they wear modest clothing, which for Somali includes a headscarf to cover the hair. Kasanji (1982:15;27) who studied Gujarti women in Wellington, notes that such clothing serves as a 'marker' to indicate culturally and religiously appropriate roles. Cross-culturally these messages are lost and the clothing acts as a boundary between cultures, emphasising the marginality of the wearer. Confusion occurs both ways, for Somali girls perceive the Western clothing of Kiwi girls as a boundary and a sixteen-year-old expresses her surprise in discovering that she had incorrectly 'read' the appearance of a Kiwi student:

... but in here [New Zealand], some people are so freaks, and some freak you out when you look at them, but they are still a normal human being Like, you see some people dressing so weird, oh my God I met this girl ... she had, her tongues are pierced, her ears and she has this hairdo that stands out like this [gestures to sides of head] and she wears all this clothing I get this feeling - I never met her, or anything - and I get the feeling that ... she probably hates people. Or this kind of feeling, like looking at her. And then actually we were in the library together we were doing something, and, yeah, she comes up to me - she was actually FRIENDLIER than the rest of the others, and I get this feeling, 'You are another person', [than] how you get this imagine of them, the way they dress. Yeah.

The girls are tired of explaining their clothes and the religion that requires such modest attire. They tell of less positive interaction with their Kiwi peers and some teachers are concerned that Somali girls are obvious targets for abuse or criticism. For example, a principal describes an occasion where a parent

called to complain that her daughter could not study in the library because "those Somali girls make too much noise". The principal notes that she does not believe the Somali students were making any more noise than their Kiwi peers, but that they are more easily identifiable because of their appearance and dress. It is also possible that this was a case of 'polite racism' (Fleras and Elliott 1996:74) and the reported 'noise' was less of a threat than the cultural and ethnic diversity Somali bring to the school.

Teachers appear to underestimate the difficulty of overcoming barriers to Somali and Kiwi student interaction based on religion, because they lack knowledge of the Somali culture and background. For example, one ESOL teacher has heard a rumour that the Somali women in Christchurch used to wear Western dress in Somalia, and began to strictly observe Muslim beliefs regarding dress only since coming to New Zealand. Based on this information, the teacher believes that the Somali community could make life less difficult for the girls by relaxing restrictions on their clothing. According to my cultural advisor, many Somali women did wear Western clothes. The seven years Somalia spent as a 'Scientifically Socialist State' between 1970 and 1977 (Laitin and Samatar 1987:81) enforced a ban on long skirts and headscarves for women and the school uniform included trousers for both sexes. From that time most urban women in Somalia continued to dress in the Western style.

Nevertheless, the teacher's suggestion that "[w]hen in Rome, do as the Romans do, kind of thing", does not take into account that clothing is an *external* marker for *internal* cultural and religious beliefs. Having lost everything but their lives, my cultural advisor indicates, many Somali turned to the Islamic faith for comfort while in the refugee camps. They began to study the Qu'ran as a way of explaining and surviving the terrible situations that they were experiencing. At this time many Somali women adopted the code of modesty in dress that Islam promotes, as an outward sign of their inner faith. To give up their modest clothing would not, therefore, be a light decision for Somali girls. Educators tell of two different Somali girls who "found it difficult to be a teenager when wrapped up in scarves" and abandoned modest dress, as the teacher above suggests. However, the girls discovered that no matter how hard they tried to fit in, cultural differences could not be spanned by a mere change in clothing.

The teacher's statement also assumes that the clothing is forced upon the girls by their families and fails to recognise the strongly held religious belief of the girls themselves. A nineteen-year-old female student explains why she wears the modest clothing that covers her body except for face and hands:

.... we are wearing this because it is something to me, it's not something like somebody has to make you do it, but it is something each person does believe it, like here in New Zealand you can do whatever they want to but if something every person believes religion, some form of belief, if you don't do it, you are thinking of hell after, because you

believe in your judgement day. So if you don't do it, it's just like education, you wouldn't go to school, I think, if we had our freedom, [but] when you grow up you have to get good job, all that stuff, it's just the same

This girl has very strong ties to the religious belief that dictates modest clothing for women. Her parents have clearly influenced this belief and Somali children are expected to obediently respect the wishes of their parents. Yet, this makes the desire to follow religious faith no less real for Somali students. They continue, as a result, to resist pressure from both teachers and Kiwi students to fit in by dressing in Western attire.

Respect for Parental Authority: "Parents have to be special people "

Many adolescents have rules and prohibitions placed upon them by their parents and intergenerational conflict can occur when they rebel against these. According to the literature such conflict is particularly prevalent amongst refugee and other immigrant adolescents because their rebellion tends to cross generational, familial *and* cultural boundaries (see Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco 1995; Ho 1995). However, Somali students report little conflict with their parents. Only one sixteen-year-old girl tells of arguing with her mother because she preferred to go out with her friends, rather than learn how to cook and fulfil other culturally appropriate duties for a young Somali woman. Others have experienced lesser disagreements, for example over television or movies, because Somali parents do not like:

TV, all the violence we have on the TV and all that Yeah, TV like all the caressing and kissing, so Somalians aren't allowed to see that kissing ...

It is difficult to ascertain why intergenerational conflict appears to be only a minor problem for Somali adolescents. There is an indication that the lack of regular Qu'ran classes and the greater temptation of Western influences in New Zealand has resulted in some Somali parents monitoring their children more closely than they would have in Somalia. Alternatively, the fact that parents are highly regarded in Somali culture and children are expected to act in ways that are not disrespectful may explain this seeming lack of conflict. An eighteen-year-old girl notes: "[P]arents have to be special people you have to listen to your parents, you have to obey them, you have to do everything". Some students may not have been willing to talk with me about parent-child conflict because it is considered a private issue or because criticism of a parent is culturally inappropriate.

It is also important to note that the adolescents most likely to experience intergenerational conflict are those who reject their home culture (Rosenthal 1984:73). The Somali students I interviewed appear

well-integrated into the Somali culture and this might explain the lack of conflict that they report. They suggest that intergenerational conflict will be more likely to affect younger children, whose incorporation into Islam and the Somali community may be less complete. The students also allude to other adolescents for whom parent-child disagreement is a more serious issue. Additional sources provide evidence that some Somali families are experiencing considerable intergenerational conflict. My sponsor tells of parents, particularly mothers, asking for advice about their rights in controlling the behaviour of their children according to New Zealand law. Others find it difficult to communicate with their children, particularly when the latter prefer to speak English and parents have limited understanding of this language (Refugee and New Migrant Forum 1998a:4). As a result, Refugee Resettlement Support (RRS) has started a class for Somali parents to address the misunderstandings that occur over the different expectations of adolescents in Somalia and in New Zealand.

The students to whom I spoke believe it important to retain the tremendous respect they have for the authority of their parents. This attitude acts as a barrier to interaction because many Kiwi students consider rebellion against parental restrictions part of being a teenager. The Somali students are shocked by the attitudes displayed by Kiwi students towards their parents. A sixteen-year-old girl recalls a school acquaintance stating:

'I hate my parents' and I say 'Why do you hate your parents?''Oh, my Mum is a big this, this, this, that' and I'm like 'What?!'. If you were in a Somali community, you couldn't do, and somebody even mention your mother, you would probably get so angry with them And then, then I was so surprised and then this other girl starts 'Oh my Mum is worse than your Mum!' (laugh).

She could never imagine saying anything like this about her own mother and when other Somali students were asked which aspect of their culture they thought would best benefit their school, the most common response was "respect for parents respect for teachers". This issue is not limited to Somali-Kiwi relations. The differing respect given to teachers and parents was also one of the major reasons Lyon's (1992:44) Cambodian students felt at odds with their New Zealand peers. Yet, it is interesting to note that, while Somali students claim that they have not surrendered to pressure from Kiwi student to modify their beliefs on parental respect, Somali parents notice that the more relaxed attitudes of Kiwi students are influencing some students. They state that this is a major concern for them.

Behaviour: "I am a man "

Differences in behaviour also act as a barrier between positive Somali-Kiwi student relationships. One boy indicates that he must always take the initiative in creating friendships and this is problematic because "I'm shy". As this boy was one of the most gregarious students I spoke to, I believe he is indicating that Somali students seem overly polite and reserved in comparison to louder and more outspoken Kiwi students. Lyon (1992:44) once again notes similar reasons for the difficulties that Cambodian secondary school students have in crossing cultural barriers to make friends with Kiwi peers. Hence, a twenty-year-old Somali male stresses that: "[I]t is very hard to find a student that you have the same kind of behaviour and personality".

Some behavioural differences result from the positioning of Kiwi adolescents as neither children nor grown up, while Somali are considered adults at age fifteen. This is the time when Somali begin to take on their adult religious duties and sometimes other mature responsibilities. According to the Refugee and Migrant Service Coordinator in Wellington, boys aged twelve and over were recruited into the army in Somalia, where they felt they had a real and powerful role in life. Yet, in New Zealand they are put into schools and expected to behave like children (Norris 1998:16). Some of the older boys mentioned "I am a *man* " during interviews, wishing to stress that they do not consider themselves children. One teacher remarks that male Somali students often make what are considered to be inappropriate sexual comments to Kiwi girls, reflecting both the Somali expectations of early sexual maturity and the gender roles within Somali society. The Somali norm of early marriage and child-bearing has also made it difficult for girls to adjust to school. At least two sixteen-year-old girls have left school to be married, disturbing the notions of behaviour that teachers and peers expect from students of this age.

Anti-Social Behaviour: "violent and inappropriate "

According to Liev's (1989:230) model, interpersonal friction between refugees and host society members will appear at the institutional level if refugees lack social skills, causing adaptational stress. Teachers indicate that there has been considerable friction between Kiwi and Somali students, for the latter often appear to act in a rude manner. An ESOL teacher explains:

.... they don't have appropriate language for acquiring things or asking for things – we all know that in English if you say 'Don't get it' you going to get a different response to 'I'm sorry, I've tried to do this but I don't understand'!

Teachers claim that Kiwi students have been hurt, sworn at or bullied because Somali students have responded to ill-treatment or bullying from others in violent ways. In one school frequent conflict amongst Somali and Kiwi boys is aggravated when the former fight with weapons. The teachers are inclined to defend Kiwi students, stating that although many are intolerant of difference, some Somali students also demonstrate impatience when they are not easily understood.

While such behaviour should not be condoned, there appears to be a lack of understanding about the backgrounds that Somali students come from and the pressures that they are under. It seems that Somali students are often reacting to negative comments about their culture, such as Kiwi students criticising the girls' clothing or stating that they do not want to sit next to a Somali because they perceive their distinct body odour as 'bad'. Ritchie (1992:104) stresses that: "A person's culture is their personal property. Invalidate it, and you invalidate the person". Thus, he warns, critics of cultural norms should expect a negative reaction, for their comments attack the receiver's sense of identity. Green (1989:128) states that refugees who resist assimilation at school through direct confrontation are often labelled aggressive, and this finding appears true in the case of Somali.

It has already been noted that the educational cultures of Somalia and New Zealand differ. Some of the anti-social incidents described by teachers can be explained by taking into account the fact that Somali students may not be aware of the social behaviour deemed appropriate by schools in this country. An eighteen-year-old female explains why some students get into fights, even though they risk being expelled or suspended:

Most students don't know that, Somali students, they don't know if you fight, even if you didn't start the argument, you'll get in trouble, so they start it anyway.

This lack of awareness is most likely when the 'rules' guiding such behaviour are less than explicit. For example, a teacher notes how she has witnessed fights on the basketball court and heard of similar incidences on the soccer field, because Somali boys do not possess the same social skill of 'fairplay' as their Kiwi peers. The concept of fairplay is one that has been popularised as part of New Zealand's national identity. We cannot assume that the cultural script of Somali places the same emphasis upon this idea, particularly when 'survival skills' may have been more relevant in refugee camps. Cochrane, Lee and Lees (1993:18), for instance, found that Vietnamese, Lao and Cambodian refugees who have spent long periods of time in camps in Thailand have difficulty discontinuing behaviour that New Zealand schools define as anti-social.

Anti-social behaviour may also be precipitated by past traumatic experiences and a lack of assistance in dealing with school and adolescent issues. Traditionally, the Somali family provides physical, financial and emotional support at all stages of life. One of the girls compares this with New Zealand:

..... you see New Zealand old people living alone ... [In Somalia] if you had a old, old grandfather, something like that, you look after them. It is like when your parents look after you when you're young, you look after them when they're old ...

Neighbours also cared for each other, providing friendship and support. The same sixteen-year-old girl laments:

I don't know why - this is so different, this is what really hurts - you never know your neighbours, who they are In there [Somalia] you know *all* your neighbours [in New Zealand] it's sometimes happens that I never go to see my neighbours, there wasn't this person, and I never see them round, unless they're off or something. Yeah, it's quite difficult not knowing who your neighbours are.

Like other refugees, Somali are often not able to rely on the traditional support systems of family and community in New Zealand. Civil war, deprivation, dislocation and immigration procedures have resulted in families being affected by loss and separation. If Somali parents are preoccupied with their own grief, trauma and frustration, students may be suffering alone. A school counsellor is concerned that it often takes years before the effects of trauma become obvious and that some of the Somali refugees at her school are nearing this time. She questions whether counsellors have the cultural knowledge to identify all of the issues that such students may manifest and whether students are aware that counsellors are available to support them through their distress. The guidance and counselling services available in New Zealand are a foreign concept to many cultures and Somali find the idea of telling their problems to a stranger difficult.

The counsellor notes that when she goes into ESOL classes to explain what her job is, she puts up words, such as sad and angry, to express the feelings that might be dealt with through counselling. The students are largely indifferent:

But then I put up 'homesick' and they all know ... nobody in ESOL has ever mentioned homesick before, they push it out of sight, they'd never tell you they were homesick, but I'd say 'Who knows what homesick is?' [and they all respond positively].

Clearly, homesickness is an issue with which many Somali students are coping. Eisenbruch's (1990:11-13) research amongst Southeast Asians found that refugees, as involuntary immigrants, find it particularly hard to let go of their home country, to abandon their former identity and commit to their new country. Often this grieving process for their home country and past life reveals itself in what are considered to be psychological symptoms. The Western diagnoses of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder are common amongst refugees and are more likely to occur if adaptation is expected to occur rapidly. Although anti-social behaviour may result from frustration, anger, grief and cultural confusion that are not being dealt with adequately, many Somali students continue to resist counselling assistance.

Alternatively, such behaviour may be a result of the alienation that Somali students are experiencing as they struggle to make a life in two cultures at school and elsewhere. Ashworth (1982:78-79) notes that it is common for immigrant students in Canada to be aggressive and participate in anti-social activities when they encounter such cultural conflict and have difficulty adjusting to school. A study of mental health services for refugees in the United States (Green 1989:128) found that refugee behavioural problems often manifest themselves at school because it may be one of few places where refugee students can express their confusion, distress, fear and anger. Inappropriate and aggressive behaviour, as well as petty crime, are common signs of difficulty in cultural adjustment. Nguyen (1989:73) cites evidence indicating that immigration at the time of adolescence also influences subsequent alcohol and drug abuse and delinquency, due to the difficulties in traversing adolescence in combination with immigration-related adjustments. The very strong religious prohibitions placed upon alcohol and drugs may make these a lesser issue in the case of Somali, but other rebellious behaviour is certainly occurring.

Gender differences in relation to anti-social behaviour are significant. Somali boys, who find it easier to interact with Kiwi students than Somali girls, are also more likely to participate in anti-social behaviour. My sponsor suggests that this is because the boys are experiencing more cultural confusion, as the greater interaction they enjoy with Kiwi students emphasises the double life that they are attempting to lead. There is far more leeway for ambiguity in the boys' cultural identity because their lives are not as closely prescribed as the girls' and their clothing does not act as a boundary between cultures. One parent, whose son has been involved in some trouble at school, is concerned that Kiwi students lead Somali astray: "Sometimes the Kiwi friends, they make problems Sometimes they, they do stuff together, that's not very good". Rather than blaming individual Kiwi students for his son's actions, I believe this father is referring to the different values by which his son is being affected when interacting with Kiwi adolescents. One ESOL teacher notes that Somali boys are floundering because many come from dislocated families and do not have positive male role models to mentor them. In addition, the truncation of their formal religious

instruction has left them without many of the props and support mechanisms of Islam, which could help them resist the assimilative processes in which they are enveloped.

It is difficult to gauge how many Somali students are involved in anti-social behaviour. D'Aeth (1998:4) suggests that Christchurch educational institutions are experiencing difficulty in accommodating the demanding behaviour of children who are 'acting out' their early experiences of trauma, due to a lack of relevant support. One teacher expresses frustration that a scheme to assist 'at-risk' adolescents does not include ESOL students because of "the language barrier". Some of the anti-social behaviour occurring is dangerous and my sponsor has attended a small number of conferences with schools about students who act in this way. Similar "violent and inappropriate behaviour" is occurring in Wellington schools to the extent that the police have often been involved (Norris 1998:16). According to my sponsor and a Somali mother I interviewed, a few young Somali in Christchurch have also been in trouble with the police for committing petty crime. However, all parties stress that only particular individuals or members of a particular family, rather than Somali students as a group, display such extreme anti-social behaviour. While serious cases of this kind of behaviour may not be common, outbursts of overt conflict suggest that there is an undercurrent of tension evident in schools. This emphasises that the numerous differences in cultural background can not only hinder the interaction between Somali and Kiwi students, but at times result in the physical exclusion of Somali from school through suspension and expulsion.

THE DIFFICULTIES OF FITTING IN

The evidence provided in this chapter suggests that Somali students are finding it difficult to fit in at school. This is because they embody many of the characteristics said to impede the educational adaptation of refugees. As with other refugees, the gaps in education that Somali students have experienced are one of the major inhibitors to their educational adaptation. The low literacy and limited conceptual and organisational knowledge that they display severely restrict their chances of adapting quickly and achieving academically. Somali parents appear to have high educational expectations of their children and some are actively involved in their education, which may enhance the adaptation of students. However, the dislocation of families and the low socio-economic status that Somali hold in New Zealand may act as a negative influence. The literature also notes that the differing cultural backgrounds of refugee students play a part in the adaptation process. This is clear in the case of Somali. In particular, behaviour dictated by the students' Islamic beliefs restricts positive interaction between Somali and Kiwi students. The conflict and confusion over culture that Somali adolescents are experiencing has also led to some being

involved in anti-social behaviour. Past traumatic experiences may be a factor in this kind of behaviour but the present study has found little evidence for this claim. Due to ethical reasons my questions to Somali students and parents avoided issues to do with the previous trauma or hardship they may have experienced. However, according to my sponsor and judging from the comments educators have made, many Somali students have experienced traumatic episodes in their life.

In this chapter I have constantly referred to the 'needs' of Somali students which result from their refugee experience and cultural disparity. It is important to clarify what I mean by this term, for in chapter seven I consider the extent to which schools meet such needs. In short, Somali students require the institutional inclusion of their culture and specific learning requirements, to be achieved through two broad means:

- Differential treatment that takes into account the little or no previous education Somali students have experienced and the lack of familiarity with the New Zealand educational culture they display. This would need to involve targeted instruction in the appropriate linguistic, academic and conceptual knowledge that is necessary for success in New Zealand schools.
- A culturally safe school and classroom environment in which Somali students feel that both educators and non-Somali students have a real understanding of their past experiences, current circumstances and the Somali culture, thus recognising their need for differential treatment.

As the next chapter will demonstrate, schools are finding it tremendously hard to cope with the diversity of academic and cultural needs that Somali students bring to their classes. While it is usually the Somali students who find they must modify their attitudes and actions, schools are also in a process of adjustment.

7
 "COPING WITH DIVERSITY":
 SCHOOL RESPONSES TO SOMALI STUDENTS

School has been conceptualised as a site of intercultural struggle. This implies that there are two (or more) groups of actors, with differing interests and needs, in conflict with each other. Chapter six demonstrated that the attributes and backgrounds of Somali refugees play a significant role in their educational adaptation but to consider only these factors would ignore the other side of the cultural ledger: schools. My second research question centred on the extent to which schools are successfully coping with the particular needs and cultural challenges that Somali students represent. It appears that they are not coping well. There have been some attempts to be inclusive of Somali needs and these are noted, but it is clear that educational institutions at the secondary school level often act as a barrier to Somali student adaptation.

Dealing first with the institutional structures of schools, particularly the disjuncture between English-as-a-Second-Language (ESOL) programmes and the mainstream, I argue that exclusive practices are common. Moving into the classroom, the same conclusion is made. Although teachers have made limited attempts to be inclusive of Somali, they more frequently exclude Somali students from educational adaptation and success. This is due to their inadequate knowledge about Somali refugees and the limited time available to meet a wide range of student needs. Despite their best intentions, the actions of teachers frequently reproduce the power relationships evident in society by defending the educational culture present in schools and resisting challenges to the status quo.

Although systemic biases within educational institutions make exclusion common, it is notable that at times Somali students resist attempts at social closure, emphasising that their exclusion is not inevitable. Nor is the adjustment process unidirectional, for the academic and cultural needs that Somali represent also require adaptation on the part of schools. While it is important to remember that the power relationship between schools and Somali student is unequal, it is impossible to ignore that such institutions - and the teachers and non-Somali students within them - have also experienced considerable 'culture shock' (see Kiang 1995:206). Thus, adaptation is occurring on both sides of the struggle, if unevenly.

INSTITUTIONAL INCLUSION

Educational institutions are increasingly being conceptualised as service providers and, in this context, schools should be meeting the needs of all those requiring service. Yet, chapter three noted that the neo-liberal reforms undertaken in education may actually constrain the extent to which education policy in New Zealand can be considered inclusive of refugee and other Non-English-Speaking-Background (NESB) students. Due to financial and political reasons, policy has focused mainly on bicultural initiatives and the new funding procedure represents the only major contribution to NESB policy. As a result, schools shoulder the responsibility for meeting the needs of NESB students within their institutions. This research indicates that, in the case of Somali students in Christchurch, schools are making only superficial attempts at being inclusive of their culture and needs. More commonly, schools defend the structures that reproduce inequity for refugee students such as Somali.

Christchurch schools have made a few well-intended attempts to be inclusive of Somali students but these have been rather hesitant and short-lived. At least two schools are aware that refugee students often come from families who find themselves under considerable financial pressure in New Zealand. They have endeavoured to eliminate some of the financial barriers to education, by waiving the school fees of refugee students. Their families must still meet course-related and material costs, but funds for those who need financial assistance are occasionally used for refugee students. Two other schools have provided uniforms for a small number of Somali students. It is unclear whether this was a proactive attempt to address the financial inequities that refugee students experience or a reaction to complaints of discrimination by Kiwi students when Somali were not obligated to wear the culturally inappropriate uniform. In addition, teachers make much of the International Night and International Food Day celebrations that are run by schools each year. While this is a positive approach to cultural diversity, it is also very clearly a superficial one that does little to make school a more equitable experience for Somali students.

More serious efforts to address Somali needs have been made. For example, it was noted in chapter six that one school ran a small, segregated class for Somali students so that they would be able to receive more individualised attention. Two other schools have tried similar schemes when there have been enough Somali students enrolling at one time and a third continues to run a class for Somali and Cambodian refugee students. Such classes tend to be temporary because they are perceived to be a stop-gap rather than a means for continuing support. One school has realised the great need for subject-specific support and employs a part-time teacher aide to assist refugee students in their Mathematics and Science

classes. However, due to a lack of funding and the demand for such assistance, students state that they see this teacher aide in class only once or twice a week. The Intensive English Centre has gone one step further by asking a Somali teacher aide to run a short, weekly class in the Somali language for two students. However, this will probably end soon because funding for such a small number can not be justified.

In addition, all of the schools have made some provision for Muslim students, so that they can pray at regular intervals throughout the day. One of the Somali girls emphasises the significance of this ritual: "[W]e have to pray five times a day, that's something about our religion, for us, and that's really compulsory for us, it's very, very important". In New Zealand religion is considered a personal matter. Although implicitly prioritising Christianity by celebrating the appropriate dates and days, schools – like all other State institutions - are officially secular. However, the school that accommodates the largest number of Muslim students offers two single-sex, permanent prayer rooms. Other schools have only a few Muslim students to cater for and provide whatever office or class space is available. This means that the same room is not used each time and often students end up praying in the classroom amongst their classmates. Inconsistent policy on this matter is evident in the frustration of a nineteen-year-old girl:

.... in my experience the first time we told them to give us a small room like this one [gestures around room], then, the second year there is no place to pray! So, you know it's very hard

Another girl tells that prayer room provision can be withdrawn if Somali students do not behave as expected in the space allotted for prayer:

.... when I was in primary school, they set up this prayer room but a lot of kids weren't praying, like they weren't bothering, actually [only] one or two were. So the school, when they see a lot of the other Somalian kids that are not praying, they just cancel it.

Teachers note that Somali students are often caught 'playing around' in the prayer room and see this as abusing the 'privilege' offered them. However, until the age of fifteen Somali children do not have to pray all of the time. In addition, some are more religious than others and pray, while others choose not to. It is possible that some mischief was occurring, just as it might with any adolescents. But schools are failing to understand that when some students do not comply with what the majority of Somali are doing, this does not necessarily mean they are trying to 'trick' teachers or are lying to them. It seems that schools are too quick to withdraw inclusive practices if the outcomes are deemed inappropriate or if such initiatives are

not 'appreciated'. It is interesting that schools have unanimously chosen to be inclusive of Somali culture through the prayer rooms, a measure that does little to target the significant *learning* disadvantages of Somali students. Students and parents comment that while the availability of prayer rooms is preferable, they can easily highlight other measures that schools could take which would more dramatically improve their chances of educational adaptation.

There are few chances for Somali parents to convey this kind of information, although two schools have arranged special meetings with them to clarify issues that have caused considerable confusion. There appears to be little regular contact between schools and Somali. While most teachers are happy for parents to contact them, they themselves tend to initiate communication only when there is a problem. According to my sponsor, schools usually ask Refugee Resettlement Support (RRS) to mediate only at a late stage, when they are on the verge of expelling students due to their dramatic academic failure or their frequent truancy. It seems that there is little time for 'pastoral work' with parents and a lack of suitable Somali-English interpreters makes it difficult for arrangements to be made. Only one school principal has had considerable contact with refugee parents and refugee organisations. She has frequently requested information from RRS, particularly about religious rituals and festivals, and this has proved useful in monitoring absenteeism. Parents claim that the contact they have had with schools has generally been favourable, if not frequent. One father notes that at his sons' school "people there are very friendly" but that they do not always have the facts required by refugee students. This school provided incorrect information about his son's ability to receive a Student Allowance, which created difficulties for the family. The lack of communication that dominates the parent-school relationship is a major obstacle to resolving many of the other difficulties that impede the ability of students to adapt to school.

Most of the teachers are aware that they and their schools are not doing enough to be inclusive of the needs and culture of Somali. Lyon's (1992:50) study on the adaptational issues of Cambodian students found that many teachers consider themselves to be successful in accommodating the Cambodian culture, even though students feel they are not given enough positive attention or understanding support. The disparity between student perceptions of their treatment by teachers and the teachers' own awareness of this appears less significant in the case of Somali students. However, a lack of time and funding often makes it difficult for teachers to provide adequate support or understanding. I believe that teachers and schools are usually doing the best that they can within the institutional limitations placed upon them, as a principal indicates: "I certainly wouldn't claim we have been successful, but we have tried".

INSTITUTIONAL EXCLUSION

The Somali experience of school provides many examples of institutional exclusion caused by systemic biases within education. A disposition towards the norms, goals, organisational practices and interests of the dominant culture is entrenched within the structure of New Zealand educational institutions. Although Christchurch schools do not intend it, they exclude or deprive Somali by ignoring their needs and experiences in favour of applying universal standards, enforcing neutral rules and promoting equality of opportunity. Both the structures of educational institutions and the everyday classroom practices of teachers reinforce dominant culture experiences and interests as normal and necessary. It is exactly this taken-for-grantedness, along with rhetoric promoting formal equality, that make systemic biases difficult to identify by those whom they benefit. Teachers and schools have a limited awareness of Somali student needs and have made some attempts to be inclusive of these and Somali culture. However, such measures fail to adequately challenge the systemic biases that are evident in Christchurch schools.

WEAK TRANSITIONAL BRIDGES BETWEEN ESOL AND MAINSTREAM

School attempts to be inclusive of Somali needs have in no way threatened the institutional structures of education because they have been 'add-on' measures that fail to address the inequities evident in school organisation. Systemic biases foreground the interests of the dominant culture and consider sub-dominant cultures deviant from the norm. This explains the low status held by ESOL teachers in schools, who are often employed on a temporary or part-time basis and marginalised physically from the mainstream classes. The expectation that ESOL teachers can cope with an increasingly unrealistic number of students who display a great variance in linguistic ability, without extra staffing or funding, also indicates their marginalisation within educational institutions (Syme 1995:37; Lawson 1992:12-14). Institutional barriers to the educational adaptation of Somali and other NESB students are, therefore, linked to perceptions of ESOL programmes as a second-class appendage to the mainstream.

It was noted in chapter three that there is great debate but little conclusive evidence indicating which methods are best utilised in teaching NESB students. I make no formal assessment of this issue, but am concerned with the inadequate bridges *between* methods. The inflexibility of the division between ESOL and the mainstream, which makes it very difficult for students to move from one to another, is a serious issue that has been long ignored. In particular, the disassociation of ESOL from the national curriculum separates it institutionally from the mainstream and buys into the assumption that ESOL requirements are

temporary. This ignores the fact that ESOL is not a fleeting need, as the experiences of Somali students demonstrate.

Intensive English: "We all the same level "

All but two of the students that I interviewed have attended or are attending the Intensive English Centre. There is consensus that the programme it offers is both useful and necessary. One sixteen-year-old who attended for four months states: "That was great. 'Cos if you don't [go] you can't catch up well". An older girl explains that Intensive English classes were beneficial because "we all the same level, so we can all speak the same and all our English is so similar". A twenty-year-old male, who had been through the Intensive programme, was mainstreamed and has now come back to Intensive English adult classes, believes he would not have been able to survive if he had gone straight into a mainstream class. Even a boy who went to an English-speaking school in Somalia emphasises that he still needed Intensive English classes because "when I went there it was, I found it hard 'cos I didn't really know what they were doing". Teachers are also adamant that Intensive classes are necessary for all NESB students with low levels of English, particularly refugees due to their frequent gaps in or a lack of education.

Nevertheless, students perceive the Intensive English programme as being divorced from mainstream curriculum and classes. They tell of others who have left the Centre before their language ability was adequate for the mainstream because they felt that they were 'wasting time' when not covering the curriculum which leads to qualifications and tertiary education. Intensive classes are favoured for those needing basic skills in English, but many students believe transitional classes would be more useful once greater language ability has been gained. They state that this would avoid "every subject with the same class", perhaps reflecting the notion that NESB students are inferior to those in the mainstream. A teacher told me that parents resist the Intensive English programme because they do not want their children to be in a class with other Somali students. They believe that the students will prefer to speak their own language rather than learn English. Walker-Moffat (1995:141-142) found the same reaction amongst Hmong refugee parents in the United States who consider ESOL and bilingual classes inferior to the mainstream. Conversely, one of the Somali mothers I interviewed prefers ESOL classes for her children. She indicates that in mainstream classes the Kiwi students, who understand what going on in class, often chat amongst themselves and distract Somali students who must concentrate more closely on what the teacher is saying.

The students I spoke with generally agree that they would have liked to stay *longer* in the Intensive programme but were unable to do so. This is partly because demand for the Intensive classes is

high, so students are usually mainstreamed within a few months. It may also relate to the difficulty of assessing the mismatch of Somali student oral and written ability. One boy is indignant that "they kicked us out for Asian people, because the Asian people are worse than us". This statement implies that some kind of discrimination has taken place. While this is possible, I believe that the boy is referring to the premature mainstreaming of Somali students because their oral fluency is often higher than other NESB students, even though their written skills or academic knowledge are not sufficiently developed. Lyon (1992:50) indicates that Cambodian refugee students are similarly expected to progress more rapidly than they are able, due to an underestimation of the amount of time it takes for those with little experience in certain subjects to develop adequate language fluency.

It is common for New Zealand schools to place NESB students in 'transitional mainstream' classes, allowing them to take a combination of ESOL and regular classes. As noted above, some of the students appreciate this opportunity to interact with non-ESOL students. However, the school that runs the Intensive English programme is the sole provider of a truly transitional approach, through which subjects other than English are available in ESOL-only classes. Other schools each have a small ESOL programme where NESB students are able to take ESOL rather than regular English, but students are mainstreamed in all other subjects. Two major issues have emerged from this 'all-or-nothing' attitude: premature and inappropriate mainstreaming.

Premature Mainstreaming: In the "too hard basket"

Somali students are often mainstreamed prematurely. They are expected to cope with secondary school classes and external examinations while their English ability is little beyond survival level. Many are mainstreamed because they are conversationally fluent, yet they lack the academic language for specific subjects, particularly Mathematics and Science. A shortage of comprehensive general Somali-English dictionaries and the non-existence of subject-specific dictionaries add to what one teacher described as a "huge problem". An eighteen-year-old boy notes:

Well, for me, Science is hard for me, because Science, I think, has a *language*, can't understand the language, it has new words that I can't understand, but in my country I used to understand what it is, what it's about I think you have to study in your own language, because, like Economics you have to work twice [as hard] as the Kiwi guys are working because it's all about language And it's real hard though, about everything. You know, I wish, my country never fight.

His final words indicate the frustration and the pain that some students are experiencing. Others, with a greater level of English, find their limited academic language inconvenient but less daunting and indicate that it takes only a few days to learn how to use and write new words.

However, all of the students agree that a lack of academic language creates difficulty in examination situations. One older boy states that:

I think everybody has a problem with exams and tests Because we can't understand the language very much In the exam, yeah, it's really hard, even the English, you can't ask the teacher 'What's this about?' 'cos it's exam And it's real hard for me, the Science and Economics

A nineteen-year-old girl who sat School Certificate last year agrees that examination language is particularly difficult to comprehend and in her case resulted in a disappointing grade:

.... If you have a test, sometimes you don't even understand the question – how can you answer it if you don't even understand the question? And they ask you very trick questions, the questions are asked in a very trick way, to understand the question, and if your English not very good (laugh) the only you don't! So it is very hard to understand even the questions I was trying my best, and I couldn't even, I didn't even pass, I only get forty-nine Also my teacher was helping me, I, she was used to helping me with my essay. But still. I was trying so hard to work, when I couldn't

Examinations are one of the major methods through which students can gain the educational outcomes – qualifications – considered desirable by employers, so the disadvantage that Somali students are currently facing is a major concern. It affects their ability to adapt to other aspects of school, for their self-esteem is diminished by a constant sense of failure. This problem is not new, nor unique to New Zealand. Cummins and Swain (1986:140) report that in the United States NESB students are often transferred from bilingual to English-only classes when they have superficially fluent English communication skills but subsequently fall behind because they have not developed the necessary academic language or skills in English. They note that since such students are relatively fluent in English, teachers assume language proficiency is not to blame for their poor academic performance. Thus, teachers believe that the students just do not have the intellectual capacity. Christchurch teachers appear to hold similar attitudes.

The failure of teachers to recognise mixed levels of English ability within an individual student may partially be explained by the way in which teachers are trained. One teacher notes that most ESOL training focuses only on 'communicative' learning. This means that once students have gained conversational

fluency in English, ESOL is considered unnecessary. The need for academic knowledge, subject vocabulary, accuracy in written language and writing skills, such as how to construct paragraphs and write essays, is ignored. The same teacher notes that training courses always place this issue in the proverbial "too hard basket". Hmong refugees in the United States (Walker-Moffat 1995:134) and Vietnamese refugees in New Zealand (Cochrane, Lee and Lees 1993:18) have criticised ESOL programmes for the same inadequacies. Teachers do acknowledge that there are shortcomings in the focus on communication only. Yet, they resist admitting a need to improve this situation, stating that younger students who have been through primary school in New Zealand will not have the same difficulties.

Inappropriate Mainstreaming: "It's a big problem we've got"

In addition to premature mainstreaming, it is common for Somali and other refugee students to be placed in inappropriate mainstream classes because of inadequate assessment procedures and a lack of understanding. Beaglehole (1990:71) found that well-educated European refugee adolescents of 1940s and 1950s were often put into a lower stream class which was not suited to their academic abilities because it took them a long time to be fluent in English. While I have heard of one sixteen-year-old Somali who was placed into a primary school, Somali students are more often put into age-appropriate classes, even when their grasp of English and academic knowledge is inadequate for this level. Some students do not even have a sound understanding of what is considered to be 'general knowledge'. For example, one teacher complains that some Somali students have no idea that the earth is round or that there is both a Northern and Southern Hemisphere.

Inappropriate mainstreaming is particularly problematic for students who arrive in New Zealand at secondary school age because, as a Somali girl states:

.... if they are fifteen or sixteen, they are the age of high school, and when they are in Somalia they're only primary school. So, it's very hard to catch with other people, yeah, so it's very difficult.

She goes on to tell of her own mainstreaming experience when she was nearly sixteen:

When they put me in Sixth form I wasn't able to take Sixth form, because I didn't do Fifth form, and Fourth form and Third form, and I didn't go Somalia or even New Zealand so the whole year I didn't learn anything. I was only going to school, [learning] nothing, and I was taking too eliter classes. So then again, the teachers put me in Seventh form and I have to tell my family, that I not ever go to school because I was thinking that's not where I am, so the first you have find where I am, so you have to have the right way,

and so my family have to take this - I suppose all Somalis have to, so have to just take the risk - so they put me in, they say, 'Yes she can be in the form of Seventh form, but the other subjects she can be at any levels you want to, and I say, I want Fifth form ...Yeah - I wasn't even the right age to be Seventh form, I was, I don't know why

This protracted process of placement was a waste of time educationally for this student. It was also confusing and continues to affect her self-esteem because other students question why she is still in the Seventh form after three years. Yet, she is adamant: "But if, I didn't told them, I would be lost, if I didn't go back, I would be Seventh form [but] I never learned anything". It is apparent that the eventual solution to this mainstreaming nightmare was found only through the initiative of the student and her family. Many Somali students and parents do not feel comfortable resisting social closure by approaching schools in this way. Thus, a Somali boy told me that students:

.... they soon not like school, 'cos if you don't understand, some of language is difficult, everything's difficult, so it has got you a lot of problem it's big problem we have got.

Other students are confused and frustrated by the lack of flexibility that schools allow in relation to choosing ESOL or mainstream English:

.... in the Fifth form or Sixth form, you want to take ESOL, then you have to wait for School Cert. English, you don't have a choice, you can only take one, you can't take both.

Those who have opted for regular English classes in an attempt to gain qualifications have been disappointed upon finding that if external examinations are not passed, even by a few marks, then it is not possible to move on to the next level. Some are repeating nationally based assessments, such as School Certificate and Sixth Form Certificate, for the second or third time and becoming increasingly demoralised.

The students also indicate that once in the mainstream they have no guarantee of teacher awareness about their difficulties. An eighteen-year-old notes how teachers differ in their understandings and assistance:

ESOL teachers they always sound good, but you go to other class, like Maths, Science or whatever it is, sometimes when they don't know who you are or you background or whatever, so they just treat like you like all the other classes, they only hand out assignments and all that stuff, they don't really know, teachers are different. And some people, in exams they give you extra time, so people are always come different!

A sixteen-year-old girl offers one reason why mainstream teachers may not offer special support:

.... Some don't really teach you and explain to you, like last year I had this really good teacher, and every time she would come up and ask me even in a test, she would come up to me, so and other students were saying, 'Why are you going up to them, you aren't even coming to ask us' and some teachers don't bother even come to you, they like this, this and this and if you don't understand, that's a problem ...

Clearly, mainstream teachers are caught in a bind when non-refugee students resent special treatment for refugees. The belief that the same treatment is equal treatment, espoused by all but one of the teachers I spoke to, does not allow room for different needs. It fails to demonstrate an understanding that to achieve equal outcomes it is often necessary to implement differential strategies which acknowledge and address the specific needs of disadvantaged students (Fleras and Elliott 1996:117). Ideally, refugee needs should be met before they enter the mainstream but currently this is not the case. Hence, it is concerning that when mainstream teachers tell the whole class that they can ask for help, specific assistance is not offered to Somali students.

Such an attitude assumes that all students in the classroom are comfortable relying on their own initiative to gain help, yet this is a culturally specific practice which Somali do not share. One eighteen-year-old girl notes that on many occasions she has not understood what is going on in class. She rarely asks for help because "sometimes you too shy to say anything", an issue particularly pertinent for Somali girls whose cultural training does not encourage the questioning of authority. When this girl first came to New Zealand she could not do her assignments or homework and was too embarrassed to admit this to her teacher. Consequently:

... when I went to school and the teacher ask and I say "I forgot at home, I didn't do"
... excuses, I made excuses, and later, when I finished, when I was almost Fifth form,
it is real hard. Now I wish I did [the assignments]!

Such an example makes it is easy to understand how teachers attribute behaviour to dispositional characteristics, for the Somali student's excuses could easily be taken as a sign of laziness or indifference. It also demonstrates that when teachers treat all students in exactly the same manner – expecting them to ask for help, regardless of their differing cultural norms and academic level - equal outcomes do not necessarily follow.

Ironically, when an eighteen-year-old boy *has* asked for assistance, mainstream teachers have often imposed limitations:

The teachers are really good, they helpful and if you ask a question they will answer it, but you can't ask a lot of questions of the teacher, you have to study at home, before you ask But some teachers are really mean! they're going to say to you, 'You're being rude, you going to get to fail if you ask me another question, I don't want to answer that question, I don't want to know' .

While such negative feedback may be uncommon, it suggests that teachers resent having the ideal of treating all students equally challenged by Somali students, who require more help than their Kiwi peers. Clearly Somali students have difficulty asking for and receiving the aid that they need within this kind of atmosphere.

It is important to point out that, in comparison, ESOL teachers are highly praised. A fifteen-year-old girl notes: "Actually, ESOL teachers are very finely than the other teachers". Others indicate that this is because "they are more helpful than the other teachers", have greater knowledge of the Somali student background and have much experience teaching people with only a little English. A sixteen-year-old boy asserts that: "I think the difference is that ESOL teachers speak *slowly* when they speak English"! ESOL classes are also more highly regarded than those in the mainstream, as a fifteen-year-old girl notes:

You feel comfortable when in ESOL, when you been in other classes and you come to ESOL, the feeling is really easy ... because you know everybody else is having the same difficulties and you go back to the other classes and everybody, they don't understand you or anything.

This feeling of discomfort illustrates how little inclusion of Somali needs occurs in mainstream classes. The limited assessment procedures by which students are placed into the mainstream fail to take into account the mismatch between oral and written ability, the breaks in education *and* the different conceptual understandings that Somali students display. As a result, one ESOL teacher estimates that most Somali students understand less than ten per cent of what is going on in mainstream classes, eventually 'glazing over' with boredom and becoming increasingly disillusioned with school.

Frustration and Anger: At a "system which is failing them dramatically"

Teachers note that confusion and frustration are commonplace for Somali students but there are certain circumstances that aggravate these feelings and often culminate in considerable anger. One such case is when Somali students are placed in classes appropriate for their age, then changed to a lower age group because their academic ability is inadequate. Discouragement is particularly noticeable at the

beginning of the school year when students discover that they can not go on with their peers but must repeat classes. Similarly, students get angry when they see other NESB students with lower levels of oral English get higher grades in tests and exams, simply because their written skills are more developed. Teachers claim that much of this frustration is caused by students not understanding the enormity of the task that they face in learning English and when some act as if they do not need to work hard to make this happen.

Nevertheless, Somali students may also be reacting to the alienation and exclusion they experience at school due to the systemic biases present in institutional practices. A school principal agrees and, in discussing how the needs of refugee students are not adequately met, she indicates her concern when meeting Somali students and parents:

.... you can see in talking to them, their frustration and anger, and all of those things which I understand completely, and I always feel really bad, at being part of, even inadvertently, a system which is failing them dramatically.

Situations of constant anger and frustration - combined with a frequent sense of failure – can have negative long-term consequences on the mental health of individual students. The Islamic belief that suffering is a necessity of life may encourage students to feel that there is little they can do to improve their situation, thus enhancing their disillusionment. As teachers are eager to point out, displays of anger amongst Somali students may also affect the physical and emotional wellbeing of non-Somali adolescents in class. They rarely seem to consider that the anger of Somali students results from a lack in *their* wellbeing.

WORKLOAD ISSUES

Today's teachers are expected to cope with considerably more administrative tasks and extracurricular work than prior to the *Tomorrow School's* (Department of Education 1988) reforms. It is increasingly difficult to deal with all of the demands that students with different needs require, particularly when the number of NESB students is rising. The Intensive English programme which offers separate classes for three levels of ability is the only one of its kind in Christchurch and under pressure from increasing demand. The programme has a policy of accepting all students that wish to attend but, with the most advanced class capped at twenty-one, students with high levels of English language ability must often be placed into the beginner's class where there is more space. This requires the teacher to run as many as five reading groups within that class and to cope with a great variation in ability.

A shortage of qualified, experienced ESOL teachers and suitable bilingual teacher aides make staffing a problematic issue. Although a small number of secondary schools have utilised the latter, teachers consider bilingual teacher aides unproductive. This is due to their lack of teaching experience and questionable 'quality'. As the pay rate for interpreting is considerably higher, Somali best suited to bilingual teacher aide positions are often drawn to interpretation. Somali teacher aides also tend to face many of the same dilemmas as their students, in that they are inexperienced with the academic language and concepts of learning required in New Zealand. The Ministry of Education has made no attempt to date in relieving this situation by initiating a specific training programme for bilingual teacher aides.

Uncertainty as to the role of the teacher aide has also created problems. Teachers at the Intensive English programme comment that one teacher aide "told them [the students] all the answers" and wished to speak Somali rather than English. Another "was on a little power trip" and wished to act independently of the teacher in charge. Similarly, tension is also apparent between ESOL teachers themselves over the best use of teacher aides. This is not surprising when there is only one full-time and one part-time bilingual teacher aide to share between three teachers taking secondary school equivalent classes and seven running adult ESOL classes. The Kennedy and Dewar (1997:144) study shows that many teachers believe bilingual tutors or teacher aides are particularly useful in the classroom, so perhaps this school has been unlucky with the individuals it has chosen.

Ultimately, a lack of time and inadequate staffing make it impossible for teachers to gain indepth knowledge about, or to assess the needs of, every student they teach. Unplanned observation in the foyer of one school, as I was waiting to undertake an interview, made clear the pressures teachers are under. In only fifteen minutes I watched students threatening each other and swearing violently at teachers. Cases reported to the teacher-on-duty included a student making water bombs, another deliberately breaking a door lock and a third incident involving a boy causing trouble in the girls' toilets. Attending to the needs of Somali students is only one of a multitude of issues that teachers must deal with everyday. A school counsellor comments that as a teacher:

.... you are so tired and exhausted and you are working so hard, that you haven't got the luxury of time to ponder the philosophy [of teaching], you just get on with it at the best of your ability.

Thus, she continues, some teachers do not want to know about different cultural understandings because they are burnt out "[a]nd they start saying 'Well, they've got to conform to our society, because they're going to live there'".

Despite the best intentions of teachers, this is essentially the message that Somali students are receiving from the educational culture in which they have been placed. It is clear that a combination of inadequate ESOL structures, funding and training make it difficult for educators to be institutionally inclusive of Somali students within schools. As the next section indicates, these factors also help to explain the ignorance that teachers display in relation to the needs and culture of Somali students. Only very limited attempts at including Somali needs and culture within the classroom have been made by Christchurch teachers. More frequently, a lack of teacher and dominant group student awareness acts to exclude such students from the knowledge and opportunities that are required for successful educational adaptation.

CLASSROOM INCLUSION

Cummins (1988:138-141) cites considerable data demonstrating that the extent to which a student's language and culture are incorporated into the school programme is a significant predictor of academic success. He adds that cultural adaptation is enhanced when students recognise that their own ethnic identity is reinforced in school. However, this study shows that there is very little inclusion of Somali needs and culture within the Christchurch classrooms. A few of the teachers I spoke to make use of multicultural readings or resources, some have already been mentioned as giving students particular attention in class, while others comment that they actively encourage students to speak their first language and to talk about Somalia. There is consensus amongst the Somali students that teachers and Kiwi students are generally interested in learning about their religion and culture. Yet, without any formal exchange of cultural information, knowledge must be gained by asking questions of the Somali students. They are generally happy to answer but some do indicate that "when everybody asks me, it bugs me, a lot!".

It appears that, in attempting to be inclusive, most teachers simply encourage Somali students to talk about their culture in class. While this provides some interesting cultural knowledge for non-Somali, such encouragement tends to regard Somali culture as deviant from the 'invisible' dominant cultural values upon which education is built (see Spoonley 1995:79). While the intention behind this pluralist approach is worthy, there seems little recognition that students consider being placed in the position of 'Somali spokesperson' as a chore because it happens so frequently. Two of the girls talk of how angry they get when they are unsure of a topic for an assignment or speech and teachers *always* ask them to discuss their culture or country, in a version of what Griffiths (1995:43-45) refers to as cultural tourism. Beaglehole

(1990:77) notes that refugee students can be alienated when "private differences [a]re exposed to public scrutiny". Thus, one of the girls points out:

Yeah, I don't actually like the idea of teachers saying that, for some teachers stand there and 'Oh, why don't you talk life in Somalia', and I'm like 'Ughh!' - I don't like the idea of it.

This reaction is understandable when the same girl tells of previous situations in which questions about Somali culture from Kiwi students have made her feel uncomfortable:

.... the students asking you all about the clothing and all this, and they looked surprised and then some of them look at you, and some of them say something behind your back, you can actually hear it, that's not, unpleasant, like if you see somebody talking, you would say 'Oh, are they talking about you?'

Clearly, the ignorance of Kiwi students has created a situation whereby some express intolerance to difference. The students note that there is a fine line between interest in their culture and disparagement of it. A nineteen-year-old girl indicates the difference between questions she considers polite and those she believes are rude:

.... some people, they didn't ask you question, they only ask for things to make you mad - some people will come to you at PE: 'Why you are wearing this?' and you can answer them! But some people, ' Ahhh - it's *too* hot, don't you feel *hot* ?'. The questions are different.

Finally, by continuing to rely on Somali students to supply cultural information, teachers divert the responsibility for being inclusive of Somali culture from themselves onto their students. It is not surprising that some students resist having this extra burden placed upon their shoulders, yet their reaction places teachers in a quandary. If they ignore Somali culture they may be accused of alienating Somali students. On the other hand, if they ask questions of Somali, they may be charged with cultural tourism and failing to take responsibility for incorporating the cultural diversity of their students within the class. Judging from the interviews I conducted, however, teachers are not acutely aware of this difficult positioning. Rather, with little time and few other resources to rely on, most teachers simply assume that Somali students will supply whatever information is necessary to discuss Somali culture in the classroom.

CLASSROOM EXCLUSION

Chapter six outlined how Somali students find it difficult to become friends and interact positively with Kiwi students due to numerous cultural differences. The lack of knowledge that dominant group students display about their Somali classmates can also lead to situations of social closure and examples are given in the following discussion. More troubling, however, is the considerable difficulty teachers have in dealing with the needs and cultural diversity of Somali students, for it is they who largely control what knowledge is transmitted and how interaction occurs within the classroom. Exclusionary practices are not enacted in any obviously discriminatory way but through everyday practices and attitudes, including teacher expectations that refugees will adapt quickly and that all students should be treated equally regardless of cultural differences (see Gibson 1995:91-94).

Although unintentional, such attitudes act to exclude Somali students from the knowledge and rewards that could advance their educational adaptation. Consequently, Somali students are at times forced to choose between school success and their own cultural identity. The virtual ignorance of teachers and Kiwi students about the historical and social processes that have determined the current plight of Somali students indicates that the classroom is not culturally safe for Somali (see Ramsden 1995:9). This places serious constraints upon the ability of the latter to adapt educationally to school in Christchurch.

LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SOMALI STUDENTS

It must first be noted that the Somali students do not expect teachers and Kiwi peers to have knowledge of their culture or needs. They arrived with few expectations and many are just thankful to be here. One boy notes:

I expect nothing; it was not safe in Somalia, you know, Somalia is a civil war When I heard we would go to New Zealand, oh, I was very, very happy!

Students and their families were occupied only with finding a place safe from civil war and famine, and did not stop to contemplate what the New Zealand education system would be like. One boy suggests that “[w]hen you are safe yourself, you can think about other things”, such as school. The students acknowledge that they are having difficulties, both academically and culturally, but still feel that it is their responsibility alone to adapt as quickly as possible to school. They do, however, stress that their situation would be much improved if teachers and Kiwi peers had greater knowledge of Somalia, Somali culture and

Islam. When asked if teachers and students know enough about Somalia, a fifteen-year-old girl makes it clear: "No! Not at all!". This lack of understanding creates considerable discomfort for the students when incorrect assumptions are made about Somali culture and the past and present lives of Somali students.

Somali culture: The "cultural blinders" of Teachers and Kiwi Students

There is considerable opportunity for misunderstanding between Somali, teachers and Kiwi students, yet there is no system for the formal exchange of cultural information within the school context. This is particularly problematic in relation to religion, for the different rituals and symbols of Islam differentiate Somali from New Zealanders in numerous ways. Many Kiwi students have little familiarity with *any* religion, which has been a most surprising discovery for Somali students. They had been told that New Zealand was a Christian country but:

... you find a lot of them are not, they are not believing in anything [a Kiwi girl] was walking with me and she said 'Do you guys believe in God?' and I said 'Yes', and then she goes 'Unbelievable - how can you believe something!'.

Consequently, Somali students frequently find their religious belief challenged, as the following conversation that one of the boys had with a Kiwi student indicates:

.... I was going to pray, and he say 'Why are you praying?' and I say, 'I have to pray 'cos I, that's my religion' and he say 'Because nothing happen to you, why do still go and you pray? Why?' And I said, 'If I don't, something might happen,', yeah, and he say nothing happens to him and he doesn't pray, so why I pray every day?!

While Kiwi students who belong to an organised religion are much more understanding of the need for such rituals and their practice, others find the Islamic way of praying very alien. A nineteen-year-old girl recalls: "I was praying at home and, there's a kid from school comes and say 'Oh, why are you kissing the carpet?!'".

Ignorance often breeds stereotyping. Immigrants from all ethnic groups often find themselves stereotyped, but because refugees come from countries that have been highly publicised due to war or natural disaster, this may be more prevalent for refugees. For example, refugees from Europe after World War II found that they were stereotyped as 'Huns', even if they were not German (Beaglehole 1990:57). Many of the Somali students have found a common assumption that all Somali express their culture and

their religion in exactly the same way. For those who are unfamiliar with Islam, it is easy to miss variations within the faith and to interpret Islam according to one's own cultural standards.

For one student, the stereotypical comments that teachers make on topics such as Africa or Islam – and in the following case, the position of women according to Islamic belief – are troublesome. He explains how one teacher:

.... he took some examples that make me feel quite unhappy they say that the Muslim's boys first, and girls bad, very bad Even when students ask him or her, they tell them something, and when they ask me, I tell them different thing. And they thinks that it's getting confused: teachers, me. And the teachers don't even try to come to me, and say to me 'Is that how...?'. Yeah, we could tell them more, and they will know more, then, some teachers will come to you and say 'Is that right? Oh, I never thought ...' and then you start tell them

Abel (1997:3) notes that ideas and values posing an ideological threat to the dominant group are often unrepresented or misrepresented. The latter is the case here and this student feels that his religion is being distorted and challenged. He makes it obvious that if teachers are open to allowing students to be 'expert' on such topics, it can offer them a sense of empowerment. However, students must be able to choose when to offer this information or they may come to resent it, as the Somali girls indicated earlier.

A sixteen-year-old highlights another incident in which a teacher assumed that all Somali girls follow the same behaviour. She recalls a school camp where the instructor told Somali girls that it was not 'safe' to climb a mountain in skirts and that they should change into shorts:

And then, it was kind of hard, 'cos, some girls *did* wear shorts and *I* didn't. And the guy said 'Well, I'm sorry but they are wearing it, you have to, too' Yeah, 'cos they think 'Oh, she is a Somalian, and she's wearing a shorts', and they ask me and I say 'I'm not going to do that, this is my religion, I wear this' and then he say 'Isn't she Muslim?' it was quite hard for that kind of thing, so I decided not to go to other camps.

Clearly, Somali students are losing out on important opportunities when they resist challenges to their religious beliefs. This results from teachers failing to recognise that not all Somali express their religion in the same way.

One recent case provides further evidence that teachers are missing cultural signals. The Intensive English Centre organised a trip to the Antarctic Centre but the Somali and Ethiopian students refused to go. According to the teachers this was because the students thought that they were going to the actual Antarctic. The teachers believe that they had explained carefully that the Centre is only a place

about the Antarctic and do not think communication difficulties due to language are the issue. Consequently, they are stumped as to why these students did not want to attend. Lyon (1992:50) states that the teachers of Cambodian students frequently offend Cambodian cultural norms due to ignorance, so it is possible that Somali norms were transgressed in this case. It is also possible that the Somali students did not equate a school trip with 'learning', as they understand it, and perceived the event a waste of time. This is the most likely scenario, my cultural advisor suggests, for education in Somalia did not involve non-academic activities such as fieldtrips. Another possibility is that the students thought that they would have to pay for the trip and many families cannot afford such expenses.

A school counsellor admits that the failure of this excursion results from the teachers' own "cultural blinders". The teachers are angry at the lack of student interest but realise that 'ungrateful' students are not necessarily at fault. The counsellor asserts: "I want to own it and say 'We haven't yet discovered how to make ourselves able to interact with them' – and I don't want to blame them". This recognition is significant, because she concedes that inadequate knowledge is the responsibility of educators. Few of the teachers I interviewed recognised this fact, mainly, I believe, because they are unaware of how their ignorance can affect their students. Lyon (1995:41) similarly found that the extent of Cambodian students' problems were generally poorly appreciated by teachers and peers and that behaviour students considered culturally inappropriate was regularly performed due to a lack of information about the Cambodian culture. In Christchurch a simple lack of knowledge and awareness has resulted in only vague acknowledgement of Somali student needs. Thus, the students state that they would find it beneficial if there were a greater awareness of their culture, particularly in relation to Islam. They would prefer it if this information could be transferred by a means other than themselves.

Previous Status and Life: "We just moved out"

Both teachers and Kiwi students also lack an understanding of the disjuncture between the New Zealand lives of Somali students and that which they led in Somalia and in refugee camps. As refugees, Somali students have experienced much uncertainty. Many had to abandon their homes with little warning and without knowing if they would ever return. One of the girls describes her family leaving Somalia a few years ago:

.... when we moved out of our house, we were like 'Oh, okay we will come back in a couple of days', nothing to take, we didn't take anything, we just - [hits hand] moved out.

Some have had to survive considerable physical and emotional deprivation living in a transit country. Their families arrived in New Zealand with virtually nothing: few clothes, no furniture, often even important documents or photographs were left behind.

Somali students feel that it would be beneficial for Kiwi students and teachers to have greater knowledge of what it is like to be a refugee. Two girls are particularly determined to go beyond stereotypes, pointing out that not all refugees – nor all Somali refugees - have suffered the same level of deprivation, either in the camps or before they left their home country. While many refugees *have* endured great hardship and witnessed horrifying scenes, this situation is not universal, particularly for those who were the first to leave the home country. A school friend had difficulty believing that the girls had not been starving or full of disease in their refugee camp, because these were the images she had often seen on television. One of the girls told her:

... 'I've never been starved in my whole entire life I never actually meet anybody who was like that, in my entire life', and then she says 'Well, well I see you', and she says, 'You know, you don't need to pretend, I *see* you'!! (laugh) And, I'm like, 'I never actually saw anything you are talking about' and then she says ' Well, my Mum works on the Church and she told us you Somalian people have never even slept in a bed, so be warned!'

The girls believe that such stereotypes are fuelled by the New Zealand assumption that everyone in Africa lives in a grass hut, as is depicted in books and movies. Klineberg (1983:48-9) suggests that stereotypes provide us with 'pictures in our heads' which give us an impression that we know what 'they' are like even before we have actually met them. Stereotypes are shaped by social, economic, political and historical antecedents, and are often influenced by the media. Contrary to popular opinion, however, many refugees were not poor in their own country, but were successful, prominent and well-integrated people who had to give up this life involuntarily (Stein 1986:9). Some Somali *are* better off in New Zealand than they were at home, but most have taken a considerable step *down* in status and wealth. One of the girls tells of a visit they made to a Kiwi friend's house. It was a:

.... beautiful house, all computers around, everything was so perfect and she was showing us around, like *if we were supposed to be surprised*. Of something. And that was, 'Oh, this is this... this is that' and I'm thinking, what is she going on about (laugh) So then we invited her the other way, yeah, and she comes to our house, and then she goes 'Oh, this is beautiful, the sitting room's beautiful, the house is beautiful' and I think, 'Why are you going, your house is [more] beautiful than us, so why are you going on about our house'. And then she comes in 'Oh, this is very beautiful, I'm sure and this is very

nice' and I'm like – 'Are you making us feel bad or something?' I know we have seen your house and when you were showing your house, I say, I just said 'You live in a nice house'. And then that was it and then she goes, 'Oh, did you had a TV when you were in there, and so' and then she's asking all these questions, about 'Oh, do you live in house? Oh, this house must be much better than the one you lived in'. And I said, 'No, it wasn't!'. And that was like really freaky and I said to her, 'I don't know where you get this kind of ideas from!'

A photograph of the type of house the girls lived in when in Somalia made the friend's misconceptions clear. Many Christchurch Somali have come from upper- and middle-class professional backgrounds to live on the unemployment benefit or low-paid, low-status work. It is understandable, therefore, that some of the students find it frustrating when New Zealanders expect them to be eternally grateful for what they have been 'given' in New Zealand, assuming that this is much more than they left behind in Somalia. All of the Somali students I talked to *were* grateful. However, they questioned how long refugees must continue expressing their thanks. In a fictionalised account based on interviews with Polish refugees in the 1940s, a character expresses: "I was tired of having to be grateful for whatever happened to me in New Zealand" (cited in Ogonowska-Coates 1992:130). I sense that Somali students are as equally tired.

Present Status and Life: "They're going to cheat with minor things too"

Teachers lack understanding of the conditions from which Somali students come, particularly in terms of their culture and socio-economic status. More significantly, they appear to underestimate the generally low socio-economic status that refugees experience while living in New Zealand. Two teachers and a school counsellor, who have had contact with many Somali students, dislike school policies that waive refugee fees because they believe it encourages them to expect "everything on a plate". They claim that Somali students and parents exhibit a 'refugee mentality' or 'cultural dependency' because they have become used to being the recipients of charity in refugee camps and since coming to this country. Yet, the four examples of 'refugee mentality' offered can be alternatively explained through cultural misunderstanding and/or an underestimation of the poverty in which refugees live. This suggests that educators need further information about the present circumstances of refugees.

In one case a teacher claims that a Somali parent was demanding "handouts" because he assumed that, as a refugee, his child was not required to pay course-related costs for materials needed in Art. Yet, the school *does* have a policy waiving the *general* fees for its refugee students and this incident could easily be interpreted as a misunderstanding of the policy. Another anecdote tells of a different refugee parent

expecting the school fee for a 'family' to cover not only his children, but their cousins as well. A teacher offers this as an example of a refugee trying to manipulate the system, without considering that Somali might define 'family' in a different way to the school, a definition that includes what most New Zealanders consider to be extended family members. It is also possible that the 'bargaining' down of inflated fees and prices is appropriate within Somali culture, although I have no evidence of this.

The school counsellor relates a story about a Somali boy who was required to buy a textbook at school. Although he said he would bring the money, this had not eventuated some weeks later. His teacher realised that money might be an issue for his family and negotiated that the student pay only two-thirds of the cost, while the school would cover one-third. Still he did not bring the money. The counsellor states:

So the moment we taught him he could have some of it [the money], he wants all of it, from us. And our interactions with him are so frustrating we don't know what to do.

At no point did the teacher ask the boy why he did not bring the money, or contact his parents about this issue. Thus, with a lack of understanding about the financial or home situation of the boy's family, assumptions were made about the 'refugee mentality'.

Later the same counsellor described how a Somali student's benefit from Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) was suspended for six weeks. She provided the girl with food parcels and other assistance but:

She kept wanting more and more and more from me and so on the one hand, I was pleased to do it, on the other hand, I wish I hadn't even started, 'cos she's learned now more about dependence and less about independence.

Having been told the psychological and family background of this girl, it does not come as a surprise that she would become attached to anyone who gave her attention. The counsellor's main gripe, however, is that the girl was not 'grateful' for the assistance she was given. It has already been discussed how students find this expectation of eternal gratitude on their part rather patronising and frustrating.

The above examples are problematic because the teachers and counsellor fail to take into account that many Somali families find it hard to survive on WINZ benefits or the earnings of low-paying jobs. Thus, they may not be able to afford school fee and textbook costs. There is also little awareness that cultural or language barriers may prevent Somali parents and students from fully understanding the importance of such issues for teachers. Nevertheless, there *is* a possibility that a habit of dependency may

develop in some refugees who have been in a camp for a long time. Stein (1986:15) notes that many refugees feel that they are owed something, due to the involuntary nature of their immigration and the difficulties they have faced. He states that some lean heavily on assistance agencies and when their demands are not met they get frustrated and bitter, because they do not like to feel helpless yet cannot cope without aid. The students I interviewed show no sign of bitterness but are frustrated that their parents must rely on government benefits. However, the majority of them have not spent a long time in refugee camps, where dependency is more likely to develop.

I believe that the notion of a 'refugee mentality' may partly emerge from media coverage of the first Somali refugees to arrive in New Zealand. One teacher discusses how the first 'women at-risk' refugees were discovered to have spouses and other relatives and were therefore considered liars. She uses this example to stress that some Somali try to maintain their dependence by manipulating the system, because: "If they've cheated with that, they're going to cheat with minor things too". The public attitudes of a host society to refugees can influence cultural adaptation (Nguyen 1989:76-78), so it is troubling that representations of Somali in the media are affecting the behaviour of teachers and, presumably, other members of the public. The lack of understanding educators display in relation to the current circumstances of refugees enhances the effect of such representations, particularly when they feel a real sense of frustration working with refugee students everyday. Distorted media images of refugees appear to be a dominant source of information, so it is not surprising that non-Somali students and teachers alike tend to blame individual Somali for their plight, rather than the processes by which the students have arrived at their present circumstances.

LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF REFUGEE NEEDS

All of the teachers readily admit that they lack sufficient knowledge about the needs that Somali students have as refugees. Kennedy and Dewar (1997:156) suggest that good programmes for NESB students require teachers to be empathetic to their prior and present circumstances. They indicate that this should not be done in a superficial way but by 'tuning in' to the needs of their different students in terms of age, gender, cultural background, learning needs, previous life experiences and personality. However, this is difficult to achieve when teachers are not supplied with information on which to base such programmes. When the first group of Somali arrived in Christchurch most teachers did not even know where Somalia was or which language was spoken, let alone what the cultural or learning needs of Somali students were likely to be. Teachers received no documentation about the age or level of previous schooling of Somali students and even those who had spent time at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre arrived with little information

useful to educators. Today, the limited knowledge teachers have gained about Somali continues to come from students themselves, other teachers or rumour. Teachers state that “we get the odd handout” about refugees from the Ministry of Education but “usually they seem to come to us for information”. Consequently, an ESOL teacher notes:

.... what we tended to do was focus on the language and behaviour issues, and knowing full well that there was all these other cultural issues in the background.

The lack of awareness that teachers display regarding the needs of Somali students as refugees is a troubling issue. Somali students who have had a break in or inadequate education for a considerable period of time, are distinguishable from other NESB students. The latter have had continuous schooling for a number of years, through which they have gained substantial academic knowledge and educational skills. Although this was learned in another language and possibly by a different method of teaching, such knowledge can generally be translated into the New Zealand context. A Somali girl notes with exasperation how she differs from:

.... other students, like from Asia, because they're studying their exams that they come here, so it is different from us, because we didn't go to school six years!

This aspect of Somali culture conflicts with the educational culture in New Zealand, which takes for granted that students have had continuous schooling. Based on this belief, schools expect students to have already gained a certain level of content and conceptual knowledge, as well as be familiar with an educational culture. Such assumptions disadvantage Somali students in their efforts to adapt to school in New Zealand.

Although teachers consider gaps in schooling a major issue for Somali students and some note that other refugee students are in a similar situation, they rarely make the connection between being a refugee and having educational needs that are different to those of other NESB students. When asked if they make a distinction between refugee and non-refugee students teachers state clearly that they do not. Yet, one teacher came to a significant realisation during the course of our interview:

Even if I don't distinguish [refugees from other students], refugees often do distinguish themselves because of their lack of academic ability, and because of their gap in education.

In defending their decision not to differentiate refugees from other NESB students, some teachers quote the school's policy on equity, which they interpret as saying students must be treated in the same way to be

treated equally. Although it has become apparent that by this they mean fee-paying students are not treated preferentially to other students, including refugees, it is clear that teachers consider the concept of differential treatment as problematic. After acknowledging that they know little about the circumstances of refugee students, some teachers actively resist the idea that they *need* to know more. For example, one assumes that there is no reason to distinguish refugees from other NESB students because she has not experienced refugees obviously acting out previous trauma in the classroom. Another claims that Vietnamese refugees who can read and come from a country with a long history of quality education cannot be compared to Somali refugees, who have had a written language for only one generation.

While it is important to acknowledge that the different histories and characteristics of particular ethnic groups will result in varied versions of the refugee experience, differences amongst students are commonly perceived as based *purely* on ethnicity. This ignores the fact that many refugees will have had similar experiences of, for example, breaks in education, hardship in a refugee camp and a sense of 'cultural bereavement' for the country and culture they left involuntarily (Eisenbruch 1990:11). Thus, the lack of knowledge that teachers display and their resistance to the usefulness of a broad understanding of refugees is troubling. Teachers already feel it is difficult to make decisions about student needs and introducing another variable based on the refugee experience adds to this complexity, making it seem a no-win situation for them. However, when they fail to acknowledge the need for a distinction between refugee and other NESB students this reinforces the systemic biases already prevalent in education and limits the possibility of schools being inclusive of refugee needs. As an ESOL lecturer stresses: "If we, the helpers, know nothing, how can we help them?"

SEPARATING SOMALI

In chapter six the Somali students indicated that they believe increased, positive interaction with Kiwi students would aid their process of fitting in at school. Teachers state that they share this belief. Yet, the practices of some seem to be less concerned with Somali adaptation and more with diluting the 'threat' that Somali present to Kiwi students. For instance, one ESOL teacher believes that "they're probably their own worst enemies when it comes to mixing with Kiwis", because she perceives Somali students as preferring to spend time and speak with others of their own culture. If this is so, it should not surprise teachers, for they also note that Kiwi students prefer to interact with others of their own culture. Yet, "clinging" is regarded as an issue only for NESB students. A small number of teachers actively separate Somali students from each other because they believe that Kiwi students may feel threatened by a group of Somali. One teacher believes that students are more likely to get "off-task"-when they are together and

speak in a language she cannot understand. Based on that reasoning, she limits the number of any particular ethnic group coming to the school for ESOL at any one time.

Bochner (1983:37) states that cross-cultural contact can be threatening for dominant group members. They may feel that minority ethnic groups are 'intruding' on their territory, trying to undermine their values and dilute the cultural identity of their members. By limiting or discouraging interaction between students of the same ethnic group, teachers act as gatekeepers 'protecting' the educational culture of their schools and classrooms from 'too much' difference. When teachers restrict the number of students from one ethnic group this reinforces that their culture and language are not valued or 'normal'. Not wishing to appear 'deviant' by association, Kiwi students thus continue to avoid interaction with and be intolerant of Somali. The intended aim of increased interaction between Kiwi and Somali students consequently fails. The barriers that teachers erect to restrict Somali students from interacting with each other in class ignore or underestimate the support and comfort students may find with others who share the same culture and language. Additionally, by blaming Somali for their lack of interaction with Kiwi students, teachers neglect to acknowledge that it is the system that is failing, rather than individual Somali students.

ATTITUDES TO SOMALI ASPIRATIONS

Social closure also seems to be evident in teacher attitudes towards the high educational aspirations that Somali students and parents demonstrate. Gibson (1995:80-87) states that if students and their parents hold high occupational aspirations this may enhance academic success. Many Somali refugees in Christchurch come from upper- or middle-class families and the parents of the students I talked to were employed in mainly professional occupations in Somalia. Their children aspire to tertiary qualifications and professional careers, such as electrical engineering, medicine, science, accountancy, economics and computer programming. Similar aspirations are common amongst other refugees from well-educated backgrounds, as Beaglehole (1990:27) found studying post-war European refugees in New Zealand. Somali students emphasise that it is part of their cultural script to believe that an education is not complete until they have graduated from university.

They also explain how important education is to their parents and the future socio-economic status of their families. A nineteen-year-old girl notes that for her:

.... education and belief are the most important thing, whatever you are, that's your future, because you have to, you need to have your self, you know when you get older, you have to get a job and be independent here, for yourself some people who

older they don't want to live New Zealand. Or any other countries, because its too cold, it's hard for them to live, but, but because they want you to get a good education [they stay]

My sponsor verified this statement, indicating that she knows of a number of parents who remain in New Zealand simply because of the educational opportunities their children now have. Some students are aware of more general economic reasons why it is necessary to gain tertiary qualifications. One of the younger boys said:

It's really hard to get a job in New Zealand, now, with Depression, our Economics teacher tell us to study hard, get more education, so, after the Depression after six years or something, that's what they'll think you'll need, so you got to get more degrees...

Another Somali male notes that a good education offers students not only specific work-related skills but also less tangible abilities, such as "getting along with other Kiwi people, and learning all their slang". An eighteen-year-old emphasises that he wants to make the most of the chances that New Zealand can offer him:

I don't want to be a refugee who come here and not, and I've got the opportunity to study, in the future I have big opportunity they've given me a lot of what I wanted, my dreams, what my dreams are and I'm taking the opportunity.

Thus, all of the students I interviewed wish to go to university and study for professional qualifications.

Somali Perceptions of Ability: "Unrealistic ideas "

Only one teacher states that she actively encourages students to maintain their high occupational aspirations, believing that her acknowledgement of their desires reinforces the motivation to study. On the contrary, most teachers consider such high educational aspirations as totally unrealistic for students who have arrived in New Zealand with little educational background and less English. The principal of one school states that Somali students:

... have huge expectations, which the younger members of the family will be able to meet because they will have been in our education system longer. But [the older students] want to do things like become doctors and lawyers and things and it has been extraordinarily difficult to persuade them that those expectations are unrealistic, because

they think that it's kind of personal to them, when it isn't, nobody in their situation could improve their language, and their written ability, and their whole skills

Teachers suggest that unlikely career aspirations are fuelled by the students' unrealistic perceptions of their own English language ability and the mismatch between oral fluency and poor written skills. An Intensive English teacher states:

.... they see themselves talking and think 'Oh, this is great' and they're not aware – I think – how poor their written work is and ... I'm not sure, also, if our level of written English would be much higher than what would be acceptable in Somalia. "And so they give you a piece of written work and you think 'Goodness, this is abysmal'. And they'll be saying to you 'I think I'll go to university next year'. And so they've got quite unrealistic ideas, a lot of them.

A teacher in a small ESOL programme emphasises that when multilevel ESOL classes are not available, some of the students rightly assess that they have greater ability than other classmates. In addition:

They perceive they don't need the ESOL but in actual fact they do! Their English is ... they're still very hard to understand in the spoken language They can't construct full sentences, their spelling is atrocious, their writing legibility is almost beyond a joke. And it's not they don't try, they really are trying, but for numerous reasons those things are happening.

Consequently, this teacher believes that the aspirations her students have for professional occupations are well beyond their reach.

Another educator conceives that parents put pressure on their children to achieve high career aspirations but neither they, nor their children, "see the enormity of the problem". She emphasises that this is not unique to Somali, for other immigrant parents often express the same wishes for their children. They see New Zealand as the "land of opportunity" and have not been fully informed of life in New Zealand and its schools before immigrating. Although most refugees would not have had a chance to read the New Zealand Immigration Service's (NZIS) *New Zealand: A Guide for New Settlers* (Green 1988:180), it offers a glimpse of the kind of information provided for new immigrants:

Your children may take a while to succeed in the New Zealand school system because English is not their first language. However, they will succeed in time. They will also teach their classmates to understand other languages and cultures, so they will be giving something to the school too.

This rose-coloured view of the NESB student experience offers no indication of how long such success might take to achieve and what difficulties may need to be overcome. Ignorance of the New Zealand education system on the part of refugees is clear. For example, one school called a parent conference because it became evident that Somali students and parents thought that physically being at school for three years enables one to go on to university, not realising that certain qualifications have to be gained before that is possible. Recently arrived Kurdish refugees have also been the recipients of exaggerated misinformation from the United Nations (UN) and the NZIS, causing enormous disappointment and resentment (Refugee and New Migrant Forum 1998b:2).

Yet, the students are not completely oblivious of the difficulties ahead and they realise that it will be harder and take them longer than a Kiwi student to complete their tertiary education. One student thinks that large classes at university will make individual attention and asking questions harder to accomplish. Some of them perceive Polytechnic as easier and are planning to go to there prior to or instead of university. The students feel limited by their ability in English language and a twenty-year-old who wants to be a doctor knows that he is not yet ready to start university and is improving his English first:

Like me, I could have enrolled last year, but I decided to stay. The teacher, teacher say 'You could go' but I know what I, how the grades at school are hard, so what is the university going to be like?

By resisting the pressure to enrol at university prematurely, this boy refuses to taste failure before he is ready to succeed. Other students understand that their limited English might require compromise in their occupational choices. A nineteen-year-old girl tells that:

.... I like computer programming but I think it is too hard for me, I like programming, but I don't know, but maybe it's too hard Yeah, I like programming, but it's quite hard English

Many students are considering studying for qualifications that minimise the need for advanced English, such as computing, engineering and accounting. However, teachers note that despite giving them advice to the contrary, some students have chosen subjects that do not follow a cohesive career path and will cut them off from doing what they want. Harker (1984:118) claims that it is common for sub-dominant group students to make wrong option choices which lead to educational and occupational dead ends, even when they have managed to resist social closure and to attain some academic success. This is because they lack experience of the educational culture, knowledge of which makes many of these decisions second-nature.

Teacher Perceptions of Somali Ability: Realism or Pessimism?

Castles et al (1986:42;47) note that in Australia there is considerable evidence of a "disproportionately high level of educational aspiration on the part of parents and offspring from Non-English-Speaking-Backgrounds", which is not matched by achievement. This suggests that the teachers in this study may be correct in their perceptions. Many of them wish for an increase in vocational guidance that could assess more 'realistic' career options for NESB students, but particularly Somali and other refugee students, so that they do not just drop out of school. Teachers indicate that they admire their students' desire for tertiary education but know that they cannot compete with Kiwi students who have had a solid school career. They suggest that a member of the refugee community, who would understand the students' aspirations and frustrations, could provide vocational guidance. However, the ESOL lecturer I spoke to notes that few people from refugee communities are able to detach themselves in this way.

Vocational training may be the most suitable option for some students but it is also possible that teachers are again explaining behaviour through dispositional characteristics. Jones (1991:147) found that teachers usually attribute differences in achievement between Pakeha and Pacific Island students to 'intelligence'. Based on this attribution, teachers actively encourage Pacific Island students to lower their educational and occupational sights. This is achieved by carefully informing students that they have little chance of 'success' and should, therefore, reduce their expectations to a more 'realistic' level (Jones 1991:170). While the situation of Somali students is clearly different, in that they have gaps in their education and are so new to the English language, it is troubling that the aspirations of Somali students are also being collectively labelled 'unrealistic'.

Driver and Beltran (1998:34) provide a similar argument, emphasising that the expectations of teachers are an important factor in determining the academic success of refugee adolescents. If students are not expected to do well, teachers may not push them to their full potential or offer them the assistance they need. Thus, again teachers act as a kind of gatekeeper to knowledge and academic success through social closure. Teachers – in combination with other aspects of the educational institution – subconsciously try to reduce the competitive capacity of refugee students for scarce qualifications. Expecting little of these students and acting accordingly is not intentional, but results from a situation where teachers, who do not have adequate training, knowledge, funding or time, must make decisions that have real life effects on students. Refugee students *can* resist social closure and succeed educationally but this requires them to adopt the tools of learning valued by the educational culture, often at the expense of their own cultural understandings.

ALIENATION FROM SCHOOL

The ways in which the educational culture and structures alienate Somali students from school are numerous. The inflexibility of institutional structures, teacher attitudes/expectations and interaction with other students are examples by which Somali learn that they are not welcome at school. Some students will resist social closure but for others the resistance required just to stay in school is too great. The students, parents and resettlement workers I interviewed suggest that many Somali adolescents are at serious risk of long-term economic disadvantage due to their regular truancy or because of their high potential for dropping out of school completely. This fact is a serious indication that schools are not coping well with the cultural diversity of Somali and that the students are having considerable difficulty fitting into the New Zealand education system. It also emphasises that results, rather than motivations and intentions, are the only relevant way to assess the effects that systemic biases have within institutions.

TRUANCY

Liev's (1989:230) model outlining the common causes of adaptational stress at the institutional level suggests that when there is a lack of awareness about the needs of a particular group by an institution, the group's members will withdraw their support from it. This is due to the alienation that they experience. Students, parents, teachers and resettlement workers state that many Somali frequently 'withdraw their support' from educational institutions through truancy. This is a common problem, although absences are often because of religious or family reasons and most schools do not record this as truancy. More disturbing are the smaller numbers of truants who absent themselves because they are bored in class or because they find school too difficult. This seems to be an issue for boys in particular. Girls have less opportunity to wander because they are supposed to be either at home or school and their absences tend to be for family reasons. Students and parents suggest that truants are likely to have experienced long breaks in education and be those most severely affected by inappropriate and premature mainstreaming. However, one principal states that it is important to note that refugees as a group do not seem to truant more than other groups of students in the school.

Research overseas shows that withdrawal in class, truancy and dropping out of school are common amongst immigrant students (see Ashworth 1982:78-79) and refugees (see Green 1989:128). Local studies indicate that Maori and Pacific Island students are the most likely to truant in New Zealand (see Donn, Bennie and Kerlake 1991:5; MacDonald 1991:210). This suggests that when education addresses only the interests and needs of the dominant culture, students of minority ethnic groups often feel alienated.

Truancy is one way that such students can express their frustration and confusion. Donn, Bennie and Kerslake (1991:46) indicate that the school 'ethos' or culture is a crucial factor in truancy. If this is unfriendly or threatening to the home culture of students and they feel powerless to change this situation, they will take themselves out of such an environment.

Inappropriate and premature mainstreaming are just two examples of the 'unfriendly' nature of Christchurch schools, whose systemic biases allow only the interests and norms of the dominant culture to be represented. The students who resist the exclusion of their culture from school through truancy, however, meet the expectations often expressed by teachers and 'prove' their predictions of failure correct. Teachers may not even be aware of Somali student unhappiness within the school environment. Lyon's (1992:31-37) study of adjustment problems in Cambodian secondary school students indicates a major discrepancy between the students level of (un)happiness and teacher-peer perceptions of it, mainly because it is culturally inappropriate for Cambodians to discuss their problems or express sadness. Only one of the teachers mentioned the emotional state of her Somali students, and she perceived all of them to be very happy. It is likely that when students are unjustifiably absent teachers tend to blame their 'lack of discipline' or 'motivation', rather than a sense of alienation.

DROPPING OUT AND YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Truancy amongst Somali students is a serious issue because it is likely to affect their long-term futures. Absenteeism is one predictor of low status occupations, less stable career patterns and greater unemployment, even after the common traits of truants – a disadvantaged background and low attainment – are accounted for (Hibbet, Fogelman and Manor (1990:33-34). Thus, the disadvantages faced by refugee students who *stay* at school are multiplied for those who *absent* themselves on a regular basis. Parents and teachers are concerned that Somali students find school so difficult that they either remain there but never achieve any official qualifications or give up and drop out of school. A Somali mother who refers to Somali adolescents as "losers", obviously believes that they have little future in New Zealand.

A seventeen-year-old boy emphasises that students are dropping out because of the difficulties they have in adapting to school in New Zealand:

.... I mean guys the same age as us, they just, looking for a job and you tell them 'Why you don't go to school?' and they say, 'Very hard, very hard'.

Even those who remain at school tend to just or almost pass School Certificate subjects and often leave with no qualifications. According to Hopkinson's (1996:11-12) study of Christchurch Somali, some students are

dropping out of secondary school to register as unemployed so that they can qualify for Pasefika Education and Employment Training Organisation (PEETO) courses, which are vocationally based and specifically targeted at refugees. This suggests that secondary schools are not meeting the needs of Somali students. PEETO, in contrast, places great value on the home language and cultural background of the students.

One teacher comments that it is hard for Somali students to get to a level where they have *choices* about their future. Many are starting off so late in terms of literacy learning that they have little chance of achieving the high standard of literacy New Zealand society requires of its citizens. Although she reminds her refugee students to work hard because they are "competing with New Zealanders", she does not really believe they will be able to catch up. Teachers fear that such a situation will result in most of the students perceiving no future except "life on the dole". This prediction may be accurate for Castles et al (1986:40a), who studied patterns of disadvantage in overseas-born Australians and their children, found that education is extremely important in determining success in the labour market. Without a solid education with relevant qualifications, immigrant youth have a high chance of unemployment.

A lack of qualifications is not the only indicator of unemployment that young Somali embody. Youth unemployment is more likely when an individual comes from a lower socio-economic background - particularly if there is unemployment in the family - and from a large family (Blakers 1990:85-87). A survey of employer expectations of young employees in New Zealand indicates that the fundamental skills employers require are basic literacy and numeracy, interpersonal skills and work readiness (McQueen 1992:10). Similar expectations are required in Australia, but are more specifically linked to qualifications, presentation, written expression and legible writing (Blakers 1990:58-59). Clearly, Somali students stand at a huge disadvantage in meeting these expectations, particularly when in competition with native born New Zealanders.

Hence, it is not inappropriate to suggest that without specific assistance which enables them to gain the qualifications and skills required by employers, Somali students have little chance of achieving their goals. Recent research links unemployment with mental health problems in adolescents (Doornenbal 1998:2). My sponsor predicts a situation whereby Somali refugees will suffer "intergenerational poverty", for today's students will experience a similar level of hardship in New Zealand as their parents are currently enduring. The Director of PEETO also indicates that the frustrations of Somali may result in violent outcomes. He claims that Somali youth may easily become Christchurch's gang problem of the future if they are not encouraged into employment or tertiary training (Iosefa 1998b:1).

THE PRACTICES OF EXCLUSION

This seventh chapter has demonstrated that the New Zealand educational culture discourages Somali students from competing with others through systemic biases that privilege the culture of dominant group members. Although the students believe that they are getting a good education, institutional barriers act to restrict the school experience of refugees or exclude them from it altogether. There have been limited attempts in some schools to be inclusive of Somali by creating special classes or providing prayer rooms. Yet, these moves have done little to threaten the entrenched institutional barriers evident in education. ESOL students are thus treated as 'deviant' and continue to be segregated academically from the mainstream. Inadequate funding and policy has resulted in premature and inappropriate mainstreaming, while large classes and poor resources make it difficult for Somali students to compete with their peers.

Within the classroom, interaction between Somali students, teachers and Kiwi students frequently excludes Somali from educational success. As the gatekeepers to knowledge, teachers can alienate students from the educational culture through their attitudes and behaviour. Teachers unconsciously indicate that the attributes of the educational culture are considered 'natural' and any deviation from this is 'abnormal'. Hence, when Somali students transgress the behaviour expected within the educational culture, due to their lack of familiarity with it, the teachers I interviewed attribute such behaviour to dispositional characteristics. This highlights their lack of understanding about the life circumstances or the culturally specific motivations behind Somali conduct. By assuming that such students have low intelligence or are lazy, some teachers actively try to lower their educational and occupational sights into more 'realistic' subject and career options (see Jones 1991:170). A lack of inclusion of Somali culture and needs at either the institutional or classroom level communicates to Somali students that they do not belong in the educational setting. Thus, Somali students are beginning to realise that their own culture is of no value in education, situating them uncomfortably between the extremes of giving up or giving in.

Real institutional and classroom inclusion of sub-dominant cultural norms and values would not only threaten teacher security, but also that of dominant group students, parents and educational staff. Teachers have already experienced resistance and censure for the differential treatment of Somali students. For example, dominant group students resisted school acceptance of Somali girls being allowed to wear mufti because school uniforms were not adequately modest, seeing this as a case of unfair, preferential treatment. In times of limited funding and scarce resources, teachers believe that to 'give in' to refugees – such as providing them with the one-on-one instruction they desire – other NESB or dominant group students must 'give up' something. Yet, by treating all students equally, regardless of cultural and ethnic

differences, teachers act as an effective filter in reproducing systemic biases and the processes of dominance within our society (Harker 1984:118). This situation is not inevitable. The next chapter deals with the ways in which improvement can be made both for Somali students and their schools.

PART FOUR: JOURNEY'S END

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study is politically motivated, in that I wish to document the experiences of Somali adolescents at school so problematic issues can be identified and resolved. In addressing my third research question, this chapter examines the improvements that would enhance the adaptational process of Somali students and enable schools to be more inclusive of Somali culture and needs. Somali students, parents and educators were asked to offer suggestions for improvement in the interviews that I conducted. Just as Lyon (1992:57) found in his study of Cambodian refugees, there is little overlap in the responses gained from differing groups of participants, but together they provide a powerful cocktail for potential change.

The students display difficulty imagining what might improve their educational experience. Arriving in New Zealand with few expectations, they accept school as they find it and show surprise at my suggestion that it could be altered. Somali parents have greater insight and are able to go beyond the individual situation to generalise across Somali communities but the recommendations that they and the students offer are mainly short-term and specific to the Somali situation. Teachers are more familiar with policy and practices utilised outside of New Zealand and have many suggestions for improvement. However, they regard the majority of these as 'ideals' that hold the potential to make a real difference but are unlikely to eventuate. Their recommendations most often involve the wider Non-English-Speaking Background (NESB) student group, rather than just Somali.

Obviously not all of the suggestions offered by students, parents and educators are viable or compatible within the current New Zealand context. I have selected some to present as research recommendations, which are identified by an additional, highlighted statement of support. These recommendations have been chosen both for their ability to meet the immediate and urgent needs of Somali students at school, as well as the long-term requirements of refugee students in general. I have attempted to be 'realistic' by considering which improvements might be successfully implemented in the present context. It is important to note that a recent document produced by the Education Sub-Group of the Refugee and New Migrant Forum (O'Connor 1998b) makes similar suggestions concerning provision for

refugee needs. As the members of this group are experienced education professionals who have worked with refugees for many years, this parallel adds further weight to the suggestions made. Nevertheless, it is clear that the recommendations present a significant challenge to central government, as well as the schools and teachers who provide educational services to Somali students.

SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS

By 'short-term improvements' I refer to changes that can be made rapidly to improve the educational experience of Somali students who are *currently* at school. Such improvements focus specifically on the needs of Somali students.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR IN-SERVICE EDUCATORS

Somali students state that teachers, particularly those in the mainstream, lack knowledge about their background and teachers verify this claim. All educators, not only English-as-a-Second-Language (ESOL) teachers, should be provided with information about refugee needs, Somali culture and the Islam religion, via written documentation and on-going professional development seminars. The School Advisor for New Settlers and Multicultural Education recommends that the 'Learning through Language' programme, which gives mainstream teachers techniques to develop language skills through the curriculum, should also be compulsory for all teachers. In Christchurch only ten schools in 1998 received this training and five more are to be targeted in 1999. In addition, the School Advisor promotes strengthening the relationship between ESOL and mainstream teachers, so both can learn to help each other concerning issues related to refugees. The position that she holds and those like it across the country need to be maintained for this to be achieved.

I believe that professional development for educators should be based on cultural safety, a concept that has developed out of the training of nurses in New Zealand. As service providers to a wide variety of cultural groups, teachers should be open minded and flexible in their attitudes towards people who are different from themselves and avoid blaming the victims of historical and social processes for their current plight. Teachers need to examine the biases, realities and attitudes that they bring to their teaching practice (Ramsden 1995:9). Thus, teachers would be encouraged to assume that their attitudes and behaviour are 'exotic', rather than 'normal' to students. Cultural safety in education would go beyond cultural awareness by offering students the power to determine if they feel *safe* in the educational context, no matter how culturally aware their teachers may consider themselves (Ramsden 1995:8). In this way,

dominant group teachers who are unable to gain indepth knowledge of each ethnic group they teach can still acknowledge that their way of thinking and acting reflects their own cultural background and positioning of power. I see increased awareness and knowledge within educators as the key to their acceptance of and support for any other improvements to the school experience of Somali students.

Research Recommendation #1: Information about refugee needs, Somali culture and the Muslim religion should be published and distributed to educators around New Zealand. Professional development courses dealing with Somali and refugee issues, as well as teaching the concept of cultural safety, should ideally be compulsory for teachers at all levels.

INCREASED LIASON BETWEEN SOMALI FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS

It is clear that both schools and Somali families would benefit from increased, positive liaison with each other, as there is considerable misunderstanding between Somali and educators. One teacher believes that regular Somali parent-school meetings should be established and used to discuss the needs of students, the expectations of parents and the school's role and organisation. However, educators do not have the time to coordinate this increased contact and language difficulties make interpreters necessary. The same teacher suggests that Refugee Resettlement Support (RRS) may be able to facilitate such a process of consultation. RRS might also be useful in helping to establish a protocol for contacting parents, perhaps by suggesting a nominated interpreter whom schools can call in the first instance.

Furthermore, Somali parents should be encouraged to take part in school activities on a regular basis. While International Nights or Days are a good way of promoting cultural diversity, they are merely cultural tourism, reinforcing the idea of culture as exotic and outside standard school structures (Griffiths 1995:43-45). The presence of Somali parents in normalised situations, such as at sports days or helping in the library, may act to diminish this 'othered' understanding of Somali culture. One Head of ESOL also suggests that if Somali parents came to sit with their children in class on a routine basis, Somali students might feel more motivated to study hard and parents would learn more about New Zealand schools. Increased communication between Somali and schools would certainly aid the awareness of educators. However, it is possible that educators may resist the need for increased communication without first gaining more knowledge of Somali.

Research Recommendation #2: A regular parent-school forum should be established with the aid of Refugee Resettlement Support to enhance liaison between the Somali and school communities. This forum could be used to discuss the ways in which Somali parents may better included within school activities.

REINSTATEMENT OF DISCRETIONARY FUNDING FOR THE INTENSIVE ENGLISH CENTRE

The Intensive English Centre is a valuable asset to Christchurch, with one school principal describing it as "crucial, absolutely crucial". A Somali boy notes that the basic survival information provided by the Centre when he first arrived was particularly beneficial. The ability of the Intensive teachers to monitor students in all subject areas is also regarded as a positive feature. Partial mainstreaming appears to work well at the Centre because the ESOL teachers have been able to liaise with mainstream teachers and keep an eye on student progress. Syme's (1995:19;23-26) study comparing Asian immigrant students in Christchurch and Auckland found that, while there was little difference in terms of English language development, Christchurch students from Intensive classes appeared happier and more secure than mainstreamed Auckland students. It is possible that the Intensive class helps students to overcome culture shock, making integration into the mainstream less of a problem. Self-esteem may be enhanced due to the solidarity gained from being with other students in the same situation, particularly if they are from the same ethnic group. It is also interesting to point out that the criticism often made of intensive programmes – that they inhibit interaction with host country students – was invalid in Syme's (1995:27) study, as Auckland students had no more success at making Kiwi friends than those in Christchurch.

In stating that Intensive classes should continue, teachers note that funding is still required for other schools who provide ESOL support within the mainstream. They also stress that the Centre is not without flaws. An ESOL lecturer is angry that demand for the Centre's classes often forces students through the three levels of instruction and out into the mainstream within a few months, even if they are not linguistically or academically ready. These sudden transitions from ESOL to mainstream were noted as problematic in chapter six. In addition, classes at the Centre are not designed to cater for students who have low literacy in their own language and little experience of education.

Nevertheless, students and teachers agree that the Centre best meets the needs of refugee students at present. In mid-1998 the Ministry of Education ceased the discretionary funding that paid for the transportation of Somali students to the Centre, compelling many families to send their children to a local school with little ESOL support. Such funding is allocated only for a few months when a large group of refugee students arrive in Christchurch at one time. In addition, the Ministry no longer resources the school's Somali teacher aide and this position is currently under review. Clearly, continued discretionary funding for both arrangements is required to address the continuing, long-term needs of Somali and other refugee students in the education system.

Research Recommendation #3: Discretionary funding for the Intensive English Centre should be reinstated so that refugee students can continue to have a real choice in opting for the educational agency which best suits their needs.

SUBJECT SUPPORT FOR SOMALI STUDENTS

In the past, large groups of refugees arriving in the Christchurch at one time have also been offered short-term orientation programmes, funded by the Ministry of Education and run by the Intensive English Centre and resettlement agencies. The Centre and two other schools have at different times organised targeted classes and found them very successful. One ESOL teacher who was involved in a Somali orientation class notes: "Last year there were [no problems] They were in their own class, I could deal with their needs, very directly, it was the perfect situation". However, due to having only a small number of Somali students, the schools found it hard to justify the cost of a dedicated teacher and the classes lasted for only one or two school terms. Somali students were then placed into regular ESOL or mainstream classes.

Some teachers, the three parents I spoke to and a small number of students believe that such courses should be maintained over a longer period of time. Students would be able to gain not only the linguistic knowledge they require for successful mainstreaming, but also the academic and conceptual knowledge with which so many are having difficulty. An ESOL/Technology teacher states that this would remove a number of obstacles that inhibit student learning and adaptation:

You are always going to have language as a barrier to learning English, but by adding all those other barriers, the interaction skills, the simply accepting that we work in groups at school here ... having a different book for everything ... if you could do even a three-month or six-month course that taught students how to organise their work, how to highlight key words

The proponents of such classes believe that the specific cultural and learning needs of Somali students can be met only through targeted instruction for Somali. Yet, one ESOL teacher suggests that it is not only for the sake of Somali students that classes of this kind are crucial:

I personally believe that it is up to the government to say, that this is a unique group of people to identify that this [New Zealand] culture is so foreign to these people, that the background they have is so vastly different to our own because we are disadvantaging the students who are already at school by having to spend so much time, managing these kids.

It appears, therefore, that targeted classes would be beneficial to all parties and would constitute an active inclusion of Somali needs within the institutional structures of Christchurch schools.

However, most of the Somali students do not consider a targeted course necessary for them at this stage of their school careers. They would prefer more specialised support in all school subjects. The students cannot understand the discrepancy that "you get help with English, but you don't get help with your Maths and Science", particularly when they find the latter subjects more difficult than ESOL. This is because they are unfamiliar with the complicated, subject-specific language and knowledge required, even when they demonstrate a high level of communicative ability in the English language.

One school provides refugee students with in-class support from a teacher aide (who is neither trained in ESOL nor bilingual) in Mathematics and Science classes once a week. The students who have benefited from this scheme find it very useful but add that they also need extra support outside of class, where they often realise that they do not understand their school work. Some students already attend lunch time study sessions run by Mathematics or Science teachers but believe that assistance in all subjects would be beneficial, even if it were only an hour or two a week. Parents agree that Somali students need this assistance, as a father notes:

.... they don't even know how to study, it's such a difference, they need to know something, I don't know, that better than they give. Special teachers, special help.

However, a Somali mother suggests that lunch time is not suitable for such instruction. She believes that many students miss the lunch time classes because they require a break from study and a chance to relax with their friends during the day. An eighteen-year-old boy agrees that "your mind needs rest" at lunch time. The mother believes that after-school classes, like those successfully run by Refugee Resettlement Support (RRS), would be the best solution. The funding that RRS has gained for this venture is short-term only, while the need is a continuing one. She and the students believe the classes should be located in and coordinated by the schools, so that they can follow the regular school curriculum. Ministry of Education funding for this would need to be additional to that already allocated and targeted to meet the particular needs of Somali.

The eighteen-year-old male who disliked the lunch time classes prefers the option of one-on-one after-school tuition at home. He states that home-based support is essential because when he does not understand his homework he has no one to ask for assistance:

Yeah, that would be useful! If I had learned the language of this thing, that would be really helpful and first, get a teacher, whatever is hard for you, whatever is Maths or something like that, if I got a tutor and just go over it at night every time that would be much easier.

The majority of Somali families cannot afford the cost of a private tutor, so this support would have to be free of charge. The Christchurch Community ESOL Tutors programme, which provides free home tutors for refugee and immigrants, does not include school students within its sphere. The trained and funded 'mentors' that provide homework and academic help for NESB students in Auckland might prove suitable as a model.

Research Recommendation #4: Additional subject support should be provided for Somali students through after-school classes. These could be conducted at secondary schools by tutors who are able to liaise with the students' regular teachers, ensuring that relevant academic and conceptual knowledge is learned.

PEER TUTORING

The Somali students I interviewed have no formal experience of peer tutoring but respond enthusiastically to this concept. A sixteen-year-old girl believes that this would work best by pairing each Somali student with a Kiwi peer in the classroom. A similar situation has already proved supportive informally:

I sit in my Science class with this really intelligent girl, she's quite good at Science, and she always helps me around. It's good to sit with somebody who's clever than you.

It has been noted that schools have no formal system for the exchange of cultural information. While peer tutoring schemes explicitly aim to enhance the academic adaptation of refugee students, they can also provide an opportunity for cultural exchange. Having a peer tutor could be highly beneficial for Somali students, as they would have a regular opportunity to interact positively with Kiwi students.

Local research offers evidence of this fact. Lyon (1992:153) found that a 'buddy system' helped academic adaptation, but was less effective in enhancing cultural adaptation. However, Glynn's (1992:15) refugee participants, who were encouraged to interact with New Zealand students by being paired with a study partner in the classroom, showed signs of improvement in adapting culturally. According to Chai (1990:4-24), there is also considerable international data indicating the success of peer tutoring in relation to refugee adaptation. I believe such a scheme could additionally raise the awareness of Kiwi students to Somali, their culture and the difficulties that they have in school. It is hoped that this would encourage

greater tolerance towards Somali students and lessen resistance when schools attempt to be institutionally inclusive of Somali needs.

Research Recommendation #5: A regular peer tutoring scheme should be organised at secondary schools to encourage positive interaction between Somali (and possibly other refugee) students and their Kiwi peers.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

There is a need for a bilingual vocational guidance counsellor to bridge the lines of communication between teachers and parents about the hopes Somali students have for the future. This counsellor would be able to provide information to parents concerning the difficulties that Somali students may face in trying to gain qualifications and achieve their goals of tertiary education. The School Advisor notes that this knowledge might help to reduce the anger and frustration Somali students feel when they do not achieve their goals. It might also lessen the likelihood of Somali students giving up and dropping out school without making an informed transition into the workplace or further training.

LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS

Many of the improvements that would aid Somali student adaptation to school cannot be accomplished quickly. Some suggestions offered, particularly by teachers, require decisions made at the national level and years of planning and piloting. This does not mean that the proposals should be ignored, for they are crucial to the long-term prosperity of Somali and other refugees in New Zealand. Rather, central government should continue to be lobbied on the increasing urgency for such improvements.

IMPROVED POLICY SPECIFIC TO REFUGEE AND NESB STUDENTS

Educators state that they lack a nationwide policy which can guide them in their responsibilities to refugee and other NESB students. Only one ESOL teacher is sceptical about an increase in policy. She believes that this might produce more confusion, paperwork and stress for teachers, who are already in a "massive information overload". Despite this possibility, the other educators favour policy tailored specifically to meet refugee and NESB student needs. They claim that *any* guiding parameters would be an improvement on the current situation, whereby they are continually "reinventing the wheel" on an individual basis.

A national policy would be inevitably general to incorporate the differing needs and issues that schools encounter. Educators realise this fact, yet still believe that such policy would enhance uniformity in the educational services offered to NESB students so that their quality would depend less on a school's decile rating or the attributes of particular principals and Board of Trustees. The teachers I spoke to note the importance of long-term policy through which they can gain a sense of stability and continuity. They consider the funding procedure introduced in 1998 as short-term, in that there is guaranteed funding for only three years. In the long-term, they believe New Zealand requires a national policy on languages and a school curriculum specifically for ESOL students.

National Languages Policy

In 1987 Australia introduced a National Languages policy which encourages bilingualism and the maintenance of minority group languages (Castles 1992:556). Under this policy, all new refugees are entitled to 610 hours free ESOL tuition (Altinkaya 1998:4) and in New South Wales, for example, all students in their first year of high school are provided with 100 hours of study in their home language (Iredale 1997:248). The educators I spoke to were emphatic that New Zealand should establish a similar National Languages policy. This would set out the needs of different ethnic groups and identify ways in which these could be met. The policy would also outline programmes to maintain ethnic first languages, which currently take place outside school hours, receive no State funding and are consequently run on a very small scale (New Zealand Council for Educational Research 1987:115). Guidelines for the establishment of a national interpreting and translation service would need to be included, making possible the provision of interpreters in schools.

ESOL teachers believe that would enjoy greater job security and the provision of ESOL programmes would be more stable if the National Languages policy allocated new immigrants a set number of hours for ESOL instruction and if funding for this were guaranteed long-term. While the policy would explicitly focus on language, Waite (1992b:10), who authored a discussion document on the National Languages policy, emphasises that it would also meet a variety of other NESB student needs. Language, he claims, can:

... empower students to deal with their world with confidence, to use their oral skills to develop and maintain their identity, to establish relationships with other people, to learn about the world, gain information and advice, to inform and advise others, to participate in recreational activities and to appreciate their own and others' cultural heritage.

Tan (1995:119) stresses that cultural and ethnic language learning can also reduce the intergenerational conflict and language barriers between some refugee adolescents and adults. Clearly, a policy such as this would have beneficial effects for the Somali students attempting to fit in at school and would offer educational institutions ways in which to be inclusive of cultural diversity.

However, despite the fact that New Zealand has agreed to uphold its citizens' community languages under Article 27 of the International Law International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Waite 1992a:14), a National Languages policy has not yet been formulated. ESOL teachers nationwide have spent over ten years lobbying for such a policy and in a 1987 briefing paper to the incoming Minister of Education, the former Department of Education (1987:6) considered the establishment of a National language policy to be one of most urgent tasks of that time. Although the Waite (1992a&b) report was commissioned by the Ministry of Education, an ESOL Lecturer states: "That report has become, I call it a doorstep there isn't any policy on anything. Okay? We are still groping around, saying we need a language policy". She concedes that the policy may need to concentrate on only one or two ethnic groups to begin with and that it will take a long time to cover all those represented in New Zealand. Yet, she believes this would be an improvement upon what exists at the moment, which is "just a lot of talk". The frustration that educators feel over this issue is evident.

Research Recommendation #6: Lobbying for a National Languages Policy must continue. This policy should include measures to address the specific needs of refugees by allocating refugees a greater number of hours for free ESOL instruction than other new immigrants.

ESOL Curriculum

The teachers I interviewed also desire a comprehensive, national curriculum for the teaching and learning of ESOL. At present, ESOL comes under the *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education 1994) framework. The meagre statement made there about ESOL offers neither guidance as to what should be taught and how, nor detail on the qualifications that can be achieved by studying ESOL. The different levels of ability set out concentrate only on communication skills in language, rather than academic competence. Discussion in chapter six highlighted this as one reason why Somali students are often prematurely mainstreamed. Unit standards are currently in draft for ESOL students above Sixth Form level, but younger NESB students are ignored. Yet, they also find it very difficult to achieve the standards established in the regular English curriculum.

Clearly, the lack of detail on ESOL within the general English curriculum limits the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education 1993:6) goal stating that "the individual student is at the

centre of all teaching and learning". When there is no curriculum specific to NESB students, ESOL teachers each have to individually plan their own curriculum. While theoretically allowing the needs of particular NESB students to be addressed classroom-by-classroom, my research indicates that this is difficult to achieve because of time and funding constraints, a lack of appropriate knowledge held by teachers and an educational culture that does not welcome the differential treatment of students. All of the teachers I interviewed believe an ESOL curriculum would be beneficial, removing much of the "guess work" out of teaching and assessment. By establishing ESOL as a subject worthy of a curriculum in its own right, it might also enhance the status of ESOL programmes and the teachers who commonly complain that ESOL is viewed as a second-class 'add-on'.

Research Recommendation #7: A curriculum should be introduced at all levels of learning which specifically addresses the needs of new ESOL learners and provides guidelines as to how ESOL should be taught.

Counselling

My sponsor and a small number of educators note that assistance for Somali students needs to go beyond their language needs. For example, it appears that some students are having emotional difficulties due to past or present traumatic circumstances. The 1989 Education Act (New Zealand Government 1996:39) states that school principals are responsible for ensuring students receive "good guidance and counselling". All schools have at least one designated school counsellor and teachers are able to refer Somali students directly to this person. However, the school counsellor I interviewed emphasises that she and her colleagues are also ignorant about Somali needs and cultures. This makes even the initiation of counselling problematic, particularly when Somali are unused to support of this kind coming from outside of their family. Specialist Education Services (SES) are able to provide behaviour management assistance, specialist educational therapies and counselling for more serious cases, including refugee students who have been severely traumatised in the past. Yet, SES are oversubscribed and charge fees for their assistance. The need for vocational guidance that is sensitive to Somali and other refugee student circumstances and desires has already been mentioned.

LONG-TERM, ADEQUATE FUNDING

Fourteen schools in New Zealand, chosen for their 'good practices' in relation to NESB students by Kennedy and Dewar (1997:7), were unanimous in claiming that more support is necessary for NESB students to succeed in the New Zealand education system. Insufficient government allocated resources

were said to be placing severe restrictions on the capabilities of schools to meet NESB needs (Kennedy and Dewar 1997:2). The new funding procedure described in chapter three was the Ministry's attempt to alleviate this situation, yet the teachers I spoke to still consider insufficient funding an issue for complaint. Teachers would like to see an increase in the amount given for each student so that the funding can be used to employ ESOL and bilingual teachers, teacher aides and interpreters for NESB students.

They also wish for funding that more realistically reflects the length of time it takes to gain the academic and conceptual knowledge required for senior level school. Teachers note that once students reach a basic level of conversational English they are no longer eligible for funding, yet they still require ESOL assistance. Many of the teachers are "green with envy" of the system in Australia, whereby each NESB student is allocated free ESOL instruction for a set number of hours. However, one Head of ESOL suggests that the funding needs to be *individualised*, so that it can be maintained until a student gains academic fluency. She adds that a comprehensive, independent assessment could be completed once a year, to determine if funding should continue. This would provide more stability in terms of job security, for teachers note that as long as funding remains tied to the number of eligible students at each school, they have no protection from unreliable funding. Until the National Languages policy is developed, NESB funding should certainly be more reliable and more realistic regarding the amount of time it takes to learn a new language.

It is interesting to note that only two students mention extra funding as providing potential benefits for Somali students. They envisage that this would allow for smaller classes in which they would be able to receive increased individual or small group attention. It is unlikely that students are aware of the funding procedures for NESB and refugee students and that schools often find it difficult to adequately resource ESOL and other school programmes. In fact, one student notes that he was surprised and pleased to find that ESOL was free in New Zealand, as students were charged for language tuition in Somalia and transit countries.

Research Recommendation #8: Increased, long-term funding for refugee and NESB students is required. The extra grant for quota refugee students should be extended to refugees who have immigrated to New Zealand under asylum and family reunification criteria and should be available to all refugee students for three years.

REFUGEE ORIENTATION CENTRE

Most students and teachers believe that there needs to be a true orientation programme for all refugee students. This is envisaged as a kind of "halfway house". Refugee students would be supported as they deal with the trauma of the refugee experience and of losing family members, while also undergoing

an assessment of the level and type of education they have received previously. In addition, refugee students would be given information about everyday life in New Zealand and taught the concepts of learning upon which the New Zealand education system is based. Instruction in the English language would include subject-specific language and knowledge. Counselling services and vocational guidance would also be available.

Most of the teachers I interviewed stress that the needs of refugees should be met *before* they enter mainstream classrooms. An ESOL/Technology teacher describes how this might be accomplished:

If they are coming straight into secondary school you would want them to be arriving here having done more than one course – maybe it's going to take two years – having met some minimum requirement of communication skills, behavioural skills, learning skills, and vocabulary is a huge one Then when they arrive here, they are able to fit into secondary school – not be a Kiwi student, because we're all different - but to have those things which will enable them to survive here in a positive way. Rather than making secondary school a negative experience from Day One.

Many educators agree with this teacher's statement, particularly in relation to set criteria being met before refugee students could move into a regular secondary school. Such criteria would focus not only on English linguistic knowledge, but also academic, conceptual and organisational skills. A Head of ESOL suggests that once students have reached this level, they should be mainstreamed gradually, beginning with only an hour or two each day. Thus, students would be exposed to regular secondary school life before they had to survive in that environment. While I believe that the Refugee Orientation Centre would work most successfully as an extension of the Intensive English Centre, collaboration with Pasefika Education and Employment Training Organisation (PEETO) would be highly beneficial. Although the latter currently deals with adult students, the staff there have considerable experience dealing with refugee issues and are knowledgeable of Somali needs and culture. The Education Sub-Committee of the Refugee and New Migrant Forum promotes the concept of a 'One Stop Shop' where all local resettlement agencies could together meet the needs of refugees and immigrants of any age (O'Connor 1998b:10). If such a place were instituted, it might well incorporate the ideas for the Refugee Orientation Centre suggested by my participants.

Research Recommendation #9: A Refugee Orientation Centre should be established, collaboratively run by the Intensive English Centre and PEETO.

LACK OF SUITABLE RESOURCES

Schools state that there is a scarcity of resources suitable for Somali adolescents. The availability of Somali-English dictionaries in New Zealand is a major issue. Some teachers have asked students with relatives in the United States to send dictionaries, because they are virtually impossible to obtain in this country. Finding other resources in Somali is even more difficult, for Somalia does not produce language material to learn English. Due to the limited availability of such resources, teachers suggest that it may be more appropriate to produce materials and resources locally. These would be bilingual or at least reflect Somali life in New Zealand.

PARTNERSHIP TEACHING

A small number of students and teachers suggest that NESB students who have initially attended the Intensive English Centre should be placed in a mainstream class where partnership teaching is practised. Thus, a teacher concentrating on the curriculum content and another attending to NESB student language needs would share the teaching of a class together. Teachers indicate that ideally the latter would be a bilingual teacher who could provide subject support and mentorship. Somali students disagree, preferring an ESOL teacher to take this position. This situation is considered to be a "dream world" by teachers and they cannot imagine a time where there would be enough funding to seriously attempt partnership teaching in New Zealand.

BILINGUAL TEACHERS

Teachers believe that if bilingual teachers were trained in New Zealand they might successfully support refugee students, for they would understand both the language and the experiences of students. It is difficult to accurately predict the success of bilingual teachers in New Zealand due to their scarcity. An external review commissioned by the Ministry of Education (Gubbay and Cogill 1988:6) recommends that bilingual teachers need not be required to have formal linguistic-based paper qualifications. The knowledge and expertise gained from the experience of being a refugee or immigrant and a native speaker are viewed as equivalent qualifications. Christchurch teachers stress, however, that bilingual teachers will be unable to fully assist the students if they have not been trained in the conceptual, pedagogical and curricular knowledge required for the New Zealand context. They do recognise that current regulations, which require bilingual teachers to be registered teachers and have ESOL qualifications, are particularly strict and question whether these could be relaxed to encourage more bilingual teachers to train. Interestingly, Somali

students are adamantly against bilingual teachers and aides. The students feel that they would supply answers and difficult words in Somali, making school "too easy".

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING FOR PRE-SERVICE EDUCATORS

The College of Education in Christchurch offers a brief, optional course which deals with multicultural, immigrant and refugee issues. The ESOL Lecturer I interviewed states that, unlike other Colleges of Education in New Zealand, the Christchurch establishment does not require secondary school teacher trainees to complete this course and she would like it to become compulsory for all new teachers. I believe, however, that such issues should not be dealt with as an 'add-on' subject but considered central to all training that student teachers receive. A distinction should be made between the requirements of refugees and of other immigrant students and ESOL teachers make it clear that their training needs to go beyond promoting 'communicative' learning. Thus, they should also know how to aid student learning of academic language and conceptual knowledge, as well as conversational English. It would be beneficial if secondary school ESOL teachers were trained to teach basic literacy, so that refugees with a broken education do not have to rely on luck to find a teacher who has this skill. However, if the Refugee Orientation Centre were established this suggestion would be less urgent.

Research Recommendation #10: Refugee issues should be included within the compulsory training of teachers.

REFUGEE AND IMMIGRATION AND RESETTLEMENT POLICY

Many of the educators and all of the Somali parents state that real improvement will not be made in the lives of Somali students unless change also occurs outside of the education system. They suggest that there needs to be far greater consultation between the governmental agencies that accept refugees into New Zealand and the non-governmental agencies that support their resettlement. For example, teachers commonly find that central government, through the New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS), has provided refugees and other immigrants with inadequate or inaccurate information about life in this country, particularly in relation to the education system. This creates frustration for both refugees and teachers.

All those who spoke about immigration and resettlement issues were critical of New Zealand's lack of a nationwide, State-funded resettlement policy and programme. The course offered to quota refugees at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre is considered to be woefully insufficient. The ESOL lecturer I interviewed has been involved in refugee advocacy for many years and strongly believes that fewer

refugees should be accepted under the quota system and funding saved from this should be invested into a comprehensive resettlement programme. She states:

Even if we only bring in one hundred, but we do it *well*, so that they now become full-fledged citizens of New Zealand, we *can* look up to the rest of the world and say, 'Look, I didn't bring many but look what I did with them'.

This is preferable, the ESOL lecturer indicates, to placing another 750 refugees on the "rubbish heap". However, she does note that her position on this issue differs considerably from that of refugee families. She suggests that, while they are disillusioned about the lack of central government support, resettled refugees still wish for friends and family remaining in camps or home countries to be accepted into New Zealand. Thus, they would resist any proposal to further reduce the quota.

A completely State-run resettlement programme is unlikely in the present political and economic climate. However, specific central government policy relating to refugee resettlement, which takes into account the rights and freedoms guaranteed in the United Nations Convention, is vital. A nationally based coordinating agency would provide a sense of cohesion in resettlement across the country and establish a protocol for regular, long-term funding which would enable non-governmental resettlement agencies to continue their present work without wasting valuable time on fundraising. A formal tracking system could then be implemented to monitor the progress of refugees, providing more detail of their needs and circumstances after they have arrived in New Zealand (Altinkaya 1998:4). O'Connor (1998b:5) suggests that a working party be established to advise central government on such a policy, for it would need to emerge from consultation between non-governmental agencies, government departments and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees representative in New Zealand. The ways in which government departments, for instance Work and Income New Zealand, would be expected to meet their refugee client needs should also be included in this policy.

Research Recommendation #11: A nation-wide policy on refugee resettlement should be established with adequate funding provided so that the real needs of refugees can be met.

THE CHALLENGE

By allowing my participants to state their own opinions about how the experience of Somali students at school might be improved, this chapter has offered students, parents and educators the voice of authority. I believe that those at the 'coal-face' are best able to provide solutions for the problematic issues

they encounter each day and have consequently based my recommendations on their comments. In general, Somali students and parents have suggested improvements that can be adopted quickly, such as peer tutoring, professional development training for educators and subject support for Somali students. The suggestions for long-term improvement, in particular the formulation of policy and the establishment of a Refugee Orientation Centre, come mainly from teachers.

Although I have selected only the improvements most urgently required, central government and educational institutions are likely to consider these unrealistic. This is not because the changes are unnecessary, for the school experience of Somali students would be greatly enhanced through their implementation. Rather, frequent underfunding has created a situation whereby competition for scarce resources is a daily reality for educational institutions and non-governmental agencies. The primacy of biculturalism over multiculturalism makes it easy to argue that Somali are only a small and relatively recent group whose needs must wait in line behind other ethnic minorities, particularly Maori. Finally, the recommendations made here represent a major challenge to the dominant discourses in this country, which continue to be successfully defended through the systemic biases evident in our national institutions.

9 RESEARCH THEMES

It is clear that both Somali students and schools are in a process of adaptation resulting from the intercultural struggle that is occurring in Christchurch schools. Several themes have emerged from discussion relating to this argument and they are drawn together in this final chapter. First, I address my fourth research question, which asked whether Somali adolescents can be considered an exemplar for refugee adolescents as a whole. I conclude that Somali students do share many characteristics with refugees in general and that similar factors enhance or diminish their educational adaptation. However, it is noted that the variables of adolescence, gender, religion and socio-economic status appear to be important influences upon the Somali student educational adaptation. This chapter also focuses on the ambiguity over equity issues that is evident in teacher attitudes and actions and, I believe, results from the anomalous positioning of teachers within a multitude of competing policy discourses. In addition, a final discussion concerning systemic bias and ethnocultural hegemony considers the extent to which they are evident in Christchurch schools. To complete this study I revisit the four research questions set out in the introduction and summarise the findings of each pivotal area of inquiry.

SOMALI STUDENTS AS AN EXEMPLAR FOR REFUGEE ADOLESCENTS

This research originally intended to cover refugee students from a variety of ethnic groups. Although the focus narrowed to concentrate upon Somali students, it is still possible to consider this group as an exemplar for refugee students as a whole. Throughout chapters six and seven I have noted many similarities between Somali and the refugees represented in the literature. The general factors that chapter four indicated as major influences in the educational adaptation of refugees – the previous education, home environment, cultural background of refugees and issues relating to the institutional and classroom context of schools - are evident in the Somali experience. In this way, it is possible to consider the information gathered from this study as useful in understanding the experiences of refugees in general.

Nevertheless, the refugee literature also notes that, while there are many common characteristics affecting the adaptational processes of refugees, other variables play an important part in determining the exact nature of individual experiences. This study has concentrated on one of those variables by focusing

on adolescents who, the literature states, find adaptation particularly difficult. There is evidence that this is the case for Somali students, especially those who have arrived in New Zealand in late adolescence, but they do not fit all of the characteristics outlined as typical for refugees of this age. In addition, although gender, religion and socio-economic status receive little attention in the literature, these attributes appear to be significant variables in Somali student adaptation. It is thus possible to generalise that individual factors affect the Somali adaptational process, just as they influence the adjustment of other refugees. However, when such personal or group attributes are taken into account, there are differences between the Somali experience and the refugee literature in general. This may reflect the fact that most of the literature is based on the experiences of Southeast Asian refugees, emphasising the importance of recognising cultural background as a significant variable in the adaptation process.

ADOLESCENCE

Nguyen (1989:73) suggests that adolescents find the adaptation process especially difficult, due to their developmental stage, the intergenerational conflict they commonly experience and their increased chance of marginalisation. These particular difficulties are not clear cut in the case of Somali adolescents, but there is some indication that they do find educational adaptation more problematic than their younger counterparts. In assessing the developmental stage of adolescence, Ho (1995:30) stresses the importance of adolescents retaining a sense of group identity with their family and home culture, while also developing a personal identity. The Somali students I interviewed appear to maintain a strong group identity, being well-integrated into their families and the Somali communities. Most of their friends are Somali and virtually all of their spare time is spent with family or other Somali people. The girls wear the modest clothing deemed appropriate by their religion and the boys attend the Mosque each week. The students identify strongly with Somali religious and cultural beliefs of their own accord, rather than just in obedience to their parents' wishes. Maintaining a group identity does not appear to be problematic for these students.

There is some evidence that a small number of other Somali adolescents have greater difficulty and are involved in practices deemed inappropriate by their communities, such as drinking alcohol. In addition, students, teachers and resettlement workers share the belief that when younger Somali reach adolescence they will find it more difficult to identify with their group because they are likely to be less integrated into Somali life. This correlates with Thien and Malapert's (1988:268) view that adolescents have an advantage over younger children when forming their identity, because they usually have specific memories of their home country. However, while some of the younger students I interviewed do not remember a great deal about Somalia, all express an overwhelming desire to return there, suggesting that

strong ties to their home country are still evident. They are emphatic that they do not feel like New Zealanders.

Perhaps as a result of their continuing identification with Somali as a group, the students interviewed for this study do not find intergenerational conflict a major issue. Rosenthal (1984:73) states that those who try to reject their home culture are more likely to experience intergenerational conflict. Anecdotal reports appear to support this hypothesis, for students, teachers and my sponsor tell of cases whereby Somali students have ignored the prohibitions of Islam and created considerable conflict within their families. Thus, girls who have adopted Western dress and both male and female Somali who have taken up smoking or drinking alcohol have experienced the intergenerational conflict discussed in the literature. The students that I have spoken to, however, find this less of an issue than those that they describe. As mentioned in chapter six, this may be due to the deference that Somali children are expected to show to their parents, which results in differences of opinion being rare or at least not discussed in public.

The literature also suggests that adolescents have an enhanced chance of being marginalised from both their home culture and that of their host society. It is impossible to determine from this small study whether Somali adolescents as a whole are marginalised. While those who are regular truants or have dropped out of school may be considered such, I did not talk to any of these students myself. The conceptualisation of school as a site of intercultural struggle indicates that the Somali and New Zealand cultures are in direct confrontation. The educational culture rewards assimilation to the norms, priorities and ways of learning upon which it is based and Somali students have complied to some of these demands for conformity to avoid social closure from qualifications and future occupational aspirations. Yet, they strongly resist relinquishing their own cultural identity and continue to be well-integrated into the religious and cultural aspects of the Somali communities.

Despite this resistance to assimilation, I do not believe that Somali students have accomplished Berry's (1988:101-102) most favoured outcome, integration. They experience considerable discomfort as they try to play off the conflicting requirements of their own culture and the educational culture. They cannot be said to be what Cordell (1994:64) calls 'boundary spanners', individuals who are able to move between cultures easily. Many are having great difficulty adapting educationally, even as they comply with aspects of the educational culture. Hence, although most Somali students are staying at school, attending after-school classes and participating in national examinations and procedures, they do not achieve according to the educational culture's definition of success. To continue working through the adaptational outcomes that Berry (1988:101-102) outlines, it is also impossible to consider Somali students as separated,

for while they are unwilling to relinquish key aspects of their culture, they do not reject that which they find in New Zealand schools. It is recognised that a familiarity with the educational culture is a necessary tool for achieving their educational goals. Hence, Somali students are neither marginalised, integrated, separated, nor assimilated. They appear to be positioned rather uncomfortably and perhaps a little precariously between two different worldviews, yet situated there nonetheless. Only time will tell if this leads to integration in the future.

This study has involved adolescent refugees alone, so it is difficult to make any conclusions about the relative ease or dis-ease with which they adapt in comparison to other age groups. However, my sample of Somali students did include two younger girls who started their education in New Zealand at primary school. There is a notable difference between their attitudes and those of older Somali students. Although the younger girls do admit to some difficulties at school, they are quite dismissive of these and do not consider them a major problem. Both girls were interviewed with their eighteen-year-old sisters. Listening to the younger and older students in each interview, it became clear that the latter are experiencing considerably more difficulty at school, regardless of the fact that they have been in New Zealand the same length of time and come from similar backgrounds due to their familial relationship. It is difficult to generalise from just two cases and it must be remembered that one of the Somali mothers describes a boy who started school in New Zealand at age eighteen as the most successful Somali student she knows. While other variables are clearly involved, there is some indication that Somali students who begin school in New Zealand at the primary school level may have fewer problems fitting in than those who begin at the secondary level.

GENDER

Refugee literature tends to no more than briefly mention gender differences in relation to educational adaptation. Consequently, I did not anticipate that gender would be a significant variable in this research and was surprised to find that it appears to have a strong effect on the adaptational process of Somali. As Muslim custom requires girls to lead more restricted lives and practice greater obedience than boys, the former appear to be studying harder and spending more time in school. Although the girls are not achieving great success, simply being in school enhances their likelihood of educational adaptation, particularly in the academic sphere. However, Somali girls find it difficult to interact with Kiwi students, both male and female, and to participate in certain aspects of school, such as sport. This appears to affect their cultural adaptation. The modest clothing that the girls wear acts as a marker of the cultural disparity between Somali and Kiwi students and is a barrier to positive interaction. Their voluntary exclusion from

sporting activities in coeducational schools and camps emphasises the division between Somali girls and their non-Somali peers.

Boys on the other hand, are able to interact with Kiwi students more readily and have adopted sport and other aspects of the educational culture in New Zealand without difficulty. They wear Western clothes and are not monitored as closely as the girls. Consequently, they have greater freedom to interact with Kiwi peers without the external markers of Somali culture acting as a boundary. Nevertheless, these facts result in Somali boys having more opportunity to reject their home culture, enhancing the probability of cultural confusion and intergenerational conflict. Boys also appear more inclined to behave in an anti-social manner, truant and drop out of school. The greater contact they have had with the New Zealand culture might, therefore, diminish the chance of successful educational adaptation for Somali boys. Thus, the gender variable may be considered a double-edged sword.

RELIGION

The Islamic faith is a major aspect of the Somali students' cultural script and has a profound effect on their ability to adapt to school in New Zealand. Throughout this thesis I have included religion as part of the Somali culture, yet in many ways Islam *is* Somali culture, for it dominates the roles, rituals and rites of Somali people. With the exception of Beaglehole's (1990) work on Jewish refugees, the literature tends to offer only a passing mention of the religious beliefs of refugees. In the case of Somali students, religion is a key variable in their adaptational process. Rituals of prayer disrupt academic instruction and assessment. Islam also sets many physical, moral and social boundaries that make it hard for Somali to fit in at school and embrace opportunities that education in New Zealand affords them. Gendered differences in adaptation, described above, reflect the roles that Islam prescribes for men and women. Caplan, Choy and Whitmore (1992:22) and Walker-Moffat (1995:113) indicate that the educational adaptation of refugee students may be enhanced by egalitarian gender roles within the home environment. The relatively traditional roles that Somali follow may, therefore, constrain student adjustment.

Yet, at times being Muslim enhances the adaptation process of these students. Their religion encourages a great respect for teachers and parents and discourages actions that would bring shame upon their family. These facts may enhance the likelihood of Somali students studying hard and following the advice their elders offer regarding education. The lives of Somali students are more closely monitored than those of their Kiwi counterparts and they appear to be heavily involved in familial and religious activities. This strong group identity makes it difficult for many Somali students to drop out of school or get into serious trouble. The Islamic belief that suffering is inevitable may encourage students to persevere with

school, even in light of continued failure and difficulty. It is impossible, therefore, to assess the impact of religion upon Somali student adaptation as solely negative or positive. Rather, it is an often ambiguous but exceedingly important variable in the Somali school experience.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

This research did not ask for details of the past or present socio-economic status of Somali participants but it soon became clear from the comments made that most are from middle-to-upper class, well-educated, urban-professional backgrounds. Without a comparative group of Somali who are working-class, less educated and rural, it is difficult to make any definite conclusions of the importance of previous socio-economic status on the adaptation of Somali students. However, the disjuncture between the past and present socio-economic statuses of the students I interviewed does appear to be both a positive and negative factor in their adaptation. Having high educational and occupational aspirations and well-educated parents who provide a supportive study environment may enhance the likelihood for this group of Somali students to succeed educationally, despite their present circumstances. In this way Bourdieu's (1974:41-42) understanding of the 'cultural capital' found in the middle-classes may be relevant across ethnic boundaries. The frustration that they and their parents feel at the drop in status they have endured as a result of the refugee and resettlement experience might also provide resolve to overcome the obstacles that these students face. However, the same frustration may result in adaptation being more difficult to achieve due to feelings of resentment and depression.

The most important aspect of the socio-economic status variable relates to the current poverty in which most Somali refugees in Christchurch live. The Ministry of Education (1998a) states that poverty is a major factor in placing all students 'at-risk' of educational failure. A lack of money affects the adaptation of Somali students, both directly and indirectly. At times school fees and course expenses cannot be paid and some parents work long hours, resulting in little time to support their children's education. Poverty also results in poor quality housing, which may not be conducive to study, and health problems. Thus, the current low socio-economic status of Somali refugees combines with the many other factors relating to the refugee experience and Somali culture to significantly affect the ability of Somali students to fit in at school. It is likely that this – along with gender and religion variables - is also the case with other refugees.

THE AMBIGUITY OF EQUITY

It was noted in chapter five that education policy statements often use the concepts of 'equality of opportunity' and 'equity' interchangeably. This confusion is reflected in the beliefs of the educators who took part in this study. When asked how Somali students may best be assisted in adapting to school, educators provide suggestions that are based on the differential treatment of Somali. Yet, further analysis suggests that they do not always intend these recommendations to produce equal outcomes for Somali students, but rather minimise the 'negative' effects Somali students may have on non-Somali. For example, when one school segregated Somali from other English-as-a-Second-Language (ESOL) students, this was initiated not only to target their specific needs but also to reduce the 'disturbance' Somali students were said to be creating for the others. In addition, some teachers actively resist the notion of equity, particularly those who refuse to concede that refugees have different needs in comparison to other immigrant students.

I believe that the ambiguity teachers demonstrate over equity issues results from their anomalous positioning. They are confused by the often contradictory policy discourses that each claim education as bicultural *and* multicultural, a commodity *and* a public good, a provider of equal opportunity *and* equity. In focusing on the latter, teachers are employed to interpret and implement policies that offer little explanation of the difference between equal opportunity and equity. When policy does suggest that students may need to be treated differentially to achieve equal outcomes, teachers have not been prepared practically or ideologically for such shifts in policy and the resources with which they are expected to achieve them are inadequate for the task. The new funding procedure for Non-English-Speaking Background (NESB) students is a good example. It usually takes considerably longer than three years for students to achieve academic-level linguistic ability, so schools must meet the costs of a student's ESOL needs long after their eligibility for funding is complete. Teachers also lack guidance as to how equal outcomes might be achieved. There are only two School Advisors for New Settlers and Multicultural Education in the South Island, with one based in Christchurch. The School Advisor I spoke to suggests that by next year these positions may no longer exist and teachers will be stranded without professional support on immigrant and refugee issues.

As the Ministry of Education moves towards making schools increasingly autonomous institutions, support and information of this kind is diminishing. Thus, the interpretation of policy relating to equal opportunity and equity is left up to individual schools. As service providers, the Ministry and schools should, in the interests of improving service, be responsible for identifying barriers and work toward eliminating

them (see Ramsden 1995:6). Instead, tough decisions are being made as to who benefits from the scarce resources available in schools. The New Zealand socio-political climate encourages bicultural initiatives to be treated as a priority and, if a presumption can be made from the bilingual signs and Maori carvings that adorn their buildings, the schools I visited reflect this emphasis. At other times, the neo-liberal agenda demands that resources be allocated where positive 'outcomes' are most probable. Of course, multiply disadvantaged refugees are unlikely to fit within this category, especially when their needs can not be generalised to the majority of students (see Boston et al 1996:13).

The educational structures within which teachers work also tend to resist notions of equity. ESOL programmes are considered to be a second-class stop-gap rather than an important and permanent part of schools. This suggests to all those involved that acknowledging the differing needs of NESB students is not a long-term goal. Teachers have indicated that even when equity is taken into account, the educational structures do not know how to cope with multiple differential needs. Thus, because language is considered to be the primary need of Somali students they are placed in ESOL and their cultural, adaptational and special needs are frequently ignored. That equal opportunity remains as the prevailing premise of NESB education in New Zealand is obvious when Somali and other refugee students are placed into the mainstream as quickly as possible, without their lack of academic, general and conceptual knowledge being addressed.

Inflexible structures reflect the systemic biases prevalent in New Zealand schools. These foreground conformity to the dominant culture's norms, rather than consideration of the differing academic and cultural needs of its students. This is partially because there appears to be a fundamental contradiction between attempts to be inclusive of ethnic minority groups within our educational institutions based on differential, customised treatment and the concept of *mass* education. It is clear that the highly varied needs of minority ethnic groups challenge the notion of an educational system to which all citizens have equal rights. Thus, even the institutional inclusion of one minority ethnic group - Maori - into New Zealand education has yet to be fully achieved (see Boston et al 1996:10-11).

Chapter's six and seven have highlighted that those whom the educational culture reflects actively resist non-conformity. The refusal of some teachers to recognise the distinction between refugee and other NESB students is a key example of this resistance. It is easier for teachers to blame Somali student actions upon dispositional traits than to understand their cultural background and refugee experience, for such knowledge would challenge the accepted opinion that equal opportunity is adequate to meet all student needs. Kiwi students, who are probably unaware of debates about equal opportunity and equity issues, have also risen to defend the status quo. They have reacted negatively towards the differential treatment

of Somali students, objecting to the fact that some Somali students are not required to wear school uniform and are given extra attention by teachers. They consider themselves discriminated against if all students are not treated in the same way. Thus, teachers are reminded that the educational culture does not approve of treating difference equitably because this challenges the systemic biases evident in schools and the reproduction of ethnocultural hegemony in New Zealand.

SYSTEMIC BIAS AND ETHNOCULTURAL HEGEMONY

Chapter's six and seven offered several instances in which schools appear to be reproducing systemic biases apparent in education. Somali students represent a direct challenge to the supremacy of dominant discourses in the educational culture. Their clothing, religion, language and behaviour emphasise that Somali are culturally distinct from the dominant culture in New Zealand. Consequently, many teachers and Kiwi students appear to find cross-cultural interaction threatening, due to the disruption of taken-for-granted assumptions and expectations that this involves. Somali students do not fulfil their expectations of what 'normal' students are supposed to know and do. The actions of teachers and Kiwi students subconsciously 'protect' schools and classrooms from 'too much' difference, through subtle and seemingly 'natural' means. Thus, Somali students are mainstreamed before they have adequate academic knowledge and language because this is 'best' for them; teachers retain Friday as the day in which tests are conducted, forcing Somali boys to choose between school achievement and their religion; and parent-teacher meetings are arranged to inform parents of their children's 'unrealistic' educational and occupational aspirations.

It is important to understand that there is no conspiracy amongst dominant group members in schools to consciously perpetuate the prevalence of their own cultural values and exclude those who do not share these. Although chapter seven discussed the actions of teachers in terms of social closure, I do not believe that teachers are aware of their participation in such practices and simply do what is expected of them to the best of their abilities. It is the ignorance of teachers and Kiwi students, combined with inflexible institutional structures, vague policy and inadequate funding, that results in their unconscious reproduction of an educational culture which reflects only the interests and cultural goals of the dominant group. In a time when resources from the State are becoming more and more scarce, competition between schools and students is increasing. Being a readily identifiable group – due to both their culture and skin colour – the potential competitiveness that Somali students embody is easily neutralised through their exclusion from the discourses of power.

It is possible to argue that, as is the nature of hegemony, Somali students do not realise that they are in the process of being excluded. They do not expect their culture to be included institutionally within the schools. When they cannot understand what is going on in class or fail to pass examinations, they blame themselves, the refugee experience or their socio-economic circumstances in New Zealand. By doing so, they take responsibility for practices of exclusion that go far beyond the individual and have been reproduced historically through the prevalence of the dominant culture in our national institutions. The fact that school in New Zealand often represents a vast improvement on what Somali students left behind in war-torn Somalia or refugee camps, reinforces the belief that they should be grateful for what they have been 'given'.

However, Bullivant (1987:2;21) stresses that sub-dominant group members are able to resist social closure and that disadvantage in the face of hegemonic practices is not inevitable. Somali students can withstand social closure by adopting the goals, norms and tools of learning valued by the educational culture. Students may be able to achieve academically if they rapidly develop skills, grasp the way in which knowledge is learned in New Zealand, follow the rules for social interaction, organise their school work in the prescribed manner and catch up on all of the academic knowledge that they have missed. The paradox is that by resisting social closure, Somali students risk marginalisation from their own culture. In failing to be inclusive of Somali needs and beliefs, the educational culture frequently asks students to choose between school success and their own cultural identity (see Gibson 1995:94). Chapter's six and seven highlighted situations where Somali students have resisted social closure through conformity and others where they have resisted compliance to find themselves excluded from that which the educational culture values. Similar situations noted by Walker-Moffat (1995:131) and Liev (1995:126) in relation to Southeast Asian students who have fallen between cultures in an attempt to adapt, stress that the choice between educational success and identity is a real one.

Yet, there *is* a choice. In discussing the case of Somali students as an example of ethnocultural hegemony, I offer only one possible reading of the material that I have gained in this research. It is very easy when considering hegemony to portray sub-dominant groups as lacking agency. I have purposely emphasised the possibility for resistance to hegemonic practices in this thesis because, as Apple and Weis (1983:19) note, there is no perfect or permanent form of hegemony. Thus, the intercultural struggle that is occurring should not only be considered as a negative attribute, for the tension and resistance that the word 'struggle' implies also holds the potential for improvement.

FINAL WORDS

My journey is almost complete. This study began with four questions relating to the experiences of Somali refugee adolescents in secondary schools. While small-scale research such as this cannot provide conclusive answers, the final section of the thesis revisits the explanations I have provided for the research problems set in chapter one. The findings for each question are assessed in turn.

Somali students do not appear to be adapting well to Christchurch secondary schools. As anecdotal reports suggested, they are having considerable difficulty fitting in at school, both academically and culturally. Gaps in or a lack of previous education are common and many students exhibit low literacy, distinguishing them significantly from other NESB students. Even those who received some education prior to their arrival in New Zealand are unfamiliar with the concepts of learning, expectations concerning the presentation and organisation of school work, and time-driven schedule of Christchurch schools. Thus, students find it difficult to gain and retain the knowledge they need to adapt successfully. The home environment of Somali students has also affected their ability to adapt to school. Although many Somali parents are well-educated and encourage high educational aspirations in their children, language difficulties and inexperience of the New Zealand educational culture make it hard for parents to assist in their children's education. The drop in socio-economic status that Somali refugees have experienced in this country is another factor that may limit student adaptation, for many families cannot afford to pay for course fees, school books or private tuition. Religion appears to be a major component of the Somali student cultural background that affects their ability to fit in at school, because it influences their behaviour and understandings of life. The students' belief in Islam creates a formidable boundary between themselves and their peers and teachers, as well as the educational culture and structures of schools. Yet, their religion also instils a respect for parental and teacher authority and this might encourage adaptation.

Schools are having difficulty coping with the academic and cultural challenges that Somali refugee adolescents represent. My suspicion that policy statements promoting equity and the inclusion of cultural diversity are not being implemented in relation to Somali students appears to be correct. The few examples of schools attempting to incorporate the culture of Somali tend to be superficial and short-lived. More often, Somali students experience exclusion from the educational culture and the qualifications it values. Social closure is performed through everyday practices that appear 'natural' to both those performing them and the Somali students they exclude. Many Kiwi students and teachers find the cultural disparity of Somali students threatening. Cross-cultural communication often produces negative outcomes because expectations of attitudes and behaviour are misunderstood. At times this results in racism from Kiwi

students and anti-social behaviour from Somali. Truancy is a major problem amongst Somali students and the future, in terms of school retention and youth unemployment, looks bleak. There are cases of resistance to social closure, but such acts often threaten the cultural identity of Somali students. Thus, the students are currently placed in a situation where they must choose between giving up or giving in to the assimilative demands upon them.

There are numerous improvements that could be made within the education system to facilitate the fitting in process of Somali refugee adolescents and the ability of schools to cope with diversity. In the short-term, change could be made to assist those students already in mainstream secondary schools. This would involve extra subject support for Somali students and a peer tutoring scheme. Most importantly, educators need to improve their knowledge and understanding of Somali and other refugee student needs. In the long-term, a National Languages policy and a curriculum specific to ESOL are required, for these would provide teachers with some pedagogical guidelines. They believe this would be highly beneficial for both themselves and their students. Funding for ESOL should also reflect the length of time that it takes to learn a language and enable schools to assist all ESOL students needing instruction. While the Intensive English Centre best suits Somali students needs at present, this should be extended so that a Refugee Orientation Centre focusing specifically on the requirements of refugee students can be established. Teaching the linguistic, academic, conceptual and organisational knowledge required for entrance into mainstream classes at a regular school, the Centre would also provide support for emotional and resettlement issues.

Somali refugee adolescents appear to fit many of the characteristics common to refugees in education and may be regarded as an example of refugee adolescents as a whole, with some qualifications. It is clear that the factors affecting the adaptation experience of Somali students are similar to other refugees at school. Their previous education, home environment and cultural background are the most important features of the refugee experience that influence their ability to adapt. Within the school environment both institutional and classroom factors affect adaptation. However, as the literature notes, other variables can also enhance or diminish the ease at which Somali students fit in at school. Religion, gender and socio-economic status are the most prominent in this study. In addition, it is possible that Somali adolescents find it more difficult to adapt to school than their younger counterparts. Intergenerational conflict, however, is certainly not a major issue for Somali, although it is for refugee students as a whole. The refugee literature also suggests that marginalisation is highly likely for refugee students but, with the exception of a very small group, this does not appear to be the case for Somali. In

fact, they do not completely fit any of the possible outcomes of adaptation that Berry (1988:101-102) outlined, but are situated on the borderlines between such categories.

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

Secondary schools in Christchurch are a site of intercultural struggle. Positioned between the conflicting educational cultures of Somalia and New Zealand, Somali students experience considerable confusion, misunderstanding and discomfort, for they are often forced to choose between resistance and compliance to assimilative processes. Interpersonal friction between Somali students, their teachers and Kiwi peers personifies the conflict which has serious consequences upon the ability of Somali students to adapt and achieve both academically and culturally. There is also pressure upon educators, school administrators and the resources of schools to adapt to Somali needs and culture. Yet, it is important to remember that the struggle is larger than cross-cultural interaction between individuals and that it is not between equals. Somali students are clearly victims of systemic biases, for the most powerful group within society dominates the educational culture and this domination reflects the relationships between groups outside of school. The extent to which Somali refugee adolescents still challenge and resist is a testimony to their personal and community strengths and indicates that improvement is within the realm of possibility.

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