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**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES TALK ABOUT  
THEIR FRIENDSHIPS**

**A Narrative Inquiry**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Education  
at Massey University, Palmerston North**

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## Abstract

This narrative inquiry explores the social experiences of four students with disabilities who were educated in four co-educational secondary schools in New Zealand. Over a period of two academic years, four students told their stories of their transition to high school and their experiences of friendships and social relationships in their classrooms, playground, and after school venues. Their parents, siblings, peers, principals, teachers, and teacher aides were also interviewed and together with school observations and relevant documents provide a holistic perspective to the students' stories.

The students' stories are foregrounded and re-presented in poetic form. Analysis of each student's accounts are developed within a socio-cultural context that examines contextual factors that shape, support, or create barriers to their friendships and social relationships. These analyses are written as narrative responses within an ethic of caring. The research discusses the nature of social relationships between students with disabilities, and between students with and without disabilities, including bullying and rejection; contextual factors such as gender that shape students' perceptions of each other; and aspects of curriculum and pedagogy that support or hinder social relationships. The agency of individual students in the processes of social relationships are analysed, and implications for further research outlined.

The study concludes that there are personal and socio-ecological factors that impact on the social experiences of students with disabilities. The findings suggest the need for teachers to examine values, attitudes, knowledge, and pedagogy in the context of their schools and adopt a multi-level approach to address the academic and social needs of all students.

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## Chapter One: Beginnings

My research puzzle came from my experiences as a teacher in a secondary school.<sup>1</sup> The pedagogic quality of teaching builds on wondering and questioning what we know and do as teachers in our relation to students and establishing dialogues with our colleagues to collectively promote “practical wisdom” as praxis, in our schools (Van Manen, 1997, p. 32). Thus my fundamental research question is, “What is the nature of the social relationships and friendships of four students with disabilities in secondary schools in New Zealand; and what factors shape these relationships?” I wanted to enter the lifeworld of students and initiate conversations with them and those close to them, and listen to their stories to understand their experiences of being in school everyday. By foregrounding their stories in my research narrative I wanted to connect the everyday lifeworld of the student with the pedagogic interest of teachers by inviting them into the narrative space and dialogic text, so they can reflect on, refine, and improve their pedagogy so all students can have positive and inclusive learning experiences.

While considering my research puzzle and after reading a number of qualitative research studies that include narrative research and narrative analysis, for example, Josselson & Lieblich, 1999; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; van Maanen, 1988. I discovered Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) book “Narrative Inquiry” that took me on a journey through the process of narrative inquiry as they described a narrative research design that resonated with who I am as a researcher and teacher. With my experience as an English teacher and as a voracious reader, I enjoy reading stories that invite me into

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<sup>1</sup> In New Zealand, most children start school on their fifth birthday (Year 1), although education is not compulsory until age six. Primary school includes Year 1-Year 6; intermediate school includes Year 7-Year 8; secondary (high) school includes Year 9-Year 13.

the experiences of the participants so I can cry and laugh with them and empathise with their lived experience, causing me to reflect on the stories I live by. After investigating this approach more fully, I chose it as the most appropriate methodology for my research as it fitted congruently with my research question.

I begin with the narrative of my experience of Guy, a student in a secondary school where I taught. I then tell and retell my lived stories of being a child at school, a student teacher, a teacher, a parent, and a researcher, in order to position myself in relation to the study and in relation to the students whose stories I heard during my research and which I re-present in this thesis – so you, as the reader, know who “I” am in the research text. “It is not only the participants’ stories that are told by a narrative inquirer...it is also the inquirers’...stories that are open for inquiry and retelling” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 60) and “... we really only understand other people through ourselves – through our past experiences and the people we are now” (Hood, 1990, p. 267). My lived stories are written in Comic Sans MS font.

## *Narrative Beginnings*

### ***Guy's Story***

Guy was fifteen. He had been a student at the school since Year 9 and was now in Year 11. He did not have intelligible speech, his spasticity made it difficult to hold a pen or pencil, and his athetosis caused him to jump when there was a sudden loud noise - a frequent occurrence - and he used a wheelchair. When he first enrolled he sat with his head down, and he dribbled a lot. His teacher aide<sup>2</sup> spent much of the time wiping his

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<sup>2</sup> Paraprofessional; teacher assistant.

chin with a small towel. A large number of the staff could not see the point of him being there and openly said so. Many were relieved that he would not be in their classes, and offered sympathy to those who would have him in theirs.

By Year 11 he knew quite a lot of students - for the first two years he had the same classmates, but this year the students were in different classes depending on the subjects they were taking. He could now manage his wheelchair by himself and did not have to rely on his teacher aide as much as he did when he first arrived. However, he still took a long time to reply when anyone talked to him, although from the huge smile on his face you knew that he loved it when people spoke to him. His words were difficult to understand, but if you listened carefully you could sometimes make out some of what he was saying.

I can see him now, wheeling across the playground on his way to class. "Hi Guy!" yelled one of the boys as he walked past. Guy's face lit up as he began to reply. The boy was out of hearing range when Guy said "Hi!" They always were. No one waited for his reply. The smile left his face and he continued on his journey.

### *Retelling Guy's Story*

Guy has cerebral palsy caused by lack of oxygen at birth as the umbilical cord became wrapped around his neck. His first school years had been in an attached unit for children with severe disabilities. He had few opportunities to meet with children without disabilities. With the passing of the Education Act (1989) he was one of the first students to be enrolled at the high school – not in the special education unit attached to a regular school, but in the mainstream school. For the teachers it was a steep learning curve. His mother had been a teacher, was a valuable resource, and a strong

advocate for her son. She wanted for him “una vida normal/a normal life” (Harry, 1998). He was placed in the accelerate class in Year 9 because all its classes were in downstairs rooms, so there was easy access for Guy’s wheelchair.

For the students and the teachers this was a new experience – to have a student with a severe disability included in the class. I can understand this fear of the unfamiliar – the feeling of being unprepared and “out of their comfort zone.” It echoed my feelings when I had visited a residential hospital many years before. There was also scepticism and the fear of “maindumping”: mainstreaming children without adequate resources (Chapman, 1988).

Communication did not occur easily as Guy could only utter indistinct words. He dribbled a lot, and smiled and laughed often. In some classes the teacher ignored him and left the teacher aide to organise his time. In others, the teacher included him in the group setting and spoke to him. No one felt very confident initially, but in time teachers became more confident in planning activities to include him: on school camp the physical education teacher insisted he take part, and so he adapted activities. If you asked Guy a question the reply took a long time to come and usually it was unintelligible so people tended to talk to the teacher aide, or walk off before Guy could reply. This must have been very frustrating for him. The most common interaction the other students had with Guy in the playground was what I began to call the “Guy Syndrome.” Students would say, “Hi Guy!” as they passed but would never wait for his reply as it was slow coming, and the greeting student would be way down the path before Guy’s words came. Many students greeted him in this way during the day but few spent any time with him. At interval his teacher aide would sit with him; during lunchtime, to give his aide a break, he went to have lunch in the attached special unit, where many of the teachers thought he should have been anyway. Meyer et al. (1998) describe a similar scenario with a boy called Matthew, whose only

social interactions were superficial social greetings and brief comments in passing. Green and Schleien (1991) call such interactions “facades of friendship.” Like Matthew, Guy did not enjoy regular friendships or have a “best” friend.”

Over the years Guy became more independent and could operate his electric wheelchair getting to and from his taxi, and from class to class if they were downstairs. He held his head up and dribbled less, and his smile and laughter showed us that he enjoyed listening to and watching the other students.

But, Guy’s social interactions were limited to being a “guest” in some classes – at best “the inclusion kid” (Meyer et al., 1998). Some students were happy to help him with his wheelchair. Most of his interactions consisted of, “Hi Guy!” but gave him no chance to reply. He had no “regular friends” or a “best friend” to invite home, or to be invited out. Most of his interactions were with adults: teachers, teacher aides, and the taxi driver.

Class teachers, the support team, specialists, and his mother worked hard to ensure his inclusion was successful, and that Guy was learning. His academic goals included beginning to read and use his computer keyboard. His social goals were about increasing his independence and developing friendships. At his IEP meetings a large group of people talked a lot and made decisions that determined his life. What was Guy’s experience of high school? How did Guy feel when the boy who said, “Hi Guy!” did not wait for a reply? How did he feel when this happened day after day after day? How did he feel when he had to eat his lunch with his teacher aide, not with his classmates? How did Guy feel when he saw the other students talking together and making plans for the weekend?

His academic progress was small but he did learn to read some words and could write short sentences on his computer. He had a good sense of humour and would often laugh at things the other students missed. The Guy

Syndrome persisted because his verbal skills made conversation difficult; students were unsure of how to communicate and were concerned that when he did say something they might not understand what he was saying.

Teachers became used to having Guy around and their opinions began to change. The way seemed to be easier for students with disabilities who have verbal skills and/or who were attractive. A girl, Katie, who was profoundly deaf and had no verbal skills, developed a circle of close friends who learned sign language so they could communicate. She was a pretty girl with a lovely smile and sense of fun, and the group spent a lot of time chatting about clothes and hairstyles.

For some of the students with obvious disabilities there was limited social inclusion – any student who “looked different” was not accepted into the social groups and these students seemed to be alone in the playground. They were “islands in the mainstream” (Sapon-Shevin, Dobbelaere, Corrigan, Goodman, & Mastin, 1998, p. 105). Often at lunchtime these students would congregate in the library - almost a haven or “safe house” where other isolated students went. In the language of teenagers, these students were “reges” (rejects). How did these students feel? How did they regard their time at secondary school? The “best years of their lives”? Or a lonely existence? How many of these students experienced the Guy Syndrome?

What were Guy’s stories of life at high school? If he had had strong verbal skills would he have been asked for his stories? It is from Guy’s silence and the silence of other students with disabilities that my pedagogic interest in the experiences of students with disabilities in secondary schools has grown. The New Zealand Education Act (1989) was seen as a radical change reflecting principles of social justice and human rights. For parents it was an opportunity for their children with disabilities to be enrolled at the neighbourhood school and make friends and do the things that their siblings took for granted. Teachers have had a lot to say about the initiative, and

parents have had some opportunity. The silence of the students is loud. I wanted to hear the stories of the students with disabilities and understand what their experience of life in a secondary school is like.

### ***The Place of the Researcher in Narrative Inquiry***

As researchers we are complicit in the world we study and working in the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space – a metaphorical term for the temporality, personal and social, and place dimensions of our lives - our own stories become visible and make us vulnerable as we share our stories too. In this space I cannot stand aside or remain silent or “present a kind of perfect, idealized, inquiring, moralizing self” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 62). In order to embark on this research I need to position myself as a researcher with my lived stories - my personal and social journey of how I came to this research. Thus in this chapter I tell some more of my stories - of my own experiences as a child at school, a student-teacher, a teacher, a researcher, and as a parent. I will retell these experiences and make visible myself in the narrative inquiry, as it is important to acknowledge:

...the centrality of the researcher’s own experience – the researcher’s own livings, tellings, retellings, and relivings. One of the starting points for narrative inquiry is the researcher’s own autobiography. This task of composing our own narratives of experience is central to narrative inquiry. We refer to this as composing narrative beginnings as a researcher begins his or her inquiries...As we compose our narrative beginnings, we also work within the three-dimensional space, telling our stories of our past that frame our present standpoints, moving back and forth from the personal to the social, and situating it all in place...Those narrative beginnings of our own livings, tellings, retellings, and relivings help us to deal with who we are in the field and who we are in the texts that we write on our experience of the field experience. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 70)

### ***My Story of Being a Child at School***

My story begins as a child growing up in the fifties and sixties in a small provincial New Zealand town. My classrooms were noticeably homogeneous, mainly Pakeha<sup>3</sup> children and no children with obvious disabilities. We had one Māori girl in our class, Mary, but she never came home to play and we never went to her house - I didn't know where she lived. I do remember she often didn't wear shoes, something I, nor my friends, were not allowed to do! Our school was close to a children's home and the "Home" children stayed at our school for varying times, for years or sometimes only weeks. We played together at school but I didn't make close friends with any, they didn't come home to play.

Often my friends would come home to play after school, and in the holidays; we played schools and formed clubs, and built forts in the trees on the empty section three houses down the road. I had a birthday party every year with invitations, "fairy" bread with hundreds and thousands sprinkled on, butterfly cakes, and ice cream and jelly. Just my best and closest friends came home to play, and to birthday parties, not Mary, and not the Home children.

I remember a friend of my mother had a daughter who was blind and had a profound hearing loss but she stayed at home and tended to be talked about in hushed and sympathetic tones. I can recall the names of her two sisters but not hers. I also recall that she died as a teenager, and my mother and her friends saw this as a "blessing."

A girl in my ballet class, Dee, had a physical impairment - one arm was not fully formed and ended at the elbow but although this was an obvious impairment and a handicap for some ballet executions, as a group we accepted that is how it was and we all danced on! And the man across

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<sup>3</sup> New Zealanders of European descent.

the road from our house used a wheelchair but he had a ramp to his front door and we thought nothing of it.

At intermediate and secondary school, my group of friends changed as I met girls from other schools, and later boys became part of the group. There was no one "different"; indeed I don't remember any very different students in my classes.

### *Retelling My Story*

I was a "graduate of a segregated childhood" and a "segregated education system" (Meyer et al., 1998, p. 198). I realise now that other larger schools may have had special classes, but for us it was "an out of sight, out of mind" scenario.

My experience of disability was limited – indeed my experience of "different" was limited. In one of my first classes at Ruawharo, I taught a student whose mother had been at the local children's home. This was a church administered home where children were fostered because of family circumstances. This student had written a narrative for an assignment where she had interviewed her mother about her experiences at school. I read this assignment and realised that her mother had been in my class. The mother's story described her life in the home and talked about those girls at school who were smug with their two-parent families and nice clothes. I knew she was describing me, and my friends. It is clear to me now that we saw the Home children as different. We accepted them but we excluded them: these different children did not become friends beyond the school gate. We played "with our own" – moving through primary school, to intermediate, and on to high school with the same group of friends. We were similar: same race, same gender, and same socio-economic background. "Different" didn't fit in. It was my regular and best friends who came to my birthday parties.

At secondary school, there was a range of courses offered but the teachers were the gatekeepers and some students were “drafted” into the home science course, or trades if you were a boy, reflecting scholastic ability level. Because I was “drafted” into an academic course, I was separated from students who had different academic ability. Thus socially, my friends were chosen from students in my class, as we did not get opportunities to mix widely. This experience would have been the norm for many New Zealand children. The education system ensured that this was so, and perpetuated the status quo.

### ***My Story of Being a Student Teacher***

As I began my teacher training in the late 1960s in a small provincial city, segregated education provision was the norm and our courses did not extend to learning about diversity in the classroom. Our teaching practicums were in classes that did not include children with disabilities, as schools had special education classes. Student teachers did not have teaching practicums in special education classes. Indeed the revelation that there was diversity “out there” was only made apparent in the last week, when we had a ninety minute lecture on individual differences. It was almost an afterthought alongside the realisation that we also needed to be taught how to teach swimming!

An experience while at teachers' college that has stayed with me, and which I have often reflected on, involved an Education Club. The aim of this club, of which attendance was voluntary, was to explore education issues and visit interesting places related to education. The only two visits I remember involved visits to special schools. One was an institution for teenage boys with severe behaviour problems and I recall little of this - there were no boys present on that day and buildings without

students left no lasting impression! I do remember wondering what it must be like for the boys to be sent to such a school. I wondered what it would be like to teach there and if a separate school was an effective way to deal with severe behaviour problems.

The other institution was a large residential hospital in a nearby town that provided for people with intellectual disabilities. I can still recall the feelings I had as we were shown the dormitories and living areas. I had no idea that such places existed and that there were so many people "like that." I didn't know how to behave: what to say to the people there and how to accept my feelings of horror at the institutional atmosphere. My school and social experiences had not prepared me for this. I couldn't imagine working or living there.

At the end of the afternoon it was explained that we were to stay and take part in a social event and dance in the evening with some of the residents. I felt panicky and did not want to stay - I was well outside my comfort zone and wanted to leave. Under the pretext of having to attend a university lecture in the city, three of us hitchhiked back.

### *Retelling My Story*

My teachers' college course was one of the last two-year courses so perhaps the short time frame meant that we were not prepared for diversity in our classrooms. However, I am sure the programme reflected the medical model thinking at the time: children with disabilities could only be taught in special classes and that teacher training courses were not expected to provide "specialist" training. This did not prepare me for my later teaching years when I welcomed children with disabilities into my classrooms.

I have often reflected on my reactions to the institution with some shame, but I also know that at that time I could not cope with the strength of

my feelings: culture shock was strong. Mel Bogard (1994) tells her story of her similar experience in the same institution when she visited as a trainee social worker ten years after I had visited: "I...was horrified at what I saw. To me, the lives of the people looked bleak and prospectless. They looked and acted weird. I remember clearly saying to friends at the time 'This is something I could never cope with!'" (p. 53) My childhood experiences had not prepared me for "difference" on such a scale and intensity. Ours had been a segregated world.

Twenty five years later when I was studying for my Masters degree, a teacher from this institution described some of the educational programmes that had been recently developed and through video I saw changes in philosophy and learning that were taking place. This was a different place to the one I had visited twenty five years before – the focus had changed from a hospital to an educational environment, where residents were regarded by the teachers as being able to learn and exciting stimulating programmes were planned. There were more visits by the residents into the community so the community became involved in their lives: barriers were being actively dismantled. This institution is now closed.

### ***My Story of Becoming a Teacher***

*The early years.* So into the reality of a Year One classroom where I discovered there was diversity in the classroom: mild behavioural and learning difficulties and children who now would be described as gifted and talented, but in those days the definition was much narrower. However, in my early teaching years "special" education was not part of our job. We could expect a few children who would need "extra" remedial help or "extending" but this generally meant "more of the same" rather than collaborative individual programmes. I remember

feeling unprepared for two boys who had great difficulty with beginning reading and a boy who could describe in detail the workings of a spacecraft. I often wonder what they are all doing now!

*Teaching overseas.* A few years of travelling saw me teaching in London where the obvious diversity in the classrooms was cultural. One school in which I taught had a large West Indian population and I was aware that my childhood experiences were so different to these children. Some of them had never seen the sea, so a trip to Brighton was planned. Oh the excitement and also the fear of some as the waves crashed in front of them onto the stony beach!

*Back in New Zealand.* I arrived back in New Zealand to teach in a school in another provincial city. The school had a special class with a teacher who had no specialised training, but couldn't get another job! There was also a special unit for children with hearing impairments with a specialist teacher. The children in the special class were stigmatised and were not part of the play in the playground with the children from the other classes. The children from the "Deaf Unit" were included to a greater extent and on sports afternoons were part of teams.

There was a boy Justin in my class with behaviour problems who would throw desks when he got stressed, and Sally, a girl who used a wheelchair. She had spina-bifida and her mother came in to deal with toileting. This was my first experience of inclusion of a child with a disability. Sally was very much a part of the class - she was an attractive child and her outgoing personality ensured that she was part of every activity. It was Sally who taught me how to play wheelchair netball and organise the room so she had easy access to resources, and not to fear children with a disability.

For a number of years the classes I taught did not include children with physical or intellectual impairments beyond children with mild visual or hearing impairment, or mild reading difficulties, so only minor accommodations had to be made. However, on deciding to continue with university study I found that the most interesting papers were those related to reading and learning difficulties, and special education. Reading was, and remains a passion, and through study I had found a way to extend my pedagogic understanding.

*Teaching in a secondary school.* With my new knowledge I accepted a position in a coeducational secondary school teaching students with learning difficulties and reading difficulties in a team teaching situation. Initially these students, mainly boys, were taught in a separate class. This created behavioural problems and for the students, stigmatisation, and isolation. The general class programme was unchallenging and I could see that for most of them school was not a great place to come every day. They called themselves the "dummy class." The students found it difficult to maintain the friendships they had formed at intermediate school as the other students did not want to mix with them and be associated with the "dummies." They appeared to be unmotivated and only there because "we have to be." Generally their achievement was minimal but the other teachers in the school were happy that they were not in their classes! The tradition in the school was to withdraw students for "remedial reading" and there was also some "extension" reading for the two top stream junior classes. This organisation was common to other secondary schools in the area and reflected the philosophy of the time: streaming and withdrawal remedial approaches to learning difficulties.

The school was progressive in its thinking and prepared to try new ways of working. Over time, although there was still a top-stream "accelerate" class, the "dummy class" was disbanded. Initially I did not consider the term "remedial reading" as reflecting a deficit model, but I did realise how the students hated coming out of class to "remedial reading" and would hide behind the lockers until all the other students went into class, so their mates would not see them going into the reading room: it wasn't "cool!" So I changed my approach and as the reading teacher, I worked in the classrooms, generally in English classes, and liaised with other subject teachers in a consultative role.

A few students from the special education unit for students with intellectual impairments began to be mainstreamed for some classes: sometimes English but usually home economics, art and physical education, that is, vocational subjects. In these latter classes it was generally expected that the mainstreamed students would have a teacher aide so the class teacher "didn't have to cope with them!" For many teachers, there was the view that they were not trained to teach "these children" and "they belong in the special education unit." Thus there was opposition to the School Support Team who was trying to support initially the mainstreamed students, and later, students who were fully included in a regular programme. I was a member of the team and because of their reluctance we could only ask "some" teachers to have the "unit" students in their classes. Many teachers did not read the Individual Education Plans (IEPs). The students tended to be isolated socially and would go back to the unit at interval and lunchtime. They were only mainstreamed for one or two subjects a day. Teachers tended not to make many adaptations to their programmes, and the student was expected to fit in and do what every one else was doing as best they could. Teachers had

low expectations of the students and often didn't expect them to complete any work. They were "in" but not part of the class (Schnorr, 1990).

*Philip.* However, one boy, Philip, did enrol in the regular programme and accompanied by a full time teacher aide and a lap top computer he became part of his class. He had cerebral palsy and used a wheelchair. He had understandable verbal skills, and his assertiveness ensured that his needs were met. Teachers began to see that inclusion could work. Socially, Philip mixed with his classmates during breaks, not on a close "best friend" basis but in a group. He also took part in extra curricular activities such as the choir. Philip was a trailblazer for other students who followed him on the inclusion path.

*The support team.* The staff learned a lot about what was possible when including students with disabilities, and about problem solving and finding solutions. A School Support Team was established with a part-time support teacher, an educational psychologist, and other school staff including me as the reading specialist, deans, class teachers and a senior staff member. Our role was to support the "mainstreamed" students by liaising with the class teachers, organising IEPs, managing the special needs budget, arranging teacher aides, and prioritising assessments and appropriate extra help for students. Over the next few years we supported several students who were included in regular programmes. I worked with teachers as support in their classrooms and I taught English to junior and senior classes that included some of these students.

I was mentored and strongly influenced by the Support Teacher who never faltered in her beliefs about inclusion. She worked hard to overcome prejudice and the "can't do/not my job" attitude of some

teachers. At this time I was learning about inclusion, and although I understood the ideal from a perspective of human rights and social justice, I could see the obstacles that existed in the school system. It wasn't lack of resources that was the problem: it was attitude. Her job was difficult but very rewarding as students themselves began to change prejudice: the unknown fear was worse than the reality because there was support for teachers. I sometimes found her in tears, sometimes tears of frustration but sometimes these were tears of joy as teachers came and shared their "success" stories. Slowly, attitudes changed.

*Study and teaching.* I was also studying at this time for my Masters degree in Special Education and found it exciting to be part of change, enabling me to link theory to practice and develop my praxis, to see problems first hand but also to be part of a system which actively sought solutions to make something that I believed in work. It had its frustrations as we tried to change the thinking of colleagues. I also realised that just talking to colleagues wasn't enough. It was the "success stories" that changed opinions. Guy was that "success story" for many.

### *Retelling My Story*

My story must be contextualised in time and place and the landscape defined. This school was in the nineties. This was a time of change and a time for mainstream teachers to be challenged in their thinking. The organisation was common to other secondary schools in the area and reflected the philosophy of the time: streaming and withdrawal remedial approaches to learning difficulties.

My story is the story of many teachers of the seventies and eighties, and early nineties when "Special education in New Zealand [was] at a

crossroads" (Moore et al., 1999, p. 5). These authors extend this metaphor to schools at that time being "caught between stories" as values shifted, and teachers questioned the implication of the biological model based on a functional limitations paradigm, and began to understand the emerging paradigm – "the new story" which challenged the "old story" of classification and individual remediation.

The 1989 Education Act, that stated that children had a right to enrol in their neighbourhood school, initially did not have a great impact on the school beyond having a few students from the attached special education unit mainstreamed for a few classes. For many of the teachers there was no change, as their classes did not include any of the "mainstreamed kids." I found transferring from the primary into the secondary sector, that teachers' views of ability ranges within classes differed. As a primary teacher I thought nothing of having seven or eight reading groups operating at the same time. I found many secondary teachers, as an outcome of their training and pressures of the curriculum and exam system, taught "to the middle" and did not have the confidence to group students within the classroom, with parallel programmes running. Thus I concluded that these teachers were less accepting of diversity in their classrooms than teachers who were skilled at addressing individual and group needs.

For many, seeing Guy managing his own wheelchair, ceasing to dribble, and holding his head up, and laughing, was success. I believe that it was progress. As teachers we wanted to enjoy success and were ready to embrace it. However for me, success would have been an alternative story for Guy - a story that told of Guy sitting with a circle of friends on the playing field, eating his lunch, sharing jokes and talk, and planning after school activities. Success would have been, not having to choose which teachers would "accept" Guy into their classes, and which teachers would adapt their programmes to accommodate his needs.

As I reflected on students like Guy, I wanted to hear their voices telling their stories of their lived experiences. My story thus far is from a teacher's pedagogic experience - this is my story. I have listened to the perspectives of my colleagues and the parents of some of the students, but I need to search for the stories of the students. I come to this search as an educator but also as a parent. Grumet (1988) foregrounds her experience as a mother and parent and explores these *private* experiences as ways of knowing as they interact in a dialectical relationship with her role as a teacher who shapes the form and purpose of *public* education. As teachers, "it is important to maintain our sense of this dialectic wherein each milieu, the academic and the domestic influences the character of the other..." (p. 5)

### ***My Story of Being a Parent***

***Children growing up.*** At the time I taught at the secondary school, my three children were also students there, at various times. It gave me cause to reflect on their experience in the school and how as a parent I was glad they all had friends and fitted in socially. I enjoyed having their friends around after school, and arranging birthday parties and other shared activities. It was a "normal" part of childhood and what I expected for my children. My children's circle of friends did not include children with disabilities - like my schooling, theirs was segregated until they reached high school in the nineties.

***Meningitis.*** An early experience forced me to reflect on having a child with a disability. After two daughters, our son was born and was diagnosed a few hours after birth as having meningitis. We were devastated. If he lived I knew he could be brain damaged or deaf and this sent us both into a place we never imagined. Emily Perl Kingsley (cited in Weaver, 1999, p. 15) describes the experience of having a child with a

disability as going to a different place from the one you had planned. She uses the analogy of planning a trip to Italy, reading all the books and looking forward to it only to find you have gone to a different place - Holland. After the initial shock you begin to realise there are wonderful aspects to this different place even though you have had to give up your other dream of going to Italy.

The celebration of a child's birth became a time for sorrow and despair and a questioning of ourselves as being able to cope. There were the feelings of, "Why us?" and, "I don't think I can do this!" Although neither of us have strong religious feelings, there was a feeling that perhaps we were in some way being punished. Perhaps we should have been content with our two daughters; after all we had reproduced ourselves and so should have stopped at two children. Our thoughts were jumbled and often incoherent. I tried not to get too attached to him in case he died so then perhaps the grief would be lessened. He was given huge doses of antibiotics and as the days passed, we realised that he was going to live but we didn't know if there was lasting damage. I was too scared to take him home: I was this competent mother and teacher, but I was frightened of this situation. I felt shame that I felt like this. My shame of the trip to the residential hospital was relived, as now I had to come to terms with the fact that I may have a child who was intellectually impaired. My life experience had in no way prepared me for this.

We did go home and as we bonded and got to know each other I could see his reactions were "normal" and as time went by he met his milestones. We visited the Child Development Unit at the hospital six monthly, and he was assessed. An educational psychologist also assessed him and his hearing was tested. There had been no lasting damage. We regarded ourselves as "lucky." Did this mean that parents with children

with impairments are “unlucky?” Surely we wouldn't have loved him any less? It was a journey where we were able to change course and go to Italy, after our stopover in Holland.

### ***Retelling My Story***

So when I worked with students at school I knew that their journey could have been my son's. He told me about school and his experiences. What would those stories have been if he had not fully recovered? What plans would he now be making for the future? Would he have the friends he has now?

This experience gave me reason to reflect on why I had felt so unprepared for the feelings of devastation that I had to confront. I did not “know” about intellectual disability: my experiences had been about “normal.” I hadn't envisaged a life with intellectual disability: I didn't have any role models or a story to live by. Perhaps if my educational experiences had been inclusive ones, the chasm I had to prepare to cross would not have appeared so insurmountable.

### ***My Story of Being a Researcher***

When I was undertaking research for my Master's degree, my research addressed parents' perceptions, understanding, and experiences of the IEP process (Ward, 1995). I used a survey methodology with a Likert Scale for responses. I had convened a focus group of parents and caregivers, before I developed the questionnaire, where I asked open-ended questions to guide rather than lead the discussion. This meeting was audiotaped and formed the basis for the design of the questionnaire, and also data to include in the report discussion. In the questionnaire, I included a space under each question and asked the respondents to

include a comment if they wished. Together with the focus group discussion, these comments made the responses "come alive" and "real". "Their lives were filled with complexities, with hopes, with dreams, with wishes, and with intentions" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxv). This was "life stuff" (Bruner, 1986, p. 43). This was the voice of the parents. These comments were heartfelt and some expressed frustration with the IEP process, for example, being made to feel like a "mere parent" and an "invited guest" at the IEP meeting (Ward, 1995, p. 26). One mother was very hurt and felt despair that the psychologist at the meeting had to see a photo of her child to know who was being talked about.

### ***Retelling My Story***

Because of supervisor advice, and because of the constraints of time, I had chosen to use a survey method to collect data. Charlotte Thompson (personal communication, April, 1995), who was also researching the IEP process at this time, suggested establishing a focus group. The group was a means to establish appropriate questions for the survey. In the questionnaire, I included space for parents' comments as I was concerned that I would not have enough significant data to report on: it was a way of "filling it out!"

However, as I listened to the heartfelt stories of the parents and caregivers in the focus group, and read the comments on the returned survey sheets, I realized what rich data I had collected. Their responses were measured on a Likert scale but the graphs did not tell the whole stories of the experiences of the parents. The voices of parents provided rich data and an extra dimension and complemented the quantitative data. They welcomed the chance to have their voices heard: before this meeting they had not been asked by teachers to speak about their experiences. As I became familiar with the work of Clandinin and Connelly, I came to realise that these parents'

stories are data and field texts for a narrative inquiry where the research text would be rich with their experiences. In quantifying experience, “its richness and expression was stripped away” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxvi). Listening to their stories offered a holistic dimension.

Since the study, I have reflected on my research and my pedagogy and wondered about the stories of the students, the students’ voice, and recognised that students’ stories of their lives can answer research questions and impact on teachers’ knowledge and understanding of their practice. Gaventa (1993) challenges professionals to understand the power of friendship in the lives of people with disabilities and “search for those voices in the past and present who can help explain the transforming power of friendship” (p. 42); there is a need for research to advance the knowledge of friendships between people with and without disabilities. Hearing the stories of students enables teachers and the wider educational community to critically reflect on their pedagogy and who they are in relation to students. An insight into students’ experiences enables teachers to learn how what they do in their classrooms and in the wider school, shapes students’ educational experiences and opportunities.

### *Coming to Research and Narrative Inquiry*

Thus far I have begun to tell my story and positioned myself as an educator, a parent and a researcher in the research; I do not stand outside the research but show how my research has grown out of my experiences and developing understandings. My stories have described the changing school

landscape from segregated provision to inclusive schools, from a cursory acknowledgment of individual difference to pedagogies that celebrate difference through accommodation and adaptation. The process for developing pedagogies in inclusive schools is ongoing and as teachers we are searching for best practices so all children can learn alongside their peers with positive academic and social experiences. In this research, I wanted to establish a collaborative relationship and dialogue with students, to understand their experiences of their education, and their social relationships and friendships at secondary school, and how this impacted on their whole school and out of school experiences. I wanted to create a dialogic narrative research text that invites teachers to hear the voices of students and reflect on their pedagogy so we can learn how to make our schools and classrooms inclusive.

In the next section I describe the structure of my research thesis.

### *Mapping the Research Journey*

To establish the context for the narrative inquiry, in Chapter Two, I review literature that relates to the area of study. I explore the nature of friendship and examine the development of the social relationships of children and adolescents with and without disabilities. I place my study within current contexts with directions for future research into the development of social relationships and friendships of children with disabilities.

In Chapter Three I explain why I chose narrative inquiry as the methodology for the research and explore the issue of listening to the voices of children as part of the research process. I describe the process of this narrative inquiry, entering the field and selecting the participants who I introduce to the readers, gathering the data, ethical considerations, analysis of

the data, and the construction and presentation of the research text. I have chosen to re-present the students' stories in poetic form and my justification for this concludes this chapter.

Chapters Four, Six, Eight, and Ten present four students' stories – their “voices” - written as poems. Their stories tell of their friendships and factors that supported and/or hindered the development of these. They talked about happy times and sad times, their hopes and dreams, and how their relationships affected their educational experiences and opportunities in school and out of school. They told stories of searching for their identity as young people with a disability.

These stories are each followed by my narrative responses to them (Chapters Five, Seven, Nine, and Eleven) in which I include the perspectives of parents, principals, teachers, teacher aides, siblings, and peers to provide a holistic account alongside links to research where appropriate. In these chapters I speak to the students individually as I reflect, analyse, and interpret their experiences in the historical, political, and socio-cultural contexts of the in-school and out-of-school landscapes. While writing these responses I had a “sense of audience peering over [my] shoulder” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 149) as I invite not only the students but also you, the reader, to also personally reflect, interpret, and respond to the students' stories of their experiences, in the light of your stories you live by on the landscapes on which you teach.

In Chapter Twelve, I analyse and explore some of the dominant threads that weave through the students' stories. I consider the significance of some socio-cultural factors, particularly gender issues, in shaping students' social relationships; I examine curriculum issues and praxis and the implications for students' social outcomes; and I describe the students' agency in meeting the challenge in their individual contexts as they establish their identities as young people with disabilities.



## Chapter Two: Reviewing the Literature

My stories in Chapter One tell of changing contexts and raise questions about the nature of friendships, and the processes and environments that shape these friendships. My fundamental research question, “What is the nature of the social relationships and friendships of students with disabilities in secondary schools in New Zealand, and what shapes these relationships?” seeks to explore an area of life than many of us enjoy as part of our lifeworld. As I explain in more depth in Chapter Three, narrative inquiry is a methodology that is concerned with the personal (inward) and social (outward); temporality (past, present, and future); and place (spatiality and landscape), so the purpose of this literature review is to provide an historical, socio-cultural and political context for my study.

I begin with an exploration of general theories and themes of friendship – some of these stretching back over two thousand years; pondering on friendship is not a new phenomenon! This first section concludes with a review of the role of the school in the socialisation process. Secondly, in order to situate my narrative inquiry in contemporary time and place, I review empirical research in New Zealand and overseas on the friendships of children and adolescents with particular reference to the development of friendships of children and adolescents with and without disabilities within a socio-cultural context, as this is the focus of my study. In the third section, I review literature that describes how schools can intervene to provide a context that can support and facilitate positive social relationships, or create barriers that can impede the development of friendships. Finally, perspectives of the players in these processes – parents, teachers and principals, and importantly the children and youth with and without disabilities – are presented.

In this literature review the terms used by the researchers are retained. This often indicates the philosophy of the researcher and the policies and practices of the systems in which they are working. There are limitations in comparing research studies because of variation in terminology, variation in measured academic outcomes, and the appropriateness of methodology including often the judgment of others with implications of bias and interpretation (Freeman & Alkin, 2000). This review of the literature identifies areas for future research and situates my research study within these parameters.

### *The Nature of Friendship*

It is appropriate to begin this literature review by delving into the philosophies of old to see what we can learn about friendship – to set the scene as it were. We would all agree that friendship is an important part of our lives and a survey of the literature reveals that “friendship” over the last two and a half thousand years has generated a great deal of corresponding expository material; the oldest material was based on strong ethical positions and emerging theoretical propositions. Early philosophers, for example, Aristotle and Cicero agreed about the importance of friendship in ensuring happiness in our lives – Cicero wrote, “They take the very sun from the heavens...when they take friendship from life...this is our best source of goodness and happiness” (Cicero, trans. 1967, xiii 47); Aristotle contributed, “Friendship...is most necessary for our life” (Aristotle, trans 1985, viii 1155a). Later philosophers and writers developed the ideas of their predecessors and noted that friendship is natural (Aelred, 1148/1974), vital if we are not to be isolated (Kant, 1775/1930) and solid (Emerson, 1991). Bacon (1991) supported these views and averred that without friends, “The world is but a wilderness” (p. 202).

Pre Christian writings acknowledged a spiritual element in friendships but early Christian expositions directly saw friendship as mirroring Christ's model (Aelred, 1148/1974) or as gifts from God (Emerson, 1991). Similarly in other religions, the Koran (trans.1974) states, "Your only friends are Allah, His apostle [Mohammed], and the faithful" (The Table 5.56). Buddhist scriptures advise followers to " radiate friendliness...with a heart linked to friendliness...free from enmity and malice" (Conze, 1959, pp. 185-6).

Reflecting classical and biblical traditions, twentieth century literature reaffirms the positive features and implications of friendship in that our friendships give our lives quality: "It is friendship, more than skills, money, power and control that makes life worth living" (Strully & Strully, 1993, p. 214), and friendships "are the core aspects of our lives" (Fehr, 1996, p. 1). Some of us form lasting friendships while we are at school, others through contacts at work or social activities. These can lead to marriage or long-term partnerships or may be nurtured on a more infrequent basis because of distance or circumstance. On a macro scale, friendship promotes the general well being of society (Telfer, 1970) and creates the root of developing caring communities (Strully & Strully, 1985). Researchers concur that all individuals need to have a circle of friends such as, "...people to stand with each other" (Stainback & Stainback, 1990, p. x) and similarly, "While we are alive we have the right to live, to love, to have fun, to make mistakes, and to fly on our own direction with our own friends" (Forest, 1991, p. 401).

It is a truism that people have a basic need to be valued, liked and respected by others, and to experience warm, reciprocal relationships; our friends satisfy our need to belong, to understand who we are, and support us as we face new experiences and challenges. Positive friendships give us confidence and enhance our self-esteem (Duck, 1991; Long, 1999); friendship "experiences are important for the acquisition of interpersonal skills and

competencies, for success in future relationships, and for emotional well being" (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1996, p. 317).

Over a period of time, philosophers and researchers hold that, "Friendship is a valued commodity for nearly all of us" (Meyer & Putnam, 1988, p. 127) of which the benefits are happiness (Aristotle, trans.1985), pleasure, enhancing the enjoyment of activities, and enhancing our emotions and our ability to "feel more" (Telfer, 1970). Interdependent, friendly relationships are rewarding in tangible ways such as advice, or social rewards such as support in difficult times (Furnham, 1989) thus suggesting mutually supportive reciprocal relationships. Although researchers agree that friendships provide intimacy, company, and practical help, they cannot be guaranteed to make people happy as, "friendships are not without risk and disappointment" (Richardson & Ritchie, 1989, p. 75).

The early ethical arguments and theoretical propositions concur with more recent empirical research about friendship as a positive aspect of life, and resonate with my positive experiences of friendship as I reflect on how significant friendships are on my landscapes. Over the years, I have travelled and lived in many different places. I have enjoyed different kinds of friendship - childhood, adolescent, adult, collegial, neighbourly, family, based on interests and activities, marital, and with my children as they become adults. I wondered about my experiences and the experience of the friendships of my children and the children I taught; from my experience and reading I wondered about the friendships of children and adolescents with disabilities and if they experienced the positive qualities of friendships described in the literature.

### *Theories of Friendship*

Early theories of friendship were based on observation and described simple categories to differentiate kinds of friendship. Aristotle paved the way

with his proposed three categories: friendship for utility, where the friends receive some useful benefit; friendship for pleasure; and friendship based on virtue that he describes as “true” friendship. The first two categories may have equal or unequal benefits and may not last as long as “true” friendship; the relationship will only last while the parties are getting something from it. Aristotle influenced later philosophers. Aelred (1148/1974) concurred with Aristotle’s first two categories, naming them “worldly” and “carnal”; his third category, “virtue”, was given a spiritual dimension and became synonymous with “true” friendship. Kant (1775/1930) developed a similar triad with the third type being “absolute” friendship based on disposition or sentiment.

Christian writings reflected ethical bible teachings of “love thy neighbour” and sought to differentiate between friendship based on charity and our love of God, somewhat akin to Aristotle’s friendship of utility, and other “true” friendships (Aquinas, 1269-72/1947). The reciprocity of friendship is a theme that emerged in the writings of Plato and Aristotle and is evident in current empirical studies of the friendships of children (e.g. Fehr, 1996; Rietveld, 1999). In Rietveld’s New Zealand study of four new entrants with Down syndrome she comments that reciprocity may not be evident in every interaction but that over time reciprocal relationships in inclusive settings will reflect not only receiving but contributing as well, by all those in the interactions. Reciprocity means there is reciprocal goodness, that is, doing good things for the friend for its own sake, affection and liking, and sharing; this reciprocity differentiates friendship from other relationships, such as for charitable reasons. Reciprocity infers a sharing of activities, contacts and pursuits, and recognises the development of “choice” in friendship (Telfer, 1970), thus, “Each person must leave a friendship with something” rather than a “poorly paved one way street called ‘benevolence’, a street that will ultimately intersect with another called ‘obligation’” (Perske, 1993, p. 5), as in the charity model. Both the pre Christian and the Christian traditions share an

ethical and theoretical perspective and focus on the importance of friendship that celebrates “mutual enjoyment, acceptance, usefulness, reciprocity and caring that is different from other human relationships” (Gaventa, 1993, p. 52).

Building on early theories, a range of theories of interpersonal attraction and friendship has been purported; the theories are not self-contained, but overlap. Behaviourist theories examine how rewards and positive reinforcement, for example, smiles, pleasure and enjoyment, act as a primary antecedent and contribute to the process of learning to like someone, with the development of positive attitudes and initial attraction (Clore & Byrne, 1974; Lott & Lott, 1974). Social exchange theory goes beyond initial attraction and describes the interdependency of relationships, which develops as relationships become closer (Huston & Burgess, 1979); this increased interdependence reflects a commitment to the relationship (Scanzoni, 1979). In this theory, changes are also related to age and maturation (Laursen, 1996). Equity theorists, for example, Hatfield, Utne, and Traupmann (1979) believe that in happy relationships we get equal rewards and benefits. In Balance Theory, people are more attracted to those who hold similar attitudes and values (Heider, 1958; Newcomb, 1961; 1971 both cited in Fehr, 1996). In describing the nature of friendship, these theorists have attempted to categorise friendship according to contributing variables. In my life, I recognise that as well as different kinds of friendship, I have experienced friendships which have not lasted as I got older, changed schools, developed different interests, or moved or travelled away. However, these changes in my life brought new friendships, some of which developed from a strong initial attraction, and others that developed from acquaintance as we spent more time together. I know some friendships did not endure because neither of us worked at maintaining contact, and other friendships have endured over many years even with occasional contact. It has been evident that there are

stages in friendship and in the next section I review research that describes these stages.

### *Stages and Processes of Friendship*

The theories of friendship describe the benefits to us individually, to our friends, and to our communities and societies. To us, the temporal nature of friendship is evident in that friendship is changing and dynamic (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996); a number of developmental theories are concerned with stages and changes in relationships over time, the building of relationships, and their life cycle. Researchers have created typologies based on empirical studies to show levels and stages of developing, for example, friendship ranging from “acquaintance” to “best friends” with stages of “friends” and “close friends” in between (Fehr, 1996). In studying dyadic pairings, particularly romantic relationships, Levinger (1979) studied adult relationships and his four-stage typology saw “marriage” as the fourth and ultimate stage. The first category can be non-reciprocal but both parties, with the category of “best friend” inferring greater intimacy, must desire the latter three. He later presented his developmental theory and included children, describing relationship building and particularly heterosexual marriage as a “long term temporal process” that he calls the ABCDE model. This “life” of a friendship has five stages – Attraction; Building the relationship; Continuation; Decline or Deterioration; and Ending. The beginning foundational stage is dependent on proximity and opportunity, which for children is often facilitated by adults, through a build up stage to moderate closeness and a settling in phase. The process may conclude with a stage of deterioration as the friends may grow apart and have different needs, to a final drifting apart, sometimes through disenchantment by one of the friends, or a moving away to another town, class, or school (Levinger, 1983).

Although friendships go through stages in their formation, it should not be implied that all relationships must reach the “final stage” or that a relationship has failed if it does not reach “best friend” status, or if the process is slower than for others (Duck, 1977). This process also depends on our past experiences of relationships and expectations of a prospective relationship (Duck, 1977). The development of reaching the next stage thus depends on the skills of each person to make the most of opportunities to meet with people, and to encourage, develop, and maintain friendships (Duck, 1991) and the development of reciprocity of liking and attraction. Thus, not all social relationships result in friendships. Lack of opportunity may result in a potential friendship remaining, at the least, as an acquaintance. Fehr (1996) recognises that it is not just personal skills that guide a person through stages of friendship, but that there are external factors that impact on the process. Although her studies focus on the processes of adult relationships, she does make some connections to children and adolescents. She describes the process of moving from the acquaintance stage and the formation of friendship as dependent on environmental factors such as physical proximity, individual factors of physical attractiveness, social skills, responsiveness and similarity; situational factors such as opportunity and frequency of meeting as well as availability; and factors related to reciprocity.

Furthermore, O’Brien and O’Brien (1993, p.12) cite Hunt’s (1991) four dimensions, or elements of friendship which are: attraction - that which brings friends together; embodiment - the ways people enact a friendship; power - the choices and accommodations people make in a relationship; and community - the friendships in a wider context. These elements are not intended to define friendship but simply identify important elements. O’Brien and O’Brien (1993) apply these dimensions in their work with people with severe disabilities and state:

These dimensions of friendship matter particularly for people with developmental disabilities because the social construction of disability can make friendship particularly difficult for them [despite the fact that] people with developmental disabilities have just as much capacity for friendship as other people do. (p. 13)

The social construction of disability is a relevant and important concept in understanding how the socio-cultural context shapes social relationships and friendships in schools so I discuss this later in the review.

The nature and process of developing friendships is complex. Theorists and researchers acknowledge there are different kinds, elements, and purposes of friendship, and that friendships develop in different ways and under different conditions, and for varying amounts of time. The classical theories and the more contemporary theories, which generally describe the nature and stages of adult friendships, raised questions for me about the nature of friendships of children, and specifically the nature of the friendships of the adolescents with disabilities in my research study, and whether these theories and stages characterised their relationships. In the next two sections, I review empirical research on the general nature of the friendships of children and adolescents and consider the role of the school as a socio-cultural contextual factor in shaping relationships, followed by an exploration of what we know about the friendships of children and adolescents with disabilities within the sociology of childhood.

*Young children's friendships.* Very early descriptions of friendship were of those between adults: usually men of social standing, marriage, or the relationship between a parent and a child (Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero). In early research, friendships of children were ignored as they were seen as less important than the parent-child relationship (Furnham, 1989), however, later research demonstrated that healthy peer interactions are important for developing "normal" social, emotional, and intellectual abilities (Rourke,

Bakker, Fisk, & Strang, 1983) with emotional learning being central to children's everyday lives and relationships (Bendelow & Mayall, 2002). Early empirical research into children's social relationships occurred internationally and used observational methods, sociometry and experimental approaches, often in "unnatural contexts" (e.g. Buhler, 1930; Lewin, 1931; Moreno, 1934; Murphy, 1937; Piaget, 1932, all cited in Renshaw, 1981). Later methods included listening to children's conversations (Parker & Gottman, 1989) and the use of friendship quality scales (Bukowski, Boivin, & Hoza, 1994).

Just as research into the types and stages of adult friendship was advanced, theories about the temporal and developmental nature of children's friendships began to emerge. Stages of friendships at different ages were described with defining characteristics, for example, young school children tend to make friends with other children who give them things and who play together; propinquity is important however, with age, children change their ideas about what friendship mean (Kerns, 1996). Loyalty and commitment become important with similarity of attitudes, values, and potential for self-disclosure and intimacy characterising pre adolescent friendships (Berndt, 1982; Bigelow, 1977; Bigelow & LaGaipa, 1975). Friendships are less stable in childhood than in adolescence (Berndt, 1982); to be able to develop social understanding and make friends, children must develop from an egocentric viewpoint to seeing others' viewpoints and empathise, realising that friendships can endure over time (Staub, 1998). This temporal quality of friendship had been also recognised by Furnham (1989) who averred that it takes time to move from the immediate and concrete relationship of childhood to a relationship of mutual sharing and intimacy of adolescence. Furthermore, Shulman, Elicker, and Sroufe (1994) suggest that the quality of early parent-child interaction influences the ability to form friendships in pre-adolescence, and that a history of secure early attachment carries over to meaningful interdependent relationships with friends.

Children may choose friends who are similar to themselves, or develop relationships where partners “view each other as equals”, or relationships where “partners are not on an equal footing” (Farmer & Farmer, 1996, p. 433). These different processes result in a range of social positions and friendship profiles over time although friendships tend to be formed between people at the same stage and age (Garrett, 1989). Reciprocal liking and ego reinforcement does not change with age, however friendship involves more than these factors; a working interpersonal relationship is assumed (Bigelow, 1977) which involves competence in social skills. As children move to adolescence, the nature of their friendships changes.

*Adolescents' friendships.* Adolescence is a time of change and growth physically, cognitively, and socially as adolescents develop an identity, and increased independence that widens their social world (Anderson & Clarke, 1982; Field, Hoffman, & Posch, 1997; Smith, T.E.C., 1997). The transition from childhood to adulthood is culturally and socially contextualised with varying degrees of autonomy and independence (Berk, 1999; Brannen, 1996; Foreman, 2005); a successful transition is marked by the development of self-determination as identities are realised (Field et al., 1997).

With increasing independence from family, peers become increasingly important, and intimacy and loyalty begin to define adolescents' friendships (Bigelow & LaGaipa, 1975; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). Close friendships provide opportunities to develop self-esteem and a positive self-concept, develop understanding of another person, help deal with the stresses of change in adolescence, and influence adolescents' attitudes to school (Berk, 1999). Thus friendships play an important role in adolescent development serving six functions: companionship, stimulation, physical support, ego support, social comparison, and intimacy and reflection (Santrock, 2001). The most important obligation in adolescent friendships is to provide emotional support (Smollar & Youniss, 1982).

Joining formal groups, such as sports teams, drama groups, Scouts, or informal groups of peers, such as a crowd or a clique, is a characteristic of adolescent relationships. These groupings exert power as they establish norms and roles determining how adolescents should behave, and in these structures provide a setting to learn both negative and positive social skills (Crosnoe & Needham, 2004). These groups differ from children's groups as they involve a broader array of members and provide greater opportunity to develop closer, more intimate relationships (Santrock, 2001). Brown (1989) differentiates between cliques and crowds and notes that cliques are small "interaction-based" peer groups in which adolescents form close relationships; they may be exclusive. He defines "crowds" as larger groups based on reputation of similarly stereotyped individuals, for example, "Populars", "Nerds", or "Druggies." The power of these groupings serves to exclude and marginalise those students who do not conform or who do not "fit" the norms or stereotypes, reflecting a society where dominant groups hold power and enjoy the benefits of social, economic and political advantage by establishing subordinate groups based on social class, ethnicity, and gender (Massey, Coxon, & Marshall, 1994), and I add, disability.

Gender affiliation has been identified in some studies, for example, Staub (1998) describes some cross gender friendships in elementary school but Schnorr (1997) notes that friendships in high school are the same gender and same race. The preference for same sex friends is heightened in adolescence (Garrett, 1989), although same sex relationships are less intimate than in later adolescence (Berndt, 1982); in early adolescence there is some gender difference with girls seeming to have more intimate and exclusive friendships than boys. Female adolescent close friendships are characterised by shared activities, mutual intimacy and understanding, acceptance and respect for differences of opinion, with a wide range of topics for discussion. Many male adolescents' close friendships follow a similar pattern but in their research,

Youniss and Smollar (1985) found that 30% of males who participated in shared activities were guarded in their communication rather than intimate, were intolerant rather than understanding, and had a limited range of topics for discussion. They saw themselves in relationships as criticised, distrustful, insensitive, and selfish, as opposed to the openness and accepting relationships of their female peers.

As I reflected on this literature and the patterns of friendship that emerge in adolescence it became apparent that school is a context, and an important factor, in the process of developing friendship. My research comes from my pedagogic interest as a teacher. Although I wanted to explore the friendships of adolescents in and out of the school context, this necessitated an exploration of the school landscape to answer questions about how schools are influential in the development of social relationships and friendships of their pupils. In the next section I review literature about the role of schools as a contextual factor in the socialisation process and later in the chapter when I explore issues relating to inclusive education, I consider the role of inclusive schools as an integral part of the socio-cultural context.

*Role of schools.* Because children spend a great deal of their time in school settings, the role of schools is an important factor in social learning and the socialisation of children and youth (Simeonsson Carlson, Huntington, McMillen, & Brent, 2001). A study of the literature affirms that schools have a broader function than just academic learning; social learning is important for individuals and for the wider community and social skills are essential to a productive and satisfying educational experience: “They are the building blocks on which a child’s academic success and emotional wellbeing are founded” (Siperstein & Rickards, 2004, p. 1).

The primary function of the school is to provide children with skills for a productive adult life (Haring, 1991), and to enable young people to move from the security and support of home into responsible and productive

citizenship, however, knowing how to behave towards others, and what one's responsibility is to the community is also important (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). School is accredited with a vital role because, "What today's children and youth learn in school will directly affect the future they create for themselves, for others around them, and for all of us in this global community" (York-Barr, Schultz, Doyle, Kronberg, & Crossett, 1996, p. 104). Societies have a responsibility to prepare their members with the necessary skills to replace those who die and carry out the adult roles necessary for survival and renewal, and to this end modern societies rely on social institutions such as schools to carry out the socialisation role (Pallas, 1993). Pallas clearly places social learning within the responsibilities of the school and states that "schooling is a social activity" (p. 409) where teaching academic knowledge is important, but developing social and emotional security is also an important task. This affective curriculum that includes intrinsic motivation, internal locus of control, positive self-concepts and self-esteem, competence and confidence, and a willingness to take risks, is equally as important, thus teachers have a responsibility to teach in a positive environment that facilitates the development of these factors (Ellis, 1998).

The implication of these studies is for teachers to recognise the dual importance of academic and social learning. Thomas, Bax, and Smyth (1989, p. 124) asserted that, "Forming friendships is a major aspect of going to school" and other researchers studied how the skills we need to initiate, develop, and sustain friendships are learned (Duck, 1991). It is not just a matter of creating a positive environment; social learning is a learned behaviour and we learn how to make friends and sustain social relationships in the classroom and at school (Staub, 1998). Children acquire social behaviours by exposure to models at school, and by watching others perform those behaviours (Smith, A.B., 1998). Such learning is grounded in Vygotsky's social constructivist model and Bandura's model of social learning. For most of us we initially

learn these skills in a family setting as we interact with parents, siblings and extended family, and friends, and later in a school context. To complement their academic function, schools have social aims with the majority reflecting the societies in which they are situated. Societies comprise a diversity of people, perspectives and values, and schools are a context for children to learn the skills to enable them to live fulfilling lives in the “outside world” beyond the school gates. These include interpersonal skills to ensure people with disabilities can survive in the community (Murray-Seegert, 1989), thus in schools, “Students may be learning a lesson in humanity that is difficult to teach”(Lusthaus, Gazith, & Lusthaus, 1992, p. 304). The middle school children in Chadsey and Han’s (2005) study of middle school children suggested a number of strategies for their teachers to use. Teachers can create opportunities for children with and without disabilities to get to know each other by hanging out together, including being included in groups rather than being paired; give children without disabilities more information about their peers with disabilities; and have the children with disabilities tell their peers about their disabilities. Harriott and Martin (2004) also support the use of cooperative learning groups and culturally responsive activities to create social competence and classroom unity/community.

Factors in school settings influence the frequency and form of social interaction between peers (Jenkinson & Hall, 1999). Caring classroom communities will promote belonging and acceptance for everyone, and are places where peer interactions are as important as academic outcomes (Noddings, 1988; Sapon-Shevin, 1990b; Staub, 1998). Such environments will facilitate positive social relationships and thus positive affective development. This is part of the informal learning that takes place in schools (Rourke et al., 1983); in New Zealand it is also part of the formal learning that goes beyond the “socialisation” role that Pallas (1993) describes above. Brittain (2004) and Taub and Greer (2000) see physical education teachers as having a vital role in

including children with disabilities in physical activities to challenge the stereotypes within the minds of children. Positive experience of physical education and physical activities can have an empowering effect on children with disabilities –the responsibility for teachers is clear. In the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, 1993) “social and cooperative skills” are essential skills to be taught, and in the Health and Physical Education learning areas there is an emphasis on the importance of creating healthy social relationships for personal and community well being. The Social Science curriculum takes a broader view and describes the schools’ responsibilities to develop students’ abilities as citizens in a democratic society to think “critically about human behaviour”, with “concern for social justice and the welfare of others, [and] acceptance of cultural diversity” (MOE, 1993, p. 14). In the Draft Curriculum<sup>4</sup> (Ministry of Education, 2006a), relationships; identity, sensitivity, and respect; and interpersonal skills are the strands in the Health and Physical Education learning area; in the Social Sciences learning area the strand of social inquiry focuses on diversity in society. Relevant key competencies include managing self, relating to others, and participating and contributing.

Out of the classroom, extra curricular activities provide opportunities for children to meet and learn together, and influence the formation of friendships (Staub, 1998). Jones and Jones (1998) aver that the quality of peer relations is related to the extent to which students become involved at school, however this infers that it is primarily a student’s responsibility to be involved. My experience suggests that there are sometimes barriers in schools that discourage some children’s involvement including racism, sexism, and disablism; thus for children and adolescents with disabilities exclusion is the reality.

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<sup>4</sup> The new curriculum will be released in October, 2007.

The reviewed literature concurs that school is influential, and plays a significant role, in the process of developing social skills and social relationships, and importantly, in shaping the values of its future citizens. The wheel will come full circle and these values will create the socio-cultural contexts for schools and the subsequent inclusion/exclusion of all/some of their students. The reviewed empirical research, and the empirical research undertaken for this thesis, explores and examines the friendships between children and adolescents without disabilities and those who have disabilities on school landscapes and identifies categories of friendships and the factors that promote or deter friendship formation. When I talked to adolescents with disabilities about their relationships at school, I was interested in the broad nature and range of relationships they had: whether they were with peers who have disabilities, or with peers who do not, and whether the “traditional” friendship patterns for children and adolescents that have been reviewed characterise the friendships of my participants, or if there are different patterns.

### *Friendships of Children and Adolescents with Disabilities*

The preceding section outlined research that pertained to children and adolescents generally. My study investigated the experiences of students with disabilities, so now I examine research that focuses specifically on the friendships and social relationships of children and adolescents with disabilities with their peers who have, or do not have, disabilities. A recent overview of the research on social relationships between children/adolescents and their peers without disabilities in inclusive settings concludes that the research is “patchy, limited in context, and non-linear in its development” (Webster & Carter, 2007, p. 200).

### *Relationships between Children with and without Disabilities*

Accepting relationships characterise positive social interactions that may or may not develop into friendships. An accepting relationship between children with and without disabilities is one where difference is not denied, so does not have a stigmatising effect. In adults, acceptance may be based on family, religious or humanitarian grounds (Bogdan & Taylor, 1992; Taylor & Bogdan, 1989), however Asher and Williams (1987, cited in Coie, 1990, p. 374) claim that children implicitly ask six core questions when considering acceptance of peers: Is the other person fun to be with? Trustworthy? Similar to me: homophily? Does this child facilitate and not undermine my goals? Make me feel good about myself? Do we influence each other in ways I like? Coie (1990) suggests some children may be rejected because the disability might be socially embarrassing; aggressive, disruptive, and withdrawn children may be rejected. As a group, peers treat rejected and unpopular children differently with more social contact with popular children, and aggressive and aversive behaviour towards rejected children (Hymel, Wagner, & Butler, 1990); children who tend to be popular or rejected maintain that social status, even with a change of classmates or from year to year (Bryan, 1976).

In order to develop peer relationships that lead to friendship, children need to be involved in a range of everyday social interactions. Richardson and Schwartz (1998) identified five types of relationships of children with and without disabilities, aged 3-12 years old, in inclusive settings; play/companionship, helper, helpee, peer/reciprocal, and conflictual. The peer/ reciprocal relationship was not observed in preschool settings but began to emerge in elementary school. Each of these types of relationships offers different developmental opportunities (Grenot-Scheyer, Fisher, & Staub, 2001). Elements of these relationships are also evident in the friendships of

adolescents. Siperstein, Leffert, and Wenz-Gross (1997) concluded that dyadic friendships between children with and without learning disabilities differ from the friendships between children without disabilities, through limited collaboration and shared decision making, and a low level of cooperative play and shared laughter. They also have an asymmetrical, hierarchical division of roles. The authors suggest that these differences may be related to social skills deficiencies in the child with disabilities, and expectations held by the child without disabilities.

Friendships are placed in a temporal context: "The experience of developing and maintaining friendships... is a developmental process that occurs through childhood" (Richardson & Schwartz, 1998, p. 65). Thus, as with all relationships, the relationships between children with and without disabilities change across the years from childhood to adulthood, highlighting the temporal dimension in relationships. Changes reflect that friendship and other social relationships serve different functions throughout childhood and adolescence (Grenot-Scheyer, Harry, Park, Schwartz, & Meyer, 1998). The patterns of schooling at primary and secondary school differ, with decreased opportunity for social interaction in secondary in comparison to primary. Because there is greater proximity in primary school, there is more evidence of social interaction between children with and without disabilities (Meyer & Putnam, 1988). I explore the role of proximity after discussing the relationships of adolescents.

### ***Relationships between Adolescents with and without Disabilities***

The transition to secondary school is marked by both anxiety and excitement for all adolescents, particularly in relation to friendship, and recognises the importance of friendships during a challenging period in their lives (Weller, 2007). Adolescents with disabilities have the same desires and

needs for friendship as their peers without disabilities, and secondary education can provide a context to encourage independence and develop social relationships (Thomas et al., 1989). For example, “hanging out with friends” typically illustrates that for adolescents, school is a social phenomenon (Ellis, 1998).

In a large research study in New York City that surveyed 492 students from third grade to through high school, Weiserbs and Gottlieb (2000) reported that students without disabilities are more likely to befriend students who have temporary disabilities rather than more permanent as the condition is seen as less threatening. They suggest that, “minimizing the pervasive impact of the disability may serve to improve social relations among children” (p. 345).

For adolescents with disabilities, the changes associated with adolescence can be compounded by an “already problematic life” (Smith, T.E.C., 1997, p. 258). Disability can be regarded as a risk factor affecting non-academic outcomes (Morrison & Cosden, 1997). Such confounding factors may be the nature of their disability, stigmatisation, and problems with family as adolescents seek more independence. Barnes (1990); and Field et al., (1997), maintain that the inability of schools to accommodate these students’ needs is a characteristic of non-inclusive schools and another contributing factor to poor social outcomes. Such factors above may be exacerbated by a growing sense of difference between the adolescent with disabilities and peers without disabilities, as plans are made for the future (Thomas, 1982, cited in Barnes, 1990, p. 97). Some parents of adolescents with disabilities may resist the striving for independence and continue to do too much for their child. Doing less could increase the adolescents’ self-confidence and self-respect (Anderson & Clarke, 1982); however, for some adolescents with severe/profound disabilities, independence may not be a realistic goal.

The adolescents' sense of self as they move from secondary school is influenced by the support they have received from parents and school personnel, but importantly, the friends they have. This social support also affects their ability to cope with stress (Whitney-Thomas & Moloney, 2001). Social competence, based on a need for social and emotional security, is an important factor in the success of people with disabilities in work settings (Black & Langone, 1997; Ellis, 1998). However, there is debate over effective ways to develop social competence - direct teaching of social skills, manipulating the environment, and /or creating a facilitative environment based on the ecological model. I examine these three options later in the chapter.

Because of the variables of proximity, opportunity, and facilitation, there can be a range of social relationships in secondary schools, with some of these developing into close friendships. Inclusion seems to be easier at the primary school level than the secondary perhaps because of fewer constraints, such as a grade level curriculum, and the pedagogical approaches of secondary teachers (Meyer, 1996). Secondary schools have been much slower in moving towards and developing inclusive classrooms (Cole & McLeskey, 1997), and there is a perception that secondary schools by retaining their traditional structures and practices are slower than primary schools to change and embrace inclusive ideologies and practices (Thousand, Rosenberg, Bishop, & Villa, 1997). In secondary schools, students are expected to use their skills to learn information, and because secondary teachers work with large numbers of different students each day, contact time is more limited than in the primary school context (Schumaker & Deshler, 1994/5). An international study of 30 Western countries by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (EADSNE)( 2003, cited in Peters, 2007, pp. 123-124) concluded that there are a number of problems developing inclusive schools in secondary education compared to primary education. These include “

insufficient teacher training, less positive teacher attitudes, an increasing achievement gap between SEN [Special Educational Needs] students and their peers, increased academic subject specialization and different school organization" (p. 124). In a traditional model, teachers at the secondary level who are recruited and trained as subject specialists, tend to have teacher-centred classrooms and didactic instruction addressed to large groups with infrequent differentiation for individual needs (Schumaker & Deshler, 1988), and so to include inclusive practices will require critique of traditional pedagogical models (Thousand et al., 1997). Furthermore, organisational features of most secondary schools (e.g. individual timetables, changing classrooms, and multiple teachers) can hinder the development of peer relationships and thus also need critical analysis (Schnorr, 1997).

The research internationally and nationally describes however, a variety of mainstreaming/integration/inclusion options in secondary schools ranging from separate classrooms on site with little social contact with the students in the host school, to inclusion in all classes. Increased frequency and number of contacts between students with and without disabilities in mainstream classes enables "interactions to become commonplace" (Fisher, Pumpian, & Sax, 1998, p. 278), and enables children to develop social networks and the opportunity to extend acquaintance relationships into friendships (Helmstetter, Peck, & Giangreco, 1994; Hendrickson, Shokoohi-Yekta, Hamre-Nietupski, & Gable, 1996; Kennedy & Itkonen, 1994). This process takes time (Schnorr, 1997) but does enable students with disabilities to improve their social competence skills (Cole & Meyer, 1991). If a student is in class for some subjects or withdrawn for individual help during class, it can be difficult for teacher and student to get to know each other. Teachers may regard such students with disabilities as not "real" students and focus on only social goals. Absences from class can also impede the development of relationships and progress towards social goals (Smith, R.M., 1997). For

friendships to develop, students need to be connected with a subgroup of peers, other than informal interactions related to class activities and routines. These informal interactions enable students with disabilities to be noticed by their peers with positive characteristics identified (Schnorr, 1997). Getting connected to a subgroup is a priority that requires initiative and an active participatory role. Many students with disabilities need help with these steps by facilitative teachers (Schnorr, 1997; Williams & Downing, 1998) though Farlow (1996, p. 53) reminds us that, "The greatest resources for inclusion in high schools are non-disabled students with maturity and creativity."

*Six frames of friendship.* An important contribution to the literature on the friendships and social relationships is the work of Meyer and her colleagues (1998). In their participatory research with adolescents, the researchers followed a large national sample of teenagers in a variety of communities throughout the US for five years. They used quantitative and qualitative methods of surveys, observations, and interviews in school, community, and work sites to assess the nature of their relationships. A range of social relationships is described between students with and without severe disabilities. This "frames" perspective addresses the issue of viewing friendships from a model other than a traditional one. They purport that in all settings children fit into six friendship frames: Best Friends; Regular Friend; Just Another Kid; I'll Help; Inclusion Child; and Ghost/Guest (Meyer et al., 1998). "Best Friends" are the ones to whom we tell our intimate thoughts and worries (Hartup, 1993). Such friendships often last for several years but may break up without the opportunities to nurture the relationship. Many Best Friend relationships are formed through proximity such as children being in the same class from an early age, or with friendships often being facilitated by parents (Fisher & Frey, 2001; Hall & McGregor, 2000; Staub, 1998). Best friendships may develop from those who are "Regular Friends."

When children with disabilities are in the classroom all day, they are often regarded as “Just Another Kid” with interactions being a natural part of the class programme. These are acquaintances rather than Regular Friends relationships, where helping each other may be the norm for all the children in the class (Fisher & Frey, 2001). The general atmosphere of the school and the classroom programme facilitates this relationship informally where cooperative learning and positive teacher modelling are occurring (Pavri & Mond-Amaya, 2001; Sapon-Shevin, 1990a; Staub, Schwartz, Galluci, & Peck, 1994).

Best Friends and other class members may also be involved in a helping role (“I’ll Help”). This can be as part of the Just Another Kid frame (Fisher & Frey, 2001), and as Staub (1998) suggests from her research into the friendships of young children, may be altruistically motivated and part of a reciprocal friend relationship; it may not be reciprocal, but the relationship must not be taken advantage of or it will not continue to be a friendship. A three year study in Australia that involved observing primary students with disabilities in different settings, including playgrounds, noted that patterns of social relationships where helping could be related to pity may indicate a lack of teacher facilitation with little contact with peers, and so the child maybe regarded as, “He (sic) is an integration kid” (Hall, 1994, p. 310); this status is labelled the “Inclusion Kid” in the six frames model (Meyer et al., 1998). In the settings that support this frame, a lot of the interaction is between the child with a disability and adults, often a teacher aide, which inhibits the child-child interaction and results in indifferent interactions or a “feeling sorry for” response (Jenkinson & Hall, 1999).

In classrooms where children are partially included, some friendships are formed with facilitation, but children are often regarded as a “Guest” or the Inclusion Kid (York, Vandercook, MacDonald, Heise-Neff, & Caughey, 1992). In Schnorr’s (1990) study, Peter was a guest in the classroom and was

seen as part of the segregated class where he spent most of his time and this precipitated her use of "Peter, he comes and he goes" (p. 231) as the title for her article. Her observations provide evidence that partially integrated students are often less frequently accepted and more frequently rejected than their peers without disabilities. Severity of disability does not affect the positive formation of friends as often students with severe disabilities are regarded more sympathetically than students with mild disabilities; rejection is usually related more to disruptive behaviour (Grenot-Scheyer, 1994; Roberts & Zubrick, 1992). In New Zealand, the use of the term "host" school to describe the school where Special Education Units are situated seems to condone this Guest frame.

Much of the research has focused on students with severe disabilities and/or learning difficulties using observation by researchers, surveys, and/or interviews with peers who do not have disabilities. Similarly, Meyer et al.'s (1998) research studied the relationships of students with significant intellectual disabilities ("target" students) and students without disabilities. Because of the severity of the disabilities, most interviews involved students without disabilities, teacher, parents, and paraprofessionals. The focus of my study involving students with physical disabilities is to hear them talk about their experiences and I wanted to explore whether the six frames model was relevant to the experiences of my participants, in another cultural context. Schnorr (1990) supports the use of the students' voice as "students are the only legitimate source for some of the answers we need for understanding and promoting school inclusion, because it is their world, not ours that defines it" (p. 240).

*"Helping" relationships.* A helping relationship can be a feature of traditional reciprocal friendships, however, in the six frames model "I'll Help" can be manifested in less reciprocal ways. In elementary/primary and middle schools, friendships of children with and without disabilities may be

limited to friends of the same age because of same age classrooms and thus proximity, whereas in adolescence the age range may vary. As noted earlier, children aged five until pre-adolescence are most likely to be attracted to peers who are similar to themselves or who have similar needs such as companionship (Staub, 1998). However, some relationships in early primary school are non-reciprocal and take the nature of a helping relationship based on mutual interests and compatibility (Jenkinson & Hall, 1999). Van der Klift and Kunc (1994) discuss the "politics of helping" and suggest that "helping" can mean unnatural attention for the child with a disability, can highlight "inferiority", and can have negative effects on the "helped" child such as low self esteem. These interactions may reflect a charity style of relating and characterise a subtle denial of dignity and respect (Rietveld, 1999).

Often friendships in the primary years of children with and without disabilities begin as children without disabilities help their peers with disabilities and find that it is a pleasurable experience. With age, this relationship may develop into a more caregiving role, thus "the changing roles may occur because of developmental differences between the children with and without disabilities and/or the expectations of the adults" (Grenot-Scheyer, Staub, Peck, & Schwartz, 1998, p. 153); this can result in personal conflict for the child without disabilities (Kishi & Meyer, 1994). When older children without disabilities befriend younger children with disabilities, a hierarchical pattern in roles is likely to emerge. Lewis (1995) observed children without disabilities addressing children with disabilities, while involved in an activity, in a manner they would use to address a younger child (see also Meyer et al., 1998).

The research discussed earlier suggests that "traditional" friendship patterns of children without disabilities may not be a useful way to view the friendships of children with disabilities and has recognised that there is a hierarchical range of friendships between children with and without

disabilities depending on age, environmental conditions, and socio-cultural factors such as racism, sexism, gender, and disablism, all intersecting with normalising processes of dominant groups in socio-cultural contexts.

These overseas studies identify possible barriers to interaction and support the development of inclusive schools to support the development of reciprocal friendships and social relationships between students with and without disabilities.

**Reciprocity.** Proximity is necessary for making new friends, and equity theorists support the view that reciprocity is a characteristic of traditional friendships. However, after observing relationships between verbal and non-verbal children, Salisbury and Palombaro (1998) concluded that the focus of study needs to move away from observing relationships between children with and without disabilities from a traditional perspective. Instead, in the friendships between children with and without disabilities, reciprocity may take a more subtle form such as a smile or vocalisation of excitement. For the child without a disability the perceived benefit may be the satisfaction of social responsibility. Harry, Park, and Day (1998) also questioned the traditional notion of reciprocity “in the context where one individual is vastly more competent than the other” (p. 394), as based on a model of friendship of peers without disabilities. They suggest a wider conceptualisation of possible close friendships (e.g. cross-age and with other people with disabilities) and accommodation of the contribution of adult support.

Empirical research has explored factors that influence the formation and sustainability of friendships such as proximity and a number of other factors.

**Proximity.** Proximity is a factor that researchers pinpoint as being necessary for, but not a determinant of social interaction. Proximity affects relationships; the changes in friendship and social relationships of children with and without disabilities are related to developmental patterns, and

environmental conditions (Epstein, 1989) including proximity and context (Grenot-Scheyer, Staub et al., 1998), opportunity, setting, supports, and time (Grenot-Scheyer, Harry et al., 1998) and adult mediation (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001).

Proximity can involve being in the same class or neighbourhood, so changing classes or moving away can mean the end of some friendships. If children are educated in special education units within schools that are far from the child's neighbourhood, proximity and opportunities to develop friendships with local children are limited. This is more apparent in the friendships of young children. Children with chronic health problems resulting in high absenteeism through frequent hospitalisation will have fewer opportunities to form close relationships (Shute, 1998). This can lead to being perceived as less preferred playmates (Noll, LeRoy, Bukowski, Rogosch & Kulkani, 1991, cited in Shute, 1998, p.138).

In adolescence, with increasing independence, proximity becomes less important (Staub, 1998) and is broadened to a wider context, for example, work and recreation settings (Grenot-Scheyer, Harry et al., 1998); however adolescents with severe disabilities with less independence than their peers without disabilities may need adult or peer intervention to facilitate opportunities to mix with others.

*Other factors.* Earlier in this review I noted Fehr's (1996) observation that reminds us there is a range of personal and external factors that impact on the process of developing friendships. Some of these such as reciprocity and proximity have been outlined and in this section I review some more factors.

Some personal factors identified by the research which influence the development of friendships between children with disabilities and children without disabilities, are trait characteristics such as behaviour and personality (Bryan, 1976; Salisbury & Palombaro, 1998), repertoire of skills (Grenot-

Scheyer et al., 2001), physical attractiveness (Coie, 1990; Kleck, Richardson, & Ronald, 1974), and attitude and personal values (Staub, 1998). The latter can inform processes of labelling (Bryan, 1976). and longstanding prejudices (Rosetti & Tashie, 2001); factors that are shaped by environmental conditions (Roberts & Lindsell, 1997). Some of these factors are shaped by environmental conditions that “disable” children by failing to accommodate their needs. This social model of disability is discussed later in this chapter. However, personal factors and supportive environmental conditions can develop personal agency whereby children can shape their own relationships and are seen as active, rather than passive, participants in their lives, forming and sustaining positive social relationships. Davis and Watson (2001, p. 672) describe children with personal agency as “critical social actors” who contest social perceptions and barriers. Similarly, Kelly (2005) describes children with disabilities who as “competent social actors ... resist dominant discourses and create their own discursive spaces based on their own analyses and experiences” thus becoming “active agents in the construction and reconstruction of their own identity” (p. 263). Some children without disabilities in Chadsey and Han’s (2005) study mentioned that students with disabilities need to assume some responsibility for the friendship process - personal agency.

Behavioural characteristics where some children display behaviour that is not positive may mean that opportunities for friendship are lost (Grenot-Scheyer, Harry et al., 1998). Many children with autism have a lack of social and communicative gestures and utterances such as smiles and vocalisation. Social avoidance is a characteristic reinforced by failure in social situations where children with autism fail to understand what is expected of them (Hurley-Geffner, 1995). Temple Grandin’s autobiographical account supports the empirical findings and provides a personal “voice.” She remembers,

As a child, I was like an animal that had no instincts to guide me ...I was always observing, trying to work out the best way to behave, but I never fit in. I had to think about every social interaction. (Grandin, 1995, p.132)

Developmental changes in social relationships can be changes from simple interactions in young children to more complex interactions, as they grow older (Grenot-Scheyer, Harry et al., 1998). As stage theorists purport, just as friendships have a "life", the process of establishing friendship frames can change with age (Hall & McGregor, 2000). Friendships in young children are not stable, as children's interests change although there is an increase in stability with age with long lasting relationships occurring in adolescence as children learn to resolve conflict (Epstein, 1989). As children move from elementary school to high school, relationships are often not maintained and children no longer interact with the same people (Kishi & Meyer, 1994), because as previously discussed, the organisation of secondary schools can also hinder the development of peer relationships (Schnorr, 1997).

If it is accepted that friendships are a positive factor in our lives, as my initial discussion indicates, I wonder what will be the consequences if children and adolescents do not have positive relationships. As I reflected on Guy's experience of secondary school I was concerned that he was excluded and did not have close friends and I wondered if he felt lonely and if we as teachers could have been more proactive in encouraging and shaping positive social networks and extending his social supports.

*Rejection, neglect, and social isolation.* "Social networks" made up of an individual's social relationships are differentiated from "social supports" where an individual feels valued and cared for by a group of people. Both play a role in acquiring social competence, and are linked to a positive self-concept; conversely, a lack of connectedness to a social network and inadequate social contacts can result in emotional and social isolation and

loneliness (Pavri & Monda-Amaya, 2001). Farmer and Farmer (1996) also made this differentiation describing social networks as “the social position of individuals and their peer groups within a broader social system e.g., classroom or school” (p. 433), or who mixes with whom. Based on observation and interviews that included students with disabilities, Kennedy and Itkonen (1994) analysed the social contact occurrences of three high school students with disabilities in Hawaii during one school year, and argued that social networks develop from social contacts in classes when through extended periods of time such as in inclusive classrooms, acquaintances may become friends. They defined social support as “the processes of social exchange e.g. ...reciprocity...that contribute to the development of individual’s behaviour patterns, social cognitions and values” (p. 433). Because the students in their study only participated in regular classes for one period each school day, their findings may not generalise to more inclusive school contexts.

Friendship is important in fulfilling basic needs such as social acceptance, intimacy, sexual relations, companionship, and tenderness, so that inability to forge close friendships can lead to loneliness and negative concepts of self worth (Sullivan, 1953). Positive relations with peers are important as sources of support, particularly when students experience school-related stresses such as failing, trouble with the teacher, and bullying (Geisthardt & Munsch, 1996). Consequently, developing friendship in primary school is vital. If peers reject a child at an early age, the rejected child is robbed of important positive learning experiences (Coie, 1990) and opportunities to develop social capital (Weller, 2007). Some children are not actively rejected however, they may be reasonably well liked but lack friends, and are described as “neglected” with few direct social overtures and little social support (Salisbury & Palombaro, 1998, p. 95). These situations may be exacerbated by a lack of responsiveness by the child with the disability, lack of interest in others, and the difficulties peers face in interacting with the child

with the disability because of challenging behaviour (Attwood, 2000; Salisbury & Palombaro, 1998).

Poor peer relationships and/or the end of a close friendship could be contributing external factors for depression and suicide in adolescents (Santrock, 2001). Although social integration is a major goal of inclusion, children with disabilities are reported as experiencing social isolation in inclusive settings, resulting in loneliness and depression. This may be caused by poor social skills that results in a lack of friends, or may inhibit the development of positive relationships because of depression (Furnham, 1989; Heiman & Margalit, 1998); Pavri and Mond-Amaya (2001) report that children in primary school can also experience loneliness. Bender and Wall's (1994) holistic model of emotional, social, and behavioural development recognises that a deficit in one aspect may result in loneliness and depression, thus negative peer relations, caused by a deficit in social skills, can be regarded as a risk factor in developing depression and maladaptive coping styles, for example, delinquency and bullying (Furnham, 1989). Low global self-concept combined with low academic self-concept may combine with negative emotional wellbeing, with subsequent increased risk for loneliness, severe depression, and suicide (Bender & Wall, 1994; Huntingdon & Bender, 1993), and school dropout and delinquency (Bender, Rosenkrans, & Crane, 1999; Morrison & Cosden, 1997). This appears to be a greater risk for adolescents with learning disabilities than adolescents without disabilities, regardless of placement setting (Maag & Behrens, 1989).

### *Changing Paradigms*

There is a tendency in research on disabilities to “blame the victim,” and this reflects a functional limitations or deficit model where students with disabilities are seen as lacking social skills and at “fault” for having no friends. This is the discourse of “personal tragedy” (Oliver, 1996). In this model, definitions of impairment and disability adhere to the World Health Organization (WHO) definitions whereby “impairment” is seen as “lacking part or all of a limb, or having a defective limb, organ or mechanism of the body,” and disability is defined as “any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being” (cited in Neilson, 2005, p. 11).

In contrast to that approach, the social model of disability is grounded in activism in the 1960s and 1970s that recognised that people with impairments are another socially oppressed group alongside women, black and ethnic minorities, and homosexuals (Barnes & Mercer, 2004). The social model of disability focuses on social and environmental barriers that “disable” people with impairments. This use of the terms impairment and disability contrasts with the individual functional limitations model where disability is viewed as personal tragedy and inherent in the individual (Oliver, 2004). The model helps us to understand disability from an alternative perspective (Barnes & Mercer, 2004), builds on a social constructionist theory accounting for the ways that reality is socially constructed (Florian, 2007), and helps to identify socially constructed disabling barriers with a focus on human rights and social justice. “Disability” is defined as social oppression caused by social organisation and discriminatory values, not as a form of impairment, that is, disability is socially and culturally constructed (Watson, 2004). Oliver sees the social model as “a practical tool” (p. 30) for challenging disablism rather than a theory, concept or idea; “a tool to produce social and political change” (p. 30). Reeve (2004) and Thomas (2004) extend this understanding to include the

psychoemotional impact that societal and structural barriers causing exclusion can bring such as rejection, isolation, bullying and lack of friends; societal barriers are apparent in social and cultural contexts (Bailey, 2004). Some researchers have used this “practical tool” to examine environmental barriers and develop frameworks for intervention that consider societal and structural barriers as well as the psychoemotional impact on children with impairments such as Baker and Donnelly (2001) and Pivik, McComas, and LaFlamme (2002). These frameworks are explored in more depth in later chapters.

The social model is important and useful for identifying barriers to inclusion for people with disabilities. Because of its focus on people with disabilities as a category, this model:

tells little of the actual experiences of living with an impairment or of the personal experiences of disablement, or of how disabled people feel about themselves...there is a danger that disabled people cease to be seen as individuals, as the commonality of their experiences is all-important. (Watson, 2004, p. 108)

It is useful therefore, to consider alongside the social model of disability, Bronfenbrenner’s (1977, 1979) ecological model which explores experiences within socio-cultural context of the child’s interactions and the social and cultural discourses in the macrosystem that impact on the child in the context/ecology/microsystems of their family and school. For the child with an impairment, this expanded view of the socio-cultural context sees a devaluing of disabled people with discrimination, exclusion and oppression (Oliver, 2004). Thus the ecological model complements the social model of disability as a strand of a social theory of disability. It enables a focus on individual experiences (Watson, 2004) as it explores the discourses and practices that may act as barriers to inclusion thus disabling children It also opens up the identifying of practices that enable or support children in a

socially relevant context/ecology: "Collecting and engaging with evidence within a school provides a means of surfacing taken for granted assumptions that may be the source of the barriers that some learners experience" (Ainscow, 2007, p. 157). To this end, Davis and Hogan (2004) support the contribution of children and young people in investigating crucial social issues in their lives. The interventions described in the next section reflect these changing paradigms.

### *Intervening to Shape Friendships of Children and Youth with Disabilities*

Research has evaluated the role of adults in intervening in the process of developing friendships and positive relationships. Significant others such as parents, teachers, and teacher aides play an important role in positively shaping friendships and social relationships of children and youth with disabilities. Although adults can also inhibit the development of social relationships and natural supports (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; Fisher, Sax, Rodifer, & Pumpian, 1999; Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli, & McFarland, 1997), research describes several approaches that have been used to develop social competence identified as important in developing enduring and meaningful relationships (Black & Langone, 1997; Ellis, 1998). Three common approaches are: social skills training (SST) which aims to remediate social competence deficits; a formal manipulation of the environment, for example, Circle of Friends; and a more ecological approach where the teacher identifies environmental barriers to friendship and subsequently facilitates social interaction in an inclusive environment using strategies such as cooperative learning and peer tutoring.

### *Intervening using a Social Skills Training Approach*

The social skills training approach is based on a medical model orientation where remediation and fixing the deficits of the child with a disability is the focus – i.e. ‘fixing up’ the child. Social skills training is based on an assumption that some children do not have friends because they lack certain social skills, with an emphasis on changing the child with disabilities, but does not consider the behaviour and attitudes of the child without disabilities; it is most often used in segregated settings. This approach involves adult mediation rather than facilitation. It involves the assessment of skills that are lacking (the deficit), and the planning and implementation of a programme to target these specific skills (Scanlon, 1996). The training must be intense and frequent if it is to have positive effects (Gresham, Sugai, & Horner, 2001), however, this approach often does not transfer to practice or address competing problem behaviours, and the social skills are not generalised or maintained, although some training emphasises trying new behaviours in real life situations (Thomas et al., 1989). There needs to be evaluation of the impact of the interventions on peers in terms of their increased willingness to interact with students with disabilities, and if there is increased social participation with the development of positive relationships; thus there needs to be increased focus on the skills needed for social participation (Haring, 1993).

However, the social skills training approach is simplistic and does not take into account other factors in forming friendships, for example, proximity and the opportunity to spend time together as many relationship skills can only be acquired in the context of a friendship (Hurley-Geffner, 1995). There is a difference between social skills training and interventions to improve friendships (Asher, Parker, & Walker, 1996), which are the focus of the following two approaches where social skills are learned in context.

### *Intervening by Manipulating the Environment*

Facilitation of positive social relationships and friendships in a more formal way is by manipulation of the environment by parents and teachers, for example, the Circle of Friends model where a group is organised by adults to “be friends” with a child with a disability (Long, 1999); peer buddies (Conway, 1999); the Special Friends model (Meyer & Putnam, 1998); the Supper Club (Evans & Meyer, 2001); and peer support programmes (Carter, Hughes, Guth, & Copeland, 2005).

“Special Friends” relationships are “closer” to “Best” friendships than peer tutoring relationships, which tend to be similar to a student-teacher relationship (Cole, Vandercook, & Rynders, 1988). Involvement in a Special Friends programme provided positive benefits for students without disabilities (Peck, Donaldson, & Pezzoli, 1990) though negative experiences for students without disabilities can result in negative attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities (Kishi & Meyer, 1994).

Uditsky (1993) challenges this facilitation approach as creating other dimensions such as volunteerism, continuity, and tensions of commitment, and favours establishing friendships through natural pathways as in an ecological model, however, Strully and Strully (1993) believe there is a place for this method of intentionally facilitating friendship and that “naturally” can lead to disconnectedness for many (Barringer, 1992) because it may not happen. Parents can also expose their children to a wide range of potential friends and find opportunities for social interaction (Turnbull, Pereira, & Blue-Banning, 1999).

### *An Ecological Approach*

In an inclusive school that works within the ecological model, teachers will be aware of some students’ vulnerability to loneliness, and be responsive

to their need for friendship (Staub, 1998). Out of this awareness, teachers must develop social supports and approaches to increase the social interaction of children and adolescents and establish social networks so children make friends and have satisfying social relationships. This approach supports inclusive education (which I will look at in more detail in the next section) and involves changing the environment with “do-able” interventions, rather than the explicit teaching of social skills (Meyer & Fisher, 1999). Strategies such as active facilitation of social interactions by using cooperative grouping, peer tutoring, collaborative problem solving and creating time and opportunity for interaction; “turning it over to the kids” to use their knowledge and creativity to interact; building community and a climate of caring for others; modelling acceptance; and creating organisational supports in the wider school settings, have been found to be effective in promoting social relations in primary school (Johnson & Johnson, 1980; Salisbury, Gallucci, Palombaro, & Peck, 1995). The classroom ecology, within the general atmosphere of the school, involving inclusive instructional arrangements and climate, and teacher behaviour, enables friendships to develop “naturally” in a child centred environment (Staub et al., 1994; Thorburn, 1999).

Enabling greater social interaction increases positive reciprocal interaction of peers and student-initiated interactions with the aim of establishing friendships. The increase in natural interaction through “contextual manipulation” and social support marks a decrease in assistive interactions with paraprofessionals (Hunt, Alwell, Farron-Davis, & Goetz, 1996). Excessive prolonged adult proximity can interfere with peer interactions however, so it is important that paraprofessionals stand back so students can respond to natural cues in the environment (Schnorr, Black, & Davern, 2000). The terms “natural” and “natural supports” are used in inclusive classrooms based on an ecological model, and refer to an

environment where it is “natural” (as in usual/“normal”) for children without disabilities to get support from the teacher and their peers, whereas traditionally, children with disabilities get support from teacher aides. The ecological approach aims to facilitate children with disabilities using the same cues and support as their peers without disabilities. In this way all the children in the class can interact with peers and the teacher. It has been found that paraprofessionals are often a barrier to interactions between peers and consequently reduce the opportunities to build social relationships and friendships “naturally”, so paraprofessionals need to be trained in distributing their assistance throughout the class, and not “hover” over their assigned student (Fisher et al., 1999; Giangreco et al., 1997) in order to facilitate natural interaction with peers rather than inhibiting them (Downing et al. 2000).

### ***Role of Inclusion to Support Friendships***

Early research on inclusion focused on children with disabilities, however current theorising of inclusion in education covers a broad range of factors which impact on diverse students. Scholars have looked in depth at the influence of, for example, gender on teaching practice and student learning (O’Neill, 2005; Paechter, 2006). Research has also explored the intersections of gender, class, and ethnicity (Archer & Yemashita, 2003). The conceptualising of inclusive education has expanded across a wide range of sociocultural dynamics. In my study, however, I focus on inclusive education in regard to disability and children’s friendships.

A recent review of literature on inclusive education from 2001 to 2005 reveals that research continues to support the rights discourse for children to be included in mainstream education with a focus on determining the effectiveness of implementation in varying contexts (Lindsay, 2007). Lindsay

concludes that studies grounded in an ecological systems approach that includes a wide range of social dimensions, for example, ethnicity, and that include the perspectives of parents and children are important in shaping the implementation of inclusion in meeting the different needs of individual children with disabilities, including social needs. He affirms that researchers must “continue to produce research evidence to influence policy “ (p. 18). A number of studies have particularly explored how inclusive educational environments can support the development of friendships.

Many elements of the school landscape influence the social relationships of children with and without disabilities, for example, the organisation and operation of the school and classrooms, the opportunities for interaction, the beliefs and attitudes of adults and peers, instructional practices, and the roles teachers and students play in the learning process can all impact. The likelihood of observing positive social interactions is optimised in classrooms that support the social, physical and instructional inclusion of *all* learners (Salisbury & Palombaro, 1998) and so in my observations in schools, I focused on observing structures and practices that encouraged, or discouraged, social interaction – both positive and negative.

Opportunities to build social relationships require large amounts of time in the same environment (Murray, 1993); propinquity has been identified as an important factor in developing relationships and school is a landscape that provides opportunities for children to meet. The research literature contrasts and compares inclusive and segregated education provision in regard to this and concludes that children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms benefit from more frequent [natural] social contacts with peers without disabilities, greater amounts of [natural] social support, and larger friendship networks than children in separate classrooms who may participate in remedial social skills programmes (Fryxell & Kennedy, 1995). Inclusive education programmes provide opportunities for friendship

between children with and without disabilities, where in segregated education children do not have a chance to meet each other (Meyer et al., 1998), suggesting that it is not natural to keep children with disabilities away from their peers without disabilities. As previously discussed, children learn from models so in inclusive classrooms, peers model social interaction skills (both positive and negative!) and children with disabilities can learn these skills in natural settings. The problem of generalising newly learned skills to other settings, that is inherent in the social skills training approach, is diminished.

The extent to which a school is inclusive is influenced, from an ecological model perspective, by activities in the wider system, for example, universal human needs, the national education system, legislation, school administration, community and home values and experiences, and mores; there must be communication between these wider ecosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Murray-Seegert, 1989). The trend towards providing inclusive education for all children so they can learn alongside their peers is an opportunity for all children to benefit from wider social interactions. Children develop social skills, positive relationships and friendships; have age appropriate role models for communication, social behaviour and dress; and learn in contexts where they develop natural supports such as teachers and peers. Inclusive education assists parents, educators and peers without disabilities improve their expectations of, and attitudes towards others, and develop an appreciation of human diversity and individual differences (Snell, 1991).

However, some studies of inclusive practice focus solely on, or emphasise, academic outcomes (e.g. Banerji & Dailey, 1995; Fisher, Schumaker, & Deshler, 1995; Wallace, Anderson, Bartholomay, & Hupp, 2002; Zigmond et al., 1995), confirming that while some teachers may consider a child's social development a priority, others may place more emphasis in

other areas, such as intellectual development (Schneider, 1993). Yet in my view, friendship and positive social relationships are vital and academic success is not the sole indicator of successful inclusion; positive social outcomes are equally important. Furthermore, inclusion is a holistic concept and involves the education of “the whole child” (Stainback, Stainback, & Bunch., 1989). A holistic approach to viewing students, including those with disabilities, involves considering cognitive and academic development; behavioural development; social development including social competence; and emotional development that includes self-concept. Importantly, “social interaction is also the basis of cognitive development since children acquire their thinking skills from social interaction with others” (Smith, A.B., 1998, p. 112; Vygotsky, 1986).

Empirical research supports the ethical arguments. Children in inclusive schools have more opportunities to interact with peers and teachers, with positive benefits for all (Pavri & Mond-Amaya, 2001; York et al., 1992). The benefits are a “two-way-street” as inclusive schooling promotes mutual learning (Murray-Seegert, 1989). Segregated “schools have created an artificial environment that does not exist outside in the real world” (Stainback et al., 1989, p. 22), and students with disabilities in inclusive classes perform better on measures of academic achievement and social competence than students educated in segregated or partially mainstreamed settings, but are not as socially acceptable as their typical peers (Freeman & Alkin, 2000). This indicates that teachers need to be proactive in facilitating social interactions and modelling an acceptance of difference; just being placed in a classroom is not sufficient.

### *Perspectives on Supporting and Shaping Friendships*

Factors that support friendships and positive social relationships emerge in research on children and youth with disabilities that focuses on exploring the perspectives of parents, principals, teachers, and children and youth without disabilities. A smaller number of studies includes the perspectives of children and youth with disabilities.

*Parents.* Research on inclusive schools that is framed within an ecological perspective identifies how parental involvement is encouraged as an intrinsic part of the school climate (Ferguson & Asch, 1989). This reflects a view that parents are important factors in a child's environment and experts on their child. Conversely, in research framed within a deficit/medical model the parents' voice is not heard and their role is diminished. In the US, parent pressure through litigation (e.g. *Brown v The Board of Education (Topeka, Kansas)* in 1954) was an instigating factor to the introduction and passing of PL-142 and the introduction of inclusive education in the US and since then parents have been a strong voice and advocacy role in the inclusion debate both overseas (e.g. Strully & Strully, 1985; 1993) and in New Zealand (e.g. Dixon, 1994; Bogard, 1994), as they work alongside professionals for the benefit of their children. In New Zealand, O'Brien (1999) explored the advocacy role of parents who lobbied and worked to gain an inclusive education for their children, and concludes, "Without the parent voice, who would continue to push the boundaries?" (p. 4) Similarly, Brown and Wills (2000), both parents of children with disabilities, interviewed 260 Auckland parents of children with special needs and examined their advocacy role pointing out that changes need to be explained and understood so parents can become the partners that inclusive education policies espouse. However, as with teachers and principals, Garrick Duhaney and Salend (2000) conclude from their literature review with respect to the perceptions and experiences of parents of children with and without disabilities concerning inclusive educational programmes, that parents do not speak with a unified voice; parents' views

are varied, complex, and multi-dimensional and affected by a number of interacting variables. Palmer, Fuller, Arora, and Nelson (2001) endorse this view as their survey of 140 Californian parents of children with severe disabilities indicates that the parents who oppose inclusion generally have children with severe/profound disabilities, whilst parents who have experienced integrated settings or whose children have less severe disabilities, favour inclusive schools for their children with benefits for both children with and without disabilities.

Research studies internationally and in New Zealand, usually involving semi structured group and individual interviews, and surveys, have found that parents of children with and without disabilities, despite present placement of their children, are generally positive about inclusion in principle, but have some concerns about implementation and provision (Garrick Duhaney & Salend, 2000). Hamre-Nietupski, Nietupski, and Strathe (1992), surveyed 68 North American parents of children with moderate or severe/profound mental disabilities across all age levels and found that the parents of children with moderate disabilities rated functional life skills highly, and that the parents of children with severe/profound disabilities rated friendship/social relationships most highly; the former group rated academic skills more highly than the latter group. Ryndak, Downing, Morrison, and Williams (1996) interviewed 13 parents of children with moderate or severe disabilities in New York state who believed that children need a support network and opportunities to interact with same-age peers to develop that network; in order to reach their desired goals, their children need to be with peers without disabilities, as well as access to appropriate supports and adaptations. The four Hispanic parents in Turnbull et al.'s (1999) research believed that they had a role in facilitating friendships by exposing their children to a wide range of potential friends, rather than prioritising a relationship with one person.

Many parents believe positive social interactions are important for people with disabilities (Amado, 1993), and they identify the development of friendship as a priority for their children with disabilities (Buswell & Schaffner, 1990; Dixon, 1994; Hamre-Nietupski et al. 1992; Strully & Strully, 1993). Many also concur that inclusive neighbourhood schools are the appropriate setting, for example:

How will children develop friendships if they do not attend the same schools and classes with each other? We must remember where children meet each other. Where do children learn about each other and ultimately become friends? The answer is, in part, at the neighbourhood school, riding the regular bus, playing together, and getting to know each other. (Strully & Strully, 1985, p. 225)

Some parents, for example, New Zealand mother Mel Bogard (1994), see inclusive schooling as the opportunity for their children to learn with their peers, and develop lasting friendships that will provide caring and support after they die. Three parents in MacArthur and Gaffney's (2001) New Zealand research suggested some specific strategies to facilitate friendships; Hamish's mother noted that when teachers participate in sport at break times, her son is included in the play; Scott's mother identified break times as a difficult time for her son because teachers did not structure this time; and Leah's mother believed that teachers need to be sensitive to the impact of a student's disability on social experiences so should plan to put in strategies to support this process. The parents in Kolb and Hanley-Maxwell's (2003) research concur with earlier research that parents should be active participants in teaching social skills and suggest that schools can address individual students' learning needs through better communication, modelling, role playing, and modifying the curriculum. They also affirm that students without disabilities also need social skills training in order to develop and maintain friendships with their peers with disabilities. All these views suggest professional development for teachers should include a focus on strategies

that support positive social, as well as academic outcomes. As Strully and Strully (1985) remind us, "In our pursuit to teach more and more 'skills' and competencies to children, we need to think about the role relationships play in our lives" (p. 227).

In contrast to these perspectives, some parents are vehement in their opposition to inclusion, as they feel their children do not receive enough individualised attention in the regular classroom. Perry's (1997) research in the USA describes how some parents of special education and gifted children joined forces to campaign actively against inclusion because of their concerns about equitable educational provisions. For parents who prefer separate special education, their argument is for "choice" and there is a fear that a lack of support for separate provision will see a closing of separate facilities and therefore "no choice" (Ballard, 1996).

The majority of the research on inclusion has been with parents of children in elementary/primary and middle schools so I was interested to hear the stories of parents whose children were included in secondary schools. The parents in my research demonstrated their support for inclusion by enrolling their children in their local school and during my research I heard their stories of this experience.

*Principals and teachers.* The research literature reports a diversity of professionals' views about inclusion and the realities of developing positive social relationships. Although many professionals adhere to the ethical arguments of inclusion and support the academic and social benefits, day-to-day concerns about teacher training and provisions temper their viewpoint and thus affect the implementation of inclusive practices that support friendships and social relationships.

Principals have an important leadership role in implementing the change process, and especially in developing their schools' philosophy (Staub, 1998) and inclusive practice (Riehl, 2000). In their research, Bailey and du

Plessis (1997) surveyed 200 school principals in Queensland and found that 73.2% supported inclusion, with benefits for the included child and social justice/rights arguments emerging as the strongest arguments. Some principals, while supporting the philosophy of inclusion on the basis of social justice/rights, are concerned however with inadequate resourcing and support for teachers in regard to issues of workload, stress, and training. In reality these attitudes may affect the successful implementation, as such principals may “talk the high road of inclusion and walk the low road of integration” (p. 435).

Attitudes to inclusive education may vary, depending on the age of students and/or the severity of the disability. For example, Smith (2000) reported that 85% of the 46 Tennessee high school teachers she surveyed believed that peers would isolate students with severe disabilities in regular schools, whereas elementary teachers in McLesky, Waldron, So, Swanson, and Loveland’s (2001) study, believed that students with mild disabilities are accepted by their peers and improve their social skills in inclusive classrooms. Furthermore, while Cook, Semmel, and Gerber’s (1999) survey in North America found that 63% of principals were generally supportive of inclusion, 63% of special education teachers did not support inclusion. Those who advocate for special services in separate environments “generally share the goal of community integration and differ primarily in their belief regarding the best strategies to achieve that goal” (Meyer, 1991, p. 639). Those who advocate for long-term separate provision doubt that social acceptance is “an achievable goal” (p. 639), even while supporting social integration as desirable.

As professional attitudes to inclusive education affect implementation and outcomes for students (Cook et al., 1999), positive attitudes to inclusion correlate positively with increased use of adapted instructional strategies and “can-do” attitudes that are linked to teacher training and improved teacher

efficacy (Scott, Vitale, & Masten, 1998; Van Reusen, Shoho & Barker, 2000/1). Conversely, negative attitudes about inclusion can be linked to less frequent use of adapted instructional strategies and inclusive practices, and Bender, Vail, and Scott (1995) suggest that this could be part of an increasingly negative cycle.

Using surveys and interviews in a NE US high school, Smith, R.M. (1997) also reports a lack of consensus in the opinions of the teachers about the inclusion of a student with Down syndrome with inconsistencies in expectations of academic and social goals that affect his belonging in classes; in some classes he is the Inclusion Kid or a Guest with frequent absences preventing him from being part of cooperative groups and developing friendships in classes; for some teachers, social goals are the only goals. Similarly, Carter and Hughes (2006) report mixed views on inclusion in their study that surveyed the opinions of high school teachers. There was considerable support however, for social-related benefits for students with disabilities in general classes where there were opportunities to interact socially with classmates, and learn from other students as role models (Downing & Williams, 1997).

Although there is still debate around integration/inclusion, research in the 1990s and 2000s goes beyond simply documenting the value of integration and discussions of appropriate placement. The discourse has moved on to how inclusion can be successfully implemented, involving a reconceptualisation of education and what constitutes effective practice, emphasising an individual determination of options (Ainscow, 1991; Baker, Wang, & Walberg, 1994/5; Smith & Bassett, 1991; Snell, 1991). The question being asked is, "How do we make integration [sic] work for all children?" (Lusthaus et al., 1992, p. 305) It is encouraging that schools are increasingly developing as problem-solving, cooperative organisations, with teachers who are reflective practitioners (Ainscow, 1991) focusing on academic *and* social

benefits for children; there is now a focus on outcomes and evidence within a whole-school approach (Peters, 2007). It is on this landscape that my research was carried out.

*Children and youth without disabilities.* The perspectives of students without disabilities have been the major focus in the majority of studies that investigate the social relationships between students with and without disabilities. One of the reasons for this is that many of the target students have severe intellectual disabilities and are non-verbal.

Some of the studies focus on how students' attitudes as socio-cultural discourses shape friendships and social interaction. For example, Allan (1999) reports that because students without disabilities often do not know what to say or how to act, they have a key role as "inclusion gatekeepers" in a context that is normalising and although it is can be positive and supportive, it can also impose limits on students with disabilities thus affecting opportunities to make friends (p. 44). Similarly, recent research in Ontario, Canada where 1,872 grade nine students were interviewed, while the majority of students held more positive attitudes, 21% of the students held slightly below neutral to very negative attitudes to students with disabilities thus presenting a major barrier to social inclusion (McDougall, DeWit, King, Miller, & Killip, 2004). The researchers affirm the importance of developing ecologically based programmes that support positive attitudes towards peers with disabilities. Their findings also support earlier studies that report positive attitudes, for example, Hendrickson et al., 1996; and Peck et al., 1990, and confirmed the majority of students without disabilities interviewed in their North American research studies said that they are willing to be friends with peers with disabilities. Furthermore, Hendrickson et al.'s study of 1,137 middle and high school students without disabilities indicated that they shared a responsibility with teachers to facilitate friendships with their peers with disabilities. They identified being educated in general education classes as a positive factor in

increasing social skills and facilitating friendships. With teacher facilitation, this can teach students how to interact with one another.

Another supportive factor that supports positive interaction findings is credits given for working in peer support programmes (Carter et al., 2005; Helmstetter et al., 1994). These conditions change the dynamics of the helping/befriending relationship, and although the studies report positive benefits for students with and without disabilities including the peers of the students without disabilities, it raises questions about power and genuineness when students gain credits for “being friends.” In New Zealand, the same credit system does not apply and so in my study I anticipated different dynamics to be at play in the relationships of students with and without disabilities.

Students without disabilities who had interacted with students with disabilities, often as peer tutors in segregated settings, emphasised the following positive points: there were mutual benefits and opportunities for learning; similarities between them; they learned how to get on with others through developing patience, empathy, and tolerance for individual differences; and there was increased self esteem and strength in overcoming a fear of disabilities (Murray-Seegert, 1989). Increased social skills and friendship were also found by Fisher et al., (1998). However, despite these benefits, “It appears from many of the comments of students...that they expected themselves primarily to be peer ‘teachers’ rather than friends” (Helmstetter et al., 1994, p. 274) – the relationship was one of I’ll Help rather than Regular Friends (Meyer et al. 1998).

An important research study that draws together and supports earlier research is Copeland et al.’s (2004) study where students involved in a peer support programme, “overwhelmingly indicated that they believed that general education environments typically are unsupportive of the academic and social participation of students with severe disabilities” (p. 351).

Supporting this statement, the students identified physical and social segregation, differential expectations and treatment, lack of knowledge about disabilities, communication differences, behavioural challenges, negative attitudes, and insufficient and inappropriate support as challenges to their participation in everyday social and academic events at high school. They made some specific recommendations to increase participation, including peers without disabilities taking the lead in interaction opportunities, advocating for students, modelling acceptance for peers without disabilities, improving support skills, and adjusting roles such as helper/friend. They also suggested these strategies could be implemented through increased awareness, training of peer supports, encouraging friendships, and teachers providing structures to encourage interaction.

The last words go to two students in Shaw's (1998) study who condemned special schools "as an injustice and denial of opportunities" and said:

I don't think we should keep special schools because we should keep everybody together. When you know the difficulties a disabled person has they can learn from other people and do the same as them [and] I used to think I'm not going near him because there is something wrong with him, but now I know he's a good friend. He hangs around with us and messes about like all the others. He's just like all the others, he's just got learning difficulties. (p. 81)

*Children and youth with disabilities.* A search of the literature provided a small but growing number of studies that ask children and youth with disabilities for their perspectives of their friendships and social relationships. There has been general support for inclusive classrooms because they are better for making friends (Vaughn & Klingner, 1998). The small number of studies reflects a dearth of consultation with students with disabilities before 1990 but which with an emerging focus on a rights discourse, such students are now being asked for their stories (Wade &

Moore, 1993). The small number of studies also reflects that many students with severe disabilities are non-verbal and so observations are made, and /or other players such as professionals, parents, and students without disabilities are interviewed.

A few studies ask for the perspectives of youth at high school. In one, students identify practices that provide barriers to establishing social relationships. Priestley's (1999) study of twenty high school students in the UK presents Shelly's comment, "God, no. I prefer it when I haven't got support [a teacher aide] because it's more... interesting. You can talk to your mates" (p. 94). Other students described how the students helped each other informally and naturally. Students identify similarity of age and gender as important when choosing friends, which supports age-appropriate classrooms and activities. Rosenblum's (1998) concurs with these findings and adds similar ethnicity and similar tastes. Her research in the US interviewed 40 adolescents with vision impairments and reports that the disability affects relationships through transport restrictions; the disability also limits some of the activities that could be shared, for example, movies, ball sports, reading books and doing puzzles.

Students' stories also point out some practices in which they are "differentially constructed" by teachers and how this affects peers' perceptions of them as undesirable friends thus creating "social distance" (Davis & Watson, 2001, p. 681). Some students identify factors that inhibit making friends where there is a lack of facilitation by adults to support social interactions and so even though they may be educated in so called inclusive schools, if children don't have friends, break and lunch times can be lonely experiences. MacArthur and Gaffney (2001) note how Scott hated break times because he didn't have friends and didn't know how to make friends. Similarly, Leah didn't know how to make friends, "I'm looking for a new friend...but I just don't know any of their names..." (p. 15). Scott also

identified lack of common interests as a barrier to friendships and Noel was hurt by unkind comments. Although Lovitt, Cushing, and Plavins (1999) research focuses on academic experiences at school, some students in this study report teasing, put downs, and being picked on by peers without disabilities as distressing. Similarly, other students also report bullying (Norwich & Kelly, 2004). These latter findings support Allan's (1999) argument that negative gatekeeping practices are shaped by socio-cultural discourses such as exclusionary deficit perspectives.

### *Summary*

The dominant stories that emerge from the literature are that friendship, whatever its shape or duration, is viewed by most people as important if we are to live happy and full lives. The alternative is rejection, neglect, social isolation, and loneliness. Schools have a wider responsibility than achieving academic outcomes. Inclusive education, despite opposing views, provides a strong direction for schools, and a landscape where teachers and peers can support and facilitate positive social relationships. The stories of the friendships children and adolescents without disabilities tell are valuable in understanding social processes in schools. However there is limited information available through interviews with students with disabilities and it is a gap that my research addresses.

The development and characteristics of friendship are determined by socio-cultural factors (Krappmann, 1996) generally understood within a context of Western Classical and Judeo-Christian tradition (Gaventa, 1993). Much of the research that has guided the development of inclusive education in this country has been from North America and the United Kingdom. Although there are some similarities between these two countries and New

Zealand, each has different historical and contemporary educational contexts. My research in the New Zealand context will enable parents and educators in this country to reflect on the stories of New Zealand students with disabilities and hopefully understand the characteristics and processes of their friendships within the socio-cultural context of the structures and practices of the New Zealand education system. Thus “through the stories and narratives of and by disabled people, disabled people will be enabled to express the heterogeneity of their lives, the fluid, situated and contextual nature of both disablement and impairment...” (Watson, 2004, p. 113).

There is a need for research in a range of education contexts related to the purposes of friendship, dimensions of friendship, facilitation of friendship, and the development of friendship (Hurley-Geffner, 1995) - research that “recognises the complexity and plurality of perspectives, voices and interests” (Booth & Ainscow, 1998, p. 246). In researching the friendships of children we must look beyond adults’ perceptions and those of non-disabled peers: “Although the children’s voices are not heard, they are truly the main characters” (Perry, 1997, p. 451). It is time...

...to become more thoughtfully or attentively aware of aspects of human life which hitherto were merely glossed over or taken-for-granted ...[and] bring us [as teachers] to the edge of speaking up, speaking out, or decisively acting in social situations that ask for such action. (Van Manen, 1997, p. 154)

It is time to listen to the voices of children with disabilities in New Zealand and hear their stories. The goal of my research study was to expand knowledge regarding interaction, social relationships and friendships of students with disabilities by investigating their lived experience as told from their personal perspectives. These perspectives have not been reported in the existing literature, so that my study addresses a gap in the literature by featuring the voices of teenagers – Sam, Gemma, Adam and Sarah – as they describe the nature of their social relationships in four New Zealand

secondary schools. In this research narrative, I have put my own findings alongside the extant research as I describe the range and dynamics of the friendships that emerged from their stories.

### Chapter Three: A Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a research approach that enables an understanding of experience as lived and told stories. By listening to and including children's stories in the research text, their experiences are validated. Establishing a collaborative research relationship takes time and space and involves the researcher developing skills as an active listener, whereby strengthening the students' voice. Paley (1986) describes an important factor in listening is curiosity whereby creating a climate where children expose "ideas I did not imagine they held" (p. 125). She observed that the stories "tumbled out as if they simply had been waiting for me to stop talking and begin listening" (p. 125). Thus, listening to the stories of four adolescents and those close to them in a New Zealand context, and giving them a public voice complements the existing research on the friendships and social relationships of adolescents by addressing the lack of contextual information (McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998).

I have described the first stage of this research journey in my Narrative Beginnings where I presented my stories of experience and narratives that situated me as a student, a teacher, and a parent: through these stories I described how my experiences shaped my research question and I identified who I am as a researcher in the midst of this research study. This led me to the second stage of my study as I searched the literature on friendships, social relationships, and the experiences of students with disabilities in secondary schools.

In this chapter I first of all explain the qualitative research methodology used in this study. I chose a narrative inquiry methodology to answer my research question, "What are the social experiences of four students with disabilities in New Zealand secondary schools; and what factors shape these relationships", because this methodology "deals with the

personal construction of past experiences” (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003, p. 266). The main purpose of the research is to document and give voice to some of the experiences that four students with a disability have of friendship and social relationships in their school context. I aim to foreground their perspectives and identify issues, so that teachers can reflect how their own pedagogy and the formal and informal discourses of their schools can support these relationships alongside academic learning. As Gemma, one the participants, said to me as I left after the fourth interview, “I hope the teachers will think about what it is like for someone with a disability, and that they might be getting picked on.”

As I indicated at the beginning of Chapter One, the work of Clandinin and Connelly resonated with my experiences and my aims for this study. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) developed a model of narrative inquiry in their research with teachers drawing on previously published work (e.g. Clandinin & Connelly, 1986; 1990; 1994; Clandinin, Davies, Hogan, & Kennard, 1993; Connelly & Clandinin, 1986; 1987; 1990; 1999). It is a methodological model that is still in progress, as more researchers listen to participants’ stories and write research texts of their experiences - “We are in a fluid time” (J. Clandinin, personal communication, May 3, 2002). Their writing has provided me with a scaffolded, logical design and a personal experience method that is congruent with my research question. Narrative inquiry is a process that enables me to listen to stories and build narratives of students’ experiences on the landscapes where they live and learn.<sup>5</sup>

In the second part of the chapter, I describe the third (entering the field) and fourth (listening to stories) stages of my journey that began as I moved into the field and approached and negotiated with schools to select

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<sup>5</sup> Clandinin and Connelly (2000) use the term “on the landscape” to describe “place” – the third dimension of The Three Dimensional Inquiry Space that I describe later in this chapter. The other dimensions are “temporality (past, present, and future)” and “personal (inward) and social (outward).”

four students to participate and share their experiences with me. This process took eighteen months as I established relationships with the students I interviewed, three of them four times over two academic years, and one student only three times as she passed away before the fourth interview. In this section, I introduce the four students to the readers. The fourth stage of my research journey ran concurrently with the third stage as I gathered and composed field texts as I listened to multiple voices, observed in schools, and collected relevant documents to contextualise the students' stories – a process Richardson (2000) calls “crystallization” (p. 934). (During the third and fourth stages of the journey I wrote field-notes, transcribed the taped interviews, listened and re-listened to the stories and wrote responses and journal entries). Then in the last parts of the chapter I explain how in the final leg of my study I moved from field texts to the research text as I analysed and coded the transcripts using the N6 version in the NUD\*IST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing) series software (Richards, 2002), and constructed the research text which presents the students' stories in poetic form followed by my narrative response to each student's stories. In the final chapter, I explore some of the themes that emerged from the stories of the four students.

Before I explain and analyse my research methods, I describe the narrative inquiry methodology and my justification for choosing it for this study.

### *Why Narrative Inquiry?*

Narrative inquiry builds on an evolving tradition of narrative in research. It is a way of thinking – thinking in a narrative way. “Narrative inquiry is the study of experience...an experience of the experience”

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 189). As a personal experience method, narrative inquiry is strongly influenced by Dewey's (1938) theories of experience in education, and Bruner's narrative mode of knowing.

Narrative research is based on two distinct types of research and analysis - Bruner's (1985) paradigmatic and narrative ways of knowing. Bruner's theory of paradigmatic cognition describes a traditional logical-scientific mode of knowing, where narratives are deductively analysed into pre-determined categories, taxonomies, and frameworks with the researcher seeking to make comparisons and generalisations across the data. The resulting prosaic narrative may include excerpts and quotes to illustrate the themes and categories (Polkinghorne, 1995), but the participants' stories do not stand alone for interpretation by the reader.

Bruner's (1985) contrasting mode of knowing is narrative cognition where stories are gathered and used as plotted explanations for human action. Narrative analysis is inductive with patterns and themes emerging from the participants' stories of their experiences, resulting in explanatory narratives with plotlines constructed to display textual meaning, threads discovered, and connections and resonance between stories identified. The aim is to understand the experiences of the individual person "as they have acted in the concrete social world" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 19). In these narratives, the focal individual experience may be supported with other people's stories to holistically describe the multi-faceted nature of the experience.

So, narrative inquiry is a qualitative research design, grounded in Bruner's (1985) theory of narrative cognition as a way of knowing, in which stories and narratives are used to describe human experience, providing a context for understanding and constructing meaning (Polkinghorne, 1995). In the narrative way of knowing "we organise our experience and our memory of human happenings in the form of narrative – stories..." (Bruner, 1991, p.4). Rather than seeking to generalise, "narrative 'truth' is judged by its

verisimilitude rather than its verifiability" (p. 13) as in the paradigmatic mode. In the narrative mode, the person, the particular student and his/her narrative experience as a way of knowing, is of prime interest. Narrative inquirers "begin with experiences as expressed in lived and told stories" (p. 40) - stories are "life stuff" (Bruner, 1985, p. 43). The stories are foregrounded, enabling readers to be involved in the experiences and reflect on the stories they live by.

### *Narratives of Adults' Experiences*

Stories and narratives have been resources in varying disciplines and contexts, but these have usually been adult voices as I discuss later in this chapter. Coles (1989) described how he learned to use the stories of his psychiatric patients so "we can understand the truth of their lives" (p. 7). He emphasised the give-and-take – the reciprocity - of storytelling, the importance of being a good listener and respecting the narrative as a gift to be shared with others.

In psychotherapy, Polkinghorne (1988) also used narrative in order to understand and help his patients to find answers as to why they behaved as they did. He noted that Freud synthesised stories into patterns (an explanatory approach), and recognised the truth of narrative as first hand experience. Polkinghorne related how Freud supported the validity of using narrative in research, either descriptively, to describe the events of participants' lives that gave meaning to their lives and to empower the participants through reflection and understanding to act differently, or explanatory, where narratives are connected in a causal sense. The former descriptive approach is congruent with a narrative inquiry research design such as I adopt in this study.

In educational research, narratives of adults (parents) have been included so teachers as reflective practitioners can learn from a range of perspectives on students' experiences. For example, Nagel and Raxworthy (1999) listened to parents' stories as they explored the lived experiences of ten families of children with vision impairment. Bogard (1994), Dixon (1994), Lambert (1994), Tihi and Gerzon (1994) all told their stories of being a parent with a child with a disability. Tate (1995) also wrote from this perspective.

Some narratives however, are autobiographies of those of traditionally disempowered and marginalised groups such as people with a disability; for example, Temple Grandin's (1995) account of her life with autism. Oliver Sacks, in the foreword describes her story as an "inside narrative" (p. 11) of autism which "provides a bridge between our world [as reflective teachers] and hers, and allows us a glimpse into quite another sort of mind" (p. 16).

Similarly, Oliver's (1996) "reflexive account" (p. 6) is his story of his experience and establishes his position as an academic and researcher and a person with a disability. His story narrates his personal journey that came to have a political dimension, as he traced how his own thinking and understanding developed. He does not seek to represent the views of all disabled people, present disability as an individual problem, or indeed present a view that is acceptable to all disabled people, but to provide a subjective framework for disability research. His reflecting and theorising as he told his story has contributed to my understanding of disability. Through reading his story I have been moved to consider his perspective on disability and reflect that "for many people [including non disabled], the process of self-re-evaluation [through reflection] begins by reading the work of other disabled writers" (Oliver & Barnes, 1998, p. 73). Kunc and Van der Klift (1995) wrote from a similar vantage point to Oliver's. Kunc as an academic with a disability tells his story alongside his wife's, Emma Van der Klift, story. Reading autobiographical stories such as these can enable teachers and

parents to reflect on the stories *they* live by and can also cause teachers to reflect on the lives of children with disabilities for whom they have responsibility in their classrooms.

### *Narratives of Children's Experiences*

The adult voice has been heard in disability research, but where is the child's voice? Boyd (1993) described a research design where a social skills programme for children was developed. That quantitative study also included the perspective of the teachers involved but the children were silent, and I kept asking myself, "What was the child's experience of the social skills training and subsequent relationships, in and out of the classroom?" The inclusion of the voice of the children, as key players, can contribute another perspective to complement those collected and provide a holistic account.

As a narrative inquirer researching the friendships and social experiences of children, I wanted to listen to children telling their own stories and foreground the experiences of students with disabilities on the in-school landscape because I want to reflect on my praxis, and cause other teachers and parents to reflect on theirs in order to create landscapes where *all* students can have positive academic and social outcomes. Their personal experiences are needed to complement existing research.

The voices of children can be found in the work of Vivian Gussin Paley. She used the stories of young children in kindergarten settings in "a daily search for the child's point of view" (1986, p. 124). In the process she learned a lot about herself as a teacher: "Real change comes about only through the painful recognition of one's own vulnerability." She used children's stories to explore specific issues of friendship (1992, 1999) and racism (1989). Respecting children and letting them speak is a strong feature of her approach to listening to a child's words. I wanted to explore ways of

listening to the voices of children with disabilities so their experiences are foregrounded in research about their lives.

### *Listening to the Voices of Children*

When reviewing the literature, and from the silences of my own teaching experience, it is apparent that it is usually the voices of adults or the voices of students without disabilities that have been heard, not the voices of the students with disabilities. It is pertinent to acknowledge that many of the studies that I critique in Chapter Two involve students who have severe and profound intellectual difficulties and who are not able to talk about their friendships, relationships and interactions. The studies of voice of persons with disabilities (e.g. Amado, 1993) are persons who are far higher functioning cognitively with language abilities than the participants in some other studies (e.g. Meyer et al., 1998). This section explores this issue in more depth by presenting contrasting research approaches.

*Traditional research: disempowerment.* Research discourse has traditionally sought the opinions and perspectives of the dominant members of society. In traditional research the “voices” of the disempowered – women, ethnic minorities, children and the disabled - have noticeably not been heard as often, or as loudly as those of men in Western societies; usually white, able bodied men. Furthermore, in patriarchal societies, women and children are disadvantaged citizens – women and children have been aligned, being socially constructed as less than adult – a protectionist perspective according to Oakley (1994). Within these traditional perspectives, if children have been studied “we learn not about children’s perspectives but about *adult’s concepts of childhood* [author’s italics]” (p. 23). The consequence has been an adult conceptualisation of childhood within which individual children’s experiences and discourses about their understandings of their daily lives

have traditionally been excluded. The latter have been “played out in adult expectations, assumptions, and behaviour and children’s responses to them” (Mayall, 1994, p. 4), in a search for the universal child (Prout & James, 1990). Ideologies of a medical and psychological model where “fault” is inherent in the child and where environments are not to be questioned, have resulted also in the implementation of policies and services which oppress children and are conceptually flawed (Mayall, 1994). Children have been seen as the problem (Oakley, 1994), and this approach can be seen reflected in the medical idea of disability as an individual problem from a medical perspective (Oliver, 1996). The scenario above sees a parallel in studies of the disabled: much of the research I have discussed gives us not the perspectives of students with disabilities but “ablist” perceptions of the friendships of students with disabilities.

As researchers however, “We have become conscious of the invisibility of children’s perspectives and voices and the fact that children’s worlds have typically become known through adult’s accounts” (Brannen & O’Brien, 1996, p. 1), or the accounts of teachers, and students without disabilities. This idea of children being seen and not heard harks back to Victorian times. There have been perceived drawbacks described in researching children; children not being able to tell truth from fiction, making things up to please the interviewer, suggesting that children do not have enough experience or knowledge to comment or report on their experience, that children only report what adults have told them: that is, their accounts are socially constructed. In suggesting this, Mayall (1994) also points out that such an argument lacks validity as these “drawbacks” apply to adults too. She sees bigger problems relating to power relationships and interpretation when adults collect data from children.

This issue of power applies even more so to studies of people with disabilities. Oliver (1996) challenges traditional research that has seen people

with disabilities as research “subjects” and regarded as passive objects for interviews and observations. This has resulted in alienation whereby disabled people do not feel part of the product of research, feel their experiences have been violated, and see the research as irrelevant to their needs and not having any positive effects on the quality of their lives.

*A new view: student participation.* The changing focus to include the voice of the child is supported by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) ratified by New Zealand in 1993. The principles include the categories of provision articles, protection articles and participation articles where children’s civil and political rights are to be considered and taken account of, with children accorded freedom of speech and opinion. This represents a shift to the recognition of children as participants in society and “it therefore sets up a model of participation” (Lansdown, 1994, p. 39).

Lansdown (1994) sees in Britain the model of participation being recognised in some medical and court judicial situations but questions if in education there has been much change. It is argued that the voice of children is not heard here, and claimed that we do not have a culture of listening to children. Hart (cited in Miljeteig, 2000, p. 171) goes further and states, “Children’s participation is often promoted as a ‘children’s voices’ movement, but it should equally be an ‘adult ears’ movement.” To apply the participation principle we must “provide them with real opportunities to express their views and explore the options open to them...” and we must “listen to their views and consider them with respect and seriousness and tell children how their views will be considered” (Lansdown, 1994, p. 39).

Smith, A.B. (1998) acknowledges that the situation in New Zealand is similar and that “there is very little attempt to take into account children’s views in education, social welfare, justice, or health systems” (p. 68). However, an international conference at the Children’s Issues Centre, University of Otago, Dunedin in 1999, focused on a broad range of children’s’

rights issues (Smith, Gollop, Marshall, & Nairn (2000) with a subsequent publication that acknowledged the importance of adults listening to the voices of children in addressing issues that affect them (Smith, Taylor, & Gollop, 2000).

There have been a few studies in this country which explored students' views; for example, Nash and Major (1996) conducted a research study that focused on the relationships between sixth form (Year 12) boys and girls from different ethnic and social classes through analysis of their conversations. MacArthur and Gaffney (2001) interviewed 11 children with disabilities ranging in age from 7-15, together with their parents and siblings to learn from their experiences of friendship, bullying, and social isolation. Furthermore, Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, and Richardson (2003) using a narratives of experience collaborative storying approach interviewed 70 Year 9 and 10 Māori students in groups and individually, as well parents/caregivers, teachers, and principals. Their findings note that the deficit theorising of most teachers results in low expectations of the students as they blame the students for their poor educational achievement. The students' narratives pointed to the importance of supportive in-class relationships and classroom interactions. This research, that explored the cultural context of schools for Māori students, supports similar findings related to the effects of environmental factors on children with disabilities. More recently, Carroll-Lind (2006) studied violence and bullying in New Zealand schools from children's perceptions and experiences. All these studies are important as they have focused on students' experiences and voices, analysing these within the socio-cultural context of their schools.

The participation principle requires a shift away from an ideology where "fault" is inherent in the child to an ecological perspective where the environment is scrutinised from the viewpoint of the child. Here "the perspective on children has shifted from that of the school and educators to

that of the children themselves" (Hallden, 1994, p. 63). Mayall (1994) supported this view and cautioned, "We can and should take account of children not in some superficial sense as actors, but...as moral interpreters of the worlds they engage with, capable of participating in shared decisions on important topics" (p. 8). In New Zealand, it has been argued that by including the words of the students as "they talk about their lives...readers are invited to enter an intimate interaction with the transcripts and the interpretations provided" (Nash & Major, 1997, p. 5). Nash and Major caution though that researchers should aim "to privilege students as authors rather than to imprison their voices within the confines of an academic discourse sounding an overriding authority of its own" (p. 5). Jones (1992) suggested that as academics and researchers we can offer this privilege to our students by "making explicit the process of construction of [our] text; ...explicitly positioning [our] self...as one voice in a multiply voiced discussion, rather than as a neutral narrator" (p. 31). As I will show, a narrative inquiry approach in my study has enabled me to focus on the perspectives of students with disabilities who were able to talk about their experiences and to make explicit the construction of the research text.

*A caveat: whose "best interest"?* The purpose of research that listens to the voices of children must be overt. Oakley (1994) warns that studies of children are not to be done in their "best interests", but adults as researchers need to be "facilitators or active seekers out of children's own perspectives and voices" (p. 20), respecting the integrity and competence of children (Alderson, 1994). Although Roche (1996) was addressing the inequities of the court system his plea is relevant to education:

The child's right to a voice, to participate must be part of this process: it is only through respect for children and their perspectives that a real community of interests, which includes all those who live within it, can come into being. (p. 37)

The “best interests principle” however, can be “a powerful tool in the hands of adults, which can be used to justify any of their actions and to overrule the wishes and feelings of children” (Lansdown, 1994, p. 41), thus accepting the framework of principles of children’s civil rights gives us a basis on which to test the concept of “best interests.” Oakley (1994) also cautions that in making children’s perspectives visible, studies do not depict a universal, homogenous, ungendered child: “The study of children has moved away from the search for the universal child, and has contextualised children and findings about them within social contexts” (Mayall, 1994, p. 3).

Smith, A.B. (1998) supports the changing orientation from viewing children from the outside to attempting to find out children’s own viewpoint as “by listening to children’s stories, we recognise them as people in their own right at the present moment in time, rather than as incomplete beings who are in the process of becoming adults” (p. 67). She states that listening to children’s perspectives will add a richer more meaningful understanding to ecologically based research into effective contexts for children’s development. Children must be recognised as social actors in their own right (Oakley, 1994), thus from Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological view, we should be seeking the perspective of children about their experience.

The issues for research with children, women, and people with disabilities are similar; all groups need approaches that focus on participation, empowerment, and reciprocity. Empowerment begins with self-reflection by participants in the light of critical social analysis that gives a deeper understanding of their particular situation and possible change. Reciprocity implies give and take – a mutual searching for meaning in an interactive, dialogic research design (Lather, 1986). Munford (1994) in searching for better ways to write about women’s experiences (that traditionally have been on the periphery) and make them visible, endorses Lather’s concept of reciprocity as part of the research process to empower women and bring about change. It is

about the mutually beneficial relationship between the “researcher” and the “researched” – the participants. Thus the researcher must ask: “What is my role in this research process?” In a narrative inquiry research design, reciprocity is established as participants are in relation contextually and temporally and the researcher is in relation to participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Dewey, 1938). Being in relation means “gaining understanding from and with others requires mutual respect and power” (Ballard, 1994, p. 311).

Narrative inquiry addresses these issues by including children’s stories as part of the narrative and interpretation, allowing the reader, who may be a teacher and/or parent, to make their own judgement and reflect on their own experiences and landscapes: “Dialogic text can teach indirectly what monologic text fails to achieve” (Van Manen, 1997, p. 144). Elements of narrative smoothing, where the researcher chooses which of the child’s stories will be included, need to be considered.

### *Continuing my Narrative Research Journey*

From these research studies and discussions about voice and narrative, I understand that narrative inquiry is a process that enables me to listen to stories and build narratives of students’ experiences as a way of knowing, as I answer my research question. As I indicated in the beginning chapter of this work, Clandinin and Connelly’s approach resonated with my experiences and the aims for this study.

Jean Clandinin (University of Alberta) and Michael Connelly’s (University of Toronto) narrative inquiry process also began a long geographical journey for me. In the winter of 2002, I travelled to Edmonton, Canada and spent three weeks at the University of Alberta taking part in Jean’s post-graduate classes on narrative inquiry, research workshops, and

meetings with Jean to develop my understanding of narrative inquiry. On my return to New Zealand I continued with the course reading and submitted my responses to Jean who commented on them and answered my questions. We have continued to correspond. As part of this journey, I was also able to read a number of doctoral dissertations that used narrative inquiry as a methodology (e.g. Craig, 1992; McPhee, 1997; Pushor, 2001; Yeom, 1996). Reading the stories in the research studies and reading subsequent narratives extended my understanding and took me in different directions as I reflected again on the participants' stories. Reading the research studies also assisted my understanding of the narrative inquiry research design, and convinced me that this philosophy and structure would enable me to answer my research question.

As a teacher and a narrative inquirer, I am interested in the lived experiences of four students as told in their words, their stories. This involves listening to stories, telling stories, retelling stories, and attempting to relive stories as the participants reflect upon selected life experiences and explain themselves to me in their own words: "*Story* is simply one person's, or one group's, social construction of 'what happened?' " The value of telling stories is "that it is precisely how one discovers what the social constructions are" (Ferguson, Ferguson, & Taylor, 1992, p. 5). As Connelly and Clandinin noted, narrative is the "...reconstruction of a person's experience in relation to others and to a social milieu..." (1990, p. 244).

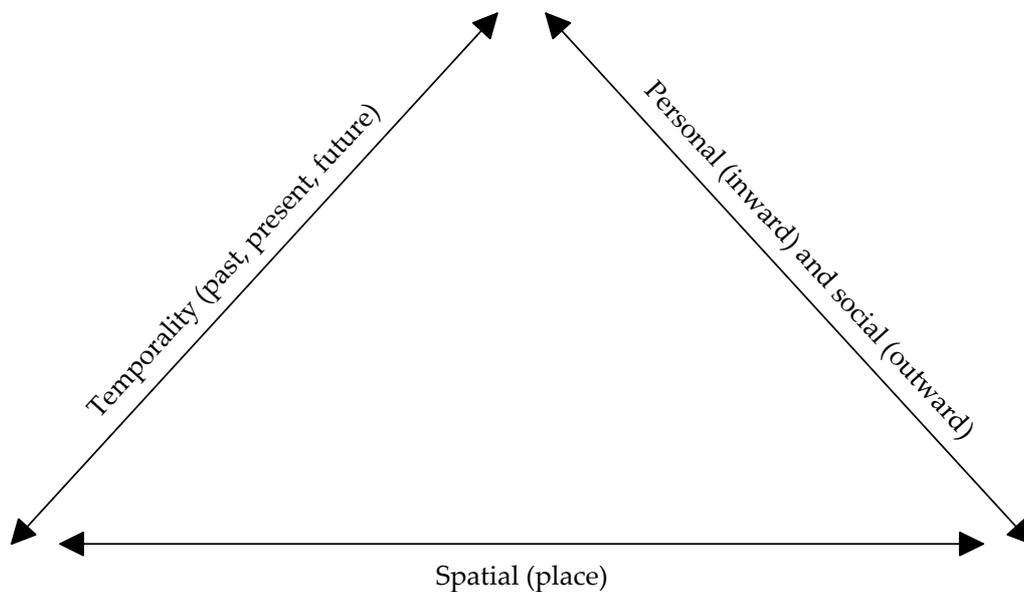
Connelly and Clandinin (1990, p. 2) purport that, "People lead storied lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience." Thus in the research text I developed, I present the personal experience stories of the students, and construct a coherent and responsive narrative. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) make this distinction i.e. that the participants tell "stories" and researchers "re-story" as they construct the research narrative, however, some other

researchers, for example, Polkinghorne (1995) in his use of narrative in psychotherapy, reverse this distinction so he writes “stories” of the participants’ “narratives.” My response narratives attempt to not privilege my own analysis but rather to respond to the students’ stories by drawing in the literature to throw light on, and make explicit, where my own interpretations have come from. I also draw on the multiple voices of the other participants on the in-school and out-of-school landscapes.

*Multiple voices and crystallisation.* Narrative accounts are thus context dependent (Bruner, 1991). In my research, the stories I gathered are the field texts – the data for my research narrative. Other complementary field texts include multiple interviews, observations, documents, field notes, and my research journal. In my narrative inquiry I listened primarily to the stories of the experiences of four students. Their stories are embedded in the in-school and out-of-school landscapes however, so I also listened to the multiple voices of principals, teachers, teacher aides, peers, parents, and siblings. As will become evident in the following chapters in this thesis the students’ stories are foregrounded and presented on their own with the other voices, observations, and documentary material contextualising and providing a complementary perspective in my constructed research response narrative text. Richardson (2000) calls this process “crystallization.” She uses the metaphor of a prism, or crystal, which is multi-dimensional and multi-directional with many faces and angles that reflect and refract light depending on “our angle of repose” or lens (p. 934). Crystals grow and alter but retain a shape. This perspective is contrasted to triangulation, recognising “that there are far more than ‘three sides’ from which to approach the world” (p. 934). However, as I explain in the next section, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that narrative inquiry can be understood within a three-dimensional view.

*The three-dimensional narrative inquiry space.* Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) approach to narrative inquiry works within a three-dimensional framework – a metaphorical term that includes the personal (inward) and the social (outward); the temporal (past, present, and future); and the spatial (place) – see Figure 1.

**Figure 1. The Three Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space**



This approach to studying experience has been influenced by Dewey (1938) who described the strong link between education and experience. His principles of continuity (temporal), situation (place) and interaction (social) are mirrored in the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space described by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). "The principle of continuity means that every experience both takes up something from those that have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those who come after" (Dewey, p. 35) thus our experiences do not exist in a vacuum but are linked to our past and our futures on an "experiential continuum" (p. 28) that links the temporal, the personal and social, and place. As the researcher, entering the three-

dimensional narrative inquiry space of this research project, I situated myself temporally, with stories of my past experiences and then moved into the present as I listened to my participants' re-construction of their stories of the past, and as they looked towards the future. The reader is also invited into this temporal dimension.

To the narrative inquirer, this notion of temporality – past, present and future – is a cornerstone of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. Bruner (1991) noted, "A narrative is an account of events...patterns of events occurring over time" (p. 6). Recognising temporality as a central feature of narrative sees the participants, including the researcher as inquirer, moving forwards and backwards in time as their stories are told (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Thus experience is seen as a process, a continuum, rather than an event, the result of which is growth (Dewey, 1938). Polkinghorne (1988) endorsed this principle of temporality: "It [narrative] provides a framework for understanding the past events in one's life and for planning future actions" (p. 11).

Dewey's (1938) concepts of situation and interaction are inseparable, and linked to a context of place and time. He described these principles as "the longitudinal and lateral aspects of experiences" (p. 44). Thus the experience involves the interaction of the individual with what "at that time, constitutes his (sic) environment" (p. 43). It includes personal drives and purposes as interacting with the situation and time that the individual is in. These are the second and third cornerstones of the three dimensional narrative inquiry space: together they are the moving and linking of the "inward" (the personal), and the "outward" (the social), with the "place" (the spatial context) aspects of the experience. Schon (1983) described the interaction of these dimensions as reflection-in-action, which comes as a result of reflection-upon-experience: thus as we reflect on our stories, the ends and means interact and thinking and doing cannot be separated.

Stories are listened to and read in the context of the three dimensional space: in narrative thinking, “the *person* in context is of prime interest” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 32). Thus the inquiry was a journey for me, and my participants, with a “sense of a search, a ‘re-search,’ a searching again” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 124). Narrative inquiry enabled me to begin with the students’ experiences and to follow them where they led. I did not presume to know where this was at the beginning of the search.

On entering the three-dimensional space of narrative inquiry I began however, by writing narrative beginnings of my past experiences whilst looking forward to becoming a teacher and researcher who has learned from the stories of others in my pedagogic journey. In the midst of this three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, I searched and met and engaged in conversations with the students in the present, that looked reflectively backward to the past and forward, as the student participants were becoming adults shaped by their experiences. In the conversations they looked inward to the personal as they reflected on their feelings and emotions related to experience, and outward to the social as they reflected on the “others” with whom they interacted in the in-school and out- of –school landscapes, and for the possible “others” who will read the stories and narrative texts in the future. These dimensions of *temporality* – past, present, and future; and the *inward* and *outward* of the personal and social, are inextricably situated in *place*.

**Landscape.** Clandinin and Connelly (2000) use the metaphor of landscape to describe the specific physical boundaries of place *on* which students’ stories of social experience are constructed. These places are situated in historical, cultural, and social contexts. Dewey (1938) states, that all “human experience is ultimately social: that involves contact and communication” (p. 38). Children learn the rules of a culture through social interaction (Haste, 1993) on in-school and out-of-school places or landscapes,

in the temporal dimension of the narrative inquiry space. In this study *place* is the in-classroom place and the out-of- classroom place as well as the in-school and out-of-school landscapes that are situated in the temporal, social, and cultural landscape of New Zealand. As will become clear, these places are interwoven throughout the stories of experience of the participants, and throughout the research text.

### *Entering and Being in the Field*

#### *Selecting the Schools*

In early 2003, after I received ethical approval for the research from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (Protocol PN 02/52), I wrote letters to the principals of fifteen secondary schools – nine co-educational school; three single-sex girls' schools, and three single-sex boys' schools - seeking participants for my study. The letter (Appendix A.2) had a brief explanation of my research with criteria I wanted to use to select participants: they needed to be ORRS (Ongoing Reviewable Resourcing Scheme) funded (indicating high or very high needs), verbal, and included full-time in the regular school. I also included the research information sheet (Appendix B) and expression of interest form (Appendix C) for them to send back to me. The schools were in three provincial cities in the North Island of New Zealand. I staggered the sending of the letters, in twos and threes, as I did not want to be swamped with affirmative replies and have to decline some of the schools' offers to participate.

The principals of four single sex schools responded on the Expression of Interest form, "no verbal ORRS students"; "one student but he/his family may not be the best for the longitudinal study"; "we currently have no ORRS funded students"; "no ORRS students in the school." A response from the

Head of Department (HOD) Learning Support from a single-sex girls' school stated, "Our students don't meet your criteria." I did not receive a response from a sixth single-sex school and although I followed this up with a phone call, my call was not returned.

Of the nine letters to the principals of the co-educational schools, I received eight responses. One principal did not reply to the letter or to two follow-up phone calls. I phoned another principal, as a follow-up to the lack of response to the letter and discussed the research but he declined to participate. A guidance counsellor phoned me and said, "We have no ORRS students"; a teacher from an attached special education unit phoned me and indicated, "We have no students who are fully included"; and a principal emailed me and said, "We cannot take part in your research of gifted children (sic)." The principals of Hillview High School and Mansfield College (the names are pseudonyms to protect confidentiality, which is discussed further in this chapter) returned the expression of interest forms asking me to ring them; and the HOD Special Needs at Glover High School emailed me and asked me to contact her. The principal of Jade Valley High School did not respond to my letter so I established contact with her by phone. She was surprised that I had not been contacted as she had referred the letter to the HOD Special Needs. Initially she was somewhat reluctant to take part but I subsequently received a letter from her stating that the school "is prepared to participate in your research project." She advised that a dean would act as a liaison person.

As I received interested responses, I phoned and made an appointment to meet with the principals to outline the research and answer their questions. At the initial meetings, the principals signed a consent form (Appendix D.2) and I provided letters for the Board of Trustees (Appendix A.1), the information sheet, and a consent form for institutional consent (Appendix

D.1) in a stamp addressed envelope. The BOT consent forms were subsequently mailed to me.

*Hillview High School.* This school is a state coeducational high school (Years 9- 13) in a suburb of a New Zealand provincial city. The school is graded Decile 9 indicating it is situated in a high socio-economic area. The school has an approximate roll of 900 that is predominantly European. There are approximately 40 international students, both fee paying and exchange. Students are drawn from a contributing intermediate school as well as other schools in the city, and overseas. The school has specialised Sports and Arts Institutes for selected students as well as a Learning Support Centre that caters for a range of needs including new enrolments during the year; students learning by correspondence; reading support; and students with disabilities. There are approximately 11 ORRS funded students enrolled.

*Jade Valley High School.* Jade Valley is a state coeducational high school (Years 9-13) in a suburb of a provincial city. This school has a roll of approximately 400, and is graded Decile 4, indicating a medium socio-economic area, with a multicultural mix: approximately 68% Pakeha, 27% Māori, and 5% other ethnic groups. The local intermediate school is the major source of new enrolments and there are approximately 25 fee paying foreign students. The school promotes itself as a community learning centre and works in partnership with four early childhood facilities, two primary schools and one intermediate school in the suburb to provide a seamless education for students. Jade Valley hosts a continuum of facilities for students with disabilities and learning needs: the Puriri Satellite School is located on the grounds; the roll is approximately eight - all are ORRS funded. The students have some special technology classes in the regular school. The school also supports a Student Support Centre where students with physical and intellectual disabilities are involved in learning as well as being included in some regular classes. The Centre also caters for a range of student needs -

correspondence students; remedial learning; students returning to school after long absences; and ESOL students.

*Mansfield College.* This state co-educational school is situated in a large provincial city, is graded as Decile 6 and has a roll of approximately 950 students with an ethnic composition of 67% Pakeha, 17% Māori, 10% Asian (the majority of whom are fee-paying international students), and 6% other ethnic groups. The school is an ORRS fund-holder school with approximately 43 ORRS funded students and has an attached special needs unit. A small number of the students in the unit with very high needs receive all their schooling in the unit - others have varying amounts of interaction in the regular school. The school is a magnet school for students with disabilities because of the purpose built facilities and all the buildings are single storey so wheelchair access is easy: there are approximately ten students who use wheelchairs.

*Glover High School.* Glover High School, situated in a provincial city, is a large state co-educational secondary school with an approximate roll of 1200, and a Decile 7 grading. The school also supports several specialised sports and arts programmes along with three special needs centres providing for a range of physical, intellectual, and learning needs. There are approximately 70% Pakeha, 20% Māori, 7% Asian, and 3% other ethnic groups. A Māori Immersion Unit supports Te Reo<sup>6</sup> at the Year 9 and 10 levels and there is a programme to support learners for whom English is not their first language (English Speakers of Other Languages –ESOL). Glover High is an ORRS fund-holder school with approximately 42 ORRS funded students. This number has been increasing over the last two years.

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<sup>6</sup> Māori language.

### *Selecting the Participants*

*Hillview High School.* I met the principal of Hillview High School in his office. The Learning Support Teacher was present at the meeting and agreed to act as liaison between me and students, parents, teachers, and teacher aides. They were both very welcoming and enthusiastic about the research and eager to help. The Learning Support Teacher suggested three students who fitted the criteria of verbal; ORRS funded, and included in the mainstream for all classes: two Year 10 males and a Year 9 male. She decided that as one of the Year 10 students had behaviour difficulties, she thought the other Year 10 student would be an appropriate student to approach initially with the Year 9 student to be approached if the first approach was not successful. I was guided by her professional knowledge of the students as to suitability for the project.

As I had institutional consent I provided a letter (Appendix A.3) and an information sheet to Sam, the selected student; a letter to his parents (Appendix A.4) with the information sheet; and expression of interest form. The Learning Support teacher agreed to give this information to Sam to take home. Two days later, I received an email from Sam's mother Charlotte to say they would like to meet with me. I arranged with her to visit them at their home at the weekend and meet the family. This was a comfortable meeting where I met Sam and his mother, stepfather Mike, and sister Rachel. We discussed the research, I outlined the participants' rights as written on the information sheet and the consent forms, and after I answered a few questions Sam and his mother signed the consent forms (Appendixes D.3; D.4; D.5) and we arranged a time and date for the first interview.<sup>7</sup>

*Jade Valley High School.* When I initially spoke to the principal of the school, she suggested a student, Gemma, who fitted my criteria and who she

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<sup>7</sup> The steps in the consent procedure were used for each of the students in my study.

thought might be a possibility for the research. I contacted the dean who the principal had suggested would be a liaison person and arranged a meeting at the school when we discussed the research. The dean suggested another student who could be approached if Gemma did not want to participate. When Gemma's parents, Kate and James returned the Expression of Interest form suggesting a suitable time to phone, I contacted them and we met one Sunday morning at their home. Over coffee and muffins we discussed the research, and I outlined the participants' rights as written on the information sheet and the consent forms. Gemma and her mother signed the consent forms, and we arranged a time for the first interviews. Gemma's sister, Alison, was not at home at the first meeting.

*Mansfield College.* At our initial meeting, the principal had already spoken to the HOD Special Needs and they had selected a possible student, Adam. I left two sets of letters so if the first approach was not successful, they could select another student on my behalf. Two weeks later I received an Expression of Interest form from Adam's parents, Louise and David. At the arranged meeting at their home on a Saturday afternoon, I met Adam and his brother Jim. We discussed the research, and I outlined the participants' rights as written on the information sheet and the consent forms. Adam and his parents signed the consent forms.

*Glover High School.* I received an email from the HOD Special Needs at the school expressing support and assistance with my research. At an arranged meeting I met with her to discuss the research and she suggested two possible students who fitted the criteria. I gave her letters etc for the students on the understanding that if the first approach was not successful, she would give out the second set. Sarah's mother Felicity returned the Expression of Interest form and I arranged a meeting where I met Sarah and her mother and her stepfather George, at their home on a Saturday afternoon. Her younger brother was in the house but I did not meet him. Both Sarah and

Felicity were enthusiastic about the research. I outlined the participants' rights as written on the information sheet and the consent forms. Sarah and Felicity gave their written consent, and the first interview times were organised.

### *Gathering Field Texts*

#### *Interviews: The Students' Stories*

Field texts included the stories which were collected by audiotaping the unstructured interviews/guided conversations using open-ended questions. In the first interviews I asked open-ended questions (Appendix G) as I sought to establish rapport, connectedness, and a conversational tone. In the subsequent interviews, I included excerpts from previous interviews and asked the students to comment on whether I had "got it right"; tell me more; clarify; reflect on how they felt about that now, thus enabling the students to participate in constructing the narrative with "negotiated interpretation" (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002, p. 344).

I audiotaped the conversations so I was able to actively attend to, and listen, to the stories (and re-listen many times) rather than trying to write everything down. I transcribed the audio-recordings into written text as soon as possible after the interviews. By transcribing the tapes myself I began to reflect on the stories and made notes as I read. Towards the end of the research and because of the number of interviews, I engaged a person to transcribe the last interviews, although I transcribed all the participating students' interviews. The transcripts were used as the basis for discussion/responses and subsequent conversations with the participants, and became part of the ongoing narrative record. The stories were dated and context noted and filed in ring binders for each student participant.

In this next section I provide introductions to the four students, and describe the interview process. Including descriptive introductions here is part of the research design in that it begins the reflective dialogue with the reader in the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. The students' stories, re-presented as poetic text provide more information about themselves (Chapters Four, Six, Eight, and Ten) and I present more details about each student in my research response narratives (Chapters Five, Seven, Nine, and Eleven).

*Sam.* Sam was a 14-year-old boy in Year 10, when I first interviewed him. He had been included in regular classrooms for all his education, going to the local primary school just around the corner from his home, then to the local intermediate school, and enrolled at local Hillview High School in 2002. He lived at home with his mum Charlotte and step-dad Mike, and his younger sister Rachel who was in Year 8 at the beginning of the study but enrolled at Hillview in 2004.

In Year 10 Sam enjoyed playing cards with his friends, watching videos and going to the movies, playing computer games, golf, and wheelchair tennis. Over the time we talked he became an avid fan of "Lord of the Rings" and continued his other interests although his interest in the card game YugiOh diminished.

Sam found it hard to describe himself, beyond the colour of his blond hair and blue eyes, but noted, "On crutches would probably be the most defining thing...yeah...uses green crutches for mobilisation" (01/04). Teachers described him, for example, as a "a very enthusiastic, bubbly boy"; "very determined to do things other normal kids can do"; "He's a very positive boy"; "He does laugh about the mistakes he makes"; "A real toiler, a real tryer"; "Gives anything a go"; "He just stands out and with that smile on his face...he's got a great sense of humour"; "He's actually a lot more mature than a lot of boys in that class"; "He's got a sunny personality"; "He's well

prepared. He's confident. He's happy. He's really motivated to do well and he's a pleasure to have around"; and "A delightful boy who just happens to have a disability." His mum described him: "A very caring and emotional character...he's always been determined, right from really little. He does get down a little bit...at the moment he's realising he's not quite the same as others but generally that doesn't last for long and he picks himself up and off he goes again... He's a neat kid!" (04/03)

When he was in Year 11, his parents bought him a mobility scooter on which he used to go to school, and he has taken on an after school job delivering pamphlets and a local newspaper. Rachel and Sam shared the paper round and they have enjoyed having money to spend, particularly being able to buy Christmas presents for their friends and family. His family is encouraging and positive, proactively finding solutions and making adaptations so Sam could be involved in everything and become independent, such as buying the scooter and teaching him life-skills, for example, making a hot drink for guests.

Sam has cerebral palsy, a condition caused by damage to the part of the brain that controls movement. Sam's form of cerebral palsy is spastic diplegia, which involves all his limbs with the legs being more severely affected. His leg muscles were tight and stiff because the messages to the muscles are incorrectly relayed from the damaged part of the brain. He had had surgery on his feet to reduce the tightness of the muscles. As a young boy he used a wheelchair most of the time but when I met him he used crutches to move around the school, or if he got tired would use his wheelchair that was kept at the Learning Support Centre. He also had a sports wheelchair that he used for wheelchair tennis and badminton. The school had ramps when he went there, but a chair lift was installed to enable him to access the upstairs classrooms in one block, for his computer classes. Initially, his mother took him to school, however in Year 11 with his new mobility scooter he used that

to get to school, and was allocated a parking space. His mother took him on wet days. At home he managed to walk slowly as he could hang onto furniture and objects to steady himself. His hand muscles were affected to a lesser extent: in Year 9 and 10, his teacher aide did most of his writing for him but in Year 11, with practice and perseverance he had developed more control of his hands and did most of the writing himself. His needs were classified as “High” and he received ORRS funding to support him at school.

I interviewed Sam four times in the lounge at his home: the audiotaped interviews were 40 – 65 minutes in duration. His mother was home on all occasions but was occupied in another room. I observed him in class for two days in the first year of the study – in maths, art, text and information management, science, English, and physical education, and for one day in the second year – in English, maths, geography, economics, and text and information management. In these classes I was able to sit towards the back of the classrooms at a student desk, positioned so I could observe his interactions with the teachers, teacher aide, and peers. On all the observation days I observed him making the transition between classes. He acknowledged me with a smile.

*Gemma.* Gemma is a bubbly, outgoing, loquacious girl who had attended the local primary and intermediate schools. She enrolled at the local high school, Jade Valley Year 9 in 1999 although her first choice of secondary school was a local single-sex school – Sheppard Girls’ High School. Because the school was popular it had established an enrolment scheme whereby students within a geographical school zone had the right to enrol at the school. Students who lived out of the Sheppard Girls’ High School zone could apply for enrolment but there was a ballot system for limited places. Gemma lived out of the school zone, and was not accepted in the ballot. Three years later, her sister Alison was accepted at Sheppard Girls’ High.

I met Gemma when she was 17 and in Year 13. She left school at the end of 2003 and attended the local polytechnic to study hairdressing, although her partial sight meant that aspects of this course, such as cutting, were difficult. When she was in Year 12 and 13 she had Work Experience in hairdressing salons as part of school course work. She loved clothes and jewellery and liked to have fun and a good time with friends.

Gemma described herself as, "a happy, outgoing, loud, bubbly person." Her teachers and teacher aide commented, "Vivacious, sociable, talkative...too talkative!"; "I like her bubbling enthusiasm"; "...is a lot more capable than she let's on"; "She can be quite outspoken"; "I think of Gemma as vivacious, talks a lot, chats a lot, can talk to anyone and could probably sell ice to an Eskimo!"; "She doesn't see hurdles"; "Gemma's very much a flirt and very friendly with people"; "On the academic side she does not achieve very well"; "Full of life and fun"; "Very enthusiastic about things she like to do and wants to be treated like everybody else...just to see her blossom over the years has been wonderful." Her parents, James and Kate saw Gemma as, "A happy girl...willing to learn...wants to participate in most things...eager...she's a social butterfly...she likes to be out there...lots of fun...argumentative."

Gemma has a hereditary vision impairment that was diagnosed when she was four months old: bilateral congenital choroidal coloboma, myopia, nystagmus, and astigmatism that result in upper field loss restricting her field of vision. This meant she found it difficult to look up at the whiteboard for note-taking and written material had to be enlarged to N.16 so she could read it, or she could wear her glasses, which she did sometimes, and/or hold print up close to read. The coloboma is a condition where part of one eye has not formed due to failure of fusion of the intraocular fissure. This had affected the choroid - the membrane lining the eyeball. Side effects of the coloboma are

nystagmus which causes the eyes to shake; and myopia or shortsightedness. Her other eye has an astigmatism, also a birth defect, which affects focus.

The impairment qualified her for ORRS funding with a combination of “High” and “Very High Needs” funding. The teacher aide, who was with Gemma for all her secondary education, sometimes took her out of class to the Learning Centre for small group, or individual help in spelling, reading, and maths. The teacher aide was with her for most classes throughout her time at Jade High to help with writing and learning support. She also had regular support from a teacher of vision from a sensory resource centre based at another school.

I interviewed Gemma four times at her home, three times when she was at school and the last interview was in August in the year after she left school. We sat at the dining table with a cup of tea. One day I was invited for lunch that Gemma had prepared, and so the interview took place after lunch. The audiotaped interviews were 60 – 80 minutes in duration. Gemma seemed to really enjoy being interviewed and talked loquaciously. On two occasions her mother was home and I was aware that she was within hearing distance: occasionally she would make a comment and also brought copies of reports and IEPs to show me while we were talking. I observed Gemma at school for two days in 2003 observing in fabric technology, food technology, English, business administration and computing, and one form-time. In most classes I sat behind the group Gemma was sitting at, however in fabric technology the group worked in a small room so although I was able to sit at another table, I was quite close to her group. She openly acknowledged me and brought her photo album with the ball photos over to show me. The teacher aide also came and chatted to me while I observed. During the lesson the group moved to another room to practise modelling for a wearable art competition and Gemma asked me to go with them and observe.

*Adam.* Adam was a 13-year-old boy in Year 9 when we met. After attending kindergarten he went with his peers to the local primary school and intermediate school and enrolled at Mansfield College in 2003. He was very competent with electronics and computers and also enjoyed drawing technical diagrams, and listening to a wide range of music. He achieved at a high level in maths and science and when he was in Year 10 he attended a Level 1 NCEA<sup>8</sup> class for science. He lived at home with his mother Louise and father David, and his younger brother Jim who started high school in the second year of the research. Adam and Jim both have Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD) and Louise took them in their wheelchairs to school each day in their van. She dropped them off at the special needs unit (Taylor Block) where their teacher aides were based. Adam was verified as “Very High Needs” for ORRS funding and has fulltime teacher aide support to get out his gear and do some of his writing: he has had a different teacher aide each year. The school is single storey and ramps provide access to all buildings.

Adam described himself as happy, and says he likes to say what he thinks. Teacher aides and teachers described him as, “a bright lad”; “a bright young fellow intellectually”; “pretty much a perfectionist”; “a pedantic worker...likes to do a good job”; “he’s very capable”; “he’s a very quiet sort of a chap”; “has a bit of a sense of humour at times”; “he’s very moral”; “he’s a very articulate young man”; he’s very pleasant. He’s usually cooperative and he’s a fine young man”; “he’s trying very hard to be independent.” His mother Louise had this to say: “he’s intelligent. He’s very happy at school...he smiles a lot but he can be moody at home. He’s very inquisitive and has always asked questions since he was little about how things work and why. He’s a perfectionist. He doesn’t like using the telephone. He is becoming more independent but still struggles with making choices.”

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<sup>8</sup> The National Certificate of Educational Achievement – secondary school qualification levels 1-3 (Years 11-13).

Adam was diagnosed with DMD when he was at kindergarten after the teacher noticed he had trouble getting up off the floor and preferred to walk up the ramps rather than the steps. Jim was diagnosed soon after this. Muscular dystrophy is a genetically determined neuromuscular disorder where there is a defective gene that produces the protein dystrophin that is important in shaping the structure of muscles. The disease, of which Duchenne is the most common, almost exclusively affects males and causes a gradual wasting of muscle with accompanying weakness that is progressively disabling with early death in teenage or early adult years (Hammond & McCann, 2003). When Adam was about nine and a half he was unable to stand and has since used a wheelchair. He also had a leaky heart valve, a heart murmur, and respiratory problems associated with the disease that involved constant monitoring and necessitated some time off school when he was unwell. He was very adept at manoeuvring his electric wheelchair and although he could manage some of his writing he could not raise his hand to ask or answer questions. In 2003 he used a laptop in the small classroom he used for study but in Year 10 he used the laptop in class, on his wheelchair tray. Physiotherapy was timetabled at school and he took one less option subject and used the time for study and to do his homework. Because of his tiredness his parents did not wish him to do schoolwork at home.

At the end of the second year of the study, Louise saw changes in him because of the degenerative nature of the disease and she noted, "He's quieter...he's more subdued. He still likes to be a perfectionist but that's stopped a little bit... 'cos of the energy levels and the tiredness. He's slowed down a little bit. He's not worried if he doesn't get something finished. He doesn't draw as much as he gets tired...but he's still positive and would rather be at school than home" (12/04).

I interviewed Adam four times in the dining room at his home. His parents and brother were home but were busy in other rooms. The

audiotaped interviews were 30 – 60 minutes in duration. The tape recorder was placed on the tray of his wheelchair and he took pleasure in the workings of my antiquated tape recorder, keeping an eye on the voice/sound level. I observed him at school one day in each of the two years of the study. In the first year, I observed him in maths, science, art, and English, and in the second year, in maths, social studies, sciences, and art. In all classes I sat either at a student desk at the side of the room or at the teacher's desk at the front of the room where I could observe Adam and his interactions with teachers, teacher aide, and peers. When I was in the classrooms, Adam acknowledged my presence with a small smile.

*Sarah.* Sarah was a 15-year-old Māori girl and in Year 11 when I first met her in 2003. When she was 16, and six weeks after the third interview, she passed away from pneumonia. During her primary school years she had attended a kura kaupapa Māori<sup>9</sup> where her mother was a teacher and she later attended Seapoint College before she came to Glover High in Year 11. English was her second language, but both languages were spoken at home. Her Pakeha father died when she was eight, and she lived with her Māori mother Felicity, her Pakeha stepfather Bill, and her younger brother Mark in a small town 20 kilometres from the city where her school was. She also had an elder brother who was married and lived in another town.

Sarah loved being part of the school kapa haka group<sup>10</sup>, playing wheelchair rugby, watching videos, shopping for clothes, and hip hop music. At primary school and in Year 9 she played netball in teams with students without disabilities. She described herself as a happy person who was shy when she first started high school. She liked clothes but didn't care what she

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9 Total immersion Māori language school.

10 The term kapa haka derives its meaning from two words: kapa (to stand in rows) and haka (Māori dance). It is used to describe both a Māori performing arts group (a kapa haka group) and the Māori performing arts in general, which include Māori dance and songs.

wore to school in Year 12 when mufti was permitted: "Clothes is (sic) nothing when you go to school...School's school. I mean it's different if you're going out or going to town but not school!" Amy, her best friend said, "She was 'out there.'" She wanted to party all the time. She was real funny...and really caring, very helpful." Her teacher aides described her, "A very, very outgoing friendly nature. She's quite bubbly and she likes to talk a lot and likes to give the teacher aides and the teachers a hard time! She's so much fun! She's full of life! She puts herself down a lot and she says, 'I can't do that!' I like to reassure her...She tries her best...She's assertive. If she really wants something she will go for it" and one of her teachers said, "She's a very energetic, up-front sort of a girl who enjoys whizzing around the school. She has a great sense of humour, a great personal approach to people. She gets on really well with everybody...She's a neat kid...very, very assertive." Felicity her mum described her:

Very independent...outspoken...she voices her opinions. She's a very, very caring child. She loves participating in everything pertaining to family and also in the community. Very social. Very social. She gets on well with adults and also with children. She's very confident of herself and she argues the point whether she knows she's right or wrong, she'll keep arguing. I'm very proud of her because she has those strengths, and that's being strong and being able to stand in her world that she lives in.

Sarah was born with spina bifida, a defect where the spine fails to close properly in the first month of pregnancy, causing paralysis in the back below the lesion, and thus the legs. She had associated bowel and bladder problems and these necessitated several stays in hospital. Her family worked hard to develop her independence with caring for herself and her personal hygiene, and in chores around the house with the aim being that she would move into a flat of her own and live independently with a job and being able to drive a car. Sarah used a wheelchair and was transported to school in a funded taxi that dropped her off at the special needs unit (Copeland Centre) at school. All

her classes were downstairs and each building was fitted with ramps. She was verified as having “Very High Needs” for ORRS funding.

I interviewed her three times in the lounge at her home. Her mother was home on the first occasion but for the second and third interviews, Sarah was home on her own. The audiotaped interviews were 30-45 minutes in duration. I observed her at Glover High School for a day in each of the two years of the study – in the first year I observed her in science, maths, and employment skills, and in the second year in whanau-time, text and information management, employment skills, economics. In all the classes I was able to sit at a student desk towards the side or back of the room where she was within my view. She did not acknowledge that I was there.

### *Interviews: Parents*

I interviewed parents twice, most of them in their homes (although I met with Sarah’s mother at work for her second interview), once at the beginning of the research and again at the end of the research. For three of the students, I interviewed their mothers; however in Gemma’s parents’ first interview, both her father and mother participated. The interviews were 45 - 80 minutes in duration. After transcribing the audiotapes into written text after the first interview, I wrote a response to the interview and took this to the second interview. This enabled the parents to reflect on what she/they had said; provided space to agree or disagree with what I had written; and participate in constructing the narrative.

### *Interviews: Siblings*

At the initial interview with the students and their parents, I met Sam’s sister Rachel and Adam’s brother Jim and in the presence of their parents I invited them to participate and be interviewed later in the research, and they

agreed verbally. Rachel was thirteen at the time of the interview; Jim was also thirteen. I did not meet Sarah's brother but she said he did not want to take part. Gemma's sister, Alison who was fifteen at the time of her interview was not there but her mother said she would take part; before the last interview with the participating students I wrote letters to Rachel, Alison, and Jim asking them to participate (Appendix A.5). Some of the questions that I was going to ask were included in the letters. Their parents rang me to indicate the siblings would participate: written consent was provided at the time of the interview (Appendix D.8). I interviewed three siblings - Rachel, Alison, and Jim, in their homes at the time of the focus students' last interview. No one else was present at the audiotaped interviews that were 15 - 20 minutes in duration. As we had only met briefly, we chatted informally at the beginning of the interview so I could establish a rapport and make them feel comfortable.

### *Interviews: Principals*

I met all four of the principals on my first visit to the schools in 2003 (the fifth principal was appointed in 2004) and interviews were arranged through their secretaries. With their written consent, three principals were interviewed twice, once at the beginning of the research (2003) and once at the end (2004). One school had a change of principal and I interviewed both of them, one at the beginning of the research in 2003, and one at the end in 2004. The audiotaped interviews in the principals' offices were 30-40 minutes in duration.

### *Interviews: Teachers*

Each principal arranged a liaison teacher to arrange teacher interviews and observations. I provided the liaison teacher with copies of letters

(Appendix A.6), the information sheet, and consent forms (Appendix D.6), and the liaison teacher organised venues and timetables for interviews and observations. Only one teacher declined to be interviewed – no reason was given.

The research took place over two academic years (2003 and 2004) and I interviewed subject teachers in November of each year. I interviewed some teachers in their classroom, in meeting/interview rooms, and some in a corner of a staff-room. The audiotaped interviews were 20-30 minutes in duration.

### *Interviews: Teacher Aides*

As well as organising the teachers' interviews and observations, the liaison teachers introduced me to the teacher aides and I discussed the research and gave them a letter (Appendix A.7), the information sheet, and a consent form (Appendix D.7). All the teacher aides consented to be interviewed and returned the signed forms to the liaison teacher who arranged the interview times. Most of the teacher aides were interviewed in meeting/ interview rooms; one was interviewed in the Learning Support Centre. The audiotaped interviews were 30-40 minutes in duration.

### *Interviews: Peers*

At the third or fourth interview, I asked each participating student to nominate a friend who I could approach with information about the research. The students signed a consent form indicating that the peers could be approached. The students and parents agreed to give letters (Appendix A.8), the information sheet and expression of interest form to the nominated peer. Adam's friend Karen contacted me via the liaison teacher, and Sarah's friend Amy contacted me via her mother and agreed to be interviewed. Written consent was obtained at the interviews (Appendix D.9). Both these

audiotaped interviews were conducted at towards the end of the study and were 20-30 minutes duration. I interviewed Karen at school, and Amy at her home at a weekend. I did not receive any replies from Gemma's and Sam's nominated friends.

### *Observations on the In-class and Out-of Class Landscape*

When I had received consent from teachers to observe in their classes, letters were also given to all the students in the classes that I would be visiting, to take home to provide them and their parents/caregivers with information about my purpose in visiting their class and providing them with the option of me not including them in my research (Appendix E). No parents/caregivers/students withheld their consent. In each classroom, I sat in a place designated by the teacher and took notes as I observed student-student, and student-teacher interactions. During the observations in the classrooms, hallways, canteens, and playgrounds of the participating schools, I took notes and later wrote these up adding reflections and notes as I wrote. These notes and reflections were coded alongside the interview transcripts.

### *Field notes*

As soon as possible after the interviews, I wrote field notes about body language, descriptions of place, anecdotes, and my reflections on the interview.

### *Journal*

During the course of the inquiry I kept a journal where I reflected on my ongoing experience and analysis of the stories and observations. This was another field text, and was an integral part of writing the research narrative.

## *Documents*

In order to support the contextual nature of the students' stories, I collected copies of students' mid-year and end-of-year progress reports, IEPs, school policies on the Learning Support Centre (Hillview High School); curriculum delivery to students with special needs and special abilities (Mansfield College); curriculum delivery, Student Support Centre, and Special Education Centre (Jade Valley High School); and Learning Support, and Special Education (Glover High School); and school prospectuses. I read these as I was writing the research narrative and referred to them if they illuminated analysis of the students' stories.

## *Constructing the Research Text*

### *Analysis of the Stories*

Analysis began with the first interview. As I listened to the stories and as I transcribed and coded the tapes I wrote responses and memos as I identified patterns and threads in the narratives – this was the beginning of the research text - and interpreted my understanding and made sense of it in the contexts of their experiences. "This interpretative function of narrative takes it out of the realm of mere reporting and embeds it in research subjectivities and social relations" (Daiute & Fine, 2003, p. 63). The responses and memos became part of my research narrative that attempted to "persuasively guide the reader to embedded meanings and their larger significance" (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003, p. 272). I sought meaning and understanding of the students' experiences, eventually re-storying and re-telling the story in the response narratives (Chapters Five, Seven, Nine, and Eleven) addressed to the student; these responses follow the students' stories that I have re-presented in poetic form (Chapters Four, Six, Eight, and Ten).

I read and re-read the transcripts in a back and forth process, and as I synthesised the field texts that included stories of the participants, observations, journals and reflections, and documents into a coherent, plotted narrative, I considered and noted the historical and socio-cultural context and temporal dimensions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Polkinghorne, 1995). From the field texts I crafted the questions for the next interview. I would say to the student, for example, "When you told me about...what did you mean?" or "Tell me more about..." or "You said... how do you feel now about...?" or "I am not quite sure what you meant by...can you explain that?"

When I interviewed the parents for the second time, I gave them my written response to their first interview to read. This provided a beginning for the interview and an opportunity for the parent to clarify, endorse, reflect on, and lead into a conversation.

Subsequent readings of the transcripts led me to further reflection and interpretation. Repeated readings saw a growing interpretation and understanding with subsequent change (Louden, 1991) through a process of reflective and prolonged thinking (Ferguson, 1993). Throughout this process I was mindful of the question that motivated me to do the research: What is the nature of the social relationships and friendships of four students with disabilities, in secondary schools in New Zealand? My ongoing journal, clarified my thinking in relation to the research question within the historical, political, and socio-cultural context of the secondary school landscape of New Zealand schools. As Smith (1992) reminded me, interpretation involves the interaction of human action and social action; human action "can only be understood within, a social context or within a web of social meanings" (p. 102). The issues of ethics and "narrative smoothing" are important in each phase of narrative research of course, and I discuss these more after the next section.

*Software.* I used the N6 version in the NUD\*IST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing) series (Richards, 2002) to organise the field texts that included 78 transcribed interviews, observation notes, field notes and journal entries. My aim was to code (or plot) each of the stories inductively as an organisational tool, rather than to reduce them to a number of themes as in a paradigmatic analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995), in a search for meaning and social significance (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

As I read and re-read the transcripts many times, supported with my field notes (external) and reflective journal (internal) that I included as memos in the coding process, I searched and re-searched for, and coded, the threads, patterns, and tensions that wove through the stories, thus foregrounding the individual and unique person's experience. I searched for narrative resonances and interlapping within the individual students' stories, rather than across the four students' stories. I searched and re-searched for themes and patterns and plotlines (Polkinghorne, 1995) within their lives and connected across their lives; gaps or silences that become apparent; tensions that emerged in the accounts, as well as continuities and discontinuities that appeared, as I searched for meaning and understanding of the experiences of four students (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The software package enabled me to organise and archive a large amount of material that went beyond the parameters of this research study. I have the written consent of my participants to access this for future research and publications.

### *Ethical Considerations*

This section discusses a number of issues that I considered as I conducted my narrative inquiry. I engaged in the students' lifeworld and tried to be empathetic, and bracket, by setting aside, my presuppositions (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000, p. 295). I was aware of these and in my Narrative

Beginnings described the lenses through which I “see” as, “Researchers interpret meaning from the data through many layers of understanding” (Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 1997, p. 44).

Ethical issues of confidentiality and anonymity, truthfulness, minimising of harm, and social sensitivity were addressed in an application to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. The committee approved the research. The research process was transparent and truthful: narrative “inquiry is a moral activity because it focuses on the understandings we have of ourselves in relation to others in society and on the kinds of society we would like to have” (Smith, 1992, p. 102). Thus the inquiry took place within an ethic of caring.

When interviewing the students, there were issues of power with the age difference between the student participants and me, however I sought to establish a rapport and trust with genuine interest in the participants’ lives. Hogan (1988, cited in Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4) described this as establishing a feeling of connectedness. He stressed a sense of equality between participants as important in narrative inquiry. This could be a limitation of the inquiry, however, by giving “voice” to the students suggests a relationship where one has the feeling of being heard and affirmed, valued, and a confirmation of each other (Britzman, in press; Elbow, 1986, both cited in Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4).

*An ethic of caring.* Within an ethic of caring (Noddings, 1988; 1990; Witherell & Noddings, 1991) and while I am in relation to my readers, I have a prior and primary relational responsibility to all those who shared their stories of their experiences with me (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This means I have to be guided by care for the stories and the people I am in a research relationship with, and decide whether or not some narratives, if published, would harm the participants (Huber & Clandinin, 2002). This relationship is developed in “a foundation of trust” (Witherell & Noddings, 1991, p. 6) and

“empathy” (Josselson, 1995, p. 29), and characterised by responsibility and response.

In this study I demonstrated my responsibility by ensuring truthfulness and confidentiality as stated in the information sheet, to achieve freedom from harm. It was stated in the information sheet that I would use pseudonyms for all participants and schools but also stated that I could not guarantee anonymity. The students chose their pseudonyms and some chose their parents’ pseudonyms. The siblings also chose theirs. The transcriber signed a written, witnessed, confidentiality agreement (Appendix F).

I adhered to sensitivity, by listening empathetically. My participants responded by sharing their experiences in this “foundation of trust.” Similarly, I responded to their shared experiences through my “commitment to maintain and enhance caring relations. I remain in concrete relation. I listen, reflect, respond” (Noddings, 1990, p. 122).

I am also in relation to my readers in establishing an interdependent dialogue with them in the research text, and inciting and building ongoing dialogues (Gergen & Gergen, 2003). My voice is one in a multiply voiced discussion and I trust my readers to make their own interpretations. This is one reason that I have foregrounded the students’ stories so the readers can read them before they read my responses. Using the personal voice and pronoun “I” can enable shared communication about the world in that they can evoke a response from other multiple voices, as though we are in conversation (Jones, 1992). Thus I also trust and hope that my readers will share their interpretations and continue dialogues with their colleagues on the landscapes on which they teach.

In narrative inquiry, caring relationships must be nurtured: in “an ethic of caring, conversation and relationship are critically linked” (Schulz, 1997, p.86). This brings a huge relational responsibility as I, the researcher, made decisions about the questions I asked, and as the writer of the research text, I

decided what may be harmful and should not be included. It was important that I was aware that the participants will read the research text (Ginsburg, 1997). Their lives go on in the contexts in which we met and I needed to ensure that my fleeting presence would not harm them. I hope by talking about their experiences and telling me their stories, they have learned to reflect on their lives, and feel they have contributed to a wider understanding of their experiences.

*Narrative smoothing.* Narrative smoothing of the participants' stories can occur at several points within a narrative inquiry, including early on during interviews if the researcher asks leading questions, encourages the participant to follow certain interpretations, or "hears" one meaning in a tone of voice as opposed to others (Spence, 1986). To counter this insidious kind of narrative smoothing (which highlights the researcher's investigative and authoritative power (Hones, 1998)), and avoid research bias, I endeavoured to establish a rapport and engaged in a conversation, rather than asking "leading" questions. Proposed schedules of possible/guiding questions that were submitted for ethical approval are included (Appendix G). I piloted these questions with a student who did not participate in the inquiry, transcribed her stories, and discussed these with my supervisors to obtain an objective critique of my ability to not smooth the narrative. The pilot interview gave me the opportunity to refine the questions and my questioning technique.

I recognise of course that stories are also shaped and smoothed by the participants. They choose what to share and have selective memories (Bateson, 1989), choosing to omit or tell some stories – that is their prerogative. We are vulnerable in telling our stories and we can choose which stories others can read. Thus ostensibly while this also "smooths the narrative", it is important that research participants have the right to participate in ways that they feel comfortable.

Narrative smoothing also occurred when I chose which stories to include in the research text. The transcripts are full of stories so, pragmatically, choices had to be made, for reasons of salience, succinctness, and space. I was guided by my research question, as I read and reread the transcripts, and chose stories that developed meaning and understanding of the social experiences of the students. I accepted this responsibility.

*Ethical dilemmas.* There are dilemmas that face researchers who want to present a multifaceted picture of multiple realities. No researcher can anticipate all ethical problems that may be encountered however, I discussed the dilemmas with my supervisors (Morrow & Richards, 1996). I was faced with several problems as I responded to the students' stories and wrote my research text. For example, during my qualitative research where I did not presume to know the outcomes of the research at the beginning, the fieldwork presented stories beyond what I expected. For example, the stories of a teacher and a teacher aide ran counter to the stories of Gemma, and Sam's and Sarah's mothers told me stories of incidents that Sam and Sarah did not share with me. This raised a dilemma for me, of "whose story counted?" My decision to include each of these stories in my responses to each of the students was informed by the aim of my research to give a holistic, crystallized narrative of the students' experience. Critics might argue that the adult voice is being prioritised. However, this was not my intention which was instead to place these stories *alongside* the students' stories.

Another dilemma I faced was how to present my research narrative. I chose the literary device of writing "unsent letters" as I wrote my responses to the students' stories. This enabled me to figuratively "speak" to the students and to reflect in my analysis my being in relation to them as I responded to and interpreted their stories. This device also enabled me, within ethical considerations of caring, to place the various stories alongside each other to create verisimilitude and a multi faceted narrative of experience. And it

further enabled me to support my interpretations with the literature as is required in academic writing. As part of my considerations of requirements not to put my participants in harm's way, I considered how the letters would impact on the students if they read them. The students all gave informed consent and knew that I would be talking to their teachers, teacher aides, and parents so were aware that there may be competing stories. There may have been several reasons why the students did not tell me these particular stories; however, I made a conscious decision to include the stories as one interpretation of their silences. I acknowledge in my narrative responses in the research text that these reflect my researcher interpretations, that is, my analysis of the stories I had been told. Other readers may interpret these stories differently.

### *Presenting the Research Text*

#### *Audience*

In discussing the use of autobiography in understanding educational experience, Grumet (1990) concludes that "any writing and reading of our lives presents us with a challenge that is at the heart of everyday educational experience: making sense of our lives in the world" (p. 324). Narrative research texts "challenge their readers and writers to find both individuality and society, being and history and possibility in their texts" (p. 323). Thus the reader is invited into the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space as a reflective participant. If this experience makes sense to the reader personally and speaks to their experience (Clough, 2002), they will ask if other situations resemble those described. The focus in a narrative inquiry is on the individual persons being researched. The responsibility for generalisation to other landscapes is placed on the readers themselves, as they know those other landscapes best.

I want the research text to speak to my readers and capture the stories of my participants, so at the outset I invited the reflective reader into the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. The audience is “invited into reflectivity – into the worlds of the study and the researcher’s thinking and feeling” (Ely et al., 1997, p. 48). To foreground the students’ stories I wanted to create evocative text that would focus on the essence of the experiences as well as engage the reader in a dialogic and reflective experience, so I chose to re-present the stories in poetic form. By reading the narrative and being influenced by the emotions and facts that the stories convey, the reader can decide if the stories have much in common with the experiences of others and be encouraged to dialogue and problem solve in wider settings (Ballard, 1994).

### *Poetic Re-presentation*

In a post-modern context, a number of researchers have used poetic re-presentation as a research tool (Austin, 1996; Glesne, 1997; Hones, 1998; Raymond, 2002; Richardson, 1997; Tedlock, 1983; Ware, 1997). Janesick (2000) sees the use of poetry as a means of crystallisation as it supports the multifaceted nature of the experience. Evocative writing “deploys literary devices to re-create lived experience and evoke emotional responses” and causes readers to experience material differently because it “touches us where we live, in our bodies” as we make connections with others (Smith, D., 1998, p. 931). Richardson (2000) describes different forms of evocative writing: autoethnography; writing-stories; and poetic representation. For this study I used poetic representation because it is consistent with Bruner’s (1985, 1991) narrative mode of knowing where plotlines are constructed to display textual meaning, threads, connections and resonance and because it is a form of evocative writing that can create emotional as well as cognitive responses. In

regard to the latter, reading the poems affects the senses and “makes one pause, reflect, feel. It ‘gives pleasure first, then truth, and its language is charged, intensified, concentrated’” (Drury, 1991, p.5, cited in Glesne, 1997, p. 232). Poetic representation also creates verisimilitude by presenting the participants’ own words (Eisner, 1997) as it “maps the real” (Denzin, 1997, p. 10) experiences on the in-school and out-of-school landscapes.

Working within the temporal dimension of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, the stories were not shared with me in a coherent chronological time; as Ellis points out, “We do not lead lives linearly” (Ellis, 1995, p. 315). The students in my study did not always speak in a flowing, coherent fashion (there were often unrelated asides and comments, a to-ing and fro-ing, long pauses and sometimes animated discussions about “The Lord of the Rings” and the design of ball gowns). Rather the stories were told backwards and forwards as the participants reflected in the “present” of the interview within “the temporal unfolding...of [their] lives” (Huber & Clandinin, 2002, p. 793), reflecting how “...the way we view our lives in the past is contextualized by what is going on in the present” (Ellis, p.335).

Organising the narratives into poetic plotlines brought unity, order and coherence into a storyline, however, which the presentation of interspersed quotes could not do (Polkinghorne, 1995; Tierney, 2000). By re-structuring (or transcribing (Glesne, 1997)) these stories in poetic form I created a coherent storyline from the interview transcripts. This editorial filtering (Hertz, 1996, p. 7) enabled me to choose stories that were pertinent to my research question. To respect the students and their stories (Hones, 1998), however, I used only their words (Glesne, 1997; Richardson, 1992). That is, I did not add any words of my own but removed linking words, asides and text that was not germane to the story.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> I was also limited by the word limits of the dissertation. Other stories will be included in subsequent publications.

Poetry was not just a method of organisation and presentation as I sought to illuminate the essence of the stories, but it was also a “*practical and powerful* method for analysing social worlds” [author’s italics] (Richardson, 2000, p. 933). As a practical research tool, this enabled me to organise the extensive transcripts in order to foreground the stories of social experiences, while simultaneously evoking the reader to connect with the students’ experiences in a powerful, relational and reflective manner. As has been suggested, “Writing up interviews as poems, honouring the speaker’s pauses, repetitions, alliterations, narrative strategies, rhythms and so on, may actually better present the speaker than the practice of quoting in prose snippets” (Richardson, 2000, p. 933).

Glesne (1997) calls poetic re-presentation, “poetic transcription”, and defines it “as the creation of poemlike compositions from the words of interviewees” (p. 202). The poems convey the “essence” and “rhythms of speaking” in a “process that involves word reduction while illuminating the wholeness and interconnectedness of thought” (Glesne, 1999, p. 183). I used the poetic devices that were embedded in the students’ accounts – repetition, alliteration, off rhyme, silences, breath points and pauses (Glesne, 1997; Engel, 2005; Richardson, 1992; Tedlock, 1983), to actively, and evocatively, involve and “touch” the reader with the essence and the emotions of the story. In particular, I crafted varied line length and line breaks to create speed and flow with the aim of keeping the readers’ engagement, and I created stanzas out of the main threads of the students’ stories (Meloy, 2002). I used the students’ words to create headings and subheadings in Chapters Four to Eleven. Appendix H gives a description of the process I used to re-present the students’ stories in poetic form.

In order to engage the reader (Richardson, 1994), I not only invited the reader to connect with the stories and reflect, speculate and interpret meaning: my decision to re-present the students’ stories in poetic form was in

the hope that these would be “a catalyst for reflection and growth” (Ayers, 1998, p. 243). I wanted readers to “step back” (Ouellette, 2003, p.17) and reflect on the lenses they look through, to “get behind each individual’s eyes to see the world from her [sic] particular perspective” (Clinchy, 2003, p. 32). I hoped that this would lead to resonance with the stories and result in “connected knowing” (p. 44).

Early narratives were oral (Silko, 1996) and the students’ stories were shared orally with me. By re-presenting them in poetic form I am encouraging readers to read them aloud, to themselves and others, thus re-creating the oral nature of the stories: “...a narrative works because of how it says something – not just what it says” (Ochberg, 2003, p. 129), creating “a window onto lives” (Pugach, 2001, p. 433).

On reading the poetic representations of the students’ stories, I hope that the reader, through entering this dialogic place, can make his or her own analysis and interpretation (Ely et al., 1997), becoming “an active participant in the meaning making” (Bullough, 1998, p. 41) before reading my interpretation in my subsequent narrative responses. Paulo Freire described this process as creating “dialogue” with the ideas of the narrative, involving “reflection” followed by “action” (Arnett, 2002, p. 493). Evocative poetic representation enhances this process and creates in the reader “...a feeling that the experience described is authentic, that it is believable and possible...and...speaks to you, the reader, about your experiences” (Ellis, 1995, p. 318).

Heshusius (1988) suggests that using poetry in special education research as a way of knowing can create insight, coherence, and meaning. It gets readers to put themselves “in the place of the Other” (Bochner & Ellis, 1996, p. 22) and reflect on the stories *they* live by. I want readers to respond to the poems and begin a dialogue, firstly with the stories, then with my own interpretive responses and subsequently with their professional communities.

### *Sam, Gemma, Adam, and Sarah's Stories*

I introduced you to the four students earlier in this chapter and now I invite you to read and engage with their stories, which are interspersed with chapters that present my interpretive responses. In my responses, I speak to the students however, I am mindful that in my dissertation I also speak to an academic audience:

We learn from stories. More important, we come to understand – ourselves, others, even the subjects we teach and learn. Stories engage us...stories are tools of enchantment...we use stories to explain...stories motivate us. [As] powerful research tools...they provide us with a picture of real people in real situations, struggling with real problems...they invite us to speculate on what might be changed...they remind us of our own fallibility...they invite us to remember that we are in the business of teaching, learning, and researching to improve the human condition. Telling and listening to stories can be a powerful sign of regard – have caring – for one another. (Noddings & Witherell, 1991, pp. 279 - 80)

## Chapter Four: Sam's Stories as Poems

### *Choosing a high school*

' cos all my friends were going...and yeah...  
 because Mum...it was kind of a joint choice  
 because Mum thought it would be a good idea  
 because they have a lot of sports here and... yeah  
 I just want to go here mainly because all my friends were going  
 and...because my friends were telling me  
 Boys' High was really like into sport  
 and that wouldn't be much good to me... so yeah...  
 Yeah it's better for me to go where my friends are.

I knew most of the people, from intermediate.  
 Yeah I knew most of the people from intermediate  
 except a few who came from other intermediates but yeah...

The strange thing is...  
 because now I'm a fourth former<sup>12</sup>  
 and all the new third formers<sup>13</sup> come in  
 and who like half the time  
 I'm walking across the...to lunch or something  
 and some people will just go 'Hullo'  
 and um there's like all these third formers sometimes  
 just go hullo  
 and it's like, 'Do I know you?'  
 but you don't say that to them  
 because that would just be mean.  
 They would have been in form one  
 at the same time as I was in form two.  
 Or maybe... yeah... from primary school or something -  
 if they have good memories.

I like high school better  
 because there's more choice  
 of what you can do.

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<sup>12</sup> Year 10

<sup>13</sup> Year 9

*His name is Andrew*

He's like my best friend.

He's been my friend for the longest amount.

Andrew's not in any of my classes at all either.

He's my age.

He's about a couple of months older than me.

His birthday's August.

He's quite a lot taller than me...about that much.

He's very easy to talk to...I dunno...

He's just different from all my other friends.

He's kind of straight.

All my other friends they like computers and cartoons.

At the moment

Andrew doesn't really hang out with us at lunchtimes

because ...on the TV at the moment

there's this new cartoon called 'Yugioh'

and all my other friends do is talk about that

and he doesn't like it very much

so he kind of left...well...

he eats lunch with me but

doesn't like hang around

'cos all they do is talk about computer games

and stuff...yeah so...

but he's a pretty cool friend.

I've known him since form one

so that's nearly four years.

Andrew, my friend,

he's like a real electronics whiz.

He's into like building stuff,

electronics and science fair and stuff.

He likes computers 'cos he can build programmes and stuff.

He likes taking things apart

and putting them back together

and taking parts from this

and putting them into things to see if it works

and he's learnt about technology.

I see Andrew at school.

I see him like every lunchtime,

morning teatime

but he's not in any of my classes.

I'll go to his house probably once every holidays –

but not really...  
 A couple of times in the Christmas holidays  
 but not very much during like in the school term.

Usually what happens  
 is Paul sits in the same place but usually  
 because he hangs out with so many girls,  
 Andrew and the others are always my first choice  
 because I don't like hanging out with that many girls  
 because they just are really loud  
 and they just argue all the time  
 so it's kind of, they're my first choice  
 but if I wander round for ages  
 and I can't find them,  
 'cos sometimes they move around quite a lot  
 whereas Paul sits in the one place  
 so I know I can always find him,  
 so if I can't find them  
 I go and sit with Paul and stuff.

Andrew and stuff change where they sit.  
 They'll sit by the library 'cos it's nice and shady  
 and then the next day  
 they'll sit somewhere else  
 so they're kind of hard to find  
 but usually I just check all the places where they mostly sit...  
 'cos usually it's the library, or the canteen, or some seats...  
 like there's a block of seats by the science block.

I got like two really...well  
 one really good friend and he's that person, Andrew.  
 He's probably still the best friend  
 of the friends that I've got.  
 Paul's pretty cool as well.

### ***Paul is a close friend***

Paul is one of my...  
 probably like my second best friend.  
 I didn't know him before.  
 He used to hang out with a whole lot of guys  
 At primary school

He's very helpful  
and I hang out with him  
at lunch times sometimes too  
I would probably not hang out with other people  
because all they do  
is talk about computer games  
and go hang out with Paul.  
The only problem with that is  
he hangs out  
with like five girls  
at lunchtimes and stuff  
and I like don't really want to do that!  
It's just a bit weird.  
It's just a bit weird  
but anyway...

Oh they're all right.  
I just think it's a bit weird.  
He kind of doesn't have any friends that are guys.  
Except for me.  
But yes...  
he just hangs out with girls all the time.  
You can kind of see it taking effect.  
It kind of affects the way he acts  
hanging around with all those girls.  
No offence to him  
but it kind of does.  
He's just...different.  
he's not always like...  
He's just weird sometimes  
but he's cool  
but he's weird sometimes.  
Like everyone in the school knows that.  
I don't really know how to put it...  
It's just I don't like hanging out with all girls.  
I find it a bit weird  
that is what he does  
but mum says  
that that's just him.  
Yes.

Paul can be a bit silly sometimes.  
He's cool

but like when you're trying to concentrate,  
he can get a bit annoying.  
He'll keep repeating things  
over and over again,  
and like real silly things  
and a couple of times  
I've burst out laughing  
because I'm not very good  
at holding in my laughter  
and well I usually have to put my hand  
over my mouth to try not to,  
but he's got in trouble  
a couple of times.  
Paul is allowed to sit by me  
'cos it's helpful.  
But we might be getting moved next time  
because we're kind of talking too much  
but I don't think it's affecting my work  
because I get my work done.

I probably hung out with him  
a lot more last year.  
Last year,  
towards the end of last year  
and early this year,  
it was probably  
because Andrew was friends with that Martin.

Paul comes here  
and I go to his house.  
He's into play station  
but he shares the play station.  
You can hold a conversation with him  
that doesn't involve computers  
but with my other friends you can't!  
If computers doesn't come up,  
they don't listen!

Andrew's my 'best' friend  
well of the two of them yes  
'cos they're my only two friends  
really good friends  
other than Paul's friends

which as I said,  
 they're kind of...just annoying  
 'cos they're just screaming  
 and just yelling at each other.

They're the two friends  
 that I'd like you to talk to  
 if you talk to anyone  
 because no-one else would...  
 'cos they've been my friends for ages.  
 At least Andrew's been my friend since Form One<sup>14</sup>  
 but Paul has kind of been my friend  
 on and off  
 for a while  
 but we've kind of been getting along lately  
 because...yeah I don't know why.  
 Can't even remember  
 why we weren't getting along  
 in the first place.  
 But yeah.

### *I used to be friends with Craig*

I've known him from when I started primary school.  
 That's really my only friend...  
 Has known me since primary school.  
 He used to be my friend in Form Two.<sup>15</sup>  
 I'm not in any of Craig's classes  
 but last year he was in my form class  
 and in third form and fourth form  
 your form class is the class you go round all the time.  
 The weird thing is with Craig sometimes  
 he can be a real pain in the bum.  
 He'll be annoying one minute and the next minute,  
 especially in art for some reason,  
 he bes (sic) real helpful.  
 One minute he might make fun of me  
 and then the next he's being helpful  
 so I don't know what...  
 Like I'm not really friends with him  
 but he like helps if I ask and stuff.

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<sup>14</sup> Year 7

<sup>15</sup> Year 8

But he's a bit weird sometimes in that way.  
 Sometimes he would be really annoying  
 but then the next minute he would help me  
 and help me get my bag and put my stuff in my bag.  
 In art, he would be annoying  
 and then he'd show me how to do something,  
 do it for me  
 or something like that.

This year I haven't actually seen him much  
 except for the fact that now he has a car.  
 He has a little Mini Cooper  
 and it looks pretty cool.  
 When I used to be his friend  
 I went round to his house.  
 I see him occasionally  
 but don't really talk to him.  
 We're not friends any more.

### *Steven was new last year*

Steven...he's ok  
 but he's only been at the school  
 for one and a half years or something.  
 Steven...he's cool,  
 except sometimes he's a bit quiet.  
 He's all right...  
 He wasn't really a problem  
 but it was more Shane  
 'cos Steven's one of the friends as well  
 but he was my friend right at the start.  
 I haven't really had any ups and downs with him  
 but it's more the other two.

### *There's another boy, Callum*

I went to his house the other day  
 and we watched a video, played computer and stuff  
 and he showed me a few cool tricks on the computer.  
 He's really into computer programming and stuff.  
 This guy Callum  
 I've really only just started to be friends,  
 real, good friends with him this year  
 ever since those other dudes

didn't want me to come to the movies.

Yeah, Callum's pretty cool.

We went to the movies the other day - 'Johnny English'  
and then the next day he invited me to his house  
and we watched 'The Matrix' and 'Little Nicky'...  
yeah so he's pretty cool.  
Yeah.

One time he asked me did I want to come to his house  
but first he asked me like ten minutes before  
he asked me, "Have you heard of a game called Morrow Wind?"  
and then like ten minutes later  
he asked if I wanted to come to his house  
and I said like, "Yes ok I'll just ring my mum"  
and all we did was play this computer game  
and it was kind of boring.  
I found the game boring  
so then he said he'd have a go  
but then I ended up watching him play.

[Nine months later] Oh Callum, yeah...  
I'm kind of friends with him still  
but he gets a bit annoying sometimes  
because he's like, when we went to the movies  
he's like, 'Oh that movie was ok 'cos it was a comedy'  
but, 'That movie was ok'  
but, 'Some of the funniest stuff was a bit overdone  
because it's done in every other movie'  
and stuff like that...so I got...  
and he's like really hard to entertain  
like he'll come to your house  
and all he does is play computer or play station  
and you hardly get a go playing it...it's like,  
'Can I have a go now?'  
'Oh yeah in a minute. I'm just going to try and finish this!'  
'Oh ok', and just grin and bear it...but yeah...

One thing that annoys me about him,  
is that he will say that he's going to do something,  
and then he'll be like, 'Oh this is psycho!'  
And "Oh it would be fun if we could do this!"  
And he says he'll do it

but he never does.  
And he's like, 'Oh this is cool!'  
And he says stuff and he thinks he's so funny.  
Like some of his jokes are a bit lame  
but he thinks they're funny  
and no-one else thinks they're funny.

I went to his birthday once.  
Some people couldn't come  
so he kind of invited me instead of those people  
like I wasn't like first on the list  
but that's ok...it was fun.  
That was a bit more fun  
because there were other people there  
and we watched some movies.  
We watched 'The Matrix Reloaded'  
and we watched 'The Bullet Proof Monk'.  
I'd already seen those two  
but it was fun...  
and we did fireworks because his birthday was just after Guy Fawke's Day.  
We ended up playing X Box the whole time.  
That's all we did.  
Andrew was at the party as well  
so when we went down to the shops to get a video  
or something different to do  
we decided we'd take our time  
and maybe go through the park instead  
and so we kind of went a different way  
and talked a bit about other stuff  
other than video games  
so we walked away from it for a while.

About two weeks before that I went to his [Callum's] house.  
When I got there  
he asked me if I wanted anything to eat or drink  
and then he said, 'Oh do you wanna...oh we'll play computer'  
and all I did was play the computer game  
and then I played it for about ten minutes  
and then I watched him play it for the rest of the time!  
And the actual game was rather boring.  
You're this man  
and you have to...it's like set in medieval times  
and you have to go round collecting money

and then these creatures came up to you  
 and then you're like standing there  
 and then you'd be attacking them  
 like ...nnn...nnn...nnn...like that  
 and then all you did was press a button the whole time.  
 It was kind of boring!  
 I haven't been to his house this holidays.  
 That was about three months ago.  
 He's moved to Wellington now.  
 Yeah I went to his going away party...yeah...  
 He was ok  
 but all he liked to do was play computer all the time.

### *Friends in class*

but not good friends kind of thing.  
 I'm happy with the friends I've got  
 'cos they're real good friends.

Two people sitting next to me then  
 'cos Paul was on one side,  
 and then there was someone next to him  
 but she talked to me.  
 She was one of his friends.

Usually during class  
 I choose not to talk to someone  
 so I don't feel lonely then  
 and at lunchtime  
 I've always got Paul or Andrew to sit next to.  
 So yeah, that's fine.

### *In science*

we sit at tables in groups of three.  
 The teacher set up some places  
 and my partner is only me and Beth usually  
 unless they move  
 which the teacher sometimes lets them do.  
 It's where we've been sat.  
 We get put into rows.  
 We do those experiments for the whole year in those groups  
 unless the teacher changes them.  
 Yeah.

I'm not a very good experiment person.  
 I don't like experiments  
 so I just let the other people do them.  
 We play with all the chemicals  
 and they could explode or something.

*I like PE.*

It means I get involved in class activity.  
 Just playing with sports.  
 Trying to get good at everything.  
 Finding ways of doing it.  
 The reason why I like it is  
 I surprise myself so much.  
 Like I get out there  
 'cos half the time I do PE  
 without my crutches.  
 I just find a way.  
 I now know that I can go along the ground  
 and stop and reach down  
 and pick something up off the ground  
 like a ball  
 and then throw it  
 and get myself up off the ground  
 if I have energy left.  
 So I suppose that's why I like it so much.  
 Because I surprise myself.

They're not exactly watching what I'm doing  
 They're busy doing.  
 We do it in partners  
 and usually Mrs Prince is my partner.  
 Sometimes games do get annoying  
 'cos the other kids don't like to pass the ball to me  
 'cos I might drop it  
 or they get quite...what's the word for it...competitive...  
 and they don't like passing the ball  
 to me or anything, sometimes,  
 and quite often  
 it's mainly the boys  
 'cos if we're playing a game like soccer  
 the girls are pretty good  
 and will pass the ball to me  
 but the boys are just over competitive  
 and so yeah... they just don't pass the ball to me...much.

I mean OK they will do it occasionally  
 but there's some boys that are really competitive  
 and then there's boys that are ... quite nice  
 and they will pass the ball to me  
 but they are still competitive  
 but they're not as competitive as some.  
 Yeah.

[A year later] They get more and more competitive and stuff.  
 I find it hard to include myself.  
 The stuff gets harder that they do.  
 Like they start doing gymnastics and dancing.  
 They just get real competitive  
 so it's hard to join in...so yeah.  
 The older they get,  
 the more competitive they get  
 so...I've put it down on my list a bit.

*In maths*

we've got seating placements.  
 Yeah...it's a seating placement – Ranjiv.  
 Normally he hasn't done his homework  
 so he always asks me what we had to do for homework  
 and it kind of gets annoying  
 but it's ok  
 because some people that I sit next to  
 don't talk to me.  
 At least he'll talk to me,  
 not just about homework  
 but he'll actually talk to me  
 so I don't actually mind  
 'cos most people don't actually talk.  
 Half the time I've noticed,  
 that when they don't *have* to sit there they don't.  
 They'll go and sit somewhere else  
 but he actually stays and sits there anyway.  
 When we have a reliever  
 people go and sit wherever they want  
 'cos the reliever doesn't know that  
 you don't have to sit there  
 but I just sit in the same place  
 'cos I can't be bothered moving.  
 It's like, 'This is my place and I'm just going to sit down!'  
 It's only for school.

Ranjiv was pretty helpful though.  
 He would help.  
 He would take down my chair and stuff.  
 He didn't talk to me much at first  
 but he started to talk to me near the end of the year a bit more.  
 Sometimes about maths things  
 but he would just tell me what he was doing in the weekend and stuff.  
 At first I thought that he thought  
 that I needed more help  
 because I would ask him how to do things  
 and he'd explain it to me  
 like I was really, really dumb.  
 Yeah he got quite a lot better as time went by.  
 That's what quite a lot of people do sometimes.  
 They think that they have to over explain things.  
 They get better as time goes by...  
 most of the time.  
 Yeah. I mean he probably won't talk to me next year,  
 but I'm not really...  
 That's fine!  
 He's been my friend while I've been in class.

*In geography*

I don't have anyone sitting next to me anyway  
 because normally I used to have a teacher aide sitting there  
 and so the teacher aide sits there  
 and I sit there  
 and so people got used to where they were sitting  
 and I don't have a teacher aide anymore  
 so like people just sit where they normally sit  
 and no-one sits there.  
 But as I said  
 people don't always talk anyway  
 so it's like it doesn't make any difference to me  
 whether I have someone sitting next to me or not  
 unless it was either Paul or Andrew  
 and then that would be cool.

*In text and information management*

sometimes the computers have troubles  
 and I have to go and sit next to someone else  
 and that's ok  
 but the people don't talk to me all the time.  
 They sometimes talk to me.

There's one guy that's real helpful.  
He'll ask me if I'm ok  
and if I want him to take my bag up  
as I have to go up in the chairlift thing  
but he's not my friend or anything.  
He just asks.  
So people are real nice...  
kind of nice sometimes.  
But then other times  
they can be real pains!

Yup...it doesn't really make much difference to me  
whether I've got someone sitting next to me.  
It doesn't matter  
because most people need someone to sit next to them  
because they have to talk,  
they can't not talk  
but to me,  
if I don't have anyone to talk to  
it doesn't really matter too much.  
It's just kind of better  
because you don't get distracted  
unless everyone starts talking  
and if they start laughing at something.  
And then I'll look around and wonder what's so funny!  
It's kind of better not to sit next to anyone.  
Some people can talk and write and still get it done.  
If I did that I'd be even further behind so  
I just don't..  
I just don't talk to people.  
I just sit away from the people that are actually talking.  
It's easier to see even though I have got my glasses.  
It's still easier to see from the front.

That's another thing.  
If you have a teacher aide,  
people tend not to sit next to you  
because then there's got to be a desk free  
in case the teacher aide wants to come and sit next to you  
so they usually leave me kind of alone.  
I just thought, 'Oh I'll just stay here for the rest of the year  
'cos I'll get work done.'

It's only really the writing  
that makes me different  
and the actual getting to class...but yeah.  
I kinda don't like  
having to ask the other kids  
to do it for me.  
But sometimes I have to of course  
otherwise I'll get way too far behind.

Even if she's there  
and I'm not using her  
it still feels as though  
they're there to help you.  
But if they're not there at all  
it's different.  
If they're there  
then the other kids still see it as,  
'Oh he still needs help!' kind of thing.  
Not that they say that  
but if they're not there at all  
it can't be seen that way kind of stuff.  
They can be a bit annoying  
about those kind of things  
but mostly pretty good.  
They don't say anything  
but sometimes the way they act  
can be a bit annoying  
sometimes.

Even though the teacher aide helps you  
it kind of feels as if you've got...  
I know I'm helped  
but it makes me feel different  
and I kind of find it's hard  
to just turn round  
and talk to my friends  
because Mrs Prince is always watching me  
and telling me to do my work  
and I really want to turn round  
and talk to my friends  
and that just gets annoying sometimes.  
So I kind of like being independent and not...  
but that's the way it goes!

You feel as if you've achieved it  
rather than someone else has helped you  
to achieve.

*I enjoy working in groups better.*

It's like you don't have to do *all* the work.  
It's like you *share* the work  
instead of having to do it all yourself  
'cos it's real frustrating when you have to do it all yourself  
especially when you have to write big, long answers.  
In maths - definitely not!  
In English - sometimes.

*We have family friends who live round the corner*

Some guys come over from England  
and who have got a ten year old - Josh  
so we go round and see him.  
He likes Yugioh...still likes it  
so whenever I go over to his house,  
just to keep him entertained,  
he'll always be on the play station all the time  
and he's another one of those people like Callum,  
a bit of a hogger on the play station.  
We're into the same kind of things.  
We like Lord of the Rings and PlayStation  
and Alfie and the Vampireslayer and stuff.  
So I go hang out with him quite a lot.

I went to a BBQ with Josh.  
There were about six families or something and plus more.  
It was like any people from England at Matipo Park.  
Josh asked me to go with them.  
Jan his mum said that we could join them if we wanted  
but mum said she wouldn't  
but Josh wanted me to come so I went.  
It was fun.  
We played cricket.  
Yeah played a bit of rugby and stuff as well...  
with the ball.

*Being with my friends at school*

*Morning interval and lunchtime.*

There's nothing much to do at school at interval

so we just stand round and talk.  
Yeah that's about it.  
Sometimes at lunchtimes  
we go for a walk to the library  
or just dawdle round the school  
still talking.  
Yeah that's about it.  
There's not much to say about that.

I don't play Yugioh cards any more.  
I thought I'd try it and see  
'cos with my friends  
that is all that they did  
so I kind of felt left out.  
I couldn't play for the whole lunchtime  
because I'd just have to sit and watch.  
It was relatively boring.  
They have gone out of fashion  
but I gave it up before.

Usually I spend morning tea with Paul and his friends.  
I eat my lunch at lunchtime with Paul and his friends  
and then I go and catch up with Andrew  
because Andrew just roams around the school  
and stuff like that  
with others.  
He has no specific place where he stays  
for any length of time  
so sometimes it's just best to eat your lunch  
'cos I can't walk around and eat my lunch at the same time.  
I've got to sit down to eat my lunch.

The trouble is Paul hangs out with like about seven girls  
or something like that...  
and it's like kind of annoying  
because they all scream!  
Some of them are annoying  
because, one of them, she's always got to have the last word  
or like if someone is telling a story about something,  
she's always has her own story  
that she makes sound like really bad.  
If we're talking about what's happened to us  
she'll come along

and tell that story and something like that!  
 Paul gets annoyed  
 but she just hangs out with him anyway!

*The cross-country.*

I like to do the cross-country.  
 I like to do as much of the school activities  
 as I can.  
 I only do one lap but still...  
 There was the athletics day this term  
 and that's real cool.  
 Me and my friends  
 we did this 800 metre walking race  
 two laps round the track.  
 It was like it was shameful  
 because we were like dawdling  
 and everyone else had finished  
 and we were like dawdling along  
 and we'd only done one lap  
 and everybody else had finished  
 so it was like we were going round  
 and everybody else had finished.  
 We still had a whole lap to do.  
 I made my friend do it.  
 He could have just skipped  
 because we were coming in at the end.  
 At the time, everyone else had finished  
 so we could have just gone off.  
 But I made Andrew finish it.

*After school*

*I play golf on Tuesday afternoons*

and that's cool.  
 I did ok by my standards.  
 They have a little six-hole course.  
 I normally get about 38 or something  
 which is good for me.  
 Normally people get a lot lower than that  
 but I don't care.

I go to tournaments in the school holidays  
 even though the age limit is fourteen.  
 I can still go

because the lady that organises it says  
it's in my best interests.

*I'd like to play cricket*

but it's kind of a bit late for me  
to start now  
because everyone's so competitive.  
I did try and play.  
I did want to play  
when I was like in Standard Three<sup>16</sup>  
I went to a meeting.  
The teacher handed me a notice and said,  
'I'm not sure if I should give you this  
because it might be a bit hard for you to play  
because it's quite a hard game to play  
but I'll give you one anyway.'  
For some reason  
the newsletter didn't even make it home.  
Maybe I chucked it in the bin.  
I don't know what happened to it.  
I tried again in Form One.  
Mum said,  
'Maybe it's a bit late to start playing now.  
The people will be quite competitive.  
You'll find it quite hard.'  
So I kind of pulled out.

*Weekends*

I don't have my friends over so much.  
My sister has quite a lot of friends over  
but I don't have my friends over so much  
'cos they've got jobs on the weekends.  
My friends work both days in the weekends  
and stuff like that  
and work at the supermarket,  
whereas Rachel's friends don't do that  
so she sees them quite a lot more  
It's quite hard  
to catch up with them  
at the weekends.  
Then during the week  
you're busy with school  
and they work some nights

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<sup>16</sup> Year 5

in the week as well but yeah.  
 I ring them up sometimes.  
 I went to the Speedway  
 with Paul Saturday night last week  
 so that was fun.  
 He rung me on Friday  
 and asked me if I wanted to go.  
 Yeah...Saturday was quite fun.

My friend Andrew invited me to his house the other day.  
 I got to stay for tea as well  
 I went over there about two o'clock or something  
 and I stayed.  
 I was meant to go home about 8.30 at night  
 but I didn't get home until 10 o'clock!  
 We just talked for a while  
 and we had food and stuff.  
 We had ice blocks yeah  
 and then we played on the computer  
 and we watched the Simpsons.  
 They have Sky, which we don't have here.  
 They've got Sky digital  
 so we were watching cartoon network and stuff like that  
 and then we watched something on the Discovery channel  
 about the FBI  
 and then we watched a thing about the ten stinkiest animals on the planet.  
 and number one was the Tasmanian Devil.  
 We had sweet corn for tea...  
 but we had ice cream afterwards.  
 Then their family had to go out  
 but me and Andrew stayed behind at his house  
 and watched some more TV  
 and played more computer  
 and had another iceblock.

### *Holidays*

I just haven't had time to see friends in the holidays  
 because we've spent quite a bit of time at the hospital.  
 Dad came home now.  
 I don't know 'cos we've got those visitors  
 but...we'll see.  
 I probably will because I'll probably go round.  
 Oh I might stay there for a while  
 but I probably won't invite him here

but I might get invited to his house.  
 If I don't actually stay at their house  
 I will probably go round to their houses  
 and show them the new scooter  
 because they don't actually know I've got it.  
 Mum said it should be a good surprise.  
 Paul and Andrew and that's about it.  
 Andrew lives quite a long way away,  
 past the school  
 so I haven't got there yet.  
 He's coming to my house tomorrow at one o'clock.  
 Probably just catch up  
 because I haven't seen him for a while.  
 I've been to visit Paul a couple of times.

### *They didn't like me much*

*Martin*

There was a period  
 where Andrew had other friends  
 that I didn't like much  
 and they didn't like me much  
 so I didn't see much of him then  
 but that was at the start of this year.

Andrew used to hang out with us all  
 but he got sick of them just talking about computer games  
 and went to hang out with a guy called Martin  
 but I don't like Martin  
 so I couldn't really follow him  
 otherwise I would of.  
 So for a spell  
 like this time last year,  
 I didn't hang out with Andrew much  
 because he had this other friend called Martin  
 and he was real dumb  
 and annoying.  
 He was real smart  
 but he acted real dumb  
 and was really stupid  
 so I didn't like him  
 so I didn't hang out with Andrew much.  
 Martin doesn't really like me either

so I can't really hang out with Andrew anymore  
and I get kind of bored  
because all they [the others] do is talk about computer games  
and how much megabytes your computer's got.  
All that stuff!  
I like play-station.  
It's a bit better.  
But I don't like talking about it all the time.  
It kind of gets irritating.

Then Andrew started to not like Martin very much.  
He can be very annoying.  
He just keeps talking about himself quite a lot.  
He's a bit up himself sometimes.  
Andrew started to not like him too much.  
Andrew isn't friends with him now.  
He smashed him in the face  
because he was being stupid!  
He came back  
and hung out with some other friends  
which I get along with.  
So I see a lot more of him now  
than I used to at the start of the year.  
He's probably still  
the best of the friends  
that I've got.  
Paul's pretty cool as well.

*Shane and Brad.*

The others, Shane and Brad,  
are kind of friends  
but not real good friends.  
They were planning to go to the movies one day  
and I wanted to come  
but they wouldn't let me come  
and they kept making up excuses so...yeah...  
I'm not really very good friends  
at the moment.  
They just like hanging out with me at school  
but they don't like hanging out with me  
out of school.  
It's kind of weird.

The people that Andrew hangs out with,

used to be my friends.  
 They are a bit annoying!  
 They're a pain!  
 Whenever I want to hang out with Andrew  
 I have to hang out with them.  
 The thing that really annoys me  
 is that Shane has a disability as well!  
 He has cystic fibrosis  
 and he bes (sic) really annoying about me  
 having a disability  
 but then he has one as well.  
 It doesn't really care to me  
 if Brad says something about it  
 but when Shane says something about it,  
 it really makes me annoyed  
 because he can't exactly say anything.  
 Just goes on  
 about how I can't do all these things  
 and yeah...about the disability.  
 Once I went on a camp with Shane for people with disabilities.  
 about four years ago, so just before I started Intermediate.  
 He was real nice to me then.  
 He was my friend at that camp.  
 My real good friend.  
 Then all of a sudden he wasn't!  
 He's just a real pain.

[At the end of the year] I can get on with Brad and Shane better now.  
 I probably wouldn't have gone  
 along with them very well  
 if it had just me and them  
 but if Andrew was there  
 that was ok  
 'cos I could just talk to him.  
 So I hung out with Paul a lot more  
 but after a while,  
 I realised that Andrew was back with the other guys.  
 Very much better now than we used to be.  
 I wouldn't say 'good'  
 but I get along with them all right.

[Nine months later] Oh they're getting better.  
 I think the whole thing is that

it's because I hang out with them on and off  
 as in I'm not always hanging out with them  
 so I might not hang out with them  
 for about two weeks  
 and then come back and hang out with them.  
 So they're kind of ...they say,  
 'You don't...we're not...'  
 Oh I can't even remember what they say...  
 sometimes they're just a bit weird when like they're saying,  
 'Oh then we'd have to look after you as well  
 because you've got a disability.'  
 I get over it.  
 I just don't care.  
 I just don't ask them  
 because I've got my friends anyway.  
 They're not really my main friends.  
 They probably won't be this year  
 because we'll all be in separate classes.  
 Not that we were in the same class anyway.  
 Me and Steven were but yeah...  
 I think I'll stick with Andrew and Paul yeah.

*Paul hangs out*

with a lot of...about eleven girls at lunchtime  
 and they're all screaming at each other.  
 I think it's eleven.  
 That's about how many friends he has  
 that visit him at lunchtimes.  
 All girls!  
 He's the only guy!  
 It gets annoying hanging out with that many girls.  
 Paul's friends are turning Paul  
 into mini versions of them,  
 for some reason.  
 You can tell by the way that he talks and some ways,  
 that he's been hanging around girls.  
 He's all right but...yeah  
 sometimes he can get a bit annoying.  
 Like when he's away from his friends  
 he's all right  
 but when he's round his friends  
 he's really annoying.  
 He's got this really annoying laugh  
 and it's quite annoying.

He's fine when he's away from his friends  
 'cos his other friends annoy me  
 'cos they're so loud and so fighting all the time  
 and yeah...  
 they're just different.

*John*

Oh that's another kid with a...  
 He's got visual impairment  
 so I sit next to him in TIM<sup>17</sup>  
 and he's all right,  
 sometimes  
 but sometimes he can get annoying.  
 Like (sigh) last year he was a real pain.  
 Oh third form he was a real pain!  
 He wouldn't leave me alone  
 and he kept stealing these my crutches  
 and he would run off with them  
 but he's ok now.  
 He kept making fun of like how I talked and stuff like that  
 but now he's ok.  
 and he doesn't say anything.  
 John...he's a bit like Craig...  
 he can be helpful one minute.  
 He'll be like, 'I'll get this for you'  
 and the next minute  
 he'll be like making fun of me again.  
 He doesn't do it as often.  
 He might do it like once every week  
 but it still gets annoying!  
 He'll come up to me and he'll pat me on the back real hard  
 and that kinda hurts  
 and he'll give me a fright  
 and when I jump he'll laugh or he'll pat me.  
 He likes to frighten me I reckon.  
 When I go to the learning support centre,  
 'cos in the mornings he's there as well,  
 he'll run up to me like real fast  
 as if he's going to tackle me 'cos  
 he's really into rugby league or something  
 and then just at the last minute  
 he'll go and pat me on the hand real hard,

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<sup>17</sup> Text and Information Management

or tap me  
 and it gets really annoying!  
 But then when the teacher aide comes  
 he's a real 'girl'  
 and he doesn't do anything.  
 I think he's just a pain!  
 I never liked him that much  
 but he's getting better  
 but he is kind of annoying.  
 He doesn't tease me about my disability.  
 If someone teases me about my disability  
 he'll kind of stick up for me  
 but he'll kind of be annoying in another way  
 but it's ok.  
 I get over it!  
 I don't really mind 'cos it's like just him.  
 I'm used to him being that way.

*I do have friends at the Learning Support Centre*

I chose to go there.  
 At the start of the year  
 I did go over there a lot.  
 If you be there for too long  
 it's kind of...their way of thinking is different  
 to that of my friends and stuff.  
 It's kind the way they do things.

I had this really...a real bad year.  
 I was kind of a bit emotional.  
 I was kind of a bit ...  
 I got upset quite a lot  
 for different reasons.  
 Last year there's like the Learning Centre, as you know.  
 I just hung around there a lot more.  
 I didn't really spend much time with the other people.  
 I spent time with Andrew  
 but not the others.  
 So they kinda...  
 they want me to come  
 but this year...  
 I didn't need to be in there really.  
 I suppose I hadn't really changed my mind.

I don't really actually like going in there much  
because I think...a while ago...  
it made me feel bad  
because I didn't like having a disability.  
Like I was feeling real bad  
and whenever I went in there  
I felt real bad  
so that's what changed my mind really.  
That's why I don't....  
It's just the place that I always go in there  
in the morning time  
'cos that's where mum drops me off.  
Some of my books are there  
so I just pick up my books at nine o'clock  
and I go to class.  
I don't really come back there unless I have to.

I suppose I do have friends at the Learning Support Centre,  
just the other people who stay there all the time.  
Quite a lot of the people,  
the other kids in the Learning Centre don't go out at all...outside.  
They just stay in the Learning Support Centre...  
and I think this year  
I was more determined not to become like that.  
They are more basic.  
'Cos I'm not in the Student Support Centre all the time,  
'cos I go elsewhere for classes,  
I find it easier to be round people  
who are doing the same kind of thing as me.  
They're all talking about how they do the Transition Challenges,  
whereas it's kind of like I do other stuff  
and then they wouldn't even be able to.  
Well they would, but not very easily  
understand what kind of things I'm doing  
even though they try to.  
They're all my friends  
but sometimes they can get a bit annoying  
'cos they get annoyed over the simplest things.  
There's quite a lot of girls in there  
and the girls are always arguing.

This year I'm not new to the school anymore.  
I get like more motivated

or go and see my friends more.  
 All my classes are over that side  
 closer to where we eat our lunch  
 so I just go there.

Better.

Do stuff.

Going out and being with my friends helps  
 'cos it makes you feel more independent  
 'cos you're not relying on the Learning Support Centre so much.  
 You're being like a normal person.

### *A good friend is...*

*Someone who listens...yeah.*

Just listens and respects...  
 respect and someone who doesn't expect you  
 to be someone you're not...that's about it...  
 ...and can talk about something else.

It's just like someone that will listen  
 and in my case  
 someone that doesn't mind  
 having to do extra things for me sometimes  
 like getting my crutches  
 or like helping me up the stairs and stuff...but yeah.

I can't do everything that they want to do so...  
 Say for instance...  
 I really hate going to places like...  
 swimming pools if they have slides.  
 I can't do things by myself  
 I always have to have someone to help me sometimes  
 but yeah...

Andrew and Paul are real patient  
 but the other guys aren't.

I have gone down the slide sometimes  
 with my friends Andrew and Paul  
 but they kind of have to be really patient.

When we went to Waterworld for end of year school thing  
 Paul looked after me on that day...really well.

I just went round with Paul the whole day  
 and he looked after me.

Very patient.

Paul, I can probably talk to him more,  
probably because he hangs out with a lot of girls  
and he's used to having people talk.  
He seems to be more talkative  
and more like...caring kind of thing.  
I didn't know him before  
because he used to hang out with a whole lot of guys.  
Well that was like at primary school.  
I didn't know him before he hung out with all these girls.  
He's been hanging out with them since Intermediate.

Andrew's kind of a more straightforward.  
He's doesn't really seem to talk about things.  
Well he'll talk about things he does in the holidays  
but not about other stuff very much.  
Yeah, Paul's kind of more understanding.  
Yeah, more understanding  
but I've been friends with Andrew a lot longer  
'cos I was only really friends with Paul  
since about fourth form  
but I've been friends with Andrew since like about form one,  
so yeah.

I mean sometimes when you're not happy or something...  
sometimes if they don't figure that you're not happy...  
sometimes you like can tell if someone's not in a good mood  
but I don't go up and say, 'Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah,'  
but if Paul can like sense that I'm in a bad mood  
then he kind of gets it out of me  
whereas Andrew doesn't like to try and find out.  
He'll just leave you to it.

I suppose that does change when you get older  
because when you're at school  
it's kind of more a friend  
but when you get older  
it's like more about life and stuff.  
It's kind of more to help you through life,  
the rest of your life,  
whereas at school,  
it's more like someone to hang out with at lunchtime.

## Chapter Five: My Narrative Response to Sam's Stories

Thank you Sam for sharing your stories about your experiences at high school and telling me about your friends and what you do and say together. This chapter builds on the previous one where your stories are foregrounded and presented in poetic form, for readers to actively make their own interpretations. In this narrative chapter, I respond to your stories and write my interpretation of them moving beyond description to what academics call analysis and insight (Bukowski, Newcomb, & Hartup, (1996), placing them in the developmental context of adolescence (Berk, 1999; Berndt, 1982; Santrock, 2001) as part of the patterns and the dynamic nature of friendship (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996; Epstein, 1989) in the social and cultural contexts of your family (Doyle & Markiewicz, 1996) and a New Zealand secondary school.

Sam, you chose which stories you wanted to share. As I interviewed your teachers, teacher aides, principal, your mum Charlotte, and sister Rachel, I put your stories alongside theirs in the wider context and so that I could demonstrate the multi faceted, and crystallised nature of your experiences (Richardson, 2000) in the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

When we began the interviews you seemed to me to be quite shy and feeling unsure but as you spoke about the things you did at high school you relaxed and laughed as you remembered fun times, and your voice became stronger. At times when you talked about difficult and "bad" times, your eyes filled with tears and your voice wavered and became quiet. As I asked you to retell your experiences or wonder at past incidents, you reflected on the inward and outward dimensions of your personal and social experiences, and made meaning of these experiences on the in-school and out-of-school landscapes (or places), as you matured and developed independence and confidence, and as you moved into the future.

Sam, you have a wide range of relationships in your peer network: best and close friends; good friends; old and helping friends; classmates and peers; new friends; and family friends. Your stories reflect the diversity of your friendships and peer relationships; the dynamic nature and process, and the ebb and flow of these relationships as your old close friendships changed; you made new friends; old friendships discontinued; and you experienced conflict with friends, and the friends of friends (Azmitia, Kamprath, & Linnet, 1998). From these experiences you reflected on what a good friend is, and placed these dynamics in the social and cultural context of your disability, and who you are as a person. Your stories reflect the patterns and sequence of developing friendships: the beginning and hope of new friendships; the comfortable phase of old friendships; the demise of friendships, and the conflict within friendships (Levinger, 1979, 1983). The threads of temporality, or time, and change weave through your stories: changing friendship dynamics; changing peers and friends; and change in you as you matured, responded to situations, and interacted with those around you in the environment as you developed “growing understanding of relationships and their management” (Azmitia et al., 1998, p. 172).

Typologies of friendship describe levels and characteristics of friendships, for example, one identifies strangers, acquaintances, friends, close friends, best friends (Fehr, 1996). Another looks at levels of “my friends” in adolescence that includes membership in cliques and crowds of hierarchical status (Hartup, 1993). Six frames of friendship have been noted between children with and without disabilities (Meyer et al., 1998), as they have the existence of play/companions and helpee relationships in young children with disabilities (Richardson & Schwartz, 1998), and levels of friendships determined by closeness (Sullivan, 1953). You used some of these “frames” as ways of distinguishing different levels of friendships in your stories. In my response narrative, as well as describing the characteristics and features of

your friendships, I go back to your stories. I want to highlight aspects of your stories that stood out for me, after I thought about them in relation to the literature about friendships that I have been reading. In particular, I look at the dynamic nature of your friendships and peer relationships within the context of your school and family.

### ***Choosing a High School: 'Cos all my friends were going***

Transition to high school was an important time for you. Together with your mum, you made a decision to go to Hillview High School. This was the local high school and you had already been to the local primary and intermediate schools, so it was a logical progression. Going to the same school as your friends was a major part of this decision, as well as location because Hillview was relatively close, so mum could drop you off and pick you up. You knew a lot of the students from intermediate, and your best friend Andrew, and another friend Craig, were also going there. Other options were considered including the single sex boys' high school, but a strong focus on sport was a deterrent, and your mother didn't really want you to go to an all boys' school – she felt that a balance of gender was important. She said, "He's always been able to get on with females and girls and he's...always had girls helping him at school...right through" (Charlotte, 04/03). Alongside this potential help from peers, she was encouraged by the welcome and support from the head teacher in the Learning Support Centre, who handled the transition and became your key teacher, and so a decision in favour of Hillview was made. In Year 11 when your parents bought you the mobility scooter, this decision was endorsed as you could now travel to school on your own.

*Sometimes you get lost.* Starting high school is an exciting time but it occurs at a time of "psychological growth and social uncertainty" as your peer networks change and "new social ties are forged" (Lee & Ready, 2004, p.181).

These concerns are similar for students with and without disabilities with a priority for all students being, "Just make friends, that's the most important thing!" (McMaugh & Debus, 1999, p. 1). You endorsed this view when you said the best thing about school was "being with my friends" (04/03). Yates (1999) questioned the literature that suggests that initial enthusiasm for transferring to a secondary school is not sustained (for example, Kirkpatrick, 1992, cited in Yates, 1999, p. 27). She found that although there was some initial anxiety such as getting lost and meeting new people, the students reported that the shift was positive and it was seen as a marker of maturity. Sam, your comments in the first interview reflected this positive reaction to your transition to high school, although you did have some initial concerns about getting lost. Your teacher aide who was with you at intermediate, where you had a group of friends including Andrew and Craig, believed (although this seems to be contradicted by subsequent events) that the transition was "easy and successful." The Individual Education Plan (IEP) at this time stated, "Sam interacts well and is easily accepted by peers; respected by other students" (IEP, 03/02). The IEP established for you a goal of, "Work towards as much independence as possible" with the use of the natural peer support of "buddies" between classes. Although it was suggested in your transition IEP that Andrew might be a "buddy" for you, however, this was not supported by the structure of the school: the classes were streamed and Andrew's high academic ability meant you were not placed in the same class. Your key teacher said she regretted this - "That was unfortunate" (08/03) - but the school structure made it inevitable. So you did not have Andrew's support in class and by the August 2002 IEP, it was noted that although Craig and Jason were "good" friends there were "fragile moments" because of your dependency on your teacher aide, who represented security and stability in the transition period. I return to these issues later in this chapter.

The teacher aide saw how the change to the high school affected you and your friendships. She observed that the friends from intermediate forged new friendships and “sorted themselves out as to what social groups they were now in” (Teacher aide, 09/03) and those did not always include you. Pratt and George’s (2005) research concurs that for some students this time can be lonely and unsettling, and can affect identity formation, self-confidence, and achievement. Although your progress reports did not indicate that your academic achievement was hindered, your teacher aide felt that your identity and self-concept, as well as your confidence, were threatened. Initially, the Learning Support Centre (LSC) was a haven at morning interval and lunchtimes because you felt secure there in those changing times, but this did not foster your social relationships. Your teacher aide remembered you getting upset about that and talking over with her, strategies you could use to cope with the stress. At the beginning of the year when I met you, the stressful situation with Jason was ongoing and one of the IEP goals was “to ask for help rather than stress” (03/03). It was noted though, that you were “becoming more independent especially in the playground at intervals and lunchtimes,” so by August 2003, the teacher aide said that you were “much more independent. We rarely see him at the LSC these days.” Subsequent IEPs focused on your academic goals and your increased independence was noted in each one, for example, “Sam spends lunchtimes and intervals outside with his friends...wonderful to see this socialising” (06/04). So, although the transition period had been a long one, lasting most of your first year at high school, you at last felt a sense of belonging and connectedness (Pratt & George, 2005).

### *The Guy Syndrome: Some people will just go “Hullo”*

When you told me your story about students just saying “Hullo” I was reminded of the reason I embarked on this research journey, and the story about Guy that I narrated in *Narrative Beginnings*. It was Guy’s experience, that because of his visible disability, everyone “knew” him to say “Hullo” to, but no students became friends. You experienced a similar response from many students, and although you knew that you did have good friends, and were quite bemused by the incidents, you reflected kindly on their intentions.

Your 2004 geography teacher observed similar interactions: “Not close friends but a lot of the good kids in the class just think of him and say ‘Giddyay!’ and help him when they can but I don’t think he socially gets on with them outside of the classroom” (11/04). Meyer and her colleagues (1998) describe such interactions as belonging to the frames of the Inclusion Kid and I’ll Help and reflect Green and Schleien’s (1991) “facades” of friendship whereby students with disabilities are not part of friendship networks.

### *He’s my Best Friend*

Sam, you described Andrew as your best and oldest friend as you had known him since you began intermediate school, he came to your house and sometimes stayed the night, and you went to his house. With prompting and encouragement from your mother, you phoned him. Although he was not in any of your classes you made an effort to see him at morning interval and lunchtimes, and infrequently at weekends or in the holidays. He was close to you in age, and you both enjoyed computers and videos and television. However, he had some different interests to you and your other friends and this sometimes caused him to go off on his own when your other friends Shane and Brad talked a lot about computer games and cartoons. Although at times you did not spend time with him because you did not like some of his

friends such as Martin, Shane and Brad, your friendship withstood these times and endured.

Hartup (1993) describes the “best” friend relationship as dyadic – that is, just between you and Andrew - and indeed you did spend time together, but usually on the out-of-school landscape at your place or his. At school, this dyad was embedded in a clique (your group that hung out together) (Urberg, Degirmencioglu, Tolson, Halliday-Scher, 1995). However, Brown (1990) describes such cliques as unstable entities, and your stories did describe how your friendships changed, with conflicts with some of these friends – Martin, Shane, and Brad. Andrew became less available to you, and you chose to stay away. Your loyalty and trust was later threatened when Andrew did not invite you to his sixteenth birthday party. Your mother shared this story with me: I presume this hurt was still quite new and you did not want to talk about it with me, possibly because it undermined the story of best friendship that you lived by and had shared with me. You found out because Shane and Brad told you: Andrew felt guilty and spoke to your mother, giving her an explanation about your safety at the party in a crowd with dancing. She was not convinced and she was also upset because of the previous closeness of you and Andrew and told me, “Sam knew it was his disability...another reality check” (12/04). In their research, Azmitia et al. (1998) saw similar incidents between best friends as a violation and challenge to the best friend “contract” – a negotiated, or sometimes tacit, understanding of what is expected in the friendship. Their research showed that boys often will not disclose these violations, just as, Sam, you did not tell me about it; yet often the incident will be discussed with someone else, just as Andrew confided in your mother. As these researchers found, a first violation to the contract will often be forgotten in order to avoid a negative confrontation and to continue the friendship. Bukowski and Sippola (1996) proposed that this situation poses a moral dilemma for friends such as Andrew and an opportunity for

friends to learn about others' needs and feelings. Your longstanding friendship survived this incident and Andrew continued to be your best friend, suggesting that he had indeed learned from that incident.

Researchers also describe a best friend relationship as one where children share their innermost thoughts and worries (Hartup, 1993; Meyer et al., 1998). Youniss and Smollar (1985) argue, however, that there are gender differences in mutual intimacy: they found that one-third of males was guarded in communication rather than intimate, and preferred friendships that are based on shared activities. This seemed to characterise your friendship with Andrew: when describing him you said, "He is more straightforward" and talks "about things he does in the holidays but not about other stuff very much." However, you seemed to have a very close relationship with your teacher aide, who had been your teacher aide since the intermediate years. In Year 9 you discussed your problems and worries with her rather than with Andrew. In Year 10 she noted when she talked to me about you, that "he probably doesn't talk to me about those things as much as he used to. I think he probably talks to his friends about them which is good because that was something that we were trying to encourage" (11/04).

### *Paul is a Close Friend*

In their discussion of what they call Six Frames of Friendship, Meyer et al. (1998) describe Best Friends" and Regular Friends. I thought that your stories about Paul described something a little different – a frame in between these two, that is, a "close" friend who is closer to you than a Regular Friend but to whom you did not initially ascribe the status of Best Friend. Or you could have been describing a hierarchy of Best Friends, with Andrew being more of a Best Friend than Paul despite the lack of intimacy with Andrew. Although you knew Paul at primary school and you were "reasonably close

to him at intermediate" (Teacher aide, 09/03), he did not become a close friend until Year 10. Unlike Andrew, he was in some of your classes, art in Year 10 and economics in Year 11. As well as interacting socially with you in these classes, he helped you with your gear and materials. Some teachers contrived to encourage this helping relationship by transferring Paul to your art class, and seating you both together in economics.

Sam, I noticed that some ambivalence about gender issues began to thread through your stories as you described the ways you sought to establish your identity as a young male with a disability. For example, you described how your relationship with Andrew survived some ups and downs, as well as conflict with Paul's increasing number of girlfriends. As a young teenager you preferred being with your boy "mates" although your mother recalled that in your early primary years you had quite a lot of girls helping you out (04/03). You respected Paul wanting to be with the girls and although you thought he was "weird" you spent a lot of time at lunchtimes and morning interval with him.

Although you had been a close friend of Paul's for a shorter time, you were more intimate with him than Andrew, even though you described Andrew as more of a Best Friend. You felt that you could talk to Paul, more than to Andrew (who you had known longer), and he seemed to be more caring. This seemed to you to be a characteristic of girls. You explained to me that because he hung out a lot with girls and appeared to have developed some "traditional female" traits, he had become caring and understanding, was sensitive to how you were feeling, and was "more talkative" about feelings.

Many researchers describe the dyadic best friend relationship as demonstrating reciprocity and mutual caring, with a sharing of interests as well as a sharing of thoughts and feelings to meet the adolescents need for intimacy (Hartup, 1993; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). Sam you described a good

friend as one who listens; I understand this to mean that a good friend listens when you tell him things about yourself. You also said that you were a good friend. This illustrates the expectation in good friendships, of reciprocity (Laursen & Hartup, 2002), whereby both friends benefit from the relationship with expectations of mutual exchanges of confidence and trust (Bigelow & LaGaipa, 1975).

When you described your relationship with Paul, however, you noted that there were gender differences that influenced the intimacy you had with him. You associated talking, understanding, sensitivity, and caring with girls, while not talking about “stuff” was linked to boys, such as Andrew, who did not hang out with girls. Sam, your experiences are supported by the research literature. Maccoby (1990, p. 517, cited Hauser et al., 1987) and suggested that their research explains different interactive styles of males and females. She purported that girls have an enabling style of interaction, with more intimacy than boys’ interactive style that focuses on a concern for “turf and dominance” (p. 519), and has a lack of self-disclosure. Buhrmester (1996) also makes a differentiation between the friendships of males and females. He stated that male friendships focus on the agentic needs of self-esteem, identity, and power, whereas female friendships focus on communal needs, such as affection, love, intimacy, and nurturance. These essentialist perspectives of gender have shaped the ways you have seen some of your friendships and I return to these gender issues again in Chapter Twelve.

Sam, you recognised that “what a good friend is...” changes with age, and you made the differentiation between friendships at school that were for “someone to hang out with at lunchtime” so you were not alone and “rejected” thus responding to a need for security and safety (Buhrmester, 1996), whereas friendships when you are older: “It’s more about life and stuff. It’s kind of more to help you through life.” To you, older friendships are more

about sharing feelings and concerns; present friendships were more about “being invited” than sharing feelings.

Another expectation for you, in a good friend relationship, was respect and helping. To help, your friends had to be patient and you felt that Andrew and Paul showed this patience and helped you, far beyond the frame of I’ll Help (Meyer et al., 1998). This indicated a commitment to, and the egalitarian nature of your friendship (Hartup, 1993; Laursen & Hartup, 2002), although, Andrew not inviting you to his party threatened these best friend cornerstones of “commitment” and “egalitarianism.” Egalitarianism does not mean that friends are identical but that they recognise, and accept, their differences (Youniss & Smollar, 1985).

### ***New Friends: I’ve really only started to be friends***

*with Callum.* As well as your close friends Andrew and Paul, you were proactive in making new friends. When you were rejected by some of Andrew’s friends, Shane and Brad, you began a new relationship with Callum, who was part of Andrew’s subgroup, and who had similar interests to you, computer games and movies, and you went to his house. Initially, you described him as a “real good friend” but as you got to know him you found his comments annoying and also found that he did not like to share and was hard to entertain. You were invited to his birthday although you weren’t on the original list, but you accepted this and went anyway. This friendship did not continue because Callum moved to Wellington; your mother did not allow you to have a cellphone so you could not text him, and you did not email him to keep the contact. She described this friendship as “not close” and “it died a natural death” (Charlotte, 04/03).

*...and Steven: he’s ok.* Steven was a new friend in Year 10 and he was part of the sub group with Andrew, Shane, and Brad. Initially this new

friendship was based on multiple proximities as he was in the group and also some of your classes, thus environmental conditions contributed to your proximity alongside visible similarity in age and academic ability. Although you fell out with the latter two, you got on well with Steven although at times you found him a bit quiet, but you enjoyed his company. This friendship was relatively new but had not had any ups and downs. Epstein (1989) describes being close in space and time (proximity) as the most basic factor in selecting a new friend; the next is age, and third is similarity in goals, attitudes, values, and personality. Hartup (1993) adds similarity in race, sex, and social class.

### ***Changing Relationships: We're not friends any more***

Relationships change, highlighting the temporal perspective of friendships (Furman, 1993), and Hartup (1993) suggests that although there is variation in the process, friendships have a beginning, a middle, and an end. The ending of a relationship can be determined for endogenous (internal) reasons such as developmental age differences (Bukowski et al., 1996) and decreased interests such as the ending of your friendship with Craig, and exogenous (external) reasons such as moving schools or cities as Callum did.

Craig was an old friend from primary school so you knew him before you became friends with Andrew and Paul, and he was a good friend in Form Two – you had been to his house. At high school he was in your form class for the first two years, and in Year 10 he was in your art class. At the beginning of Year 9 he had lunch with you at the Learning Support Centre. However, you found him confusing, as he fluctuated between being very helpful and very annoying. Your teacher aide reflected that the students who were very helpful and supportive in class “will be good for a certain amount of time” and that maybe they got “sick of being the helper” (Teacher aide, 11/04) and found it to be a burden. Your Year 10 art teacher noted that Craig “tries to be a toughie

but then he's got this real soft spot you know, where he really helps Sam out. I think he's known Sam for a long time...He really looks after Sam" (11/03).

Craig was one of the students who had less contact with you when the new boy Jason started school (I discuss this in the section on conflict), and the friendship discontinued as you began to develop different interests - Craig got a car and that was something that you could not do then. You did not see him very often and no longer talked to him. Your key teacher observed, "A teenage thing...they grew away from each other" (11/04), although your teacher aide thought the relationship was more a helping relationship and said, "I don't know if they were ever really, really close friends" (09/03).

Although Craig was no longer a good friend he still looked out for you. The teacher aide commented that when you had the conflict with Jason and the group, she spoke to Craig: "Just make sure Sam's ok and being his friend all this time just keep an eye on him and he said, 'Of course I will' and they do...They're usually pretty good" (Teacher aide, 09/03).

### ***Classmates: He's been my friend while I've been in class***

*In maths.* You recognised that some friendships were situation specific and may not be long lasting. Your friendship in maths (Year 11/2004) with your classmate Ranjiv was one of these friendships. This friendship was based on proximity and shared activity, rather than common interests. The teacher seated him next to you at the beginning of the year, and he continued to sit there even when the teacher was absent. Initially, your interactions were about homework and he was helpful with your chair and gear. Over the year, Ranjiv found out that you were not "dumb" and that he did not have to over-explain things, and your conversations developed from class-work to social interaction about the weekend and other chat. Working together dispelled the stereotype that disability equated to "dumb." The teacher commented, "I

wouldn't actually call them great buddies but I think there was a mutual respect...and Ranjiv was helpful in the physical sense" (11/04). You enjoyed the relationship while it lasted and you appreciated that he continued to sit there even when he did not have to, making the comparison with other students who would move away from you if they had the chance, so you often didn't have anyone to talk to. You expected that in Year 12 he might not talk to you but you accepted this as characteristic of such short-term relationships, as not all social relationships result in lasting friendships (Duck, 1977).

Your maths teacher said there was not much opportunity for social interaction in his class which he ran formally: "I don't get the kids to move around much...a lot of it is bookwork" (11/04), reflecting individualistic rather than cooperative goals.

*John* was another classmate who you were seated next to in Text and Information Management (2004). This arrangement was for convenience because you both had a disability and the teacher aide helped you both. You didn't like him much but interacted socially in class, but he annoyed you because he made fun of you, which was hurtful, although if anyone else teased you he would stick up for you. You generously accepted this part of his nature but didn't consider him as more than a classmate. In Year 10, you had little social interaction in this class, but the next year I observed you chatting to classmates and your teacher also observed that you were more social and would get up and talk to the girls behind you: "He'll actually get up out of his seat and go and talk to other students about what they're doing, or have a look at their screen and make a comment. He would never have done that before" (11/04). This reflected your growing confidence in yourself and your ability to make friends.

*In art* (Year10/2003), Craig and Paul, who you had known for a long time, helped you and there was some limited interaction with the boys at your

table, however the teacher wondered about your disability acting as a barrier to social interaction: "I think some of them are a bit nervous of him actually. Well nervous in that they just don't know how to handle it. Because of a lack of understanding they don't know how to treat him normally" (11/03) that is, just like another boy, and consequently for most of the class, you fitted the Ghost, or at best, the Guest frame. In Peck et al.'s (1990) research, students without disabilities who were grouped with students with severe disabilities were initially "really scared at first, I didn't know what to expect...I had to learn something different...but you can be comfortable with anyone...you're not afraid of the unknown so much" (p. 245), thus eventually reducing their fear of human differences through contact and interaction (this reminded me of my story in *Narrative Beginnings* when I visited a residential hospital and did not know how to behave or what to say). I thought that it was positive and encouraging that your teacher aide tried to facilitate social interaction by deliberately staying out of that class, as she knew you had the peer support of Craig and Paul: close proximity of teacher aides inhibit the interaction with peers, and if the teacher aide is not there "peers are more likely to fill the space" (Giangreco et al., 1997, p. 13).

*In English* (Year10/2003) the teacher noted that you did not get up and wander around the room as some of the other students did, because of your disability, but "he's good at turning round and talking to the people he's sitting near, four or five people, and he has a bit of a joke with them" (11/03). Your Year 11 teacher commented similarly: "I see him relating quite comfortably and normally...He just seems to get on with everybody" (11/04).

*There's (sic) boys that are quite nice in PE* (Year 10/2003) but you did not have friends in this class. Neither Andrew nor Paul was in the class and you were not part of a social subgroup. Physical activity is an important context for socialisation and identity construction (Taub & Greer, 2000) and a context for getting new friends, learning, strengthening one's physique,

becoming someone, and having a good time (Kristen, Patriksson, & Fridlund, 2002). Research findings established that although there were many beneficial outcomes from physical activity, these coexisted with disempowering experiences such as negative comments and exclusion in team games, mainly at the secondary school level (Blinde & McCallister, 1998; Hutzler, Fliess, Chacham, & Van den Auweele, 2002; Kristen et al., 2002); Wilhite, Devine, & Goldenberg, 1999). Similarly, you found that as they got older, most of the boys in the class became increasingly competitive and did not include you in the games. Your Year 9 PE teacher reported in June 2003: "Often it is the others who are letting him down by not including him as much as they could" and in December 2003: "Sam faces frustrations of being included and this is our biggest barrier and concern."

In Year 10, you described PE as your favourite subject and you enjoyed pitting yourself against yourself and tried hard to be good at everything. This is supported by Taub and Greer's (2000) research that part of identity construction includes a perception of competence and a feeling of self-enhancement, however, in Year 11 you felt because of the competitive nature of some of the male classmates, you did not enjoy PE any more. You reflected that it was mainly the boys as they got older, but the girls would pass the ball to you. Azmitia et al. (1998) suggest that this competitiveness, and excluding you, could be part of a "test" that boys set themselves in order to prove their popularity and status with their peers. The teacher aide's comment, "They're just very competitive and 'I'm showing off to the girls and boys', or whatever..." (09/03) supports this. DePauw (1997) considers factors for exclusion in sport and physical activity, and the marginalising of people with disabilities. The socially constructed ideals of sexuality, masculinity, and physicality are illustrated in your experience Sam, where the boys excluded you from full participation in physical activities by your "inability" to meet

these socially constructed ideals, particularly by not exhibiting socially accepted views of strength, agility, and aggression.

The teacher aide noted that although the girls at intermediate always wanted to help, she only saw them helping in PE. Consequently, because of the competitiveness and exclusion, and the discouragement and high expectations from team coaches, you avoided school sport and found it was better to do it through CCS where “everyone’s kind of the same” (Sam, 12/04).

Goodwin (2001) places the responsibility for the negativity in physical education on the teacher. Intuition and thoughtfulness, that is, pedagogical tact (Van Manen, 1995), in an ethic of caring would have alerted teachers to any embarrassment and frustration by a student such as you Sam and considered your needs as they monitored the social dynamics of the learning environment. Although her research was in physical education, Goodwin’s view is also relevant to teachers in other subject areas.

*People don’t always talk anyway.* Your teacher aide mentioned the respect that the students in class had for you and that there was no bullying or nastiness, although there were no friendships in Year 9. In Year 10, this situation improved and although “you could say it is not happening brilliantly in his own class...those friendships are now happening at lunchtime...social stuff is starting to happen and they see him as the same as them” (09/03). At the end of the second research year (Year 11/2004), a teacher observed that:

He’s really come out of his shell socially with his peers in the classroom and to me that’s been especially rewarding. The kids are very accepting of him and even though he might not be part of the ‘in’ crowd, he’s very much accepted. (11/04)

Sam, the extent to which students socialise with their peers in the classroom is influenced by environmental factors such as school ethos or spirit, school policy, and the professional style of teachers and teacher aides.

An ethos of tyranny within a school policy that focuses solely on competitive academic and sporting achievement and where professionals adopt an autocratic style inhibits friendships and interactions. An ethos of clemency, when this is supported by a school policy that addresses social as well as academic goals and which is conducive to social experiences, can encourage professionals to adopt an informal, flexible, egalitarian style of teaching where group-work is evident and friendships nurtured. It is interesting that at Hillview High School, the Learning Support Centre policy included “to support the social and emotional needs” but academic goals were not stated, whereas the policy for students with moderate needs focused on academic rather than social needs. The inference was that for students in the LSC, the focus was on social rather than academic and vice versa for students with moderate needs who were included in classrooms. My observations confirmed this academic/social split. (I believe that this highlights an exclusive curriculum: I examine these curriculum issues and the implications for facilitating friendships and social relationships, in Chapter Twelve). From my observations and interviews with teachers at your school, Sam, group-work was rarely used; the only example of group work I observed was in economics, although in Year 10/2003 the science teacher said they worked in groups for experiments but these groups were decided by him at the beginning of the year and did not change. So Sam, you had few opportunities in class to work with your peers so you could get to know each other: being seated with your teacher aide also reduced such opportunities.

Sam, in Year 10 science, you were placed with the other students who needed the support of the teacher aide and did not have the opportunity to work with your other peers in the class: in effect you were segregated from the other students with your set place at the front bench that included the teacher aide. This was an “island in the mainstream” (Meyer, 2001, p. 27). Although you told me that “I enjoy working in groups better”, responses

from your other teachers when I asked if they planned to include students socially by using cooperative learning, included: "No I don't" (Geography teacher 11/04); "Not a lot...sometimes I get the kids to work in pairs" (Maths teacher, 11/04); " We've done a little bit but they're a bit chaotic at times, that particular class, so I've kept them sitting at their seats as much as possible" (English teacher, 11/03); "He's up the front and we don't do a lot of group work this year to be quite honest" (English teacher, 11/04). Your teacher aide, who is a trained primary school teacher, endorsed these comments: "There's a different type of teaching really [in secondary schools]. There may have been once...a certain teacher got them into groups at one point...but generally they don't do that here!" (11/04)

In all classes, you sat at the front, whether or not this was near the door; you said this was because of your eyesight. In some classes, your teacher aide sat with you if there was a group of students she was supporting. This created a physical and symbolic barrier to peer interaction and relationships (Giangreco et al., 1997). In three classes, science in Year 10, and English and economics in Year 11, I observed that students with behavioural, rather than learning difficulties were included in these seating placements, so the teacher aide could "keep an eye on them." Thus you often had either no peers next to you, or you had peers with behavioural difficulties: again highlighting difference and creating an island in the mainstream and a "special" part of the class, thus reinforcing your "otherness."

Schnorr's (1997) research found that being part of a subgroup was a factor in whether students with disabilities achieved membership in a class, and that having friends in class is important for students. In Year 10, your friend Paul was in your art class, and Craig was also part of this subgroup, and in Year 11 your economics class. You sat next to Paul in both these classes and from my observations these were the only classes where you interacted with other students for any length of time: your friendship with Paul was

your entry into a social subgroup. Your art teacher was positive about this: "I felt that Sam really thrived mainly because he had a good friend there" (Teacher, 11/03). In the senior secondary school, the organisation of classes often means that close friends are not in the same class, however, subgroups of dyads, triads, cliques, do form but students often do not notice students who are not part of these networks (Cusick, 1973, cited in Schnorr, 1997, p. 11). This was evident in your classes Sam. The implications are that there is a need for teachers to see beyond the "whole class" and recognise their role in establishing social interaction and possible subgroups to ensure all class members feel as though they belong, by encouraging group work and having flexible seating arrangements. Sam, you could also have been proactive in taking steps to be part of a class subgroup by sitting with other students, and interacting more in class situations, where this was appropriate. You did not feel lonely in class saying: "Usually in class I choose not to talk to someone but I don't feel lonely then and at lunchtime I've always got Paul or Andrew to sit next to so yeah, That's fine" (Sam, 12/04). However, your lack of interaction in class did not encourage other friendships on the out-of-class landscape.

Your teacher aide recognised that her presence could be a deterrent to social interaction and she proactively supported your social interactions by sitting at the back of the room until you needed her, or she roved around the room helping other students, rather than remaining too close to you all the time (Giangreco & Doyle, 2002). When you were in Year 10, she said, "If I feel that Sam is not being joined in I will sometimes try and do something about it without him noticing, do something to make sure he is part of it" (09/03) and in Year 11, she said, "He doesn't particularly want his peers seeing him with a teacher aide any more...he's more than happy if I'm not going to be there" (11/04).

Sam, although in Year 9 you wanted the security of a teacher aide all the time and “it was hard breaking that pattern” (Key teacher, 09/03), by Year 11 you felt that having a teacher aide was stigmatising. It affected your seating placements because you were always placed at the front with a designated place for the teacher aide, and even if she sat at the back there was always a desk left free which meant your peers did not sit there, so usually you did not have a peer next to you: “They usually leave me kind of alone” (Sam, 12/04). (Sometimes you were placed next to a student with a behavioural problem, not a student of your choice). You preferred not to have a teacher aide because of the stigma and the potential effect on your relationships:

Even if she’s there and I’m not using her, it still feels as though they’re there to help you...If they’re there then the other kids still see it as if they are there to help you kind of thing and, ‘Oh he still needs help!’ kind of thing. Not that they say that but if they’re not there at all then it can’t be seen that way...sometimes they can be a bit annoying about those kind of things but they’re mostly pretty good...but sometimes in the way they act...I can’t think of any examples but you can kind of see it sometimes. (Sam, 12/04)

By Year 11 you noted that you only needed the teacher aide to operate the chair lift and to help you with a large volume of writing, although generally teachers modified the amount of notes or photocopied their notes: “It’s not the knowledge...it’s only really the writing that makes me different and the actual getting to class but yeah...” (Sam, 12/04)

These patterns of interaction link to Meyer et al.’s (1998) analysis of frames of friendship Sam, and remind us that you were more than a Guest in the classroom as teachers saw you as part of the class and in some cases, modified the writing component. You were Just Another Kid in that you worked on the same content as the class, however the teachers’ seating

arrangements supported the Inclusion Kid frame, and this influenced the perception of your peers as different, and influenced social interaction.

The perceptions of teachers, about their responsibility in facilitating social inclusion and teaching the student with disabilities, is pertinent here. Hamre-Nietupski, Hendrickson, Nietupski, and Shokoohi-Yekta's (1994) research found that teachers perceived it is their role to facilitate friendships between students with and without disabilities through cooperative learning and peer tutoring, although this was perceived as being easier in primary school. My interviews with teachers produced a range of views: "Sam is the teacher aide's [responsibility]. I help her" (Science teacher, 09/03); "I wouldn't like to think he felt isolated in class" (Text and Information Management teacher, 11/03); "No I don't [plan how to include the students socially]" (Geography teacher, 11/04); "Sam has fitted in so well it hasn't seemed like mainstreaming. I don't think there's a lot of sacrifice on my part" (Maths teacher, 11/04); "I run a reasonable formal...I don't get the kids to move around much...a lot of it is bookwork [maths]...you don't have the same opportunity for social interaction" (Maths teacher, 11/04); "We don't do a lot of group work this year to be quite honest" (English teacher, 11/04); and his economics teacher:

We should probably have done more group work but we probably didn't because I was conscious of trying to get through the course and having to move along I guess. I did an activity one day and they all had to go and search for things in groups and one girl who probably isn't all that academic said, 'Oh that was heaps of fun! Why don't we do that more often?' and I thought, 'Yes, you're right! We should!' but you're always constrained by the fact that you've got to try and teach them the syllabus and get through it all. (Economics teacher, 11/04)

This last remark was from the teacher of a Level 1 NCEA class and reflected the pressure to "deliver" the curriculum, which she interpreted as necessitating a formal teaching style. Sam, because you came in quietly and

got on with your work, teachers did not consider your social needs and predominantly focused on academic learning goals. Your Year 11 maths teacher also noted a change in focus in the senior school because of assessment pressure and stated, "Year 9, Year 10, there is much more scope for group work...but there comes a time when they actually have to work independently" (11/04). Working more often in groups would have provided not only a chance for you and the other students to get to know each other but an opportunity to enhance academic learning in an informal, learning environment with shared goals and cooperation.

### ***The others are kind of friends but not real good friends***

Although Andrew and Paul were close friends, their relationship with you was not exclusive and they had other friends who you sometimes considered to be friends of yours as well, although you made the distinction between the closeness of the friendships you had with Andrew and Paul, and the "other" friendships: "my best friends" and "my friends."

You realised that you had to make an effort to nurture friendships with the wider group and made a decision to buy Yugioh cards and play them so you would be liked (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996) and not left out of the friendship circle with Shane and Brad. You recognised that the card game was only a fad and on reflection would not spend a lot of money on something just to be included. However, at the time it meant you could take part and be an active member of the group, rather than being an onlooker, which you found was boring and not satisfying your need to be accepted.

### ***Conflict: I'm not really very good friends at the moment***

Sam, you described the antagonistic relationships you had with some of the friends in Andrew's circle of friends. These caused you to spend more

time with Paul and his friends and for some time you did not see much of Andrew.

*Shane and Brad* were two of these boys. One day they refused to let you go to the movies with them and you felt they were not upfront with you. They were unpleasant to you and complained that they would have to look after you because you had a disability. This was hurtful, particularly because Shane also had a disability, cystic fibrosis, and you felt that he should have been more supportive. You reflected that you could forgive Brad for his comments, but not Shane. Such teasing and derogatory remarks are power plays in the context of peer relationships (Azmitia et al., 1998) and can serve to bolster their own sense of self-worth (Sullivan, 1953).

On reflection, you rationalised that perhaps they excluded you because you only interacted with them intermittently because you spent time in the Learning Support Centre, and did not spend much time with them. They expected you to be with them more if you wanted to be friends with them. This caused you to reassess the time you spent in the Centre. Shane and Brad's rejection made you reflect on having a disability and you began to feel bad about yourself. The Learning Centre confounded this feeling that you were different, so you made a considered and conscious effort to spend less time there, and more time in the playground with friends, as they expected. This was an upsetting time for you as it challenged who you were as a young man with a disability. When you shared these stories you were close to tears but you continued, because you knew you had made this decision and that you were stronger for having done so.

In Year 11 you said that you got on better with Shane and Brad but this was only because they were friends of Andrew. You didn't consider them to be good friends, or main friends, but "I get along with them all right." You didn't expect to be friends at all with them in Year 12.

*Martin* was another of Andrew's friends who you did not like. The feeling was mutual, so you did not hang out with Andrew much. Eventually the friendship between Martin and Andrew soured and it ended violently, so you and Andrew spent more time together.

*Paul hangs out with all those girls.* You preferred to spend time with Andrew but because of the conflict with Martin, Shane, and Brad you chose to spend more time with Paul. However, Paul's other friends were an increasing number of girls whose company you did not enjoy. The options were to be on your own, find other friends, or go to the Learning Support Centre. You had made a break with the Centre so you stayed with Paul's circle. You always knew where they would be and so you could have your lunch with them. Once Andrew and Martin had split up, you searched for Andrew after eating your lunch, and tolerated Shane and Brad. You had to make choices and compromises in order to spend time with your close friends.

*Jason.* Sam, this experience is not one that you told me about but your teachers and teacher aide, and your mother shared these stories with me. I decided to include these as part of my narrative, and in the sub-section on conflict with friends, because I felt that your silence was significant and that this experience had hurt you so much, as did the incident with Andrew and his birthday party, that you felt that you did not want to open old wounds but you have put it behind you and moved on (Azmitia et al., 1998).

Jason was a boy with vision impairment who moved to Hillview from another city. He was in your Year 9 class and although your key teacher thought that you were becoming friends, as you spent some time together in the Learning Support Centre when he was new, the dynamics of the class group were changed with a new person coming in part way through the year, and the situation became untenable for you. As he established himself in the class and made friends you thought that he was deliberately taking your friends, particularly Craig, away from you:

He found it quite hard emotionally. He would often end up in tears and coming over to us because they'd left him behind or didn't tell him where they were going and he couldn't follow...and Sam felt he was on the outer. (Key teacher, 08/03)

You felt alienated and betrayed and described the time as "bad" and "emotional" and that you "got upset quite a lot, for different reasons." Craig, Jason, and you were a triad: Azmitia et al. (1998) describe this grouping and comment on its instability with invariably one member feeling left out. They also note that such "freezing out" and power play, suggests a link sometimes to members of oppressed groups, for example, Jason's experience as a boy with a vision impairment, might have caused him to exert his power within the context of this group and the new classroom context, as he established his popularity and status in the pecking order.

This was at a time when your teacher aides were being changed and you were already upset with that situation. The situation with Jason was a major one for you and was discussed at your IEP meeting. Your key teacher talked to Jason and Craig in a roundabout way, and they were "absolutely staggered...and really upset to know that's what Sam thought and it was never intentional" (Key teacher, 08/03). She did not think that bullying was involved and did not think that you saw it as bullying either. At this stressful time you cried a lot in class and the teachers, teacher aides, and your mum felt that this made Jason uncomfortable with you: "I think he found Sam's emotions a bit high" (Charlotte, 04/03) so this might have accounted for him moving away from you. Your key teacher remembered this time:

He was very aware of the fact that his friends probably saw him as a big cry baby because there were a lot of tears in class and was probably right in a way that a number of his friends were put off slightly by him bursting into tears. (08/03)

She saw this as immaturity on your part and this contrasted with the maturity of your friends. Azmitia et al. (1998) note that peer acceptance is significantly

correlated with self-esteem but question if troubled friendships cause low self-esteem, or whether low self-esteem causes troubled friendships. Did your stress and tears over changing teacher aides cause problems with your friendship with Craig and Jason, or did the feeling of alienation make you feel insecure and miserable, and the removal of the teacher aide exacerbate that? It is impossible to establish the direction of causation (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996; Buhrmester, 1996; Bukowski et al., 1996).

Bryant (1998) describes these “bad” times as “setbacks” (p. 354) that are important in learning about how to develop coping strategies for stressful situations. The rapport you had with your teacher aide, and your mother’s support, enabled you to problem solve these situations, and they suggested strategies and skills for coping. The experience and “coming through it” made you realise that you still had friends but that friendships change, and that you could cope without the teacher aide to the point where you were asking not to have one with you all the time. When I interviewed your teacher aide at the end of the following year she noted your increased confidence and peer acceptance: “The social improvement is quite a major thing for him: a very important step” (11/04).

### *I suppose I do have friends in Learning Support*

Friendship with the students in the Learning Support Centre was an ambivalent situation for you, although you did describe them as friends. These students were not mainstreamed and spent most of their time in the centre. The only thing you seemed to have in common was that they and you all used the centre to a greater or lesser extent: proximity through school structure, rather than choice. You described them as more “basic” than you, having different interests, and “their way of thinking is different.” These friendships challenged your self-concept as you also compared them with

your other friends and again made that decision to be with your other friends who made you feel more independent and “like a normal person.” Meeres and Grant’s (1999) research identified this ambivalence between individualistic personal and group goals, and their work suggests that your mixing with these “other” students who did not make you feel “normal” threatened your self esteem and that by socially distancing yourself from them, you were able to “fit in” with your peers outside the Learning Support Centre. By comparing yourself with the students in the Centre, you enhanced your own personal attributes. Deal (2003) suggests that this relates to the notion of a hierarchy of impairments where people with disabilities, for a variety of complex reasons, do not associate with all people with impairment but differentiate themselves from other “impairment” groups. In August 2003, your key teacher noted this social distancing whereby you used to go to the Centre at intervals and lunchtimes especially when it was raining, but this had decreased: “We’ve not seen him nearly as much and that’s a good thing ‘cos it means that he’s more independent and he’s socialising more with friends outside.”

Despite your decreased time at the Centre you sometimes joined the “special needs students” on outings and also competed as part of the school team in athletic events for students with disabilities, as well as a badminton tournament.

### *We have family friends*

Another friendship that you enjoyed was with a much younger boy, Josh, who was ten (in December 2004) and the son of family friends. Because of the family connection you saw him frequently at the weekends and played Yugioh with him even though you no longer played this with your school-friends. You were included in games with him and not excluded because of

competitiveness. You also shared other interests with him, for example, Lord of the Rings and Playstation although, like Callum, he didn't always like to share. Proximity facilitated by the family friendship encouraged this friendship and although you were older than Josh, you are small in stature and build and you had similar interests. Epstein (1989) notes that almost all out of school friendships include mixed-age friends, particularly in adolescence, in response to opportunities for mixed age interactions; mixed age friends are a natural and positive choice.

***Reflection: I think I've just grown up***

The changing dynamics of your friendships and social relationships paralleled your growing confidence, and your acceptance of who you are as a young man with a disability. This has been an emotional journey for you but you have had a lot of support from your family, your teachers, teacher aides, and friends. You felt that in some case, for example with Shane and Brad, your friendships were affected by your disability but you realised for your close friends Andrew and Paul that this did not matter. This growing confidence and self-esteem also manifested itself in the way you decided you did not want teacher aides with you in the class, and the way you tackled senior management about having responsibility for using the chairlift. You felt that waiting in the chairlift for the teacher aide to operate it, using a laptop in class, or asking friends for help, and going to the Learning Support Centre made you look different to the other boys and you became determined not to be seen as different as you felt that this had affected the students' perceptions of you, and your friendships. At quiet times, mostly at night, it sometimes popped into your dreams, and you reflected on how your life would be different without a disability. This was a sad part of your life but you accepted that there was "nothing I can do about it so like live with it..."

(Sam, 07/04). You recognised that you were more confident and generally happy with your life: The new mobility scooter enabled you to have an after school job delivering pamphlets and papers and you enjoyed earning some money, just as your friends did.

### *They want me to be independent and all that stuff*

Your parents have encouraged you to become independent with the scooter with the aim of getting your drivers' licence, and your mum drove you to golf and picked you up when you had finished: "We try and always give him encouragement and be very positive for him" (Charlotte, 04/03). She encouraged you to phone and invite your friends home, just as your sister did: "He just sometimes needs a push perhaps to do that...but he does the ringing...and all the arranging" (04/03). When you were in Year 11 she let you stay home on your own: "He's sixteen and he's sensible"; you went to school by yourself on your scooter; went shopping on your own; and she thought that in the future you might like to join a gym as "fitness is a sport type thing...and it's a social thing. It would be great!" (12/04)

With friends, teachers, and family as support, you set goals for the future: "To get a good job...in computers; get out and play on an actual golf course; to learn to drive because I'll have to get an adapted car" (01/04). Your mum envisaged you having a flat of your own and said, "I do think he needs to be more proactive" so she would "encourage him to get into clubs or to do things where other young people or people his age are gathering and the social thing flows on from there generally." She was confident that you have a bright future: "Whatever he decides to do, he'll do it...we'll find a way you know!" (12/04)

In this context of positive support, the threads of your stories Sam show how your experiences on the in-school and out-of-school landscapes,

including the processes of friendship, have shaped and developed your independence, and self-advocacy - your stories tell of notable personal growth. You agreed to participate in this research because you wanted educators to learn from your experiences and I know that your stories will cause them to reflect on their own attitudes and pedagogy – thank you for sharing.

## Chapter Six: Gemma's Stories as Poems

### *I didn't want to go to that school*

The whole year I was like negative.  
 I think right up until fifth form  
 I was negative about school  
 because I didn't want to be there  
 at all!  
 I was just,  
 'Ah! I hate school!'

Katrina and I went to primary school together.  
 We went to Intermediate together  
 and then she went to Girls' High.  
 I was really, really, really upset.  
 I was so upset!  
 I cried for ages over that  
 just because she was my buddy.  
 She left school at like fifth form I think.  
 I saw her like walking around the street and stuff.  
 Now I see her all the time  
 and we're like still really good friends.  
 Like I still chat to her  
 all the time.  
 I don't have her phone number  
 or anything like that.  
 Yeah we just see each other  
 and, 'Oh yeah'  
 and we'll have a real good conversation.  
 I know where her salon is  
 and she could be my hairdresser.  
 I could go and see her any time...yeah...  
 and go and have a chat.

### *I made a new friend with Sally*

...and it was really cool.  
 One I sort of made on the first day  
 because she was like really lost and that  
 and it was like, 'Oh hi!'  
 'Hi I'm Gemma'  
 She came from another school

and she was like, 'Oh I'm Sally...sort of thing  
and like hi!'  
And then we started like hanging out  
together  
and then, last year she actually left school  
and went and did hairdressing.  
She's changed.  
She's decided she doesn't want to be a hairdresser.  
She wants to do fashion.  
Yeah, yeah I still talk to her and that.  
I saw her once  
and that was the day that she was slung out of hairdressing college  
and I haven't seen her...  
Oh, I often see her at like parties and stuff like that but yeah...  
I should actually ring her.  
I thought about it the other day.  
I thought, 'Oh I wonder how Sally is.  
I should like ring her'  
and it's like it's just one of those thing you think about  
and then you get busy  
and like yeah.

### *The other one was called Jack*

He's a farmer now.  
Jack and I were friends in form one,  
form two, third form, fourth form and fifth form.  
Yeah sort of half way through fifth form  
he left and then he became a farmer.  
Yeah, like now I don't talk to him.

### *And Sean*

He left school  
and I think he's doing like something to do with motor bikes  
and dirty and yuk.  
Sean left...in...  
I think it was end of fourth form,  
start of fifth.  
Sean was at intermediate with me yup  
and then we were friends.  
We weren't really friends.  
We were put together in classes [Student Support Centre].  
And so that's how...

We talked basically.

***The other one was Stacey***

We went to primary school and intermediate together  
then I didn't talk to her from third form on.

She left school like we were in third form.

She left school.

Basically does nothing.

I don't talk to her now.

***There was another girl called Rochelle***

and I made a friend with her.

I met in third form.

Basically we hung out together for like one term.

She knows that I can't see stuff

and she will go, 'Oh Gemma.

Do you want me to write this out for you?'

And that to me...that's really nice.

if I can't see it.

I was like, 'Oh thank you Rochelle'

and sometimes I'd say, 'Look Rochelle.

Could you write the work out?

Can I take your book home and I copy it?'

And she'd say, 'Oh that's fine.

You know you can keep it

for as long as you want'

and, 'Oh thankyou'

and so, yeah.

She sort of turned really...evil!

She went into this like really bad crowd of people

and it was like ugh.

It was like in third form

and it was like, 'whoa...you're just too mean!

That's not nice!'

So yeah...like went and hang out with them.

Oh she just turned.

She got like all gothicy.

She started hanging round with the wrong crowd

and then she started smoking

and then she got like a boyfriend

and ...yeah...we talk now though.

She's fine like now  
 but yeah she just sorta like turned really weird!  
 I think in third form  
 she got along with like the wrong crowd  
 but now she's sorta like ...  
 Yeah...she's good now.  
 Yeah...we talk now.

*There's a certain crowd*

Like I'm a person that can jump from group  
 to group  
 to group  
 to group.

There's certain crowds.  
 There's the bad crowd,  
 the like totally nutty crowd  
 and then there's just like all these different crowds.  
 There was like the Māori crowd and stuff like that  
 and I was like, 'Oh ok I'm not going to hang out with you'  
 and so there's all these different crowds  
 and so I've been basically round every single crowd  
 except the cool crowd.  
 There's like the Tiffanys,  
 and the like the really cool people  
 and I was like, 'No not hanging out with you'  
 and so I've done basically done all of the crowds.

I didn't hang out with them on weekends.  
 I just sort of saw them at school.  
 Basically all the friends  
 that I hung out with before now  
 I just used to sort of see them at school  
 and ring them up  
 maybe  
 on the weekend  
 but like the crowd  
 I'm hanging out with now  
 we go out together  
 and like we just go out and get movies  
 and yeah...we go shopping together  
 and stuff like that.

Yeah it's really cool.

*I did fit but sort of I didn't*

There was one crowd...

They're sort of like...

They're not the nerds

but they're just a different crowd.

They're really into school...

like into school and band

and into like stuff like that.

And so the 'different' crowd...

They were like...

Yeah they're still at school

and one does ballet and is totally into dance.

She's never not dancing.

All the time she's dancing

and the other girl Amy she is totally into like band

and Leigh she's...she's really weird.

Like she's like she's totally into sort of like Romeo and Juliet times.

Like she's like totally into like swords and stuff like that

and it's whoa just like weird.

And like I was totally like the bubbly one.

You know, 'Let's go out, let's go out

and you know let's do something!'

And, 'Oh no!

I've got band.

I've got this.

I've got that'

and it was like, 'Oh!'

I was sort of like...

I was totally into school.

I was like really into school.

I just wanted to get my subjects.

That was probably a really good crowd for me  
that year

because that was like the year of the exams.

That was fifth form yeah

and so it was like really into exams and stuff

and because they didn't really do anything

it was sort of like,

'Oh what shall I do this weekend?'

It was like, 'Read my books!!!'

And it was like, 'Yeah...ok...cool!'

I hung out with like these girls  
 which were like...  
 There were Māori  
 and sort of like I'm not really into them  
 but it's ok you know.  
 They weren't like into smoking  
 when I was hanging out with them  
 but after like...  
 I had them come over for my birthday party  
 and we all had a sleepover and that  
 and they were like totally into smoking  
 and stuff like that  
 and it was like, 'Oh smoking's just not good'  
 and like drugs and drinking and parties  
 and they were probably fourth form  
 and it was like, 'Oh my God you're so young!  
 What's the point in going out and getting trashed  
 when you like in fourth form!  
 It's just wrong!'

### *The cool crowd*

They went out and stuff  
 like every sort of weekend and that  
 and they all had jobs.  
 When you're like in sort of third and fifth form  
 it's like, 'Oh she's got a job!  
 She's got money  
 and she always goes out.'  
 She was always going out  
 and drinking and stuff like that  
 and she was... they were just like really cool.  
 Now one's pregnant...cool! Pregnant!  
 And like Whohoo!  
 One of them's pregnant!  
 One of them is working at K Mart!  
 One of them's working at The Warehouse  
 Most of them have actually  
 all dropped out of school.  
 There's only like ...three of them  
 that have only survived!

They were pretty cool!  
I wanted to be like that.  
I did!  
I wanted to hang out with them  
but I ...just never did...yeah.  
Oh...well...  
One of them was quite snotty yeah...  
They were like, 'Look at me! Look at me!'  
'Oh I'm so cool! I'm so cool!'  
And she's still like that now.  
It's like, 'Shut up you're not cool!' ...whatever!  
It's like, 'Shut up!  
You're not cool. You suck!'  
She's just snotty and up herself...yeah!

Now in seventh form  
there's no particular crowd.  
Oh ...third and fourth form  
it was sort of like, 'Oh look there's that crowd!  
but I don't sort of talk to those people' and  
then there's the crowd  
like that you can talk to  
but you just sort of like say, 'Hi!'  
Yeah that was sort of like that cool crowd.  
It wasn't easy to move in and out of crowds  
in third form.  
You sorta saw that crowd walking past  
and sort of 'Ooh that's them'  
but...and yeah...  
It wasn't really easy at all.

I did move round in crowds  
but when I said I moved round,  
I think I like changed in each crowd.  
Like I was a different type of person.  
I wasn't sort of a different person.  
I just acted differently  
with that crowd of people.  
You know how you act differently  
and yeah...looking back on it now  
it's like, 'How did you do that?'  
It's like, 'Why didn't you just keep like your one crowd?'  
But...yeah.

It's basically just shopping round I think.  
 Like it's just going into one store  
 and then go into another and....yeah.  
 I think... I think I was just like looking  
 for like a crowd like me...  
 Like 'cos...in form two...  
 my crowd split up  
 and they all went to different schools.  
 All of them.  
 And I was the only one  
 that went to Jade High School  
 so I had to go and find a crowd  
 so that's sort of I think why I did it  
 'cos I had to find a crowd  
 which was my own.  
 Probably yeah in fourth form,  
 fourth, fifth form  
 I found the crowd  
 and that wasn't like the band geek crowd.  
 It was just sort of like the school-focused group.

I was probably trying too hard.  
 You know hard out  
 like, 'Whoa let's be cool!  
 Let's be cool!  
 But, 'Oh no!  
 Be a sour!'

Because you're going through that little transaction (sic) time.  
 It's like you know, 'Let's smoke!  
 and it's like, 'Yeah yeah let's do this! Let's wag!  
 and it's cool  
 and it's like, 'Oh no let's get a bad name for yourself!  
 They were going through that changing as well  
 and it was like, 'Ok yeah let's be catty!  
 Let's be angry sort of thing!  
 It's all about change. Yep!  
 Yeah...I was definitely trying.  
 Be a sheep!

I've basically done all of the crowds  
 and that was it  
 and like the people that I'm hanging out with now

I went to Intermediate with them  
 but I didn't really hang out with them at Intermediate.  
 I knew them yeah  
 and so I hang out with all my friends now  
 and we've like been hanging out for  
 about two and a half years.  
 Oh my God! We get on so well.  
 Like they're my people.  
 Like we've got so much in common now but it's  
 like all the other crowds are sort of  
 like ok right!

I started hanging out with that group  
 because Jo and I were in the same form class together  
 and Simon and I had just broken up  
 and I said to Jo,  
 'Oh look...can I hang out with you guys today?'  
 and she was like, 'Oh yeah sure come on!'  
 and so that's...  
 I just started hanging out with them.  
 I was probably more myself...  
 I was more, 'Yeah yeah!'  
 and like because we got along  
 because Lisa and I went to  
 Intermediate together...  
 we all went to Intermediate together  
 but none of us went to primary school together.

***I don't have a special friend***

Not really...  
 I don't sort of class my friends like,  
 'You're my best, best friend.'  
 Like probably at school  
 there are the two friends.  
 Olivia is probably the one  
 that I would rate...  
 yeah a special friend.  
 She's really funny.  
 She's so go easy and yeah  
 she's a bit like me.  
 She's has her whole crazy thing  
 and she's just... she's just really neat

and I really like her.  
She's just so cool'  
'cos I can trust...I can trust all of them  
but I know that if I ring up Olivia  
and say, 'Oh what's happening tonight?'  
She'll go, 'Oh nothing's really happening tonight  
but do you want to come over type of thing?'  
and it's like, 'Oh, yeah ok type of thing'  
so yeah.  
She's outgoing.  
She's so bubbly.  
And it's like we just talk,  
and talk,  
and talk,  
and talk,  
and talk,  
and yeah it's really good.

Olivia would be like my utter like my most best friend in the world  
because we just get along so well.  
I wouldn't tell her that  
she's my best friend  
because like I look at her as  
my special friend  
but I wouldn't tell her  
because I know that she  
wouldn't think that.  
She doesn't look at me as a 'best friend'.  
She looks at me as a close, close friend  
but Andrea is her best friend.  
They're like best friends  
because they just get along so well  
like they live near each other.  
They live in the next street from each other  
so they're really close  
and see each other every day.

Oh she just cracks me up!  
We just get on so well!  
Like we can just like sit down  
and like every Friday night  
she's like, 'Oh I love you Gemma!  
You're so funny!'

She's a laugh a minute.  
We get along really well.  
I like the same clothes that she likes  
and she likes the same hair styles that I like  
and I just compliment her like all the time.  
I'll go, 'Oh my God look at that necklace!  
I love your clothes.'  
I'd just like a day in her wardrobe.  
I'd be like a queen...love it...it's great.  
She's got really cool necklaces  
and stuff like that  
so we've got like the same style  
and yeah it's really cool.  
Olivia...Yeah! She's always still there.  
She's definitely...Yes definitely!  
They're all special  
but probably, 'Livvy is the best.  
And Lisa.

Lisa is from intermediate.  
Lisa wasn't in my class  
but she was in the class next door to my class  
and so therefore we had to put our bags  
in the same locker room.  
Lisa and me are really close too  
but I think Lisa and I will always be close  
because we have that Girl Guiding thing.  
Yeah we went to Girl Guides together  
so we sort of like knew each other  
when we were like ten.  
So we knew each other then  
and then we went to intermediate together  
and I hung out with her at intermediate  
and then we sort of didn't hang out in like form two  
but now we're hanging out together again.  
Yeah she's in my other classes too.  
I talked to her and stuff like, 'Hi Lisa'  
and, 'How are you?' type of thing  
and yeah that was it  
and she was friends with my boyfriend  
and so yeah we were like talked again  
and like she used to come over after school sometimes  
and that was sort of like ...

that was probably a couple of weeks  
 before we started hanging out together  
 and then we started hanging out together all  
 like all together in the group.  
 Our birthdays are like the same days basically  
 like I'm on the 22nd and she's on the 23rd October yeah.  
 She's really outgoing and bubbly and stuff like that.  
 So yeah... I guess we're friends  
 but we're not like close, close friends  
 like she's like heaps more closer to Olivia  
 and that's ok.  
 That's cool.  
 I don't mind that  
 but we're still gonna be friends.  
 Yeah...over life...  
 we're still going to be friends.

***Olivia and Lisa are probably my closest friends***

I am closer to Olivia probably.  
 Yeah Olivia.

***On their own levels***

Olivia is probably like my special friend  
 but all of them are like really good together  
 like on their own levels.  
 So it would probably go...  
 Olivia, ...Jo, Andrea,  
 then Lisa.  
 Lisa and I get along really  
 'cos we did Girl Guides together  
 so yeah we've got that  
 and I was in a group with Lisa at Intermediate  
 so yeah.  
 Andrea, Olivia, Jo, Lisa, Anna.  
 I always sort of like see them in the weekend  
 and if I don't see them  
 I usually ring them up  
 so yeah!

Andrea and Jo and I went to intermediate.  
 Yeah we've always talked always  
 like since like third form right through.

Andrea and I went to intermediate together.  
She was one of those people  
that I saw around at intermediate  
but I never really talked to her.  
No, she wasn't in my class.

Anna went to intermediate  
but I don't actually remember her at intermediate.  
She wasn't in any of my classes  
and she was sort of just one of those people  
that you saw round.  
I don't really know  
where we started to become friends

Yeah, these are the levels  
that I put them in.  
Yeah we get along really well  
like we just laugh like so much,  
always,  
yeah.

I think I'm in the middle somewhere.  
I'm between like...  
Lisa and Jo are best mates  
'cos they've known each other since like kindy.  
They just know each other really well.  
So it would go Olivia, Andrea,  
probably me,  
Lisa then Jo.  
I think I'm there  
but like Anna and Diana...  
I don't think they're like even quotas.  
Like we all in the future  
we don't see Anna and Diana.  
They're not there in the picture  
because Diana's a quiet, like insignificant person  
and she's like...  
Even last night when we came home  
from the graduation dinner  
Mum said, 'God! What's Diana's problem?'  
That's the first time that mum has been with Diana  
and mum's picked it up straight away.  
She knew that Diana was a bitch!

She said, 'Mad as cow!'  
Yeah I know she's like that  
and she said, 'Is she always like that with you?'  
and I said, 'Yep!'  
That's just Diana.'  
She didn't want to be with me at all.  
I stood here  
and she stood way over the other side of the table  
just so she didn't have to talk to me.  
She's really snobby!

One day I think Diana was by herself  
and the girls went over to Diana and said,  
'Hey! Do you want to hang out with us?'  
They only did it to be nice  
because she was alone and that Diana's just stuck.  
Diana doesn't go anywhere.  
She's like a little sheep.  
She follows.  
She's a follower like if we sort of say,  
'Oh we're going to go out tonight!'  
She's like, "Oh! I'm going to come!"  
She's really quiet and insignificant.

Diana I still think is a little underdog.  
Yep she's still in the group.  
She's just never liked me  
I don't think  
'cos I've gone up a level to her  
and she's stayed in the same level.  
Diana's been like that for...  
basically nearly the whole year  
because I was the last person into my group  
and before that Diana was the last person  
and Diana expected to go up in the group,  
and me be the baby  
but she hasn't.  
I've gone higher in the group  
than she has  
like when we go like out to places  
I'm always considered for a ride  
always  
and Diana isn't

because I can't...  
 I can never ever drive.  
 Whereas she can and she's got her learner's licence.  
 She's had her learner's licence for ages.

I love buying Christmas presents.  
 It's great!  
 I don't know where I'm going to get the money from  
 but I'm going to get a present, for them all.  
 I might...  
 I don't know...  
 I don't want to buy a present for Diana.  
 I'll just sort of see how things go with her  
 because I don't really know.  
 If I get everybody else a present  
 and not her  
 and one of them says, 'Oh blah blah blah blah!'  
 and Diana'll go, 'What! I didn't get a present!'  
 I don't know...  
 I don't really  
 want to get her a present  
 because she's such an evil person.  
 I don't know  
 I might get her something  
 like cheap!  
 I don't really want to get her anything at all  
 but I might just get something to be polite.  
 That would be it!

I don't think she'll get me anything.  
 She bought me a birthday present  
 and I was like, 'Whoa! She bought me a birthday present!'  
 and that's like really weird.  
 I got a birthday present from her  
 and I wasn't even expecting a birthday present  
 from her.

*I'd probably tell my real personal stuff to*  
 Olivia would be the first one  
 that I'd tell.  
 I'd probably tell all of them  
 except Diana and Anna.

'Cos like Andrea and I get along really well like  
 and stuff like that  
 and Jo and I get along really well...Jo yeah..  
 and Lisa and I get along great...  
 'cos she's just like yeehee!  
 She's like me! And yeah...  
 she's really cool like...  
 she dropped me off somewhere one day  
 and she's like,  
 'Phew! This is crazy!  
 You're sitting in the car next to me  
 and I didn't even realise  
 you've become one of my good friends'  
 like 'cos she said,  
 'When you first came to my group  
 I just thought like  
 Oh my god what's Gemma doing?  
 Like she'll just hang round with us for a couple of days'  
 and she was like, 'You've sticked (sic) and that's really cool!  
 And you've gone higher than Diana!  
 and I was like, 'Yeah it's cool!  
 and she's like,  
 'You're going to stay at my house tonight!  
 and I'm like, 'Ok!' and so  
 like we yeah...  
 It's pretty cool!

I don't know like just like which friends are true  
 and stuff like that.  
 Like on my birthday  
 like all of my friends rung me  
 except two  
 and the two that didn't ring me  
 I didn't expect to ring me  
 because they're not really my friends  
 now anyway like Diana and Anna.  
 I class them as 'friends' but not 'friends'...  
 Not close friends, just friends.  
 Like if I saw them on the street  
 I'd say, 'Hi' to them  
 but that's it like I don't expect to see  
 Diana or Anna again  
 and if I do like at graduation dinner last night,

they didn't say hello to me  
at all.  
They didn't even talk to me.

*The crowd I'm hanging out with now in seventh form*

We go out together  
and like we just go out and get movies  
and yeah...we go shopping together and stuff like that.  
Yeah it's really cool!  
Yeah.  
Same movies, same clothes, same music.  
Yeah they're just really cool  
and like we all basically...  
We're all in like the same classes together as well.

Now in seventh form  
all of us merged together.  
We're all just like one big group.  
Like if none of your friends are at school  
you can sort of just go to the common room  
and just hang out together.  
So it's cool!  
The highlights?  
This year for me  
it was just the whole seventh form  
like all of us  
because we were all friends.  
There's nobody that isn't a friend  
and if you're still not a friend with them  
you still talk to them  
so yeah that's really cool.  
We've all grown up.  
We'd all just get along.  
It was really cool.  
I liked it.

You can get mean people  
and you can get nice people...  
but I think in our year group  
we've just got like an all round bubbly year group  
that like get along anywhere  
like if we ever saw like anybody on the street

like go and talk to them  
 'cos we're just that type of  
 group...we're like...we're really happy and bubbly.  
 Our dean was saying like,  
 How bubbly and how much we've blossomed and that.  
 She was saying  
 that every year group  
 has their little own mark  
 and ours is like being loud!  
 Like we're the year group that are loud!

Oh my god we get on so well!  
 Like they're my people.  
 Like we've got so much in common now.  
 Like all the other crowds are sort of  
 like ok right...

***Most of my friends have left school***

Like all the crowds that I used to hang out with  
 have all left school now.  
 They've all like gone  
 and done their own thing.  
 Heaps of them have.  
 You've always got the phone  
 and if you really want to see them  
 you can like always phone them and go, 'Hey!  
 What are you doing? Let's do something?'

Like Sally like I see her now like  
 I only see her at parties  
 and it's sort of like, 'Oh blah, blah, blah, blah, blah'  
 and I go up and have a chat with her  
 and...like the last time I saw her was...in April or May...  
 so yeah that's quite a long time ago.  
 We've still got the same likenesses and dislikenesses  
 but yeah.

***I got the whole 'school boyfriend' thing***

Fifth form was probably a cool year for me  
 because I got my first boyfriend.  
 That was really cool!  
 That was the highlight of the fifth form.

I think I started to be friends with Simon  
and that made school better.  
Yeah having friends made it better.

Everybody has their little story  
about their boyfriend at school.  
Oh third form and fourth form  
like everybody had boyfriends  
and it was like,  
'Oh everybody had a boyfriend.'  
I don't actually think it was cool to have a boyfriend.  
Not really.  
To me boyfriends come and go  
and like at the end of the day  
your friends are still there  
and if you get a boyfriend  
you get, 'You've got a boyfriend!  
Hey that's pretty cool'  
and that's it.  
I don't have a boyfriend now  
and I don't sort of like really like anybody now.

*Oh Simon likes you!*

End of...fifth form.  
It was really like in the school holidays  
like the last day of school sort of  
fifth form...  
the sort of beginning of sixth form  
so we went over like the holiday period...type thing...  
We went to intermediate together  
and I hung out with him at intermediate.  
Yeah we sort of hung out in form two  
and form one  
but I didn't really talk to him sort of thing.  
I talked to him  
but I didn't really.  
We didn't hang out...  
Oh we talked in the third form  
but we didn't really talk in third form.  
He wasn't in my class third and fourth form  
but he was in my form class fifth form  
and we hung out with each other at school  
so like at interval and lunch and that...  
and so yeah.

We did that and then...  
I didn't know that he liked me  
'cos he was quite a shy boy  
and so I didn't really know that he liked me...  
so it was as silly as...  
My friend Suzy told me.  
She said, 'Oh Simon likes you', and all that.  
'Yeah he likes you'  
and 'Real?'  
and it's like, 'Yes'  
and she's like, 'I wasn't supposed to tell you that'  
and I was like, 'You have now'  
and so like he told me that he didn't hate me  
and stuff like that  
and we went out for six and a half months  
so it was quite a long...  
It was like a big relationship sort of thing.  
It broke up because  
he...said...that 'cos we were like best friends  
before we went out  
and he said that he loved me more as friend  
sort of thing  
and he just like grew apart  
and that so that's why.  
The day that Simon broke up with me.  
The next day at school  
that was a really mean day!  
'Cos I didn't really  
know like what to do.  
Like he walked past me  
and I walked past him  
and he was like, 'Hi!'  
and after he'd walked past me like 'Hi!'  
that it was it  
for like the whole day.  
We didn't know what to talk about  
or anything!  
It was really sort of eehh!  
That was a stink day!  
*I've always known Evan.*  
Evan and I went to primary school together.  
We went to intermediate together  
And I never really talked to him.

Right through we've been at school.  
 Right through together.  
 and so I've always known Evan.  
 I see him at weekends.  
 Not every weekend.  
 Just some weekends.  
 We don't sort of have like a matey-matey relationship  
 where I sort of ring you up and talk to you.  
 We don't have that  
 but when we see each other  
 we talk to each other...  
 and yeah he's pretty cool.

*Brad hung out with my cousin at school.*

I just sort of walked past  
 'cos he was a really tall guy and  
 you just see the tall guys  
 'cos they're tall.  
 He was really tall  
 so he was good for photos  
 'cos tall guys are just good for photos.  
 I just used to see him  
 and that was it  
 and then we went to YMCA programme together  
 and it was like really buddy.  
 I knew him because we were leaders together.  
 We like started like talking  
 and that and ringing each other  
 and yeah...that was it..  
 and like we're still like friends now.  
 We don't sort of see each other.  
 He rung me up the night before  
 and said, "Oh I don't want to go  
 to the ball with you anymore!  
 And it was like 'Oh no!'  
 The last time I saw him  
 was a Thursday when I went to Work Ex.  
 He phoned me up that morning  
 and so we had lunch together  
 and then he went and did his own thing  
 and then that was it  
 so yeah!

*Rick was like a family friend.*

We started going out.

We went out for about two months  
 and then we broke up.  
 He lived like ages away from here.  
 I only used to see him like the weekends  
 and we used to go to the movies.  
 We used to hang out with his friends  
 'cos like you've got to get on with your boyfriend's friends  
 so yeah I used to hang out with his friends and him.  
 We like... we used to play scrabble.  
 I was going to go to a party with him  
 but mum and dad wouldn't let me so yeah...  
 That wasn't a goer!  
 He used to come over here  
 and we just used to just see each other.  
 We broke up because we didn't see each other like all the time  
 and yeah we didn't really talk.  
 We talked on the phone  
 but we didn't really talk you know  
 and so it was just sort of like yeah...  
 I guess we just really grew apart.  
 He said that he didn't really want to go out with me anymore  
 and I was like, 'That's fine ok '...so yeah...

***It's really hard for me to find friends***

It's really hard to put like...  
 Because like the whole eyesight thing...  
 like when you were little  
 they always used to look at you,  
 'Oh there's Gemma Wilson.  
 She's got an eyesight problem!  
 And that's how they would look at me.  
 It was sort of like,  
 'Oh there's Gemma Wilson.  
 She's really happy!  
 Kids are mean!  
 Kids are so mean!  
 Because we were in like in a bad class in third form.  
 Like we were just we always talked  
 and we were always like fighting  
 and stuff like that!

*The other students help me*

If I can't see something  
 like I can't...on a sewing machine  
 I can thread the whole machine up.  
 I just can't thread the needle  
 and so I just say, 'Oh look Andrea  
 I can't thread the needle.  
 Could you please thread the needle for me?'  
 and she's like, 'Oh yeah as sweet as...that's fine'  
 and so like they thread the needle for me  
 or if Miss Graham's not there  
 I say, 'Look I can't actually read this off the board'  
 and they go, 'Oh well if you go closer'  
 and I say, 'Oh nah! It's not going to help.  
 Could you just please write it out for me?'  
 and they write it in their book  
 and that night I bring it home.  
 I write it out.  
 Sometimes if Miss Graham's not there  
 Lisa's great.  
 Sometimes she knows that I'm struggling  
 'cos she's got like a sight problem as well  
 but it's not as bad as mine  
 but like she still wears glasses and that  
 and if she sees that I'm struggling  
 she like goes, 'Oh Gemma, you should put your glasses on'  
 and I'm like, 'Oh they don't help!'  
 because sometimes they just forget that  
 because I'm not compulsing (sic).  
 I'm not wearing them every single day...  
 I don't really need...

*I just got stick every day*

Day to day...it's not really...  
 Oh third form it was sort of like a big thing like,  
 'Oh Gemma, Gemma' type thing like,  
 'Oh Gemma needs a helper lady!'  
 'Gemma needs her little helper lady!'  
 and it's like, 'Yes I need a helper lady!  
 Congratulations for spotting this...cool!'  
 and it's like oh..  
 just stupid little dumb things

really got to me.

Yeah it was just one...  
 It was one person - Glen  
 and he still does it now  
 and 'Get over it!'  
 He was in my class in third form  
 and stuff like that ..  
 He thinks he's such a bigwig  
 and it's like 'Whatever!'  
 Get over yourself!  
 You suck!

The other students...  
 like a couple of them are sort of like that  
 but then they've sort of like got over it  
 like the Chloes and the Zaras and the Stuarts.  
 It was just sort of like those main five basically  
 ...basically there was five.  
 All of them were in my class...all of them.  
 And I just got stick every day.  
 Like it got so bad  
 that I actually went to the dean  
 and I said to her,  
 'Look you know...I'm....  
 These people are really giving me stick.  
 What shall I do?'  
 And she had a meeting and Chloe walked in.  
 And Chloe was like, 'I didn't do that!'  
 And I was like, 'Sure...let's just lie!'  
 And so yeah it was like she just lied her way through it.  
 And then yeah I like went to the counsellor  
 and said to him and then I said, 'Oh...'  
 then basically I just got over it.

Third, fourth, right basically till fifth form  
 'till like Chloe, Stuart, and Zara all left school  
 at like fourth and fifth form...so... 'cool,  
 let's leave school. Go get pregnant.'  
 And Glen...  
 like's the only one who's sort of like stuck through...  
 Yeah...whatever.  
 He wants to be an army person.

Good luck to him!

***Glen has changed now***

but he's just a bigger evil person...  
 like he doesn't sort of talk about it now  
 like I don't talk to him.  
 He doesn't talk to me...and that's it!  
 Oh he's just a dick!  
 He's a macho person  
 and he thinks he's so great.  
 I don't like him at all.  
 It doesn't like really hurt me.  
 It just annoys me  
 just like all the time  
 'cos he's constantly like picks on me and stuff.  
 There was one day out of this year  
 he said something nice to me  
 and I was like, 'Whoa! Did you just talk to me?  
 Like a person?'  
 I was like, 'Whoa! That's crazy!'  
 Yeah he thinks he's something really special  
 and he's not!  
 He's a loser!

***A good friend?***

You have to trust them.  
 They're like yeah, trust, honesty, reliability.  
 Definitely they're always there.  
 Always, always there.  
 They don't bitch about you!  
 And they're not sort of like,  
 'Oh God her!' kind of thing!  
 They're not nasty.  
 They can take a joke  
 and you can take a joke with them  
 and you know when it's a joke!  
 Yep I always think I'm a good friend.  
 My friend's just gone through a crisis  
 Where two guys asked her to the ball  
 We'd had a chat  
 and I said,  
 'At the end of the day

It's your choice!  
And she's like, 'Oh thank-you Gemma.  
You've been so good to me.  
You've been so nice.  
You've been such a good friend'.  
And I was like, 'Yimmee!'  
And so I was really stoked about that.

### *Friends are good*

Friendships are important I think.  
I always say friends  
are the most important things in the world  
apart from family like...  
It will always be family and friends.  
It's really hard to put like...  
It's really hard for me to find friends  
so to me  
I think friends are the most important things in the world.  
I ring my friends every single day  
to say 'Hi' to them.  
Friends are like always important.  
Every weekend without a coconut  
I would go out with my friends.  
Just like go out anywhere with them.  
Just to be with them.  
'Cos yeah I think they're important.

## Chapter Seven: My Narrative Response to Gemma's Stories

Gemma, thank you for the hours we spent together as you enthusiastically and loquaciously shared your experiences at high school with me. You and your parents welcomed me into your home and our sessions were friendly, relaxed, and comfortable.

The threads running through your stories tell of how you didn't want to go to Jade High School and of how your intermediate school friends went to another school so you had to forge new friendships. This was a difficult time for you as you "shopped around" the groups trying to fit in and establish friendships. Later you had romantic friendships with boys and eventually became part of a crowd with some close friends.

All stories are retrospective: I met you in Year 13 and so your stories of the earlier years are constructed through reflection on a five year period from a relatively more mature perspective, than if, for example, I had interviewed you in Years 9 and 10 and recorded your feelings about the events you describe that would have temporally been closer to you. In this way you have smoothed the narrative by filtering out some experiences, which in hindsight are, painful, and exaggerating some events because they stand out over time as you selected, reconstructed, and interpreted your memories (Eckert, 1989). However, despite this smoothing, your reflections in Year 13 and the year you left school have been analytical and I have found it interesting to place my interpretation next to yours as I undertook a narrative analysis, particularly about your need to "fit in" and how you went about this. Similarly, my research narrative is also retrospective as I respond to and interpret "the significance of events that have occurred on the basis of the outcome that has followed" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 21). Listening to your stories that encompass five years' experience at Jade High School has provided me with a breadth and depth of observation and reflection, where continuities and

discontinuities of threads and patterns provide a wealth of data for analysis and interpretation. Your stories are complemented here in my response, with the stories of your parents and sister, the principal, teachers, and teacher aides providing a multi-faceted perspective.

In this chapter I present the dominant threads in your stories of a young woman with vision impairment, and place these within the context of adolescence and adolescent girls' friendship on the in-school-landscape of a co-educational New Zealand high school, and the out-of-school landscapes of social activities and family dynamics.

### *Going to High School: I didn't want to go to that school*

Although Jade High School was your neighbourhood coeducational high school, and the intermediate you attended contributed to this high school, you and your parents, Kate and James, applied to enrol you at a single sex state secondary school (Sheppard Girls' High School) about ten kilometres from your home. This school had an excellent reputation, was graded Decile 8, and because of its popularity had instigated an enrolment scheme. This means that applicants from beyond the school's residential zone enter a ballot where names of successful students are drawn to fill available places: your father's comment, "It is unlikely it would be like that but that's what they say" (James, 07/03) demonstrated his doubts about the fairness of the ballot system. Apart from the perceived advantages of going to a popular high decile school, (he said, "We thought it was the better high school to start with" (James, 07/03)), your parents justified this decision from a safety point of view. Although Sheppard Girls' High was some distance from your home, you would have been picked up by the school bus without having to cross any roads. To go to Jade High you had to cross two very busy roads. You were not successful in the ballot and so enrolled at Jade High although your

friend Katrina was successful. The safety issues were not included in your application and you and your parents were bitter that you had not been accepted. Your mother reflected:

I couldn't talk about it for a long time because every time I thought about it, it made me really upset because I think she missed on a really good opportunity so we decided that when our youngest one wanted to go to a high school we did things differently and if I'd known what I know now I would have done it for Gemma...and that was writing a letter of why I wanted to go to Sheppard Girls' High School and that was what our youngest did and she got a letter back. Alison said, 'Bugger this! I'm not going to Jade High. I'm not going to that stupid school full of Māoris.' (10/04)

So throughout your time at Jade, there was a feeling in your home that the school was not good enough, but you had to go there every day and make the best of it. Your stories also reflected the difficulties you had in being accepted by groups/crowds. Three years later when Alison was accepted at Sheppard, your mother said, "Gemma was gutted but she was really pleased for Alison. Gemma had the same feeling [as Alison] about Jade. Gemma didn't like Jade at all. You know, Jade sucked as far as she was concerned...right through to the end" (10/04). Your teacher aide was also aware that your parents wanted you to go to Sheppard Girls':

She wasn't accepted and it's been made known to me several times in front of Gemma and Gemma knows this, that this school is not good enough...you know that it's a rough school...it's not a good school and so when Alison her sister...came time for her to go to high school and she got in there it's been rave, rave, rave about Girls' High. Gemma says she's too dumb to go to Girls' High. She was always looking forward to having her little sister come to the school and when she got accepted at Sheppard, Gemma was happy for her... a sort of dream had disappeared and she took that quite hard. (09/03)

When I talked to you after you had left school, you said that you were pleased in the end that you went to Jade High because of some of the teachers and some of the opportunities you had in fashion: "You wouldn't get as much

attention as Miss Spencer [fabric teacher] gave us...so yeah...a little school's good" (08/04). This more positive attitude also reflected your happiness at school in the last two years when you had gained social success by being accepted into a crowd, and made some close friends.

### *Trying to fit in: Shopping around*

Gemma, the feelings in your home about Jade High coloured your feelings as you began high school: to you and your family, it was second best. Your friend Katrina went to Sheppard Girls' and you lost contact with her. When you left school you said, "I see her all the time" and you are "really good friends" however, you did not have her phone number and you said that you had had only met in the street by chance and had stopped for a chat. Another time you said that you didn't have a special friend at intermediate: "Probably no. We were just like a 'go around' group."

*Looking for a crowd like me.* Being part of a group or crowd is important for adolescents (Bagwell, 2004) and your stories showed that you wanted to be part of a group because it would enable you to fit in and help you cope with a new school structure in a sea of unfamiliar faces (Brown, 1990). It would also signal to others that you were accepted and like the others.

Although you knew a few students from intermediate school, you did not have friends. Your mother knew this had been a difficult time for you:

Terribly, horribly and she lost a lot of friends. Practically all her friends that she had at intermediate all went to Sheppard Girls' and they never kept in contact with her and when they saw her in the street they would just ignore her and that was really sad for her because I think that's when she was quite vulnerable for friends and she sort of like...just if somebody sort of wanted to be my friend, oh yep she'll be my friend, you know, and it was the wrong choice. (10/04)

Gemma, you remember being excited about making a friend, Sally, on

the first day: you approached her and you started hanging round together until she left school, and although this was not a Best Friend relationship, you felt successful socially, and initially secure, because you had made this friendship.

The early high school years were a time in your life when you were seeking an identity – who am I? Belonging to a group gives you an identity and this thread in your stories motivated me to reread Erikson's (1968) classic theory in order to contextualise your experience in adolescent psycho-social theory. This time in your life parallels Erikson's stage of identity versus role confusion with your primary task at this age to develop an identity. Parker and Gottman (1989) confirm that "Who am I?" is the underlying theme for adolescent friendship and this is worked out in discussion with friends. So Years 9, 10, and 11 saw you jumping from group to group in a pattern of inclusion/exclusion, as you searched for "a crowd like me" (08/04). Your love of shopping for clothes provided a good analogy of this process: "Shopping around...it's like going into one store and then go into another...I think I was just like looking for a crowd like me" (08/04). So like clothes shopping, you "tried on" different groups but the "fit" was never right. On reflection, and with maturity, you could see this as a changing and transition time where everyone was trying out new things like smoking and wagging school. In response to these times you were happy to "be a sheep" and try new things if it meant acceptance by a group. Your parents tried to support you in this and invited group members to a birthday party, at your request, however your mother was horrified at the behaviour of the girls and warned you about making wrong choices:

We tried to tell her, her friends were not of good quality...your friends are false...she didn't choose very well, her friends...we just knew that they were just like deadbeats...you knew that they weren't really her friends... (Kate, 10/04)

Your mother felt that the girls “used you” but in a way you were also using them to provide you with security and an identity. Her comments must have been confusing for you because you just wanted to be accepted, by any group, so you would have someone to hang out with at school and so you would not be alone at interval and lunchtime and have someone to ring up and chat to. The comments characterise your moving away from parental norms as you began to seek the norms of a different group membership (Eckert, 1989). So, you “shopped around.” Your teacher aide observed, “She likes to be a social butterfly” (09/03) but I think this perception is superficial and that you were desperately looking for an identity, status, and acceptance as you alighted on one group after another.

*Bad crowd...nutty crowd...cool crowd.* Groups and crowds are part of the adolescent peer culture; some groups have more status than others, some are more friendly and some are more hostile (Brown & Theobald, 1998). The stories you told about the different groups conflicted with literature I read about cliques, groups, and crowds. Some researchers (e.g. Berndt, 1982; Brown, 1989; Dunphy, 1963) differentiate between these terms: a clique being a small group, and a crowd being a larger grouping of cliques and/or dyads. You used the terms groups and crowds synonymously and more loosely, supporting Brown and Klute’s (2003) view of the complex and dynamic nature of adolescent peer relationships with “multiple relationships operating on multiple levels” (p. 343). However, you did recognise that the groups/crowds could be distinguished from each other, for example, the “bad crowd...the totally nutty crowd; the Māori crowd...the real cool crowd...the different crowd...the school crowd...the band geek crowd.”

As I read the literature I found a lot of different terms for these adolescent crowds. In New Zealand research, Nash and Harker (1998, p. 102) identified goodygoods, tryers, dropouts, and troublemakers as general terms for some groupings, with some youth sub-cultural groups called Homies,

Skinheads, and Metallers. North American research, for example, Eckert (1989) reports the polarised Jocks and Burnouts, groupings that reflect the acceptance or rejection of specific values and interests, and in some schools groups can be differentiated on the basis of ethnicity and socio economic status. Australian researcher Nilan (1992) describes the Originals, the Kazzies, and the DBTs who differ on style of dress and ethnic and socio-economic factors. The groupings that you described included similar differentiating characteristics, but did not describe such widely polarised socio-economic divisions, despite some perceptions of your peers of your own socio-economic status. I return to this idea later.

Because each crowd was different you became a chameleon and acted differently to be able to blend into them, however, it was the “in” group, the “really cool” group that you wanted to be part of. Their lifestyle resonated with your “ideal” self. You kept trying to be part of that group and your teacher aide, Mrs Graham remembered this time as a very unhappy one. She said,

In Year 9, it was a real struggle ‘cos she hadn’t found her niche. She used to cry and get really upset...they were quite blatant with her you know and said to her, ‘Look we don’t want you Gemma! We don’t want you.’ And that’s when she got really upset. But otherwise while they were just maybe sitting in a group she’d just sit over here so she looked part of the group but quite wasn’t...she could hear what they were talking about all the time so she sort of knew a bit what was happening. (09/03)

By sitting near them Gemma, you could convince yourself that you were part of the group and to others it might have appeared as if you were part of the group. Mrs Graham reflected on your resilience:

She’s got such a marvellous...she can forget it the next day and go back and try and be friends with them again the next day...she kept doing...it didn’t faze her...she just still kept on hanging in there. (09/03)

Gemma, seeking the status of the “in” crowd resonates with Nilan’s (1991, 1992) Australian research into adolescent friendship networks. She found that girls’ groups are hierarchical, according to style of clothes, socio economic area, and ethnicity, through a process of inclusion and exclusion that maintains orderliness in their social world. Brown (1990) identified some students as “hanger-ons” and “wannabes”, and Nilan (1992) talked about “tryhards” in groups as those who have to make an effort to achieve the style of the group, and I saw these in your reflective story: “I was probably trying too hard. You know hard out like ‘let’s be cool’”, but when you were rejected you thought the girls were “sour” or “snobby.”

However, Gemma you did have boundaries that you were not prepared to step over. You described Rochelle as turning “gothicy” and “evil”: she became too different for you to remain friends with her so although you may have been going against parental norms in some of the crowds you tried to be part of, there were some factors that did not sit well with your developing identity. Another one of these factors was smoking which transgressed your norms although you “tried them on.” You could not have been part of the “band” group because you did not have the skills, so although you gave the impression of trying all the crowds, just as in a shopping expedition, you rejected some of the crowds [goods on sale] and didn’t even try them on because you could see they wouldn’t suit or “fit” you. This was part of the process of developing and establishing your own identity.

*The whole eyesight thing.* Gemma you became part of several groups for a short time and although your stories gave me the impression that *you* decided not to be part of the groups, rather than a process of exclusion, you felt that you were not accepted by some groups because of your disability, what you called, “the whole eyesight thing” (08/04). You also pointed out that, “some people don’t actually know about my sight” (07/03). Mrs

Graham's view was that the issue was "more personality I think" (Teacher aide, 09/03) and this was reiterated by another teacher: "She can be quite outspoken...speaks before she thinks...when she's nervous, says thing she really shouldn't. It is social skills..." (Teacher, 11/03).

And indeed later, in your last interview, you yourself recognised this and reflected that, "It wasn't completely about the eyesight...part of it was...not the whole thing but some of it" and tried to explain:

When you're third formers [Year 9] you sort of pick things out of people...it's like, 'Oh look at her! She's wearing her hat backward. She's lame!' kind of thing, you know...it's like third formers are nasty. Kids are nasty!

In another way your disability *did* affect your friendships in the reduced opportunities you had to interact on the out-of school landscape. Because of the vision impairment your parents were naturally concerned for your safety and were very protective, so when your peers were going to parties, you were usually not allowed to go. Relationships in adolescence are established on the basis of status and social skills developed through earlier relationships in childhood and pre-adolescence (Brown & Klute, 2003) and so your reduced interaction, because of the safety issues, meant you spent more time with your family than with friends. This influenced your opportunities to develop and practise social skills with peers: you learn to be a friend by being a friend. Your dad recognised that these safety issues were a factor in inhibiting the formation of friendships: he thought, "They were a hold-up for her and quite a big problem really in terms of allowing her to..." (07/03) and although you were encouraged to go to Girl Guides, you did not have many friends come to your home. He recounted:

She didn't have a close companion type like a real close friend buddy which was always a bit of a problem because she couldn't, and we wouldn't allow her to, do the things that the normal kids do i.e. jumping on your bike and riding to Simson Park and seeing the rugby

play or riding over to where the action was. She couldn't be with them because she couldn't ride a bike and we couldn't rely on her friends to be there and be her eyes for her...so no really close friends. (James, 07/03)

These concerns for your safety were not ill-founded: one day you were hit by a truck as you crossed the road, and so your parents would sometimes drop you off at school, however, this was perceived by students as being "spoilt." Again, this exacerbated the perception of difference, not because of your vision impairment but being treated in a way that was different to your peers -they were not taken to school. Getting out of a BMW would also have made you look different.

*'Cos I sort of like I felt different sometimes.* As well as reduced opportunities on the out-of-school landscape, I identified some factors that highlighted your disability on the in-school landscape, thus emphasising your differences to your peers who were at the age of stigmatising difference, as you described above, and trying earnestly to be like everybody else:

She pretends she can still read it...because she pretends, the teachers aren't really aware of what she can't see...they forget...they [the teachers haven't accommodated the vision disability] because Gemma just blends in so it hasn't been a problem...Gemma just doesn't want to be different. (Teacher aide, 09/03)

Alongside these feelings of yours Gemma, there were some practices that created a context on the in-school landscape for your stories of friendships and social interactions in class, which emphasised your "difference" as a way of addressing your academic needs, with implications on the out-of-class landscape. The above comment by your teacher aide illustrated how you tried hard to be like the other students and possibly why the academic side of school became less important as you got older, and as you fell behind your peers academically. The presence of a teacher aide

interferes with peer relationships as it presents physical and symbolic barriers (Giangreco et al., 1997)

Practices such as withdrawal to the Student Support Centre for one or two subject lines each year in Years 9, 10, 11, and for a “catch- up” period in the senior school, caused you to feel stigmatised and call the centre “Cabbage.” The teacher aide tried to minimise the stigma by including a couple of other students in the remedial maths instruction. Having a teacher aide for most of the day and being seated with her at the front of the room even though you couldn’t see the board, kept you separate from your peers in class. You had the same teacher aide for the last five years and became increasingly dependent on her to the extent she would carry paper and pens because you usually forgot them. You described this relationship, “She’s like a mum!” And you confided in her, and would ring her at home, but these activities might be perceived as you not being an independent person and able to be part of peer relationships. From my observations she became one of the crowd in class and took part in your group conversations, as a member of the crowd: she told me:

I’m dreading it! [When Gemma leaves]. You know I just haven’t got to know Gemma, I’ve got to know everybody in the group so it’s like losing the whole group...I hear all these bits and pieces...they’ve got so used to me they forget that I’m there...they’ve obviously become comfortable with me...I’ve got a good rapport with them...it’s good. (09/03)

In English you were the only Year 13 student in a Year 11 class and the teacher remarked that you and Mrs Graham had created “your own little world” with rare interaction with the other students. He occasionally created groups and found that you worked well in a group and interacted freely, although sometimes Mrs Graham suggested that she should work just with you (“Why don’t we just sit here and work on it”) rather than you working in a group, demonstrating little evidence of fading support and encouraging you

to interact with other people (Giangreco et al., 1997). This meant that your opportunities to mix with the other students were minimised and her hovering over you created the perception of neediness and lack of independence; again emphasising your “difference.” The presence of your female teacher aide contributes to the concept of the feminisation of disability that I present and discuss in Chapter Twelve.

Because you wore mufti, you were visibly different in the class of students in uniform. In this class, I observed you speaking with one boy seated near you but otherwise there were no other students near you and there was no interaction. In contrast, in Food and Nutrition and Fabric Technology, classes where you were with your group, there was a great deal of chatter and social interaction but little focus on academic learning. In Food and Nutrition, your teacher aide stood away from you at the table but wandered past and kept trying to refocus you on the task. In Fabric Technology, Mrs Graham sat with you, tried to focus you, and as well as being part of the group interaction she was a source of erasers and pencils for the other students too.

Mrs Graham was an untrained teacher aide and in the first three years at school seemed to take an increasing responsibility for your learning in the Student Support Centre. This appears to be common in many schools as the least trained adults work with students who have complex learning problems (Giangreco, Broer, & Edelman, 1999). There existed a tension between teachers who felt your secondary education had been a success, and those who reported that there were huge gaps in your learning and that your learning had not been well managed so you were leaving school without basic skills because there wasn't the knowledge on how to meet your academic needs:

I think people don't know how to work with Gemma. I don't think anyone's ever been told how to teach her, exactly what her needs are

and exactly how to cope with her and as a result she's become something peripheral and the assumption has always been that Mrs Graham's doing the job...and it's taken me a long time to realise that it's not actually happening...you see them as their own little world and in the end people have just let her come and go as she pleases because it's easier to do that then try and tackle her and try and figure out where she is...the background knowledge isn't there and it's easier to just sort of let her come and let her go...too hard basket basically! They think Mrs Graham's got the work so we'll get on with this. (Teacher, 11/03)

These comments reflected Giangreco et al.'s (1999) findings that because of the teacher aide doing a lot of the teaching, teachers became less engaged with the student. The teacher's comments also reminded me of Roberta Schnorr's (1990) research in a first grade classroom, that she entitled "Peter? He comes and goes..." reflecting the frame "the Guest" (Meyer et al., 1998) - when the teacher welcomed her at first but "overstayed her welcome" when it was found she working at a Year 10 level and did not have the background knowledge for all the NCEA Level 1 standards.

In contrast, there were those who felt your time at Jade High was a success and that you had become a vivacious, confident, out-going, young woman; as well as the teacher who didn't measure your success in academic terms and concluded: "Well she's just not academic and there's lots like her!" (Teacher, 10/03). I place all these comments alongside the comments by the principal, "We don't have a written policy on inclusion. We have a range of policies on what we aim to do for young people and those are written with no exclusion" with a commitment to "caring" and "individual pathways" (10/03), and "a strong culture of inclusion" (2004 School Prospectus). Ironically, these statements did not reflect the reality for you Gemma and highlighted the concerns some of the teachers had about your academic progress. In Chapter Twelve I discuss curriculum issues and the inclusive curriculum and how

these impact on the inclusion of all students, affecting their academic and their social outcomes.

*I got stick every day.* So, on this in-school landscape some student perceptions *were* related to your disability and you told stories of bullying. This began in Year 9 when you were trying hard to be like everyone else and make friends and gain acceptance, so it undermined your confidence and highlighted your differences that you were trying to hide. Mrs Graham observed, “Gemma just doesn’t want to be different” (Teacher aide, 10/03). Your dean recalled:

In those early days too I can still see Gemma with her paper right up to her eyes because she was refusing to wear her glasses at that stage...her main focus for the year was to hide her disability.” (Dean, 11/04)

Although your impairment is not noticeable, and your father noted, “She doesn’t give any indication that she is partially sighted” (James, 07/03), having a teacher aide in every class made your disability visible, “and it did make her a little bit different from most of the others (Teacher, 10/03).

The New Zealand research of MacArthur and Gaffney (2001) identified two factors that contributed to you being bullied: isolation with your teacher aide that emphasised your “difference” and lack of friendships – these factors put you doubly at-risk of being a victim. One boy in particular, Glen, gave you a hard time and mocked you for having a teacher aide, who reported that he said, “All retards or people with disabilities... should be put down at birth’ and it was comments like that the whole time through school” (Teacher aide, 09/03). Although she said that she thought a lot of this went over your head, I am not so sure that it did. You went to see the dean about the teasing and when the students denied it you went to the school counsellor to find ways of handling it and although you learned to ignore it so you could cope, you

remained bitter about it, as indicated in your comment, "Glen Hawthorne! He's a loser!" (Gemma, 08/04)

However, on the out-of-school landscape your disability was more "normal." You selected stories to tell me that emphasised your sameness to your peers, but there were silences about the relationships with people with disabilities, and perhaps this was my fault because I did not specifically ask you about such experiences. Your parents' stories however, told of you going on the Spirit of Adventure voyage for students with disabilities; being part of activities such as ten pin bowling; going to McDonalds; visits to the snow; jet-boating; sports and athletics organised through the Foundation for the Blind in the area, and in other centres for courses related to life skills and the future; as well as visiting two boys with severe vision impairment in the South Island who you met through Foundation activities and to whom you emailed and text messaged. You felt comfortable with these boys and did not have to pretend you did not have vision impairment - you all had a lot in common.

*I was like...I'm not going to hang out with you.* Another factor that Nilan (1992) identified in influencing group acceptance is socio-economic status. This is a resonant thread woven through the stories I was told by you and others Gemma that may be a factor in you being excluded from groups. The higher Decile 8 of Sheppard Girls' was a draw card for you and your parents; there was a feeling that Jade High was not really good enough socially although you live in Pinehill, the suburb in which Jade High is situated. The school also drew from adjacent, lower socio-economic status suburbs. As I said at the beginning of this section, these views must have coloured your perception of the school and the perception others had of you. If you gave the impression that they were of lower social status than you, it would affect their perception and thus their acceptance of you. Although this thread does not come through strongly in *your* stories, it was noteworthy in the stories of your parents and teacher aide and helped to explain why

acceptance was difficult. Your teacher aide's comments were interesting. She said:

Gemma likes to be socially acceptable...likes to be 'above' in stature...likes to think she's socially above everyone else...but she still mixes with everyone else. Someone who goes out to good restaurants for meals...not just McDonalds...goes to cafes for coffee on a Sunday morning...does those sort of things...I would be surprised to see Gemma in a second-hand clothing shop and if she wore second-hand clothing it would probably be from someone who has got designer clothes. She tells people she lives in Totara Ridge [an upmarket residential area] and I'll say, 'Gemma you don't live in Totara Ridge, you live in Pinehill', and she'll say, 'Oh it's close enough!' She likes the idea of living in Totara Ridge as opposed to Pinehill and her friends live in Blacktown [a lower socio-economic area] and she'll say, 'Oh but they live in that area so it's all right for them.' And 'we drive a BMW!' you know, or 'we'll bring the Beamer...you don't want to go in your car. I'll get dad to take us in the Beamer!' You know, those little things like that.' (Teacher aide, 09/03)

You tried to impress others as you experimented with an "ideal" self - the self you would like to be (Harter, 1990). Gemma, your mother was aware of the perceptions at school that you were "rich bitch." She said:

I don't know why, whether that was because she bought her lunch on specific days or I don't know what but she got labelled 'rich bitch' and she didn't like that... because kids would come along and they'd see the type of home that we lived in [a comfortable, well maintained home] and maybe it was the car that we drove [a BMW], who knows, but she got labelled 'rich bitch' and that sort of stuck. (Kate, 10/04)

Thus this "status" factor affected you in converse ways. You were perceived as being "above" the others, thus having higher socio-economic status and were not accepted and regarded as "rich bitch" which may be also regarded as "snobby." However, when you tried to get into the "in" crowd which for *you* had high status, primarily because these students had after-school jobs and money, you were not accepted and you regarded members of this group as "sour" and "snobby." Being spoilt, showing off, and posing were "wrong" behaviours described by Davies (1982) that inhibit the forming of

friendships. Although her research was with younger children, these factors seemed to resonate with your stories and the stories of those close to you.

### *Old Friends: They've all left school now*

So alongside the struggle to be accepted by a group, you made some individual regular friends but these were not long lasting, for example, there was Rochelle who turned “evil” and joined a “really bad crowd of people” and Josh who used to go with you for lessons in the Student Learning Centre. Stacey was a friend from primary and intermediate schools who left in Year 9, and Jack and Sean who you were friends with until they left school in Year 11. These friends were for hanging round with at school and once they left school you did not see them anymore.

### *I got the whole boyfriend thing*

Although you had regular boy friends in the first years at high school, for example, Josh, Jack, and Sean, getting the “whole school boyfriend thing” marked a transition from the intermittent group forays to the acceptance in a crowd in Years 12 and 13. Hartup (1993) notes that romantic relationships become more common in mid-adolescence. Having a boyfriend was initially a status marker for you (Laursen, 1996) and made school a happier place to be. I need to retell some of your stories as I explore these friendships in the context of adolescence. You began, “I think I started to be friends with Simon and that made school better. Yeah having friends made it better.” However, two years on, you reflected that perhaps it wasn’t that “cool” as “boyfriends come and go” and are not as constant as girl friends, however, at the time it *was* “pretty cool!” The relationship with Simon began when Suzy acted as a go between and you went out together for about six and a half months, which you regarded as “quite long” and “like a big relationship!” When he finished the

relationship you were upset and reflected, “That was a stink day!” You asked Jo if you could hang out with them that day as you did not want to be without friends. This infers that your friendship with Simon was exclusive and you did not maintain girl friendships during this period. Mrs Graham remembered, “Her whole life was centred around him...phoning...at school holding hands...sitting together all the time” (Teacher aide, 09/03). This exclusivity echoes the early studies Griffiths (1995) cites, but her research found that girls worked hard to maintain their girlfriends alongside relationships with boys – perhaps your exclusivity reflected that during this time you did not have any strong relationships with girls and it signalled a break, a welcome respite, from trying to gain entrée to the girls’ groups.

The ending of your relationship with Simon was a turning point in your relationships and the beginning of acceptance into a large crowd, which increased your feelings of increased self-esteem. Mrs Graham observed, “She started picking up with the group she’s in now and yeah, the friends she hangs out with all the time now” (Teacher aide, 09/03). Although boyfriends were important in the Year 11, this diminished once you were in Year 13 and you said, “No, not like in seventh form [Year 13]. Everybody’s just matey and really chummy” reflecting more cross-age regular friends in Year 13 than in earlier years. McDonald and McKinney’s (1994) research found that girls in the senior school, who had boyfriends in the past but no longer had one, had higher self-esteem than girls who had past boyfriends and still had one. Your stories indicate this higher self-esteem as you gained the marker of acceptance.

### ***My Group: Like they’re my people***

Gemma, you told me how you became part of this group, for which you did not have a name and happily described:

It turned out...I started hanging out with the group because Jo and I were in the same form class together and Simon and I had just broken up and I said to Jo, 'Oh look, can I hang out with you guys today?' She was like, 'Oh sure come on!' and so that's...I just started hanging out with them. (08/04)

Although you did report later that Lisa was surprised that you came into the group and stayed, "When you first came into the group I just thought like...oh my God! What's Gemma doing? Like she'll just hang round us for a couple of days." Perhaps seeing you move from group to group since you began high school influenced their perception.

This new crowd was made up of girls you knew from intermediate, although apart from Lisa in an out of school activity, you didn't hang out with them. When you told me about this group you were very happy, excited, and bubbling over as you described the girls and what you enjoyed about them. Although, as I noted in a previous section you sometimes gave the impression of being "above them", the girls were caring and accepting of you demonstrating a moral obligation (Nilan, 1991). Your excitement reflected your thrill at being accepted by these girls and that you were now in a group relationship that had lasted two years. The group gave you what you had been looking for since you went to high school - it gave you security, status, and a sense of identity (Brown, 1989), and you said, "I was probably more myself."

There were seven of you in the group and within that group there were dyads, for example, Olivia and Andrea, Lisa and Jo, Anna and Diana. These girls had been in these dyads since intermediate and you were last into the group. Mrs Graham remarked, "Gemma really is an outsider coming into the group" (Teacher aide, 09/03). Although you thought you were closest to Olivia, your stories described a different pattern of close friendship and I will discuss this later. Your teacher aide described the group as loyal to each other and very caring, "They've learnt more about her eyesight and things. They're

protective of her to a certain extent" (09/03), and focused on similarities rather than differences.

The formation of your group was influenced by the school's structure where, as students, you were of similar age, socio-economic status, and in daily proximity, because you were together in Food and Nutrition, Fabric Technology, and also in the Year 13 common room (Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990). You were not part of the academic subgroup that was on track for university - "the Clares" - but had similar interests such as fashion, and vocational aspirations of tertiary study at the local polytech. Your teacher aide commented, "This was the only group left" (10/03). The group became the new "in" crowd/group for you although you also noted that you saw all the students in Year 13 as one big crowd who all just hung out together. Your own "group" was a discrete configuration of seven.

Although you said that you went shopping with your "in" group, and went to the movies, your teacher aide also noted that the group was very active socially in a wider crowd that included boys, but not girls, from other local high schools and some boys who have left school and are working, or who were studying at polytech, and she perceived, "They drink a lot and go to a lot of parties and nightclubs and suchlike" (Teacher aide, 09/03). Although you were permitted to go to the odd party, your parents would not let you go to nightclubs and all the parties, and you felt left out. The teacher aide thought that you did not go shopping or to the movies with the group.

### *Olivia is like my special friend*

In our first conversation Gemma, although you said you didn't class your friends, as "you're my best, best friend"; you described Olivia as a special friend. In the second interview, later in the same year, you said, "Olivia would be like my utter...like my most best friend in the world"

despite you also saying that Olivia and Andrea were a dyad within the group. The following year, when you had all left school you reiterated to me that Olivia was still your best friend, “Yeah! She’s always there. She’s definitely...yes, definitely! They’re all special but probably Livvy [Olivia] is the best!”

Researchers (e.g. Berndt, 1982; Epstein, 1989; Hartup, 1993) purport that the best friend relationship is a dyadic one, and is mutual and reciprocal; however, there was some ambivalence in how you described this best friend relationship. To you, being best friends did not have to be mutual or reciprocal, and although you described Olivia as your “best” friend, you knew that this was not mutual and confessed:

I wouldn’t tell her she’s my best friend because like I look at her as my special friend but I wouldn’t tell her because I know that she wouldn’t think that. She doesn’t look at me as a ‘best friend.’ She looks at me as a close, close friend, but Andrea is her ‘best’ friend.

Although I asked Olivia to participate in the research as a friend of Gemma’s, not a “best” friend, she declined. Similarly in Rosenblum’s (1998) research of the friendships of adolescents with visual impairments, she suggested that some nominated “best” friends did not participate because they did not believe they were “best” friends, although they may have been classmates for a long time.

Gemma, your mother believed you had more than one Best Friend and said, “Lisa sticks out...oh Olivia and Jo, they are probably her bestest friends” (Kate, 10/04) however, a teacher had a differing perspective:

Andrea, I would describe as her special friend...probably Andrea or Lisa probably. Not Olivia. She’s been coming to school with Lisa but Andrea would be the one. Andrea’s always the caring one who tends to support her. Andrea mothers her...looks after her...keeps an eye...makes sure that no-one sort of...yeah. (Teacher, 11/03)

Andrea had successfully combined the roles of “helping” in a good friend relationship. This teacher became close to your group because she taught you all for two classes in both Years 12 and 13 and observed the group relationship over that time on the in-class landscape and on trips and activities on the out-of-class landscape and was surprised when I suggested that you had described Olivia as her special friend:

Oh does she? Gemma would *like* to be Olivia’s special friend. I guess she pushes herself on Olivia frequently and I think wants to desperately to be like Olivia...wants to have the looks that Olivia’s got that come naturally. Wants to have the abilities she’s got because she’s got wonderful fashion ability. She admires her from an image because Olivia’s got a beautiful self-image and so Gemma admires that look I guess...from an attractive model perception, which is what Gemma is aiming for. (11/03)

This teacher thought that you perceived that Olivia had high status and an identity you coveted so you were happy to be part of her group. I believe that this shaped your description of a hierarchy or “levels” as you called it, within the group.

***These are the levels that I put them in***

I found your stories about the “levels” within your group very interesting and saw me searching for literature that showed a similar phenomenon. Some researchers (e.g. Dunphy, 1963; Nilan, 1992) report hierarchical status *between* groups, with groups having an internal structure of a leader and perhaps a social leader although these roles sometimes changed. Eder (1985), although she didn’t use the term “levels’ as you did to denote “status” suggested possible complex hierarchies within groups. Griffiths (1995) found that large groups did not have a clear hierarchy or leader, but small groups like yours did have a hierarchical structure and clear leaders. Similarly, Dunphy’s (1963) research also revealed that, “While many group

members could not accurately describe their own positions in the group structure, they could usually describe the positions of others with some precision" (p. 233) and that the lower you are in the group, the less likely you are to establish relative positions. Gemma, you used the term "levels" and described your position/level as "about the middle" and elaborated on the positions of the others, with Olivia as a "clear leader."

Olivia was put at the top of this hierarchy and one of your teachers agreed with this but observed this had not always been the case:

Olivia had a huge maturity thing happen last year [Gemma had told me that Olivia's parents had separated]. She went from being just a nobody in the group to being like the group leader where prior to the beginning of the year I would have described either Andrea or Lisa in that role. She's absolutely blossomed this year and accordingly a lot of where she blossomed was her work with Gemma [preparing her as a model for the Wearable Arts Competition]. (Teacher, 11/03)

Olivia put a lot of time in preparing you for this event Gemma and it was not surprising that you felt special with Olivia's attention, helping, and caring, and you interpreted this as being "best" friends. You idolised her and put her on a pedestal. She possessed "referent power" - a social power in that you admired her and wanted to be like her (Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990). Dunphy (1963) might link this to Freud's notion of an "ego-ideal" with strong identification ties to the "ideal" leader.

In your stories there was some fluidity in the levels between you and Olivia, in the group; "below" Olivia in the hierarchy you placed Andrea, followed by Lisa and Jo because "they are best mates" although in a later interview you placed Andrea after Jo, then Lisa and then you. You described yourself as having a "middle" place and always above Anna and Diana. Your stories showed that you did not like Diana, as you wondered whether or not to buy her a Christmas present. A teacher presented her view of this relationship:

They were a very, very mature group. The only one that I'd say wasn't was Diana and yet Diana is another one...like I see her working and she actually is but she is very similar to Gemma in that she's quite outspoken...does a bit of talking before she thinks...has a short fuse and I think they're very alike and so I wonder whether that's why they tended to clash more than the others. (Teacher, 11/03)

This was an interesting comment that contrasted with your description of Diana as "a quiet, insignificant person."

The structure and purpose of your friendship group resonated with research by Newcomb, Bukowski, and Bagwell (1999) who would describe the grouping as a clique or friendship network in that it was emotionally supportive and based on interests - "same movies, same clothes, same music"; personal characteristics; and was made up of pairs of mutual friends. A point they make, and which I could see had happened in your group and your stories of levels, was that not all the ties in the cliques "represent mutual friendship choices" (p. 79). Thus within groups, girls strongly uphold a norm and view members as being better or worse, more successful or less successful than themselves (Eder, 1985). This would describe your relationship with Diana in the group and the levels in which you placed the girls, to you, Olivia was the most successful so you put her at the top, and you felt you had more acceptance and were more successful than Diana.

The use of your terms "levels", and "underdog" and "quotas" to describe Diana, suggested to me that there was a covert sense of competition, and a limited number of places in the group, and that there might not be a place in the group for Anna and Diana in the future, although it was not clear if this was the opinion of the group or just yours, even though you did say "we." The metaphor, "underdog" infers that Diana had little status in the group and that this was the designated position of the girl who was last into the group and who remained the "baby" of the group until she "goes higher"; the inference being that there was always someone at the bottom and the baby

could not have the same rights as the “grown-ups” which was a status that you achieved early on. You interpreted this as the reason why you and Diana did not get on, and why you thought she was “snobby” - ironically a term usually used to describe students of higher status (Nilan, 1991).

So in this group Gemma, you found the acceptance and identity you were searching for and this gave you a positive view of your last year at Jade High. You reflected, “This whole year’s been a cool year. I think at every school, seventh form’s [Year 13] a cool year.” For you, having friends “are the most important things in the world” and outweighed other aspects of school:

The most important side of school is the social side but then academic had a part to play for it as well. I knew that at the end of the day school was going to set me up for life. I knew that but I still went to school just like to see my friends. Yeah!

By Year 13, you reported that all the groups “merged together” into “one big group” and that as “we’ve all grown up” you “all just get along” suggesting that most students, with maturity, were comfortable with their identities (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980) and able to mix with everyone despite any differences in values or interests. You all shared the honour of being the most senior students in the school with a common room and other privileges, and you were all preparing for your lives beyond school. The common room and known classmates still offered you the security of school and shared experiences before leaving to follow diverse paths, where many of you would find new friends. Many of the students in your earlier groups had already left school by Year 13.

When you left school you still saw the group socially, although researchers (e.g. Shrum & Cheek, 1987) suggest there is a de-grouping process as adolescents move towards adulthood and less structured networks of people, a process that had begun to happen in Year 13. You still phoned Olivia, Andrea, Lisa, and Jo, but not Anna or Diana. You thought that there

were probably not levels in the group any more, reflecting a possible de-grouping, but although Diana was still in the group, your comment, "I still think Diana is a little underdog" indicated you still placed her at a lower level, or status, than you. Your mother didn't think that anyone in the group stood out as being a close friend, "No, probably because they all stick together...Lisa's been round here...and they're happy to give her a ride or pick her up...they have gatherings" (Kate, 10/04).

### *The only frustration I think, is transport*

Gemma, as well as restrictions imposed by your parents, who were concerned for your safety in uncontrolled drinking environments, the restriction of not being able to drive because of your vision impairment, and therefore being dependent on parents or your friends with a full licence was a problem in becoming independent and doing what your peers were doing. You complained, "Yeah, transport's the only sucky thing" (08/03) because your friends went off at lunchtimes, or to after school activities like Pilates but you were reliant on your parents to get you to places. Sometimes your friends thought to take you along but not always, and only two of the group had full licences and could take passengers. The bus service into the city was infrequent from your suburb and this also made independent transport difficult so, "We have to drive her round a fair bit...it's not easy for her" (James, 07/03), although he did say that they encouraged you to take taxis. Because you did not have your own transport, you were often alone at home engaged in passive activities and lamented:

I absolutely hate being home by myself. I just wouldn't be home now if I had my driver's licence! I'd be anywhere! *I do* feel restricted especially on a day like today. I don't want to go anywhere because I have to go and catch a bus, put my brolley up, put my scarf on, put my winter woollies on just to go and catch a bus! It's stupid!

Gemma, if it's any consolation you are not alone in this dilemma! MacArthur and Gaffney's (2001) New Zealand research identified that transport is a problem in encouraging and maintaining friendships, and Bramley and van Kraayenoord (1993) in their Australian study of adolescent girls with disabilities, also found that parents were very protective and sometimes unwilling for their daughters to take risks, and that transport was a problem that often saw the girls involved in passive activities such as watching television, reading, listening to music, or being involved in family activities. Similarly, Sacks, Wolffe, and Tierney (1998) reported that students with visual impairment have less autonomy than their sighted peers because of travel difficulties and parental protection, and are involved in passive activities, and Rosenblum (2000) found that adolescents equated driving with independence and freedom from reliance on others. This was a rite of passage, and some of her participants with vision impairments echoed your feelings, "This year all my friends are starting to drive and that's really upsetting. I can't go anywhere" (Chuck, p. 437), and in a similar vein, "There's always going to be a little tiny bit of difference. You can't drive" (Esther, p. 437).

### ***Recurring Patterns: I sit by myself at Tech***

In your last interview Gemma, a similar pattern to your early years at Jade High emerged as you tried to make friends in the course group. The girls were one or two years younger than you but you said there was "heaps and heaps of cattiness in the group" and that you were ostracised because there was a perception that you were "rich" and "always gets what she wants" (these comments resonated with the perceptions of some of your school-mates that I discussed earlier) so you didn't speak to them and sat by yourself in class and when you had lunch. You bemoaned, "Oh it sucks...and like I go to Tech some days and I go, 'Oh my God! I want Olivia! Oh my God! I want

Andrea!" You enjoyed the closeness of that group and missed seeing the girls everyday, as you did at school.

***On Reflection: Oh I'm all right!***

As I said earlier Gemma, your reflections on five high school years provided a breadth and depth to your experiences. In the last interview, when you had left school, you reflected on the turbulent times of your first three years at Jade High as you sought an identity in different groups, experimenting with different roles as you were resolving the identity-versus-role-confusion conflict of adolescence (Erikson, 1968). This trying out of different crowds and identities and finding a crowd in which you were happy fits with Marcia's (1980) status of "identity achievement" and you have emerged with a relatively firm identity. Your stories of when you left school and began to fulfil your dream of being a hairdresser told of how you had come on a journey and now felt comfortable with who you are and you reflected:

At the time it was like, 'Oh I don't have any friends! I'm a loner!' but looking back at it now, it's like, 'Oh you're ok Gemma! You're fine! I've turned out well!' but like yeah, but at those times it's like, 'Oh it's not fair! Nobody likes me! I want my mum!' kind of thing but now it's like, 'Oh you're ok! I'm all right! I've still got friends.' (08/04)

You began to negotiate the beginning of Erikson's next stage of psychosocial development of intimacy vs. isolation, in your new intimate romantic relationship with Tim, which gave you the security and acceptance you were seeking. Your mother said, "Probably Tim's her best friend...Tim's her b-all and end-all...she and Tim have got this connection and they're committed and they've exchanged rings..." (Kate, 10/04)

### *Look out for that!*

After our last interview Gemma, you walked out with me to my car. I thanked you once again and you remarked that you hoped this research would make teachers realise what it is like for someone with a vision impairment to try and make friends at high school and make them aware “that kids with a disability might get picked on, and to look out for that.” Yes Gemma, teachers do have an important role in facilitating friendship and acting as a “bridge” by creating opportunities for peer interaction (West, Houghton, Taylor, & Ling, 2004, p. 26) and there is a wealth of research in the inclusive education field that supports this view and suggests ways this can happen (e.g. Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Foreman, 2005; Fraser, Moltzen, & Ryba, 2005; King-Sears, 1997; Thorburn, 1997) and more specifically for example, cooperative learning (e.g. Brown & Thomson, 2000; Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1993; Slavin, 1995) and the use of teachers and teacher aides who encourage natural support from peers (e.g. Giangreco et al., 1997).

Gemma, your stories provide a way for teachers to engage with the experience of students with a disability and to reflect on their own attitudes and pedagogy, so the suggestions from research can become a reality and a part of inclusive pedagogy in secondary school classrooms. Thank you for sharing your stories, not just with me, but with other teachers as well.

## Chapter Eight: Adam's Stories as Poems

### *The best school out!*

It has one of the two disabled units.  
 Boys' High doesn't have any...  
 and the other high school doesn't have any either.  
 I preferred Mansfield.  
 It's well looked after.

### *Going to High School: I heard stories*

and what they'd do to you.  
 It was so stupid!  
 It was like...Junior Beat-up Day...they beat you up!  
 No, but it was just a story.  
 No that's never happened.  
 Scary...I was nervous! That's about it.  
 I was nervous for three days  
 at the beginning of the year  
 'cos I thought it'd be like my old school  
 and you just get all these detentions.  
 Last year I got three...  
 for stupid things...  
 not getting a pencil.  
 Write lines!  
 And I can't write lines.  
 Yeah I was a little worried.  
 That could be why I got stressed.  
 I thought if I told somebody,  
 they wouldn't listen to me.  
 I was wrong.  
 The school's totally different.  
 I talked to them 'cos I was getting too stressed out.  
 I think it was just the start of high school...  
 the first time.  
 I get listened to more.  
 Everybody.  
 Yeah.  
 It feels good there...  
 good atmosphere ...

***Yes...I am part of the Taylor Block<sup>18</sup>***

No, not really.

I'm mainstream...mainly classes.

There's a room called 315 we call it.

It's just where the special needs people go  
for study and homework...

the mainstreamed.

***At intermediate I only had one friend...***

No, it wasn't BJ...some other friend.

The last year at intermediate I had no friends.

Well I did have a friend

but he decided to um...

not to be friends with me any more.

The first year I was hanging out with a really weird kid.

Weird is his middle name basically!

He thinks he's got this secret military base in his ceiling space!

He's one of those exaggerating sort of people.

Yep...he does it so much that he can get away with it.

I don't see him much...

He goes to Boys' High.

His name's Johnny but we call him Holmes.

***BJ and Karen: That's my main friends***

BJ in a wheelchair.

And Karen in a wheelchair.

She's one of my friends.

That's my main friends

but I've got lots of other ones.

I sit outside in the courtyard near the auditorium with their friends.

BJ's the only one that I knew from Intermediate.

The other ones I just met on the first day of school.

Karen went to Intermediate with me too.

Only BJ and Karen are in wheelchairs.

and Dan...

and they're about the only ones I know in wheelchairs

that are my age.

I see BJ out of school.

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<sup>18</sup> The Taylor Block is the name of special needs unit at Mansfield College.

***Karen: She's nice***

and doesn't like physio either.

She was at Intermediate with me  
and primary...one year at primary  
and at kindy.

They used to live down this street.

Karen lives down the other end of town.

She came to one of my birthday parties.

I was about four or something maybe...

mmmm...she's interesting!

Well...for a couple of years she didn't want to know about me.

It's funny that she wants to be my friend now.

At Intermediate she did not want to know me.

She changed her mind again.

I don't know!

Yeah...she's all right...yeah!

Somebody to be friends with.

That's about it.

I don't see Karen out of school.

I'm one of her friends,

her and the rest of her friends.

I get on well with her other friends,

except my other friends say, 'I want to go round with you today'

and I'll say, 'No I want to go round with someone else.'

My other friend BJ and Karen don't get along at all.

Her family doesn't go anywhere for holidays.

She stays at home.

I just don't like her family.

Well one thing...we both like cats.

I like cats.

She wanted the kittens...

the mother cat had kittens.

Gave them away.

Gave one to Karen's friend.

Karen wanted one.

Her parents can't let her have anything...she says.

Her parents aren't very nice to her, apparently.

I've heard that from adults as well.

Not very nice.

They've never had a pet...

even a fish they've never had!

Yeah... it's funny  
 'cos Karen's friend came to our house  
 to see the kittens  
 and I don't really have people do that...  
 come to my house.

You'll most likely get some other end of the stories.  
 It'll be interesting for you.  
 She can say things about me  
 'cos she's nice and stuff like that,  
 all the time to me.

### **BJ**

He's in a wheelchair too...  
 so I don't really care  
 I don't know!  
 I've been friends with him for ages happily.  
 He's a year older than I am.  
 We talk a lot.  
 That's about it.  
 He just talks to me  
 and I just talk to him  
 and yeah...  
 He's all right.  
 He says funny things  
 like he says to me, 'If someone punches me  
 I'll punch his lights out!'  
 That's his mentality.  
 Something like that.  
 It's really funny.

He likes Play Station  
 and that's about it.  
 I don't play it  
 but I still watch it.  
 He comes round here.  
 He lives in Rosston  
 so we can't go round there.  
 BJ comes to my house...sometimes.  
 Not very often.  
 Yeah...depends...it's usually at the weekend.  
 We go to the park.

Weekends...I don't know...  
 He's only come over once.  
 Went to the park.

His family's a bit weird!  
 He's got so many cousins...it's funny.  
 His family's just weird!  
 'Cos he's never always at his house.  
 He's always at his nana's.  
 It's just a bit weird!  
 He's got at least ten people in his house all the time.  
 Cousins.

BJ never makes it this far.  
 He's got a weird family!  
 No. I don't really want to go to his house.  
 Crazy people there!  
 In the back when he's on the phone  
 I can hear a dog bark  
 and a cat meowing  
 and a bird tweeting  
 and kids in the background yelling and screaming!  
 Oh no! Who wants to go there!  
 Yeah. I don't ring.  
 I don't really want to talk to him.  
 He's not very good company  
 like he forgets what he tells me  
 and then he'll start again  
 and, 'I already know that!'

***Ben is the only friend not in a wheelchair***

Ben and Karen's friend Fiona...  
 who does have people in her family in wheelchairs.  
 Yes. He is one of my friends.  
 I talk with everybody.

***I make most of my friends...yeah...***

from outside the class actually.  
 I've only got Karen and her friends and that.  
 I just meet them!  
 Fiona...she's helpful...  
 She's one of my friends too.

She gets my books out sometimes.

***Ben: He's got an anger problem.***

Can't control his anger

'cos people slam him into walls and stuff like that.

Yeah that's how come he's got an anger problem.

He gets angry when people do that...and hurt him

but he doesn't do anything about it

and I keep telling him to do something about it.

'Go and see a guidance counsellor or something like that.'

He has people slam him into walls

and he gets really angry because of that.

I think it's because they know he gets angry

so they go on doing it.

Make him angry.

Make him do something that he shouldn't do.

It's most likely because he's been teased.

I have no idea...I don't know.

He wears glasses but I don't think that's it.

I have no idea

and I haven't asked them why.

People say it and just do it.

I think they just bully him and he can't stand it

and gets wound up

and kicks people sometimes.

He lets his anger out on my wheel sometimes.

He just kicks it!

I don't care about my wheel.

It's only my wheel.

Nah! He doesn't kick me.

He just gets angry and doesn't know how to let it out.

I don't tease him and he doesn't get angry with me.

I think they just bully him

and he can't stand it

and gets wound up

and kicks people sometimes.

He is sometimes a good friend.

He talks to me.

Anything actually.

He's interested in most things.

He's sick most of the time

and his parents won't let him stay home  
 so he stays sick for ages.  
 I don't think that's fair.  
 He gets sick and it takes him ages to get better  
 'cos he's not getting looked after properly.

***I've got tons of friends***

Quite important.  
 Somebody who talks to me.  
 I look for people that are nice.  
 I get along with almost everybody.  
 Go round with my friends...  
 I've got lots and lots of friends.  
 I've got lots!  
 I think that's good.  
 Mmmm I've got tons of friends.  
 Yeah and I'm keeping my friends...Karen, Fiona and all that...  
 it's funny...  
 I keep friends.  
 It's best to keep friends..  
 'cos then you know they're gonna be your friends.

***Yes...like five!***

Five that actually say hello to me.  
 Out of 33!  
 I don't think it's that many.  
 I still have friends.  
 I don't care.

***Seating: Mainly the front, yes.***

Because the classes are different.  
 I sit at the front most of the other times.  
 I sit with Karen's friends.  
 She's got lots of them  
 and they're all my friends as well...  
 I think that's good.  
 I've got tons of friends!

***Nobody annoys us...***

Because there are too many of them.  
 Too many disabled people out  
 so they can't do it to one

'cos there's tons of others that can tell.  
 And the teacher aides are walking round the school as well  
 so they can't try anything.  
 One girl...Yvette...I know.  
 She just called me a few names  
 but it got sorted out fast.  
 Got sent to the dean's office she did.  
 We told the dean through a letter.  
 The teacher aide wrote a letter for me.  
 The dean got it and sorted her out  
 and now she's not actually annoying.  
 She's talking to me a little bit more now.  
 That's funny. She had to [apologise]  
 otherwise she would have been in more trouble.  
 Well she doesn't say rude things to me anymore.  
 She's about the only one.  
 The school's pretty good.

**2004**

***Yeah, friends have changed***

This year's not going so well.  
 Especially with friends.  
 It was better at school last year.  
 I think it will get better.  
 Well, they're taking a long time to get better!  
 Yes, I'm waiting for next year.  
 It's still not going well.  
 It's still not very, not going very well.  
 Yeah, friends have changed.  
 If they grow up  
 yeah I would be friends with them.  
 If they stopped being silly.  
 Well yes because they used to be so.  
 It was annoying  
 'cos they ... at least I had somebody to talk to...  
 I had something to do at lunchtime.  
 It was annoying 'cos Kylie...  
 she started off alright but got sick of me so.  
 Oh she might get better, I don't know.  
 I'll have to find out next year.  
 I might make some better friends.

Lonely? Not really.  
 Sometimes.  
 When Jim's not there,  
 but that's at the moment.  
 If I make some friends it doesn't really matter.  
 Yes, it's usually Ben and BJ.  
 I like to have them around.

***Karen: Yeah she's still my friend***

but her friends have decided to say goodbye  
 and be very mean to each other.  
 Yeah...they didn't want her anymore.  
 She's decided to make new friends.  
 So her old friends...  
 this girl  
 keeps swearing at me  
 and telling me to 'F...off!'  
 And stuff like that!  
 She's *very* nice!!  
 I don't think she likes wheelchair people.  
 It isn't Fiona.  
 It's that girl Kylie.  
 At least I know Karen's still my friend.  
 She'll still talk to me.  
 Yes, which is why Kylie tried to get her out in the corridor as well,  
 'cos she's 'nice.'  
 At least I've got some friends.  
 It was better when I was like round with Karen, Fiona,  
 and their friends  
 'cos they would stick up for us.  
 It was so funny  
 at the beginning of the year Term 1 and 2  
 me and Jim were with Karen and her friends,  
 which was pretty good.  
 He got along with them and they talked to him,  
 like, 'Look it's Adam's little brother!'  
 Karen's still a good friend...  
 she still is  
 and Fiona is still talking to her at form time  
 when Kylie's not there.  
 Oh, she's [Fiona] basically friends with Kylie,  
 trying to avoid Karen all the time.

Karen gave me a Christmas card  
 so that was pretty good.  
 Last year I got a present from Fiona and Karen  
 but that was just special  
 because that was when they were properly friends with me  
 but not anymore.

***Oh, my other friend BJ's still around***

and I've got some others.  
 It's changed a hell of a lot!  
 Oh, BJ's the same as he was last year.  
 Still thinking he wants to whack people.  
 [Is BJ a 'best friend'?]  
 Not really.  
 No. I'd rather be Ben's friend  
 but that's just him.  
 It's the way he is  
 so who cares?  
 Yes, except the problem is, is that he gives up.  
 Didn't do his exams this year  
 because he just gave up.  
 That's him,  
 he just gives up.  
 Not very good.  
 And he says, the reason he says that he's not doing it  
 is that he can't be bothered,  
 but I really know he's not trying hard enough.  
 He wouldn't have passed NCEA anyway  
 'cos well he only got two credits in the whole year.  
 If he tried a bit harder.  
 I think it's just because he's not very bright.  
 It's also 'cos his cousins have dropped out  
 so he's mostly thinking about what's the point?  
 It could be causing it  
 'cos he's not trying.

***Oh Ben: I'm still friends with him sort of***

Yeah...he's not in my class any more  
 which changes a lot of things.  
 I don't have any of my friends in my classes.  
 Not very good.

I've got someone I'll talk to but that's about it!  
 Oh Ben's got better.  
 He's a bit better this year than he was last year.  
 He's still around, yeah.  
 He's pretty good.  
 I still see him.  
 I'll see him next year as well  
 Yes, it's usually Ben and BJ.  
 I like to have them around.

***The bullying's got worse this year!***

Year 9s are crazy this year.  
 They're really crazy.  
 It's really crappy this year.  
 It's so stupid!  
 The Year 9s are even worse than we were last year.  
 They scream in the corridors!  
 They get yelled at all the time.  
 Lot noisier!  
 The students from Intermediate that used to bully us  
 have come with my brother  
 which means that I get bullied now too.  
 'Cos last year there was like three people  
 in the whole Year 9 group from Intermediate  
 so there wasn't many people  
 and they didn't do anything  
 because there wasn't enough of them.

***Some boy tried to tip me out of my wheelchair.***

Oh he came up behind me...  
 moved forward...  
 pushed my wheelchair forward  
 and then he ran away laughing.  
 Oh we just went and told.  
 Yeah, I got spat at!  
 He spat at us  
 going down the ramp.  
 Who wants to get a shower of spit?  
 They wanted to do it and decided to go [spitting motion].  
 It's not very nice!  
 And they got dealt with!  
 I didn't get bullied really much this year.

Not really much.  
 Except that incident  
 but that was because Jim was getting bullied as well.  
 But school's getting better.  
 It was better  
 when I was like round with Karen, Fiona, and their friends,  
 and the rest of them  
 'cos they would stick up for us.  
 It was so funny.

***It's this other girl Kylie***

She bossed everyone around.  
 Caused all the problems.  
 She still frowns at me.  
 She just stares.  
 She stares at me.  
 Really mean to me.  
 Go past her and she says, 'Ooh gross!  
 He's following me!'

At the beginning of the year  
 Kylie came along and told me to 'F... off!  
 A couple of times actually!  
 The rest of them apologised to me  
 but Kylie didn't.  
 No she's never...  
 so I just think she's got something against people in a wheelchair.  
 I've got fed up with it!  
 I let her have it!  
 Oh not much.  
 I wouldn't say anything...  
 I just glare at her...or just say, 'Look what you did!'  
 She made Karen lose her friends!  
 So she's got new friends...  
 and she said it was Kylie's fault.

She seems to keep trying to find me all the time.  
 I keep finding her just by driving round the school.  
 Yeah she's quite annoying to me!  
 Her friend told me she was getting annoyed  
 about us driving around...  
 Her friend said, 'Kylie said to say something!'

Really pathetic!  
 She must have something against wheelchairs.  
 And she can tell me to 'F... off!  
 Or glare at me  
 and I don't care!  
 I just ignore her!

Kylie - She so funny!  
 She's still staring at me in Maths class.  
 Oh she tried the 'nice talk' again,  
 but it's usually just her device to get rid of me.  
 She says, "Hello", and stuff  
 and that's so I don't say many things about her.  
 In my head, 'I know what you're doing!'  
 She's trying to be nice  
 and then she starts with the phrases  
 and being nice  
 and then she gets grumpy  
 then she starts swearing at me  
 and it's like...when we're around  
 they just embarrass themselves calling out.  
 It's slowly diminishing.  
 They've kicked someone else out of their group  
 because they don't like people that are 'nice.'  
 And their group are constantly swearing.  
 It's not very good!  
 They might grow up.  
 Karen's friends, they have arguments with Kylie and stuff.

### *Kylie's just trouble*

She acts...  
 if you like saw her in person,  
 she acts like little Miss Perfect.  
 Not gonna do anything,  
 teacher's there,  
 not gonna do anything.  
 It's really annoying.  
 Kylie's one of those mood swing things.  
 Swinging from happy to grumpy,  
 happy to grumpy.  
 I don't think I'd get along with Kylie.  
 Maybe her parents don't like disabled people either.

She's just copied them.  
 Yes, I don't think it's her  
 as much as she's just doing what her parents do probably.  
 By the sounds of it.

Fiona doesn't talk to me anymore.  
 Kylie's saying, 'Don't talk to him, he's an idiot!'  
 I get called 'idiot' and 'retard' and you name it.  
 Kylie thinks that!  
 Kylie's friends.  
 They're stupid!  
 I mean, I'm in extension Maths  
 and she knows that  
 and she knows I'm in Year 11 Science.  
 She knows that too.  
 She still thinks I'm an idiot!

Kylie the only day she was nice to me  
 was on my birthday,  
 and that was really funny.  
 She was only nice,  
 so only didn't say any bad word to me on that day.  
 After that it just went...  
 All got worse and worse.  
 It's so funny!  
 Oh, I just laugh at them.  
 They're just being stupid and childish.  
 Not much point listening to them  
 because they don't know what they're doing.  
 So who cares?  
 At least I know Karen's still my friend.  
 She'll still talk to me  
 'cos she's "nice."

***None of my friends are in any classes***

Because I've changed form class  
 which changed a lot of things too  
 like I'm not in the same class as Karen any more.  
 For anything.

It's only really in form time  
 I don't have anyone talking to me  
 because I'm at the back  
 and it's kind of... annoying.

*Science: I'm in a group yeah.*

Which is good.  
 At least they talk to me.  
 Yeah...they're Year 10s and a Year 11 as well.  
 The Year 11 students don't really pay much attention to us...  
 but at least they're not mean to us!  
 Nine. That's including me.  
 Science I'm sitting with people at a desk  
 which is really good.  
 Most of the ones in Science will help.  
 Or would.  
 Eventually they got the idea to get out of the road  
 so I could see.  
 It took them a while  
 but they got used to it.  
 Got used to me and started talking to them more,  
 which was a good thing.

Oh the Year 11s were pretty good.  
 They got used to us after a while.  
 Yes. I made friends with them.  
 They will talk to me sometimes.  
 They were good.  
 Ah, they would help me sometimes.  
 Didn't really see much of the Year 11s?  
 After a while - it was all right.  
 They used to have like really funny things they talked about in class.  
 At the end of the year the teacher said,  
 well ended saying, 'Well you can talk if you want! '  
 'Cos we were so quiet!

*Social studies...yes.*

I've got some other students  
 in there with me.  
 One's that are in my science class.

I made a friend with this girl  
 who agrees with me on lots of things  
 like how stupid Mr Chomley is!  
 Amy...yes, she sat beside me at the end of the year.  
 Mmm so she was all right.  
 She kept saying mean things about Mr Chomley  
 like, 'There he goes again not noticing you!'  
 If he was in a good mood  
 he would notice me.  
 If he was in a bad mood he wouldn't!  
 So he kept marking me absent  
 because I didn't exist!  
 Trying to ask Mr Chomley something  
 is like talking to a brick wall.  
 It's... you have to like say it repeatedly  
 before he'll listen to you.  
 That's with everybody else in the class.  
 They say, 'Mr Chomley, Mr Chomley.'  
 Yes...he will walk into me sometimes.  
 Not really absent-minded.  
*Mr Chomley. Oh my goodness!*  
 That teacher!  
 Don't like him!  
 He stood in the doorway once...  
 didn't know although I said, 'Excuse me!'  
 Didn't move so...  
 so all the students were around and said, 'Move Mr Chomley!  
 He wants to get in!'  
 He thinks I'm invisible...half the time!  
 The only time he talks to me  
 is when he notices me.  
 Sometimes he doesn't even know I'm in his class.  
 Hands out books!  
 Misses me!  
 It's really annoying!  
 It depends what mood he's in.  
 Sometimes when he's in a good mood he'll talk to me.  
 When he's in a bad mood  
 he doesn't even see me!  
 It's really funny!  
 He doesn't call me 'it' he calls me 'Adam' which is good!  
 It's better than 'it' and 'he.'

I read too many books at home about stuff like that.  
 So I knew too much  
 and I didn't quite finish all my assignments,  
 and he'd get really grumpy.  
 Parent teacher interviews,  
 he would continually moan at me  
 for not getting this done  
 and not getting that done.

***Sometimes they only listen to the teacher aide***

Mr Chomley's one of those.  
 You have to get the teacher aide to give pieces of paper to him  
 because he won't see you.  
 He'll look straight across the top of you  
 like you don't exist.  
 He'll talk to me sometimes.  
 Depends what mood he's in.

***English Teacher: She's not very good***

She's still a bit crazy.  
 She like, all of a sudden will notice me  
 and then not notice me  
 and then keep me in at lunchtime for no apparent reason!  
 Lunchtime detention,  
 I had one.  
 I had no idea why I had it.  
 I couldn't do the homework.  
 I couldn't finish it  
 so she punishes me for it.  
 It's like punishing you because you're in a wheelchair kind of thing.  
 Then she changes her mind  
 and decides to say, 'if anybody doesn't help me  
 they'll have to stay in at lunchtime!'  
 Threatening the class.  
 Helping me.  
 These kids are so scared  
 that if they didn't help me  
 the teacher would keep them in  
 so they had to!  
 She didn't have to do that.  
 That's what my teacher aide's for,  
 who is always ten minutes late after the period.

It's like waiting  
and waiting  
and waiting  
for the teacher aide to come.

***Some people just hate disabled people.***

Some teachers hate people in wheelchairs as well.  
Some teachers need to get a bit more helpful.  
Some teachers have been surprising.  
They got better after they got used to me.

***I'm not an 'it!'***

Only the reliever teachers...  
yeah how they'd not talk to my face.  
Some relieving teachers say, 'Does he do any work in here?'  
Like I say, 'Well I'm in the class but I don't do any work in here!'  
Stupid relieving teachers!  
They'll say to my teacher aide,  
'He' or 'Is 'it' doing the work or something?'  
It's terrible!!  
I'm not an 'it!'  
And 'I'm not a thing!'  
And I'm not a 'he!'  
Well I am a 'he' but...  
that's not my name!  
The stupid teacher doesn't understand  
and won't let you do anything!  
She talks so low like we're thick!  
We had her for two weeks  
and it's like every time it's the same thing.  
She'd go absolutely mad and scream at us every two seconds.  
If somebody said something she'd scream back to them  
so it was like, 'I don't like being in this class!'  
That was bad!

***I got an Award!***

A special one from the Principal!  
At the end of the year for Science.  
Oh boy you should have seen everybody's face!  
They were like, Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!  
It was a special award for Year 11 Science  
and it was special because I was in the Taylor Block

and no-one else in the disability block's ever got one.  
 So everybody was like, 'Oh my goodness how the heck did he get that?  
 He's in a wheelchair!  
 Supposed to be stupid!  
 You should have seen the look on their faces.  
 Like, how dare he get an award!  
 I just looked at them  
 and smiled at them.

***So that might actually change a few pupils' view of me***

So I might make some more friends now!  
 I'm not so stupid!  
 Show them I'm not a stupid idiot like people think.  
 Yeah, surprise a lot of people.

***Most people will talk to me***

Well, it's a nice place.  
 Nice feeling school.  
 It's quite yeah,  
 it's a nice school.  
 Most people will talk to me.  
 I had some random people stick up for me!  
 Don't really know them  
 They see me around.  
 I think school's getting better.  
 I don't know what's going to happen.  
 Maybe...the friends will get back together again.  
 They usually do.  
 They might after the holidays.  
 I don't know.  
 I'll have to find out.

***At home I watch TV***

Fiddle with the... PA system.  
 I made it myself...  
 wire it I mean.  
 That's about it.  
 Draw pictures.  
 Down the back  
 fiddling with the sound stuff.

***Weekends: Nothing really.***

Going to church is about the only thing.  
 My brother's friend came yesterday.  
 We go to the park.  
 It's not too far.

***Holidays: Go to Auckland***

On the 27th  
 We're staying with mum's friend from school I think.  
 Go shopping in the big town centre  
 that's being built...at Botany Downs.

We're supposed to go somewhere next holidays.  
 Taupo.  
 In a hotel this time  
 'cos the house we've stayed in has been sold  
 for a lot of money...  
 1.5 million.  
 Yeah...right on the lake.

Then I'm going to Dunedin in December.  
 I've been there when I was doing the...at the hospital bit.  
 We're going on holiday for 12 days  
 but not in Dunedin for 12 days.  
 We have to drive all the way.  
 Drive...to the ferry...on the ferry.  
 We're staying in Christchurch for five nights I think  
 and then we're heading to Dunedin for about that  
 and then back again.  
 We're just like going on holiday.

No...nah...no friends here in the holidays.  
 Friends come round.  
 Old friends from ages ago.  
 Jim has friends from Intermediate.  
 I don't really have...  
 BJ's the one that sometimes comes round.  
 We've got some other friends that we've known for years,  
 or Mum and Dad have now.  
 And they come round.  
 That's good.  
 So that's what we do in the holidays.

*I'm happy and friendly*

Electricity...

Using the computer.

Designing websites.

I can do that quite well.

I'm happy!

I'm happy...that's about it!

I'm happy and friendly

I do say what I think!

*I'm not thinking that far*

I don't know...

I'm not thinking that far.

Not really. No.

I don't do that much.

Most probably won't be able to do anything.

I don't like thinking that far

because there's stuff that happens.

Serious stuff happens to me then.

I'm just doing it as I go.

I can't put my hand up.

Needing more teacher aide and stuff like that.

Not really noticeable.

No, not really, not really.

I can do a lot of things.

I'd rather be at school sometimes than at home  
because I worry all the time.

I don't really like thinking about that.

Oh I'd still rather be at school.

Yeah because it makes me think of other things  
all the time and stuff.

## Chapter Nine: My Narrative Response to Adam's Stories

Adam, thank you for sharing your stories with me. Initially I know you felt wary of me and of opening up and reflecting on your experiences, but as we got to know each other you talked more openly, particularly about things that annoyed you, for example, bullying and injustices, and the learning areas such as science and art which were both areas where you were achieving well.

In representing your stories as poems, I made particular note of the year in which you told me these stories. Your first year at high school was very happy once you had settled in, however, Year 10 was not a happy year with relationships, both with friends and your teacher aide, and these stories are in contrast with your Year 9 stories. However, weaving through these stories, although you experienced hurt, frustration, and disgust during your times on the school landscape, was your ability to sometimes stand aside, reflect, and see the funny side, whilst remaining optimistic about the future of these relationships. Your reflective stories illustrated your maturity to see these experiences within a temporal dimension and you acknowledged that there is always a brighter side and the opportunity for people to change with time. I organised your stories as poems and my narrative to illustrate this temporal dimension.

The predominant threads entwined in your stories tell of your changing social relationships on the school landscape, so I begin my narrative with your transition to high school and a description of the friendships you made in your first year and how these changed in Year 10. From this base and within a social model of disability (Oliver, 1996), I explore the negative and positive environmental influences that affected and contributed to the dynamics and the quality of your social experiences in the contexts of the in-school and out-of-school landscapes: community perceptions of disability; school influences that include the physical environment, teachers, teacher

aides, other students, principal, policy, and school ethos; and family influences related to independence and encouragement (Baker & Donnelly, 2001). In the last part of my narrative I reflect on your stories about friendship, and the issues you faced as you physically weakened.

In constructing my narrative, I include the stories of your parents Louise and David, principal, teachers, teacher aides, your brother Jim, and your friend Karen, alongside documentary material from your IEPs, school policy, and an ERO (2003) report, to complement your fore-grounded stories and provide a holistic perspective to your experience.

### ***The best school out!***

In choosing to go to Mansfield High School, you visited another city school but preferred the well-kept buildings and grounds of Mansfield as well as the atmosphere and the facilities for students with disabilities, the Taylor Block, that the school offered. Ultimately it was a combined decision that you and your parents were happy with; your father from his dealings with some of the staff through his work, and your mother because it was close to Jim's school and made transportation easier. Jim also has muscular dystrophy and uses a wheelchair so your mother took you and picked you up from school in your van that was set up to transport you both. Apart from this logistical reason, your mother was impressed with the professional attitude of the staff:

...and taking Adam to his limits and maybe just a little bit beyond just to keep his incentive going and keep him encouraged and achieving...they would give him that little push when he needed it occasionally...they have to take into account next year...he'll be getting weaker and weaker. (Louise, 18/03; 12/04)

This focus was on the academic curriculum but also reflected her concern that you might need encouragement because you might become discouraged because of your weakening condition. I noted that neither you Adam nor

your parents mentioned friends as a factor in choosing a high school, possibly because you did not have any close friends at intermediate.

You knew students who were going to enrol at the local single-sex boys' high school but you knew that there were no facilities such as ramps and staff expertise there so "we didn't think to try there" (Louise, 08/03). It wasn't until the next year that your parents realised that you had a right to enrol there and that legally (1989 Education Act, Section 8) the school would have had to make adaptations for you, however you were all happy with your decision and the attitudes of the staff at Mansfield, and because...

...they're [Boys' High] quite sports oriented there I think...yeah and I don't think he would have fitted. It would have been good because he's so bright, so intellectual, and that school's very much that way, but no, we didn't look at that which we could have because if Adam did want to go there they would just have to adapt the place for him...which we've only just realised. (Louise, 08/03)

This illustrated that thirteen years after the 1989 Education Act, some parents were unaware of the rights of their child in choosing a school. In the city where you live there were two high schools with specialist facilities; both of these were co-educational, which did not provide an equitable choice for parents and students desiring a single-sex education. I discuss these gender issues in Chapter Twelve.

Although it was natural to feel apprehensive about starting high school you began your first year at Mansfield with some trepidation as your intermediate school experience had not been happy; there had been issues with teacher aide support and staff attitudes and when I first met you and your family, your parents Louise and David had just withdrawn Jim and enrolled him at another school. So with these distressing experiences in mind, together with the urban myths about initiation rites for new students (Yates, 1999), you were very nervous about going to high school. Your mother also felt anxious: "I was a bit dubious about how good it would go" (08/03).

In hindsight you saw that some of this nervousness was an inevitable part of beginning a new school and getting used to a different environment. At the beginning of the year you took a full load of subjects, with physiotherapy in the physical education line, but this became increasingly difficult as you became tired with the workload. By the end of the first term you were feeling stressed: "He was getting very tired. He really just wasn't coping. He was having problems with his heart racing and he was putting everything, every ounce of energy he could into the work, wanting to do it perfectly" (Louise, 08/03). Because of your experiences at intermediate, when your mother spoke to the key teacher about it you were both surprised and relieved that you were listened to: "It's better...I get listened to more" (08/04). A decision was made, with you, to drop technology, which was a difficult subject because it required more manual dexterity than you had, and you used this time for study and doing homework. Because you got very tired your parents did not want you to do homework at home so this adaptation to your programme enabled you to keep up with the work in your other subjects without tiring you. You felt good because you had been listened to. Your mother also talked about the support she had received from staff at the school:

I think both Adam and I had had bad experiences at intermediate and the teachers wouldn't listen at intermediate and I thought, you know, that high school would be the same. I thought Mansfield would be the same so Adam and I would be discussing things and he'd get upset and I'd get upset and that's when I started to ring the key teacher and started to realise, 'Well hey! They *will* listen and they *will* help!' It was a learning process for both of us I think! (08/03)

Previous experiences had not been ones of collaboration, however, at Mansfield, collaboration and listening reflects the ecological model as discussed earlier, in which collaboration is an essential element and the centre

of a process “to meet the needs and develop the strengths of students” (Fraser, 2005, p. 128).

Adam, so you found that you had choices and you could make decisions and your mother noted that you became more positive, more confident, and more independent as you began to have some control of your life: “He’s been given more choices that he’s never really had before so that’s given him a lot more confidence” (08/03). Making choices, like social skills, requires practice and the early months at Mansfield provided you with the opportunity to make choices, however in Year 10 your mother reflected that there had been fewer opportunities that year to do that: “Not as much...not so forthcoming...I think he still struggles with choices” (12/04). Nevertheless, you began to have more control of your life: “...a lot more positive...confident and more independent...less fearful” (Louise, 08/03) and this helped you when you were bullied in the second year. Adam, your experiences and opportunities saw you developing self-advocacy skills in that you understood your strengths and limitations; you set realistic goals and strived to achieve them; you assertively stated your personal needs (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990); and you sought help and in some circumstances set out to, “say what I think!” This is consistent with recent research that shows that given the right environment, children with disabilities hold and express their views (Cavet & Sloper, 2004).

In the context of this new school landscape you settled into school and enjoyed the learning, working very conscientiously in all your subjects and achieving good results. As well as the academic side of school, the social side was also developing.

### *BJ's the only one I knew from intermediate*

Friendships did not play a part when you were choosing a high school: "The last year at intermediate I had no friends." You knew BJ in your first year at intermediate, but as he was a year older than you, he was not there in your second year. BJ was a familiar face when you began at Mansfield, and because he also used a wheelchair you had this in common. In the first interview, when I asked you if you had any special friends you mentioned BJ and Karen. You said that you talked to each other but you had little in common other than all using wheelchairs, and I will discuss this factor later in my narrative. Compared with your own family experiences you found BJ's family "a bit weird!" and I thought that you were quite judgemental about your families' differences. For example, you said you said that you wouldn't feel comfortable in his home. BJ had only been to your house once, and you went to the local park together, but you never went to his house and you didn't want to. He lived in a small village in the local area so geographical distance was a physical barrier (Baker & Donnelly, 2001; Day & Harry, 1999; MacArthur & Gaffney, 2001) and transport was a problem. Because his cerebral palsy distorted his speech, you did not like to talk to BJ on the phone although he rang you about once a fortnight, or more often if you were sick.

In the Year 10/2004 interviews you said that BJ was not a special friend as you would rather be friends with Ben, and I got the impression that BJ was always around and it was someone to have lunch with so you were not alone, giving you support when you were bullied. With your success in your academic studies, you had less in common with BJ who you felt, because of family influences, had "given up" and was "not trying." For you, this highlighted the differences between you; however, you generously accepted these traits: "That's just him. It's the way he is. So who cares?"

### *Ben is sometimes a good friend*

Ben was a friend who was in your Year 9 art class, and I observed him helping you with your gear and also interacting and chatting with you as you worked. You said that he had an anger problem and it appeared that he was bullied and taunted by other students who seemed to get pleasure from winding him up and watching his out-of-control reaction. This was a concern for you and you advised him to get some help. You were a support for him as you didn't taunt him, you were concerned for his health, and you valued him as a friend. This was a reciprocal relationship (Bukowski et al., 1996); you helped Ben with support and guidance and he helped you in class and chatted to you. I observed you enjoying each other's company; he had wide interests and you enjoyed talking to him at school.

In Year 10/2004, Ben was still a friend. He was someone else, just as BJ was, to have lunch with, although you weren't in any of the same classes so this meant there was no interaction on the in-class landscape.

### *Karen's she's nice and she doesn't like physio either*

Although Karen went to the same intermediate school you were not friends ("At intermediate she did not want to know me") however, your friendship developed in Year 9 initially because of proximity factors as you were in English and science together, sharing a teacher aide in those classes. When I suggested that maybe she'd discovered that boys were interesting people, you gave a wry smile and said, "I don't know!" but the idea obviously appealed to you! Karen mentioned that she had known you for a long time since before you used a wheelchair. She found it significant that your early friendship at kindergarten was not based on the similarity of being in wheelchairs but that you had liked each other. She saw your present friendship as a renewal of this now you were now at high school together,

and not just because you both used wheelchairs. However, at high school you had this in common which meant you spent time together at, and also shared an antipathy for, physio, so these enabling factors of proximity and shared “dislikes” encouraged the friendship. However, like your friendship with BJ, this friendship did not extend to the out-of-school landscape; Karen no longer lived close and transport was a problem.

Although you had been friends with Karen at kindergarten and she had been to a couple of your birthday parties, and she went to the same intermediate, in Year 9 you were surprised that she wanted to be a closer friend and she gave you a Christmas card and a present. I observed you helping her in science and you chatted a lot with her in that class. In Year 10, although you were not in any of the same classes as you had been in the previous year, you saw Karen in physio and study period, and your friendship with her developed, and at the end of the year you were happy for me to talk to her. Although there were difficulties with your friendship with Fiona, Karen’s relationship with you became closer. She described you:

He’s such a nice person. He wouldn’t be nasty to you or anything and he’s just so fun to be around and he’s funny with all his...him liking all his high tech stuff and he’s always telling you about it and helps you with your work and everything. He’s just such a nice person...extremely trusting and he wouldn’t ever be nasty to you...you never have that with Adam. He’s just someone you can definitely get along with...yeah. (04/05)

Apart from both being in wheelchairs she said, “We both love talking!” She also appreciated you helping her with her schoolwork, “... ‘cos he’s so bright! It’s pretty cool!” She reflected that she thought the teachers had facilitated your friendship by organising it so you could have the study period at the same time. She didn’t think you had hobbies in common but often talked about schoolwork. Despite not having common interests Karen thought of you as a special friend, a Best Friend “ because we’ve got

like...since we're kind of in the same situation it makes it even more special, which is good." So sometimes you talked about being in wheelchairs and the problems with small classrooms and having to sit at the front however, "it's not a common subject that we talk about 'cos it's just with us all the time." Karen defined a good friend as "someone you can trust and someone you can have fun with and for my case, talk a lot too! Yeah!" She admired how you are "always so positive about everything and he makes sure that nothing's a boundary to him and...he always found ways to get round things" and she had noticed that you had become more "confident around people." Your mother also noted this increase in confidence: "Maybe even gone up another notch [in] that he's taking control of more of what he's doing" (12/04).

Karen had a circle of girl friends including Fiona and in your first year at Mansfield you became friends with this wider group in some classes, and out of class at lunchtimes and intervals: Karen's friends became your friends and although they sometimes had tiffs and you felt that you were stuck in the middle ("they sort it out themselves"), you were able to observe these dynamics of friendships. This was a happy time for you even though at times you felt pulled between BJ and Ben, and Karen and her friends: this choice was a new one for you, and a luxury, because you had never had several friends to choose between before.

### *I've got lots and lots of friends*

Adam, you settled into high school and with the study period you coped with your subjects, and you developed and maintained friendships with BJ, Ben, and Karen. You had some regular friends in- class and out-of-class: "I've got lots and lots of friends" although your mother called these "so-called friends" making a distinction between close friends and regular classmates, but all these friendships were on the in-school landscape and did

not extend to the out-of-school landscape, apart from the phone calls from BJ, which you discouraged. Your stories, the stories of your teachers and mother, and my observations indicated that you did not have lots and lots of friends and although a lot of students knew you, and you talked to Karen's friends, you only identified BJ, Ben and Karen as "good" friends. The others were friends of Karen's who you could talk to. I wondered if telling me you had lots and lots of friends was the answer you thought I wanted to hear; if you enjoyed the thought of having a lot of friends, which is a socially acceptable and typical thing to do; or if you counted classmates, and the friends of friends, as *your* friends.

A comment from your mother about your social relationships at primary school resonated with my stories of Guy which I told in Chapter One:

He's very shy...he attracts people. I don't know what it is but there is something about him that people want to befriend him and talk to him. When he was at primary school, all the kids knew him by name. All walk past and say hello to him even though he only had a couple of close friends. He knew everybody and everybody knew him. (08/03)

She did not mention if that happened at high school.

### ***BJ in a wheelchair...and Karen in a wheelchair***

Adam, your mother reflected on your present relationships:

He seems to attract children that are different...it's interesting. He tends to befriend...get closer to the ones that are in wheelchairs. He doesn't seem to want to reach out or want friendships with, so close, with those that are normal...I've only just realised it now. Don't know why he's done that...whether he feels more equal footing with them so he can talk and they understand each other more. That could be part of it. (08/03)

In this statement, your mother began to reflect on the nature of your friendships and made me reflect on the way inclusive education focuses on establishing relationships between students with and without disabilities.

Similarly, Harry et al. (1998) also reflect on this and the way research on the friendships of students without disabilities is used as the basis for research on the friendships of students with disabilities. Their research indicated that in the friendships between students with disabilities, although there were features of “typical” friendships there were areas where support was needed to provide a context to enable these friendships to flourish on the out-of-school landscapes, for example, parental support and transportation. For you Adam this is a simple summation as there were complex reasons that created barriers for your out-of-school friendships, as I discuss later in this chapter.

Harry et al.’s (1998) research investigated the nature of friendships between youths with disabilities and found that, as in your friendship with BJ and to a greater extent with Karen, the key features of friendship, for example, proximity (Hartup, 1993); as well as reciprocity, liking, and fun (Bukowski et al., (1996) were present. Other features included age and using wheelchairs. This latter feature whilst maybe influencing a mutual choice of friends, does not reinforce the view “better off with their own kind” (Harry et al., 1998, p. 399) but recognises that you have this shared understanding of life experiences in common (Romer et al., 1998) as Karen described in her stories about your friendship. It endorses also a range of freely chosen relationships (Harry et al.) on an inclusive landscape. Your key teacher facilitated this when organising your study and physio times.

### ***Yeah! Friends have changed...It's changed a hell of a lot!***

Your stories of your first year at Mansfield were happy; you enjoyed your subjects, your teacher and teacher aide were supportive, you were listened to and given choices, and you had friends and mates to be with at interval and lunchtime, and in some classes. However, in the nature of adolescent friendships this happy situation changed in your second year. You

no longer regarded BJ as a special friend but your relationship with Karen became closer. Ben was still a good friend although he was no longer in any of your classes. There were clashes with some of Karen's friends, particularly Fiona and Kylie and these were upsetting and confusing for you. These changes threatened your social relationships, and thus your happiness at school.

In my subsequent narrative I have adapted Baker and Donnelly's (2001) framework, that I introduced in the chapter's introduction, which focuses on the environmental factors that have influenced your social experiences: I use this to examine (i) perceptions of disability; (ii) school; and (iii) family.

### ***(i) Maybe her parents don't like disabled people either***

Community perspectives affect students' social experiences (Hunt et al., 1996; Williams & Downing, 1998) in school, as was evident in some teachers' and students' attitudes to you as a young man with a disability. Adam, you were affected by negative perceptions by a relieving teacher who treated you like a Ghost and called you "it", and another classroom teacher who also tended to ignore you; negative student perceptions where you were ignored in class; and negative perceptions that saw you bullied on the out-of-class landscape.

Bullying was not an issue in Year 9 apart from one girl who called you names and you dealt with this, and you commented, "The school's pretty good." You felt supported by your key teacher and dean in resolving the issue and you felt some control over procedures to deal with bullying issues. There were places that you felt comfortable at intervals and lunchtimes, for example, the auditorium and the library, and you had the support of friends as well. I place this alongside the late 2003 Education Review Office (ERO) report stating that tolerance and inclusion of students with disabilities were

high at your school. It was interesting to me that “tolerance” was seen as positive and linked to inclusion. I acknowledge that bullying was not widespread in the school however; in the light of your stories about bullying I find the ERO statement ambiguous. The Concise Oxford English Dictionary (n.d.) defines “tolerance” as: “the ability, willingness, or capacity to...allow the existence...of (something that one dislikes or disagrees with).” Other dictionaries extend this to: “the capacity to endure” (The New Oxford American Dictionary, n.d.) or use the synonym “forbearance” (The Oxford American Dictionary of Current English, n.d.). These definitions imply passivity. In contrast, inclusion is defined as: “the action or state of including or of being included” (The Concise Oxford English Dictionary); this is an active state. I suggest that “tolerance” is not positive and is certainly not inclusive. Adam, I am sure you wanted to be included, however, were you happy with being tolerated? Is there a place for “tolerance” in an inclusive school, where difference is valued? Did you feel as though you “belonged” in an environment where you were tolerated or endured or treated with forbearance?

Because of the support from some staff and friends, you were happy at school. Your friend Ben was bullied and you supported him, however, bullying became a major issue for you in Year 10 and you felt less safe. You reflected that it was often new Year 9 students who did the bullying and that this was a part of a trend with increased smoking at school and other incidents including suicide.

*The bullying's got worse this year.* In your stories there were tales of spitting and trying to tip you out of your wheelchair, and both you and Karen talked to me about the conflict with Kylie in Year 10 and how this had disrupted and changed friendships, and I was impressed with the calm mature way in which you both refused to be victims and stood aside and

viewed the situation. This contrasted with the reactions of Jim and Ben when they were bullied and I would like to explore this in more depth.

Kylie was originally in Karen's group of friends whose friendship you had enjoyed in Year 9, but she became the leader of a breakaway group, taking some of the friends including Fiona with her. Kylie's bullying included name-calling, foul language, and exclusion, and she and her friends sought you out so they could taunt you. Carroll-Lind (2006) reported that the students in her study of New Zealand children's perceptions of violence, thought that emotional violence, such as Kylie's bullying, was more prevalent than physical and sexual violence. So Adam, bullying is not restricted to students with disabilities but involves a range of students in a school (Nairn & Smith, 2002) including students of diverse ethnicities (Sullivan, 2000); bullying is a common experience for secondary school aged students in New Zealand secondary schools (Adair, Dixon, Moore, & Sutherland, 2000). Understandably Adam, you said that this was a low point for you in Year 10; in fact your mother didn't think you had any highs that year! As I wondered about this and read more studies of bullying and victimisation, I found two perspectives.

Firstly, research findings have pointed to personal and interpersonal factors that might contribute to victimisation (e.g. Hodges, Malone, & Perry, 1997; Hodges & Perry, 1999). These include: having internalising problems such as crying easily or manifesting anxiety; being physically weak; or displaying externalising problems such as ineffectual aggression or argumentativeness. The first factor - internalising problems - did not seem to relate to you, Adam, and neither did the latter - externalising problems - although Jim and Ben both displayed anger and aggression when they were bullied, causing the bullies to "wind them up." Kylie may have seen you as physically weak because of your condition and because you used a wheelchair. Another factor that researchers describe is that children may be

victimised if they are seen not to have supportive friends to protect them (MacArthur & Gaffney, 2001). Kylie succeeded in reducing the number of your friends by persuading them to be part of her group. This left you with Ben who was also bullied and had externalising problems, and BJ, Karen, and Jim who also used wheelchairs and who were perhaps also seen as physically weak and not able to support you. These proximal factors reflect the view that the “victim” has the problems, with blame placed on the victim; that the child invites victimisation, and that main interventions focus on coping skills for the vulnerable and at-risk students. Only a few interventions address the attitudes of the bullies (Smith & Sharp, 1994). You saw Jim and Ben as victims because of the way they reacted to the bullying. Your mother noted, “Adam just handles it...I think he just lets it flow over him, whereas Jim’s the one that ‘Harummmph! I don’t like this!’...Jim reacts and they do more and he can’t see that” (12/04). I would now like to reflect on your perceptions and turn this “victim” view around, focusing on the distal factors of familial, societal, and cultural attitudes.

My second perspective puts bullying in a social-cultural context where there exist “intentional attitudinal barriers” that create social distance and/or emotional bullying (Pivik et al., 2002, p. 102). I found your stance mature: the way you observed and commented on Kylie’s actions and the dynamics within her group, and did not “blame” her. Initially, you “couldn’t understand why” (Louise, 12/04), but then you rationalised that her beliefs about people in wheelchairs must have come from her parents. Although you saw Kylie and her group’s actions as somewhat ridiculous, you generously acknowledged that with maturity she would grow out of it. Indeed, you were more concerned that the bullying upset Jim, causing him to externalise the problem. This reflected the confidence and maturity you had developed in your first year at Mansfield and the security you had in your friendship with Karen. You were both affected by Kylie’s behaviour and were able to gain

strength from your mutual support as you discussed this when you were away from the others at physio or study time. You both reflected that this was because Kylie couldn't cope with people in wheelchairs; it was her problem not yours and by using problem solving strategies you decided that ignoring her behaviour was the best course. You also theorised, "she was just doing what her parents do", that is, copying her parents' prejudice against people with disabilities. Your view resonates with a parent in Baker and Donnelly's work: "that the outside world is still very, very threatened by people with disabilities" (Baker & Donnelly, 2001, p. 72).

Jim was bullied more than you, and like Ben he reacted to the bullying, which you observed was not the best way to deal with it. Your mother noted your growing confidence: "He's sorted out any problems. He hasn't come home and complained to me. He's gone and sorted it out" (Louise, 12/04). Your strategies included seeking support from your key teacher, or ignoring it. As I discussed earlier, you felt that bullying was from students who did not like people in wheelchairs, or in Ben's case, students who were easy to wind up and who reacted angrily. You reflected maturely on these incidents and recognised that this behaviour, whilst hurtful and distressing, was immature, performed by junior students, and was not "invited" by you, and you hoped that it would cease once the students "grew up." Thus Adam, you developed your own coping strategies.

There are programmes such as Kia Kaha (stand strong/be strong) that involve school wide approaches to address bullying in schools and involve parents and caregivers, educating students on the nature of bullying and how to handle it (Sullivan, 2000). However, societal attitude change is systemic and may take a long time to change. Inclusive education is a platform to address "attitudinal barriers" in a positive way. By being a young man with a disability in a regular school, Adam, you were yourself contributing to

changing perceptions and attitudes. You were thrilled to receive a Principal's Award in Year 10 for achievement in Year 11 science and I include your story:

It was special because I was in the Taylor Block, and no-one in the Taylor Block's ever got one. Everyone was like 'Oh my goodness! How the heck did he get that? He's in a wheelchair...supposed to be stupid! So that might actually change a few pupils' view of me. So I might make some more friends now! ...I'm not so stupid! Fiona and Kylie were there...you should have seen the look on their faces!

Your mother reflected, "I think he was quite rapt about that. The look on his face was, 'Wow! I've achieved! I've done it!' I thought it was so good because they said he's from the Taylor block and I think a lot of the kids were surprised that someone from the Taylor block has achieved, you know, so hopefully it did something and made the kids realise that, you know, he's not stupid and he still gets that at school" (12/04). I will highlight and discuss your "inclusion" in the Taylor Block, below.

*Does he do any work here?* The "attitudinal barriers" (Pivik et al., 2002, p. 102) and perspectives of some teachers surprised you, and you concluded that "some teachers need to get a bit more helpful", although "they got better after they got used to me." Although it was hurtful, you explained their treatment of you as a dislike for people with disabilities and that, "some teachers hate people in wheelchairs as well." This appeared to be reflected in the comments of only a couple of teachers, notably one relieving teacher, but it was very hurtful: Pivik et al. call these inappropriate comments "intentional attitudinal barriers" (p.102). Apart from direct comments like those of the relieving teacher, teacher attitudes are also manifested in the way they accept responsibility for student academic and social learning, structure their lessons, organise seating, use teacher aides, and interact with students. If these do not address academic and social needs they present as "unintentional attitudinal barriers" caused by a lack of education, knowledge,

and understanding (Pivik et al.). I will discuss these factors in the next part of the framework.

*No one in the Taylor block's ever got one.* In your comment above about why your award was so special, you described yourself as a part of the Taylor Block despite being included in all academic classes and achieving well academically: first place in Year 9 science; doing NCEA Level 1 science in Year 10; being in extension maths classes; and achieving excellent results in art. I suggest that this “placement/enrolment” in the Taylor Block because you were an ORRS funded student reflected the unintentional attitudinal barriers described above. Your teacher aides and key teacher were based in the Taylor block, and you went there for physiotherapy. This created the perception of difference amongst your peers and teachers and affected your friendships and inclusion in classes, reinforcing the perception that you were a Guest in the mainstream classrooms. Some teachers perceived the Taylor block: “It’s kind of like an outside group which is within the school”; “It doesn’t play a part in the school. It’s just ‘out there.’ We had a guided tour as part of our orientation but otherwise I wouldn’t really know it was there.” Two teachers - I did note these were both primary trained teachers - said, “I think some people have sort of a ‘Taylor block’ and ‘the school’ kind of mentality, and some people just have the ‘school as one unit’ type of thing...I’m ‘the whole!’” and another felt that, “I don’t think at present...that the ordinary teacher takes full responsibility for the learning of the students with special needs at all.” This latter comment reflected:

...the fact that the teachers in the Taylor block come across as the ‘experts’ in dealing with students with special needs and ‘Who am I as a teacher to say this is better than what those teachers are saying?’ And so it’s easier for me just to say, ‘Well you go ahead. You know best!’  
(12/04)

This perception of the Taylor Block teachers as “experts” reflects a medical model discourse and a cult of expertise that creates a barrier for classroom

teachers. It also reflects a devolving of responsibility for the learning of students with disabilities to specialists and teacher aides. I am not denying that they have specialist expertise, however in a consultative-collaborative inclusive ecological model, classroom teachers will consult the specialists but at the same time develop their own professional skills. In this way, they accept responsibility for the learning of all the students in their classes and teachers are empowered to become expert teachers (Hattie, 2002).

So Adam, the unintentional attitudinal barriers created by the Taylor block perpetuated the concept of difference. Your alignment with the block promoted difference including physical weakness, and stereotypical views created the perception that you were “stupid.” That made you a target of bullying. Being in the Taylor block meant you were “someone else’s responsibility” so some teachers would greet you (as in the Guy Syndrome that I described in my narrative beginnings) but leave the responsibility for your learning to the teacher aide. Only one primary trained teacher considered your social needs and thought about facilitating social interaction to include you. I will discuss the physical barriers to social interaction caused by unintentional attitudinal barriers in the next section.

*(ii) I think it's a nice place but...*

Adam, your stories reflected your general satisfaction with school apart from the attitudes of a few that directly affected you and your social relationships through bullying as well as the negative modelling by some teachers. However, as I read and reread your stories, a number of threads about barriers to interaction with your peers on the in-class landscape became apparent to me. These affected subsequent interactions on the out-of-class landscape. The first was the Taylor block, which I have just discussed. Other

barriers were related to school ethos and structure, and what was happening in your classrooms.

Adam, as I reread the comments of your teachers, I was mindful of the role of the principal in creating a school ethos and so I reread closely the two interviews with your principal. I noted that whenever I asked her about provisions for students with disabilities she would begin by discussing the specialist help and facilities in the Taylor Block and stressing the importance of the students learning social skills in that environment. She also mentioned aims to include more co-curricular activities and “disabled sport” on the out-of-class landscape. When I asked about provision on the in-class landscape she stressed the importance of the level of teacher aide support and resourcing. Although she emphasised that teachers were “very accepting”, she herself made no mention of adaptation of the curriculum for students with disabilities. When I asked about this, she said, “It’s not something they would think about” (11/03). This contrasted with her comments about provision for ESOL: “...our ESOL department provides a lot of...subject support and they liaise with subject areas to ensure they are reinforcing vocabulary, concepts, and ideas in subject areas” (11/03). She had observed liaison between teacher aides and class teachers and recognised that teacher aide presence reduced teacher/student interaction and responsibility: “I think that’s probably inevitable to a point” (11/03).

*Five that actually say hello to me.* I saw that there were barriers on the in-class landscape determined by school structures and class placement that reduced the proximity to your current friends, or inhibited you from establishing new friendships through opportunities to get to know other students. In Year 9 you were in two classes with Karen, and I observed that you helped her and enjoyed chatting, and in one class with Ben who helped you and also chatted with you. These were happy experiences that continued into the out-of-class landscape at intervals and lunchtimes. However, in all

your Year 9 classes, you said that only five students would speak to you (reminiscent of the Guy Syndrome), and rarely did teachers facilitate any social interaction. For these five students you may have represented the Inclusion Kid, part of the class but different, or at best Just Another Kid. To the others, you appeared to be a Ghost or a Guest (Meyer et al., 1998), although in classrooms not all students greet or speak to each other anyway.

Adam, you generally liked your teachers and teacher aide. They helped you and talked to you, and “the science teacher prints things for me” and “they get my stuff out when my teacher aide’s not there.” However, from their comments and yours as well as from my observations, they gave little or no thought to your social needs:

I think mainstream teachers might not necessarily acknowledge that the social agenda is there...I would say that they definitely think it is *not* their role. They teach subjects, not students. We have a number of primary trained teachers in the school, and their philosophy is a little different. They’re more open to modifying the curriculum...so the student can take part and the primary teachers are *far* more open to that whereas the secondary trained teachers say, ‘Oh but this is the course!’ There’s still a long way to go! (Principal, 11/04)

One teacher put this succinctly, “I was trained 20 years ago, and, you know, not trained to be able to deal with anything different” (11/04).

Getting your high wheelchair into science benches was seen as difficult, and group configurations did not change and were not adapted for you so consequently you were positioned at the end of rows or away from other desks “making it difficult for you to integrate in a close sort of way” (Teacher, 11/03). Some teachers made the assumption that you liked to sit away from your peers: “He’s shy. He doesn’t push it” (Teacher, 11/04); “He’s very quiet” (Teacher, 11/04); “There are a lot of people who don’t want to talk to their neighbour and it’s often a matter of personality” (Teacher, 11/04); “He’s very focussed in what he’s doing and he doesn’t really say too much to the other kids” (Teacher, 11/04); “He doesn’t really say a lot in English

because he's kind of at the end of the aisle" (Teacher aide, 11/04); "He doesn't engage with people, either me or his classmates very much. Having said that he still has a sense of humour because he smiles occasionally at things" (Teacher, 11/04); "You know, some of it is up to Adam...he is quite an academic student, so some of his peers...he wouldn't be keen to socialise anyway!" (Teacher, 11/04). These comments and assumptions seemed to justify and absolve them of the responsibility to ensure you had the opportunity to interact with your peers, as the rest of the class was able to do. I wondered how you could talk if you are not close to the other students. How could you develop those skills of approaching others, initiating conversations, and developing confidence in sharing ideas? This resonated with my reading of Bukowski et al. (1996) who say it is impossible to establish the direction of causation – does social interaction cause the learning of social skills or do social skills initiate and sustain social interaction? I suggest that developing social competence is a "two-way-street", and that social interaction causes the development of social skills and that simultaneously, learned social skills initiate and sustain interactions with others. In contrast to those teachers, and somewhat in surprise, one teacher noted:

Oh one day I had put the tables into groups and they chose their own groups and he sat at a group, which was close to that side of the room. He was part of the group and he did seem to enjoy it actually as I remember. (11/04)

You *did* enjoy working in a group and the subsequent interaction with your peers: "I'm in a group yeah...which is good. At least they talk to me." You enjoyed being Just Another Kid. This was in the Year 11 science class and the teacher said to me later, and reflected the comments above, "I'm primary trained so I'm used to working with groups." (11/04)

Reading your IEPs I noted that social goals were set in the March 2003 IEP: "All teaching staff to encourage Adam to join in group activities as much as he is able." This seemed to put the onus on you to join, rather than on teachers to organise the class into groups of which you would be a part. In August this was reviewed and the comment read: "[The goal was] partially achieved. Adam often prefers to do activities on his own. This is because he works to such a high standard and knows exactly how he wants to achieve a satisfactory result", and the goal was rolled over. The comment reflected the previous assertion that you preferred to work on your own and did not address the issue that teachers were not using groups in their classes. This was supported by the review comment in your March 2004 IEP: "In Adam's [Year 11] science class there are often group activities. He works willingly with the Year 10 students and contributes to discussions. In other classes this seldom occurs" - your science teacher was primary trained. Similarly in the August 2004 IEP review of the goal: "Adam will work cooperatively with his classmates in activities as directed by the teacher"; "Achieved in social studies and science. Not applicable in English and maths as very little group work." The goal was modified to: "For Adam to develop good relationships with others and work in cooperative ways to achieve common goals." Again, the onus was on you, Adam, to solve problems through suggested strategies based on an individualist approach (Oliver, 1996), with assumptions that lead to "practices that emphasise personal dysfunction and place the burden of change on the person" (Baker & Donnelly, 2001, p. 72). Notably there were no suggestions for your teachers to facilitate you with this in order to learn the social skills in a cooperative group environment, despite school policy stating, "Social development and skill development are both considered important." I found the 2003 English teacher's comment on your report interesting in the light of the discussion above: "...it would be great if he felt he had the confidence to enter a little more into the class discussions, as his opinions are

often perceptive.” Experience in small group discussions would have helped you to develop your confidence and discussion skills (Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Putnam, 1997). It is also noteworthy that by the end of Year 10, there were only remarks on your academic progress, and none related to social skills or progress, as you moved into the senior school and more NCEA assessment.

As a researcher observing in your school, I knew that my presence could change the dynamics of the classroom. My presence acted as a catalyst for two teachers to reflect:

It wasn't until I heard that you were coming that I realised when I thought about it how little interaction he has with other students, and I hadn't really noticed it much because I haven't had a lot of dealings with students in wheelchairs. Yeah it wasn't something that I'd been aware that I wasn't doing until yeah...until you were coming yeah. (Teacher, 11/03)

Another said, “Actually when I saw this coming up it started me thinking about yeah, how very little interaction he had. It's quite sad!” (Teacher, 11/04). I hope that as a result of my research presence, the teachers continued to reflect and made some changes in their pedagogy to enable you to learn socially as well as academically. Other researchers have stated that, “As a teacher, you must be proactive to ensure that social benefits accrue to all students” (Friend & Bursuck, 2006, p. 472), and not see facilitation of friendship and social interaction as an “extra” (Turnbull, Pereira, & Blue-Banning, 2000, p. 69). Researchers' evidence supports weaving social skills objectives into the academic curriculum as “all students will ideally be involved in learning experiences that provide opportunities and support for both academic and social skill development” (Korinek & Popp, 1997, p. 152). These views are supported in the New Zealand context with the Essential Skills of the Curriculum Framework (MOE, 1993) being integrated into the

Essential Learning Areas at all levels of the school. This is also a focus on the Key Competencies in the Draft Curriculum (MOE, 2006a).

The teachers, teacher aides, and the principal all identified external factors that inhibited social interaction with your classmates, for example, small classrooms, your large wheelchair, safety issues in case of fire, workload pressures to focus on academic learning, teacher training and philosophy. They also identified internal factors, for example, your disability and your personality. Apart from the two teachers mentioned above, who began to reflect, other teachers made no reciprocal links between your “quiet personality” and your isolation and limited peer interaction: if one is naturally shy, isolation will not address this. Yes, you focussed on your work and it was very important to you, and yes, you were shy. However, opportunities to spend time with your peers would work both ways. The other students would get to know you, and by talking together your shyness might lessen as you become more comfortable, and you might develop the social skills to make friends and approach others. Maybe then you would have more than five people out of a class of 33 who will speak to you!

*None of my friends are in any classes.* Another change in Year 10 was that Karen and Ben were not in any of your classes. Dan, who used a wheelchair, was in maths. In Social Studies you sat near and chatted to Alicia, a “nice girl/bright girl” (Teacher aide, 11/04) who sat at the front, apart from the other students. In science you were sometimes included in the groups of Year 10s because you sat at the end of their bench and because you all stuck together because you were in a Year 11 class. The primary trained teacher sometimes organised group activities, and the students came to consider your needs as you worked. I observed you listening to the banter of the boys on the front bench; they did not include you but you were listening as you worked and had a few chuckles at their humour. I felt that you would have loved to be included in their fun. Sandy, your teacher aide, noticed this too:

Probably kids can kind of leave him out of their conversations a bit. I think he likes getting involved with the other kids. He loves listening to what they say and you know, you can see him laughing at something they've said. (11/04)

Adam, these stories of limited interaction and relative isolation in class are also the stories of the participants in Schnorr's (1997) study where she found that class membership and belonging as a basis for developing friendships depended on being part of a subgroup. However, although in some classes you were part of variable subgroups, these "groupings" did not transfer to the out-of-class landscape. This caused you to be isolated from the rest of the class with almost no facilitation by teachers to integrate these groups into the rest of the class. Consequently, students remained unaware of you whilst you were excluded from interaction with the rest of the class. Did this lack of friends make you feel as though you didn't belong? Did you feel as though you were a Ghost or a Guest in the classroom? Is this why one teacher said:

He just floats in and he does his stuff and he floats out. It's just a hello and goodbye. Not from him...from me. He doesn't...yeah he sometimes does...not too much enthusiasm but he does say hello. (11/04)

A story you told me scathingly about one teacher who ignored you also gave me the impression you were a Ghost in the classroom: "He thinks I'm invisible half the time...Sometimes he doesn't even know I'm in his class. Hands out books. Misses me!" Your teacher aide supported your story: "The teacher tends to ignore Adam a bit you know. I think Adam finds that pretty frustrating, you know, being ignored" (11/04). I am sure this was distressing. Giangreco et al. (1997) noted that the constant presence of the teacher aide might cause teachers to avoid assuming responsibility for the students with a disability, resulting in limited interactions.

*She isn't very nice.* Adam, there were some negative changes in your second year at Mansfield, and you were not as happy as the previous year for a number of reasons. In your second interview, at the end of Year 9, you reflected, "I like school" and you were looking forward to Year 10, being in the Year 11 science class, having new teachers, and although you knew that you would have a new teacher aide you were not worried about it and were quite happy to find out the next year who this would be. However, the next time we talked, at the end of the second term in Year10/2004, you noted, "It's been an interesting year...things have changed a hell of a lot!" One of the main changes was the change of teacher aide. In Year 9 you had loved Irene's support and help: "She's the best teacher aide I've had so far", and in Year 10 you were happy for Jim when Irene became his teacher aide, however, you missed her and you did not like your new teacher aide, Sandy: "She isn't very nice." You didn't like the way she talked to you and she was often late to your classes. This meant you had to wait for her to get your gear out so you could begin working; this annoyed you. I observed in your Year 9 maths class that the teacher got your gear out for you when the teacher aide was delayed. In the last interview you noted that Sandy had some time off on holiday and things had improved: "She got better after her holiday. I think she needed it!"

Although you did not need your teacher aide to help you with the content of lessons, you were reliant on her to help you with your laptop, get out your gear, turn your pages, and do some of the writing. Consistent with research studies, her proximity probably was responsible for the fact that teachers engaged with you less (Giangreco et al., 1997). Her presence emphasised your dependence and difference. Other means of support, for example, the natural support of peers, were not utilised except in Year 9 art when Ben helped you.

*(iii) We're going to some family...my nana's house*

In this third section I explore some of the stories you told me about your family and the stories your mother told me about you, and the experience of raising two sons with disabilities, and how these affected your social life and the development of friendships. Doyle and Markiewicz (1996) recognise that friendships are embedded in family systems and Adam, you are fortunate to have a close, secure, supportive family who enjoy spending time together on walks, going to church, and travelling around New Zealand on wonderful family holidays. Your grandparents too play an important supportive role in your family life. You contrasted your family life with that of BJ's which you thought was weird, and Karen's parents who you felt did not let her do things, including having a pet. Your home welcomed your two cats and lots of goldfish.

You and Jim have muscular dystrophy, and your mother took the load of caring for you both. She said that, "Two is very, very hard work and it's getting harder as we go along. I would like to be able to look after both of them on my own without anybody else's help but I can't" (Louise, 12/04). There was some respite care before and after school. Nevertheless, your mother got tired with the broken nights: "...lack of sleep...I find it hard to cope...start to panic, but I keep going"; with no breaks away: "It's too hard. I don't know if we'd find anyone suitable, that I would trust"; and with the constant care, "I'm tired anyway and to have someone round's tiring" (Louise, 12/04). These understandably affected activities with your peers on the out-of-school landscape. Her views resonated with the experiences of some of the participants in the Baker and Donnelly (2001) study; these were reflected in decisions that ultimately inhibited social experiences.

*My pesky little brother.* A positive change in 2004 was the arrival of Jim at Mansfield. This changed the dynamics of your friendships as you spent

a lot of time with him because he initially found it difficult to make friends and was bullied. Before he came you were worried about how he would fit in with your friends as he had a different personality to you. You felt very protective of him and chose wheeling around with him at lunchtimes as a way of avoiding the bullies. However, this meant you did not have the same opportunities to develop your own relationships and your teacher aide observed, "I think Jim's probably his best friend here" (11/04). When I interviewed Karen in April 2005, she reflected that Jim made friends more easily than you did and that your circle of friends had grown as Jim made new friends; his new friends became friends with you too.

*He lives in Rosston so we can't go round there.* One of the factors that promote friendships is proximity: the opposite of this is distance, and because you lived at the other end of town from Mansfield, and because you depended on your mother to transport you to school, you did not live close to your peers so there was no natural interaction on the out-of-school landscape. Karen had lived close to you when you were young and you used to see her. BJ lived outside the town, and he had only visited you once. Your mother was aware of the distance barriers but qualified this by saying you were not interested in having friends at home. She was also very tired looking after two children with disabilities and the onus would have fallen on her to organise transport.

Your mother didn't feel that distance was so much of a barrier to mixing with friends out of school: "...but Adam's not sort of one to...he's not that interested in friends. He's quite happy just to be at home" (08/03), and she said that you saw the in-school, and out-of-school landscapes as separate:

He's sociable in that he loves talking to other kids but he's never been one to want them to really come home. It's never really been something he likes to do. He doesn't want to join the two. He wants, 'that's school and I'll have my friends', or 'so called friends', that 'I'll talk to at school but not home.' (08/03)

Like your teachers, your mother also convinced herself that you didn't mind being alone. She also explained that it was hard for her as it was tiring coping with the two boys, so "that's why I haven't pushed it at all" (12/04). She related her experiences:

The times that he has had a friend around, he tends to stay with them for a while and then he'll take off and do his own thing and I've got to look after the friends and I think, 'Adam, this is not quite right!' So that's why I haven't pushed it at all. (12/04)

Perhaps you also realised the difficulties that your mother faced in facilitating your out-of-school friendships so did not press her to organise it.

*Friendship: quite important.* Friendships are described as reciprocal (Bukowski et al., 1996; Hartup, 1993) and when I spoke to Karen she confirmed that your friendship *was* reciprocal. I did not speak to BJ or Ben but as I mentioned earlier I observed that Ben helped you in art, and you helped to support him when he was bullied. To you, friends were people to talk to and who were nice to you. Friends were also people to have lunch with so you were not alone at school, however, your mother observed that you did not like to mix the in-school and out-of-school landscapes and so your social life out of school revolved around family and church activities, with occasional visits from Jim's friend from intermediate school. His friends did not have a disability and could bike to your house. Karen was a special friend at school, but you did not talk on the phone or visit each other. Your condition made you tired, and together with the problems of transportation, not liking to talk on the phone, and not having the dexterity to send text messages, these factors inhibited your social interactions on the out-of-school landscape.

Developing friends was something that your mother wanted for you, but "it just isn't happening" (Louise, 12/04). She saw that having Jim at Mansfield High might have been "a negative...they just ride around

together.” Parents play an important role in the development of their children’s social skills and social competence: abilities that enable them to make friends and sustain social relationships (Kolb & Hanley-Maxwell, 2003) and ideally, together with teachers, can create opportunities to encourage social interaction and to learn social skills, however your parents may need support in order to provide you with opportunities for wider social experiences (Baker & Donnelly, 2001). Although your mother encouraged you to make friends at school, she found that having friends at home was “too hard...’cos I’m tired anyway and to have someone round’s quite tiring”, especially if she was left to entertain them!

Adam, I have talked about the “lost” opportunities on the school landscape, however, this did also not happen for you on the out-of-school landscape for reasons of distance, your growing weakness, your mothers’ tiredness, her perceived view that you did not want friends at home, and your view that friends are so you are not alone at school. With Jim at school you were not alone and just as you could avoid using your social skills or initiating new friendships by spending most of your time on the out-of-class landscape with him, so too you did not sustain relationships by inviting friends home. Your mother reflected sadly:

I think he may not make any friends. I just see...because he’s getting weaker and all that he’s going to have one of those chairs that’s going to make it even more of a barrier and I don’t know if he will make other friends...I think he would like to have more friends at school...it would be nice to see him have maybe one or two more friends that he can associate with and talk to. Would be nice. (12/04)

She didn’t see that she could have helped you make friends at school by encouraging out-of-school friendships. Grenot-Scheyer, Harry, et al. (1998, p. 406) have commented, however, “If the family does not value or is not able to support a child’s friendship building outside school, it will be increasingly difficult for the child to experience satisfactory relationships over time.”

*I'd rather be at school sometimes than at home.* Despite the down times at school, this statement Adam reflected your general feeling of contentment at school where you were achieving well above many of your able bodied peers, and the realisation of the probable outcomes of the disease. Your mother described you as “a thinker...very deep” and that you “bury it all” as you reflect on your fears and cope with your weakening body. Your family and your strong Christian beliefs helped you to deal with these issues, and reassured you, and at school you were busy and didn't have the time and space to worry. At home you had time to reflect, and you enjoyed some quiet time by yourself. Some studies of adolescents with Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD) found that they were socially isolated, passive, and depressed (Harper, 1983). Your mother recognised these feelings in you and realised that as you got older,

...it's getting harder. He's starting to say a bit of you know 'Why? Why me?' and we've had to deal with it. I mean most fourteen year olds don't have to face that sort of thing so he's had to and had to look at it...I mean he has cried a lot but that's understandable but yeah I think he's got a very positive attitude...I think he does portray this joy, this happiness even though what he's facing...I don't think he realises it himself. (12/04)

McKimm and O'Grady (1993, cited in Hammond & McCann, 2003, p. 86) noted that with support and comfort such as you received in your wider family unit, children with DMD find self-acceptance and positivity. Some of their other findings, that as children lose physical strength they focus on verbal, intellectual, and social skills, resonated with your stories Adam as you found increasing satisfaction in your academic achievements; you enjoyed the recognition of others of your intellectual, rather than physical, strengths. Focus on social skills was not a priority for you on the out-of-school landscape. Although at school you enjoyed the company and support of friends on the out-of-class landscape, as Meyer et al. (1998, p. 190) point out,

“Friendships may be hard to come by, and over time, social isolation escalates.” This situation was explored by another study, Bothwell et al. (2002), who concurred with Harper’s (1983) conclusions about social isolation and also suggested that not only is the child who has DMD socially isolated, but that the whole family experiences social isolation, depression, and anger, so as well as dealing with the everyday practical problems, the emotional impact can result in these negative repercussions.

So, Adam, as your mother described, your family life was not easy and this may have affected your social life on the out-of-school landscape. Your mother’s desired self-sufficiency may be reflected in your contentment to cope by yourself at home. Most of the studies that I have read focus on isolation as negative. Jersild (1955) suggested however that isolation is not necessarily synonymous with loneliness. He uses the term “aloneness” and sees this as a strength when one can enjoy one’s own company, drawing on one’s own resources, and having the courage to be oneself. Adam, your stories of being alone at home were positive and satisfying and reflected Jersild’s perspective.

Adam, as I listened to your stories on the temporal landscapes of in-school and out-of-school it became clear to me they were marked with change, both in your relationships and in your physical development. Your weakening physical condition meant that for you the goals were not increasing independence but adapting to what you were able to do physically. Teacher aides and your parents with support staff, and to a lesser extent by teachers, provided physical help. Your reciprocal friendship with Karen was important for you both emotionally, and your academic successes fulfilled you and provided you with a strong sense of identity. Thank you, Adam, for sharing these stories with me and with the educators who will read them. Your stories also provide insights into your experiences of bullying on the school landscape and how these affected your social relationships, and will

cause readers to critically reflect on attitudinal barriers that may inhibit students' full social participation in school life.

## Chapter Ten: Sarah's Stories as Poems

### *I moved from Seapoint High*

I used to...  
 in third and fourth form...  
 I went to Seapoint High School.  
 I moved from there to go to Glover High  
 because all my friends were at Glover  
 and the teachers and that  
 weren't very supportive of Māoris.  
 Ah just put downs and really stuff like that.  
 It's really hard to explain  
 and so I didn't really like Seapoint.

### *I didn't get on with my teachers at Seapoint*

I don't think that they liked me  
 because I was too outspoken.  
 Like when they called out the roll  
 they called me Sarah [mispronounced]  
 and I didn't like being called [mispronounced name]  
 and the teachers didn't...  
 everytime they saw my name on the roll  
 they just didn't call me out any more...  
 'cos they'd say [mispronounced name]  
 and they know that I don't like that name  
 and 'cos they could say anything closer to Sarah  
 but not [the mispronounced name]  
 and so they just didn't say my name at all...yeah.  
 Oh it didn't worry me after a while...  
 I kept answering back  
 and telling her not to call me [mispronounced name]  
 and she said she was going to send me out  
 and I said, 'Well you send me out and I'll go to the principal!'  
 so she didn't send me out.  
 She could have tried harder.  
 I just didn't really want to talk to them.

### *I wasn't allowed to play netball...*

for a little while.  
 Well the coordinator at Seapoint said I couldn't play netball  
 because I was in a wheelchair

and it was too dangerous  
and then she tried to say that it was the committee at McLeod Park  
that didn't want me to play  
but it was actually her that didn't want me to play for the school  
so I made a complaint.  
I said to them, 'I am not dangerous!  
I've played for many years!'  
so they had to let me play  
because they couldn't not let me play  
just because of my wheelchair.  
McLeod Park wasn't the one that said it!  
They said I could play  
because my mum went and rang them up  
and asked them  
and they said there's no rules against people in wheelchairs playing!  
I didn't have to trial out,  
they just put me in the lowest grade that they had.  
I was happy 'cos I was playing netball.  
If I had trialled out  
I probably wouldn't have made it in.  
They would probably have just said...  
like that, 'No you're not in!'  
I play centre  
I think they just got used to it after a while  
having a person in a wheelchair playing centre.  
We lost most of them.  
We only won about five games...out of about 20!  
Well the teacher came to watch me one day  
and she put a smile on her face  
and I think she changed her mind  
after she'd seen me play...yeah.  
Yeah. I would have preferred it if she was straight with me.

That was about it actually...  
the rest of it was all right.  
We got to choose our own subjects.  
Yeah we had to do PE for the first three years.  
Some of the stuff I couldn't do  
because it was jumping and gymnastics  
but the teacher tried her best to find stuff that I could do as well  
so she was pretty cool.  
Found sports that I could participate in as well...  
T ball...

sometimes played basketball  
and sometimes we played hockey  
and that's real cool  
and we played all sorts of games.

***I didn't achieve academically***

Not too well.

I just think because most of my teachers weren't helpful  
in the subjects and stuff like that...

or the teachers didn't go around the room...

or...just left to do my own...

all stranded!

I had a teacher aide sometimes.

Some of my subjects I did

and some I didn't.

Oh I had them now and again...

sometimes they'd come into my classes

and sometimes they'd have to go in somebody else's class.

So it just depended on their timetable.

No I didn't talk to some of my teachers at Seapoint.

I just didn't like the teachers so...

and I was third and fourth form.

It was my first two years

and I was a bit shy...

sort of...but not as bad as I was when I was first started.

***Yeah I had lots of friends***

That's the only thing I miss about that school.

I see them...

now and again.

Yeah!

***Yeah...it took Mum a long time to agree though***

but yeah...

I don't think she wanted me to move

because she liked it where I was.

My mum wanted me to go to a bilingual school.

She didn't want me to be with my mates

with my friends

and see how that went

but it wasn't working

and I wanted to be with all my peers.

***So I made the big move to go to Glover***

...so I went to Glover where my peers were...  
 from my primary...  
 and since I've been at Glover  
 they've been really nice and supportive of me  
 and everything  
 and good friends  
 and stuff.

***Old Friends: We're sort of close***

Well I've been brought up with most of my friends  
 since we were five years old  
 so we're sort of close.  
 Sort of scary  
 because I hadn't seen ..  
 before I started at Glover  
 I hadn't seen them for a while  
 and like it was sort of scary  
 going from an old school to a new school ...  
 but it wasn't...  
 but then I got used to it.

***Going to a New School: The best thing was***

when I started at Glover  
 it was like...meeting new teachers  
 and you know coming from a school  
 where the teachers didn't really like you  
 and going to another school  
 where they're real supportive  
 and everything of what you do  
 and so is the principal  
 so yeah.  
 And I started achieving in my classes.  
 The teachers were understanding and supportive.  
 and if I needed help  
 they'd be there.

***It is a very good school***

I love the subjects.  
 They've got more opportunities than Seapoint did.  
 Now I'm doing employment skills  
 and I'm doing Māori

which I could have done at Seapoint  
 but they wouldn't have had  
 the level that I'm at.  
 They had a Māori class  
 but it wasn't as good as at Glover.

*They're there to help you*

I started achieving in my classes.  
 Yeah they make it real fun.  
 Yeah I'm achieving...  
 I'm a lot happier...  
 get on with my teachers.  
 You get used to some of them.  
 They like to be really smart to you  
 and have you on.  
 So you get used to them sometimes  
 and some of them are real serious  
 and you don't know whether they're joking  
 or not!  
 They're there to help you  
 if you have questions  
 and if you're stuck on any particular subject...  
 they always help you...  
 you just put your hand up  
 and they come and help.

Well all my teachers are helpful to me so...  
 there are none of them that are not as helpful as the others.  
 One of my particular teachers...  
 I had exams test  
 and I didn't have a reader-writer  
 and so she went complaining to Mrs Winton about it  
 and I had a guy come in and test me  
 to see how fast I can write and stuff  
 and now I've got a reader-writer...  
 so I was pretty pleased about...

The teachers are understanding and supportive  
 and if I needed help  
 they'd be there.  
 Yeah if the teacher aide didn't understand the question  
 and I didn't understand it

then I'd just put my hand up  
 and he'd come over and help.  
 Everyone  
 and everyone  
 got on with all the teachers.  
 Sometimes you could have a real good conversation with them  
 and laugh  
 and sometimes you'd just look at them  
 and you'd know not to talk to them ...  
 if they looked like that...  
 or if they'd had a bad day,  
 and you!

*My science teacher... [2003]*

He's cool.  
 He's funny...yeah...  
 He can be an egg sometimes  
 but he's funny.  
 Yeah...well...usually I just...  
 if I need help I go to my teacher aide,  
 I don't really talk to him.  
 The only time I talk to him  
 is when I have no-one to talk to  
 and I need someone to cheer me up!  
 He just says something really funny  
 just to make me laugh  
 but it sometimes doesn't work!

*And my economics teacher... [2003]*

He's funny!  
 He's funny!  
 Yeah!  
 He threatens people to put a ruler down their throat  
 if they don't be quiet!  
 He doesn't actually;  
 He just does it to be smart!  
 It's real funny!

*My maths teacher [2003]*

Yeah he's good  
 but he's not my favourite though.  
 I give him a hard time.  
 He doesn't give me a hard time.  
 He's a bit of a softie.  
 He explains things.  
 Doesn't go away

until he really makes sure that you understand it  
so...yeah it's pretty cool.

*My employment skills teacher [2003]*

She's all right.

She's sweet...

I get on well with her sometimes.

*When they have a reliever*

but then again all classes are like that  
when they have relievers.

The students don't listen!

Because they're not used to that teacher  
so they don't...

There's something I don't like  
about all my teachers...  
sometimes...

it's pretty hard to explain.

I'm just trying to think...

No that's the thing.

They're all sweet  
and they don't like growl at us...  
usually...that sort of thing.

Yeah...that's it...

most of the teachers I've had this year are real softies...

Well Miss Simpson  
she's real funny man...

like she doesn't yell at us...

and it's like, 'Growl at us!

We've done something wrong  
so growl at us!'

and she just takes it in a funny way..

You know, the funny side of it.

It's noisy!

Sometimes it's hard to concentrate...

I like quietness when I learn.

Oh in my classes I don't talk.

I just get on with the work.

I don't talk in my classes.

I just get on with the work.

*The principal...he's cool! [2003]*

Yes...he's really nice...  
 he's cool.  
 He's real sweet  
 but he's leaving  
 at the end of next term.  
 It's a bummer!  
 They're still doing interviews I think.  
 I hope it's someone nice!

*Yes. He's ok [Principal 2004]*

but he's not as nice as the other one!  
 No I haven't gone to talk to him.  
 Oh he's come to our assemblies  
 and talks to us.

*I have a shared teacher aide*

I've only got two teacher aides  
 in two of my classes  
 and the rest I'm by myself.  
 They're very nice.  
 Colleen...she's just like a little kid  
 who likes to laugh.  
 You can laugh and joke about work all the time.  
 She hardly ever likes to work  
 but who does in maths?  
 And Mary she's sort of a serious kind type of person  
 but you can joke about anything with her  
 so they're pretty nice people  
 and if I get tired  
 then they're there to write the stuff down for me.  
 With Mary I share with three students  
 and with Colleen I only share with another girl.

Mary's more serious than Colleen...  
 Colleen is the more jokey one.  
 She's the one...  
 like Amy and I always play around with her hair...  
 always mess it up  
 she just laughs and tries to mess up our hair!

We didn't get her!  
 I was gutted!  
 No I didn't get any of those teacher aides from last year.  
 I was pretty sad!

We did have Colleen  
 I think it was like for the first two weeks of school  
 and then they changed.  
 Naomi  
 She's...ok...  
 but I've just gotten used to her.  
 I didn't really like her at first  
 because she was quite grouchy!  
 But now she's pretty cool now!  
 We have laughs in the class.  
 We have really fun in that class!

Thank them for getting me through this year  
 and being cheerful  
 and joking around with me  
 and talking to me and stuff... yeah.  
 Yeah and you can joke with them  
 and fool around with them  
 and then they take it the serious way.  
 You've got to have a laugh now and again!  
 They've helped me to catch up on work...  
 like if I'm away  
 they'll write some wall notes down for me  
 and put them in my books  
 for when I get back  
 so when it comes to an exam  
 I'm not stuck or anything  
 and I'm up to date  
 and then when it comes to the day  
 a half an hour or ten minutes before we do a test  
 they do a quick revision with me.

***I don't really have many friends in that class [ Science 2003]***

because yeah I don't talk to people in that class.  
 Most of them don't do their work!  
 You came on a good day!  
 I work with the two other guys  
 that my teacher aide works with.  
 To work with the others?  
 Yeah I probably would  
 but then she'd have to go up and down  
 and it wouldn't work

so it doesn't worry me.  
 Because I could go in  
 and sit somewhere else  
 if I wanted to  
 but I just don't.  
 No.

***Ashley: I talk to him***

Yeah...I talk to him in economics  
 because he's the only one I know in that class.  
 I play wheelchair rugby with him  
 so yeah we basically just talk about wheelchair rugby!  
 I don't have anything else  
 to talk to him about!

***Special Friends?***

Not really  
 they're all my friends.  
 The only times I talk to my other friends  
 is in class time  
 as I'm usually in the Copeland Centre<sup>19</sup>  
 talking to Amy.

***Yeah...I have a couple of 'boy' friends***

..that I used to go...  
 I've just been brought up with them from primary  
 so I've known them for a while.  
 I don't really hang out with them  
 that much  
 but the only time I see them is in class  
 or when I go to the Māori room.  
 The same age as me yeah.

***Yeah there's a girl called Aroha***

I've known her since I was about four.  
 Her parents and my parents are quite close friends  
 yeah.  
 Sometimes we talk  
 and sometimes we don't  
 but we talk in Māori.

---

<sup>19</sup> The Copeland Centre is the name of special needs unit at Glover High School.

***We'd always been friends [Amy, 2003]***

for the last four or five years I think...  
we hadn't seen each other...  
I think we were about two years old  
when we knew each other.  
Well we just started to catch up on the old gossip  
and then we just talked to each other.  
Yeah she's the same as me [spina bifida].  
I hadn't seen her for about three years  
before I came to Glover.  
I didn't actually know that she was my age.  
I thought she was younger.  
She's Pakeha.  
She's very nice.  
We get on a lot...  
like we have the same interests...  
boys...  
No we've got different tastes.  
We'd probably be fighting over the same guy!  
Oh they don't go to school.  
Left school.  
...and shopping...  
Yeah but she likes animals  
and I don't.  
I don't really like animals.  
I suppose we both like guys  
but...who doesn't? (laugh).

But Amy's my best friend so...  
one of my best friends  
so yeah...  
She helps me  
like when we're in class  
she helps me with the things I am stuck with  
and she understands  
like I could tell her anything  
and everything  
and she understands  
and she'll...  
she's sort of like my counselling sort of thing.  
Mmmm she tells me

everything that she doesn't tell anyone else.

Best friend?

Ah...yes and no...

Well she's a friend

but I've got...

like there's another friend of mine

that I was brought up with

and we're closer than...

Roanne.

She lives in a motel just out of town.

She's left school.

She's got a baby.

I haven't seen her for the last three months

I think.

Sometimes when I can be bothered ringing them

or when they can be bothered ringing me.

Yeah I would ring Amy...

or I'd ring my other friend Katy.

### ***A Good Friend?***

Helpful...

careful...

caring...

understanding...

and friendly.

### ***At intervals I don't really do much. [2003]***

I just go to the Copeland Centre

and socialise with one of my mates

because she doesn't like going out in the playground

so I go to the Copeland Centre to talk to her

instead of going around with her.

The only times I talk to my other friends

is in class time

as I'm usually in the Copeland Centre talking to Amy.

### ***At intervals I go somewhere else. [2004]***

I go to the Māori room,

or the caf.

Oh I just walk around...yeah...

I try and stay away from the Copeland Centre  
because I don't like going there.

I don't know.

I just don't like it.

I'll go there sometimes to see people

and say, 'Hello'

and that's about it

then go and do my own thing.

### ***There are bullies at our school***

I haven't been bullied

but there are bullies at our school yeah.

I've heard...yeah.

### ***Netball? No***

because of my back

'cos I've got rods and cords in my back

so every time I go to stretch,

they hurt

so I've decided to just play wheelchair rugby

where I don't have to stretch.

I haven't been playing rugby for the last five weeks

because I had a sore big toe.

I got a sore infected toe so I haven't been able to play.

That's why I've got no shoes on.

Yeah well it's got a bandage on it

and I don't want to put a shoe on it

because it squashes it.

Yeah! We won't go into details!!!

### ***I did mini Olympics***

I came first in all the wheelchair races.

The hardest one was the 1000.

I did that in nine minutes and 16 seconds... I think it was.

Hard and long!

I just about gave up!

I was supposed to play wheelchair rugby

but by the time I did five races,

I was tired!

And I was still tired the next day

so I didn't do any swimming.

I did...T Ball.

I did so well in that!  
 The pole thing went flying with the ball.  
 Everyone was sitting there laughing at me!  
 Yeah. I was!  
 It went backwards so you would!  
 And they all ducked  
 and they thought I was going to hit them with it!  
 I could have but I wasn't that mean!  
 I did basketball shooting.  
 I didn't get any of them in!  
 So they just put me down as competed.  
 Yeah I felt real sad!  
 Oh what else did I do?  
 I can't remember what else I did.  
 It was last term.  
 I was just tired  
 and so I was for a week!

***I also do kapa haka.***

We have practice every Thursdays  
 and we've got kapa haka and speech regionals  
 coming up in September that we'll be going to.  
 I'm not going to speak.  
 We're going to watch.  
 I'm one of the ushers.  
 We might be doing a few items  
 but we're not actually in the competition.

***Out of School Activities?***

Yeah computer  
 and talk on the phone.  
 I usually ring my nana or my brother...yeah.  
 Go shopping!  
 Or go to town to have a look around.  
 Or otherwise just have a look on the net.  
 I like to go out by myself.  
 I like to be independent yeah.  
 Go by myself.  
 My mum drops me off  
 and just leaves me  
 and I ring her up when I'm ready to come home.  
 I shop by myself.

Sometimes...not all the time...  
 when I have money  
 or when my mum's got money!  
 I like to buy clothes.  
 I go by myself  
 because my mum doesn't like coming with me  
 because I spend hours and hours in one shop!  
 Yeah I do...especially when it's looking for jeans...  
 'Don't like that and don't like that!'  
 I won't let my mum buy me clothes without me  
 because she buys the wrong things.

***I don't see many people***

I just see them at school  
 and that's it!  
 I don't go out much.  
 I went shopping two weekends ago yeah.  
 I bought a DVD.  
 I bought a beanie.  
 What else did I buy?  
 Food!  
 What else did I buy that day?  
 I bought a phone cover  
 and that's about it.

***I do dishes***

I do the washing.  
 I fold the washing  
 and I sometimes put the washing on  
 and I clean the bathroom  
 and sometimes do the vacuuming.  
 I help cook  
 but don't cook by myself though  
 because I'd burn myself.  
 I did the ironing once  
 and I burnt myself  
 so never again would I iron!  
 I like to bake.  
 I like to bake cookies and pancakes.

***I'm always happy and cheerful***

I'm never...

oh whenever I'm sick I'm unhappy  
 but I'm always happy and cheerful  
 and never sad.  
 Well I like school but I don't...  
 I like to go to school to socialise  
 but I don't like going to school to learn...  
 like other students...  
 I don't know many students that like school!  
 Oh in my classes I don't talk.  
 I just get on with the work.  
 I don't talk in my classes.  
 I just get on with the work.

***Reflection: I've sort of gotten used to it***

but when I was two or three years old  
 I just didn't want to know.  
 I couldn't handle being in a wheelchair  
 and you know all my friends were walking  
 and I wasn't so  
 but now I've got used to it so  
 I can do basically  
 just about everything that anyone else can...  
 if not better!  
 I just get on with life.  
 They've got ramps...every classroom.  
 Well the classrooms in corridors...  
 there's only one corridor that's got steps  
 but I don't go up those steps to go to that classroom.  
 They've made sure that all my classrooms are on the low level.  
 I like to push myself.

***Hospital...lots of times***

A week - seven days.  
 Yeah...  
 probably sleep and sleep and sleep.  
 I'm supposed to be in ICU for the first three days I think.  
 I like to watch TV.  
 I don't think they'll give me a TV.  
 I've got family that wants to come down.  
 Mr Clark is going to organise for me to do correspondence  
 so I can get all the credits  
 so that'll be cool!

My principal would have signed me up for correspondence.  
 I went to him in the middle of this year  
 and he said if I was going into hospital during the year,  
 in school-time,  
 he'd put me on correspondence,  
 just until I come out.  
 Yes!

### *I don't care what I wear*

Oh actually, when I go to school  
 I don't care what I wear.  
 I'm not like most teenagers  
 that have to, you know,  
 go round and look for clothes and stuff.  
 I don't care what I wear to school!  
 I like shopping for clothes.  
 Yeah. I just don't care what I wear to school!  
 In town I do.  
 Yeah.  
 When I go to town it's like,  
 'Oh I've got to find clothes!  
 I've got to find clothes!  
 Got to get something to wear!'  
 But when I go to school I just go,  
 'Oh I'll put this on!'  
 Yeah.  
 Clothes is nothing when you go to school.  
 Fashion!  
 Mind you most teenagers at school,  
 they either worry about their fashion,  
 or don't.  
 No.  
 School's school!  
 I mean it's different if you're going out or going to town  
 but not school!

### *When I leave school*

That's one thing I don't know at the moment.  
 I know some people want me to be a teacher  
 which I don't want to  
 because my mum's a teacher  
 and my mother's mum was a teacher.

So that's why I don't want to be a teacher.  
Because I don't want to follow in my mother's mother's footsteps  
who handed it down to my mother.  
Well I wanted to be a hairdresser  
but then that changed.  
No first I wanted to be a barman  
then I wanted to be a hairdresser  
then I wanted to be a masseuse.  
Now I don't know what I want to be.

## Chapter Eleven: My Narrative Response to Sarah's Stories

Sarah, this has been a poignant response to me to write because you passed away six weeks after I had interviewed you for the third time. During that last session I thought that you did not look well and that your cough was troubling you. You had had some time off school with bronchitis and you weren't your usual bubbly self and did not elaborate as we talked. I reflected that although the conversation was not as full as the previous two, that in the fourth interview I would be able to draw the threads together and encourage you to reflect on your experiences. Sadly this didn't happen.

I did not find out about your passing until the day after the memorial service at the school, and I wish I could have been there to help me in my grief and sadness by sharing this with your family and friends. Writing this chapter helps me to do this as I reflect on your experiences as you shared them with me. Your mother Felicity spoke to Jill, the liaison teacher, after the service and said she wanted me to continue with the research. I rang Felicity shortly after this and she shared the circumstances of your sudden passing from pneumonia. I had already had one long interview with her and she was enthusiastic about talking again, which we did about five months later. It was an emotional interview mixed with tears and laughter as we both reflected on the vibrant young woman that you were, and how all those who knew you, remembered you with love and laughter. Shortly after this I interviewed Amy, your best friend at school, and so these interviews are interwoven in my response to your stories to create a narrative that reflects the experiences of your short life. I had already interviewed some teachers, teacher aides, and the principal in 2003 (the year before you passed away); I also interviewed some of your teachers, teacher aides, and the new principal, in late 2004 after you had passed away. They all readily talked about you and the enthusiasm

with which you lived your life, and these thoughts are also threaded through my narrative.

Because you attended two secondary schools, your experiences were enriched as they involved some comparison, but also because these experiences provided a depth that shaped you, developing an independent confident young woman who was comfortable in two cultures - Māori and Pakeha, which was your mother's dream for you. The threads in your stories tell of your confrontation with attitudes about your culture and your disability and how these challenged your identity in the social world of your school and community. Your social relationships and friendships were influenced and developed on those landscapes.

***The teachers and that (sic) weren't very supportive of Māoris (sic)***

Sarah, your primary school years were spent at a kura kaupapa where you were immersed in Te Reo Māori and where you had friends who you had known since you were five. Your father, who died when you were seven, was Pakeha and your Māori mother wanted you to go to a bilingual school and away from your kura peers, so you could learn to stand in two worlds. The total immersion kura environment had been secure and nurturing and your mother reflected, "The reason why I sent her to a mainstream school was for her to be able to survive in a mainstream school because she'd been nurtured in a total immersion environment" (Felicity, 11/03).

The first two years of your secondary education were spent at Seapoint High School and your mother said that it was there that you "had to deal with other cultures other than the culture she had been immersed in and she didn't quite sometimes know how to face those issues that came up" (Felicity, 11/03). One of the issues that you told me about was when one particular teacher continually mispronounced your Māori name. I found it interesting that when

you chose a name for this research you chose an easily pronounced English name, rather than a Māori name that could have possibly been mispronounced; this has meant that I cannot describe the mispronunciation. I was going to discuss this with you at the fourth interview. The other interesting thing about the mispronunciation was that when I discussed your choice of name with your mother in her second interview, she said that only your father and godmother pronounced your name as the Pakeha teacher had done. Perhaps you felt that it was their special way and you objected to the teacher's use of that name or as you described, feeling that she could have tried harder and that it indicated a lack of respect for you. Metge and Kinloch (1978) agree, "...deep down they resent it especially if continued, feeling (probably with justice) that it is a sign of unwillingness to make the effort to accept that which is different" (p. 34). You responded to the teacher:

I kept answering her back and telling her not to call me [mispronounced name] and she said she was going to send me out and I said, "Well you can send me out but I'll go to the principal", so she didn't send me out.

This comment also reflected your mother's description of you:

She's very confident of herself and she argues the point whether she's right or wrong and I'm proud of her because she has those strengths ...and that's being strong and being able to stand in the world she lives in. (Felicity, 11/03)

This incident on the in-class landscape highlighted your difference and "otherness" as a Māori student.

### *I wasn't allowed to play netball*

The other major issue for you at Seapoint High was another cultural issue, but this time it was a clash of disabled/able-bodied cultures. Your mother reflected that in the nurturing total immersion environment:

They treated her the same as they would treat an able child because that's how she'd been nurtured. They *all* treated her like that [peers and adults] whether she was in a wheelchair or not, she was treated exactly the same as the others. She played netball from the time she started with her peers right up to the time she finished. (Felicity, 11/03)

I discuss cultural perspectives of disability later in the chapter.

When you tried to play netball at Seapoint you were told you were not allowed to play with able-bodied students because it was dangerous. This became a major issue as it raised new questions for you about your identity and who you were as a young woman with spina bifida as, "she realised she was disabled" (Felicity, 11/03). Your mother saw this issue as part of not recognising yourself as disabled: "She did not affiliate herself [with students with disabilities]...could not affiliate herself with being in the block for special needs." She explained how you did not like your taxi dropping you off at the Special Needs block when you said, "I'm not putting up with that! Because I don't need to! I'm mainstream!" Your mother responded;

I just chuckled to myself and I felt for her...and I thought, 'Oh goodness me!' and I said, "No, that's for *you* to take on", because in life I've always waited for her to say, "Why did I have to be disabled"? but she's never, ever, ever said that to me. (11/03)

The determination to play netball affirmed the self-identity and social perception you desired (Wilhite et al., 1999). So as well as this challenge to your identity when you were told that you couldn't play, you were angry that the teacher was not "straight with me." You later reflected that this had been a new situation for the teacher; however, it reflected a disablist attitude (Oliver, 1996) and both you and your mother were upset and angry. Furthermore, your mother was a strong advocate for you and encouraged you to "speak your mind." She also challenged your teacher, "'You have brutally taken something that she knew she participated in and was inclusive, away from her" and she goes, 'Oh! I...we never thought about it that way'"

(Felicity, 11/03). Felicity suggested that it was a big issue that should have been discussed as a group and also noted that when you played with your kura peers, the netball association and coaches were informed and the girls were taught “to run sideways so they are able to see”; Felicity had coached netball. Taub and Greer’s (2000) US research into the experiences of children aged 10-17 years with physical disabilities who were excluded and discouraged from participation in physical activity, resonates with your feelings of disempowerment at being excluded. In their research, physical activity legitimated their social identity and provided a setting in which social networks with peers are enhanced.

As you told me about this experience at Seapoint I wondered if others had tried to play netball with their able-bodied peers at secondary school level. In my Narrative Beginnings I recalled Sally, a child in my Year 4 class who had spina bifida, and who taught me how she could participate in playing netball. A web search did not reveal any journal articles but I found a newspaper report in the Dominion Post (Robson, 2003, April, 3) in which the Halberg Trust had facilitated a ten-year-old girl in playing two “invitation” matches that included wheelchairs and able-bodied players with Irene Van Dyk as the referee. This was an opportunity for the Trust to openly promote their policy of “ensuring people with a disability can participate in inclusive sport and active leisure within their community” by providing training and support to teachers and coaches (Halberg Trust, 2006). I contacted a Regional Development Manager for the Trust and asked him about any other examples. He gave me anecdotal evidence:

While I haven’t experienced this situation myself I have heard of an example where a girl who was originally from Symonton and played netball in her intermediate school team and has now transferred to Seapoint High School and still plays netball with her school team. I understand there was concern from the local netball union and they were advised to write letters to all the teams in the competition and say there was a girl playing in the netball competition who would be in a

wheelchair. I understand there was no changing of rules, dispensations etc. However modifying rules to ensure inclusion is a possibility, for example, one could be that no one is allowed within one metre of the wheelchair. The rules need to be such so that they don't degrade, or are unfair towards the individual or towards the other players. (J. Broadhurst, personal communication, January 17, 2006)

Was this serendipitous that he may have been talking about you Sarah? Because of confidentiality I could not discuss this possibility with him. The details of place and contributing school were not the same but on the phone he said that someone else had told him about this incident when he received my email, so some of the details may have changed like in Chinese Whispers. If indeed this was another girl at Seapoint, perhaps the staff handled the situation more sensitively after your experience. Because Seapoint was not part of the research study, there is a limitation because I did not interview your teachers to hear their perspectives.

Sarah, you *did* play netball that season, surprising your teacher and principal, and you smugly commented, "She came to watch me one day and she put a smile on her face and I think she changed her mind after she'd seen me play." You made a lot of friends and it was these friends that you missed when you left Seapoint and enrolled at Glover High at the beginning of Year 11: "Yeah I had a lot of friends. That's the only thing I miss about that school!" but "it wasn't working and I wanted to be with all my peers...so I went to Glover where my peers were." You did see some of your Seapoint friends at the movies and shopping but the move to Glover saw you reunited with some of your peers from the kura, as well as old friends who also had spina bifida, and whom you had known since you were preschoolers.

*I'm a lot happier: Nice and supportive...good friends and stuff*

So Sarah, you felt that you didn't belong at Seapoint and you persuaded your mother to let you move schools, "It took her a long time to agree though. I don't think she wanted me to move...because she liked it where I was." Your mother remembers this time, "She [Sarah] said, 'Oh I've had enough of this. I want to go back where my peers are. I want to go back to the wharekura!'" You felt that at Seapoint the teachers "weren't very supportive of Māoris...put downs...I don't think they liked me because I was too outspoken!" whereas at Glover, "they've been really nice and supportive of me and everything and good friends and stuff...they're very nice people...I started achieving in my classes." Although you and your mother did not think you achieved or made progress at Seapoint, your key teacher at Glover noted that you had achieved well and were well supported with a strong reading programme that catered for your English as a second language. Maslow (cited in Eggen & Kauchak, 2004, p. 354) purports that in order to be receptive to learning students need to feel as though they belong.

Sarah, you found it was a bit scary "going from an old school to a new school"; meeting up with your friends from the kura was scary because "before I started at Glover I hadn't seen them for a while", however you soon settled back with them and said, "Well I've been brought up with most of my friends since we were five years old so we're sort of close." They were not special friends but "they're *all* my friends" representing the Regular Friend frame (Meyer et al., 1998). You saw these friends mainly at school, in class, and sometimes you saw them when you went to town. Because your family had moved to another town about twenty kilometres from the school you didn't see them as much as you used to when you were at the kura when you "...went to town...went to pictures. Yeah just hung out and did the normal teenage things."

Sarah, your mother noticed how much happier you were at Glover, becoming more sociable and independent:

I think the difference is the school culture...I'm not talking about Māori culture. I'm talking about school culture...the school culture itself. That's the difference that we've seen and from the time that we've walked into that school it's been the school culture...and yeah...not taking it away from Seapoint or anything like that but one school is very "dominant" where they will say, "Well this is how we do things and this is what we want done" whereas the other school will do the saying but also consult with you or say, "What are your views?" (Felicity, 11/03)

These comments reflect a model of consultation and collaboration at Glover where you were listened to. Felicity added, "whereas the other one I fought and said, 'No!'"

### *Science...I don't really have many friends in that class*

From my observations, in classes when you had a teacher aide, you sat with her away from the other classmates, for example, in science in Year 11 you sat at the front with two other students who were being helped by the same teacher aide and although most of the class was seated in the back half of the class, one boy from a nearby table came and spoke to you and your teacher aide and asked to borrow your eraser. Your teacher aide noted:

She does know a couple of the girls in there and just says, "Hello" to them, but it's not a deep friendship with a one-on-one friendship with anybody really on a deeper level in that classroom, but everybody is very social towards her and inclusive of her in a natural way just as if she's totally the same. (Teacher Aide, 11/03)

This gave me the impression that the able-bodied students accepted you as Just Another Kid, but the seating structures supported by your teacher aide presented you as the Inclusion Kid (Meyer et al., 1998), with physical and symbolic barriers to social interaction with the rest of the class (Giangreco et al., 1997).

Occasionally you worked in a group in science and your teacher aide noted that you were dominant and wanted to take over the task by yourself rather than work with the others so she had to intervene so everybody could participate. She commented, "I mean it's great for her independence but what about the other people's? She wanted to stay in that group but she wanted to lead the group and that's fine!" (11/03). If your teacher had structured cooperative learning groups, you would have shared the outcome of the task and you would have taken on a specified role that ensured positive interdependence. In this way you would have interacted positively with your classmates and shared the satisfaction of achieving a shared learning goal (Putnam, 1997) as you and your classmates got to know each other; academic learning and social learning would be inter-related.

In Year 11 maths the teacher aide sat in between you and Amy so she could help you both, however this meant any conversation you had with Amy was said "across", and heard by, the teacher aide. The rest of the class sat towards the back of the classroom and about two rows of tables away from the front row. In both these classes I observed that the rest of the class was very "social" but the emphasis for you and the other students with the teacher aides was academic. However, in Year 11 employment skills where you did not have a teacher aide you sat at a table with other students so there was the opportunity to chat and the teacher encouraged your group of girls to work together, thus positively facilitating social interaction.

In Year 12 economics I observed you sitting at the front next to Ashley and you later commented, "He's the only one I know in that class. I play wheelchair rugby with him so yeah we basically just talk about wheelchair rugby. I don't have anything else to talk to him about." This relationship was based on proximity and a shared interest because you both had a disability. Similarly, in Year 12 Text and Information Management you chose to sit at the

side and away from the others with Simon who had vision impairment. The teacher in that class observed:

She got on fine with [the other students in the class] but didn't really mix a great deal with them. She'd talk and say hello and that but mainly sort of other people from the Copeland Centre or from sort of our learning disabilities class, which she would've been in as well. Yeah she probably knew those kids better. Whenever we did [work in groups] Sarah was with like the low ability kids and they never seemed to do a great deal. (Teacher, 11/04)

This view reinforced stereotyping. Proponents of co-operative learning suggest that teachers need to be thoughtful about the composition of groups so "students with disabilities generally should not be placed in groups with only students who possess similar characteristics" (Putnam, 1997, p. 58). One of the purposes of structuring groups is to enable diverse students to interact so they can "learn about themselves and each other as individuals" (Baloche, 1998, p. 48). Another factor that may have inhibited you talking to the others was that this was a Year 11 class and you and Simon were the only Year 12s so you "stuck together." If your teacher had mixed the participants in the groups, this stereotyping and separation would have been avoided, and there would have been opportunities for wider social interaction.

In Year 12 employment skills there were two other students sharing a teacher aide and the four of you sat in the middle of the room "on an island" at desks, with the rest of the class seated at benches around the periphery of the room. There was no interaction with these other students and the teacher assumed you did not want to talk to your classmates, "That would have been her choice I imagine" (11/04). Thus an assumption was made, and stereotypes were reinforced.

There was a similar arrangement in your whanau form class.<sup>20</sup> You sat at the middle “island” with a teacher aide, but not yours, and the other students sat around the periphery. There was no interaction even though the other students included your former kura peers. Thus in these classes you generally fitted the frame of the Inclusion Kid (Meyer et al., 1998) where you were seated separately from the rest of the class with no interaction most of the time. The presence of your teacher aides created a physical and symbolic barrier by separating you and your classmates, thus inhibiting interaction with your peers on the in-class landscape (Giangreco et al., 1997) and inhibiting the formation of friendships on the wider landscape.

The focus for you in class Sarah seemed to be on working hard at your subjects rather than socialising and you noted, “I like quietness when I learn. Oh in my classes I don’t talk I just get on with my work. I don’t talk in my classes. I just get on with my work” however, earlier you said, “I like to go to school to socialise but I don’t like going to school to learn. I don’t know many students that like school!” The renewed focus on your work seemed to reflect a response to achievement; at Seapoint you had not achieved academically, you had not felt supported by the teachers and you were unhappy, however, your stories about the teachers at Glover indicated that you really liked the teachers and that they were all supportive and helpful. You felt as though you belonged. Your key teacher described your enrolment at Glover, “Her group from the kura...they welcomed her home” (10/03). You felt that you were achieving and this motivated you to work hard; Eggen and Kauchak (2004) describe how success develops perceptions of competence and self-efficacy, important factors in promoting intrinsic motivation. Your relationships with your teachers were also a factor in creating that sense of belonging; you established an excellent rapport with the teachers and enjoyed light banter

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<sup>20</sup> “Whanau” means family. A whanau form class is one where for daily registration, students from all year levels (9-13) are grouped in one class as a family.

and repartee with them and you called this “giving them a hard time.” However, the focus on academic work could also be seen as your response to having little social interaction; being seated away from the other students and with few opportunities to mix in groups saw your teacher aides keeping you focused on academic tasks.

### *At intervals I don't really do much*

Although you said, “The only time I talk to my other friends is in class time”, I asked you about what you did at intervals and lunchtimes. In Year 11 you spent most of these times at the Copeland Centre where you talked to Amy. This was the beginning of renewing your relationship with her; you had met when you were preschoolers at a group for children with spina bifida and were friends. Because she didn't like being in the school playground you remained at the Centre with her, demonstrating a commitment to your friendship and loyalty to her (Hartup, 1993). In Year 12 your attitude to the Centre changed and although Amy still preferred to stay in there you deliberately went to other places; the cafeteria, the Māori room or you would just...

...walk around [because] I try and stay away from the Copeland Centre because I don't like going there. I don't know. I just don't like it. I'll go there sometimes to see people and say hello and that's about it. Then go and do my own thing.

Your key teacher noted that Amy had a lot of absences through sickness and it was noticeable that you did not go to the Copeland Centre as much. Sarah, you strongly believed you were not part of the Centre, but a mainstreamed student. Being in the Centre highlighted your difference and “otherness” which I discuss later in this chapter. Similarly, some students in Lovitt et al.'s (1999) research described how they disassociated with “special”

education because “special” implied “undesirable” with one boy saying, “In a real class, you feel that you’re normal” (p. 78).

Teachers observed that you were usually on your own as you “walked around”, although one teacher had seen you “chatting to students outside the senior common room” (10/03), and another commented on your personality and demeanour:

I always see her with people acting positively. Yes I think she’s such a neat young woman. She’s always got a smile on her face. She’s always purposeful and people respond to that. They really do like her as a person. She’s a great young woman. I think she does [have positive social experiences at school]. I wouldn’t like to say whether they were very deep relationships but people are good with her because I think because of her personality. She’s good with people...as far as I know she has positive, fairly superficial relationships. (HOD Special Needs/Key Teacher, 10/03)

Another factor that diminished the amount of time you had for socialising at lunchtime was going to the Copeland Centre to shower. Because of urinary problems that saw you having an operation at the end of 2003, you showered at lunchtimes. Your key teacher regretted, “that cut into the social time quite significantly” (HOD Special Needs, 10/03), although you would often choose to go to kapa haka practice rather than shower! The urinary problem also created difficulties with social relationships in other ways. Sometimes odour caused students to move away from you in class creating a barrier to creating friendships. Some of the students “have been quite rude, moved away, quite openly rude” and “she doesn’t seem to overtly get hurt by it...Sarah is philosophical about it I guess, like, ‘...in the meantime I have to put up with this problem I’ve got’” (HOD Special Needs, 10/03). After the operation this was less of a problem.

### *Yeah, I go to wheelchair rugby*

Wheelchair rugby was an out-of-class activity that you enjoyed, and you also took part in the mini Olympics for students with disabilities and achieved well in the events you participated in. These activities enabled you to interact with other students with disabilities and have fun through participation in sport. Interaction with other students, and having fun, through participation in sport are two of the aims of the Halberg Trust and are supported by researchers (e.g. Kristen et al., 2002; Kristen, Patrikson, & Fridlund, 2003) who found several reasons for participation in sports programmes such as getting new friends and experiencing a feeling of togetherness; learning a sporting activity and gaining self-confidence, knowledge, and skills; strengthening one's physique and achieving good health; becoming someone; and having a good time.

### *I also do kapa haka*

The kapa haka group was an opportunity for you to mix with your friends from the kura, and make new friends. You enjoyed the practices and it was in this group that once again you met a clash between the non-disabled/disabled cultures, but this time it was within your own Māori culture. You did not share this with me and I can only imagine this was because you were hurt again and maybe because I am not Māori and you were uncomfortable that you had been rejected by your Māori group. At Seapoint the netball clash had been within a predominantly Pakeha culture and another context, however, when you were told by the Glover kapa haka group that you could not perform with them at the regional finals you were devastated. Your mother described what you said:

She goes, 'I have been in a Māori environment all my life and the last thing I needed was for someone to slap me in the face like that. I am

Māori. I was brought up Māori. I know Māori. I know my stuff but because I am in a wheelchair...they took it away from me!

Your mother also felt that you had been let down by your culture, going against the inclusive attitudes of the kura and your upbringing, and sadly reflected, “so something that we had nurtured in her at a total immersion school environment by everyone participating was just taken out of her” (11/03).

### ***I am Māori. I was brought up Māori. I know Māori***

Sarah, the attitudes to your disability that you confronted in the Kapa Haka group contradicted the attitudes that had shaped you in your total immersion schooling and within the context of your whanau. It threatened your identity as a young Māori woman and the values that nurtured you and your mother remembered:

It hurt her and it hurt me...I know it was the wheelchair thing...I totally believe it was because she was in a wheelchair...it's facing disability in different environments. So something that we had nurtured in her at a total immersion school environment by everyone participating was just taken out of her...but she was strong enough to get back on there. It's tough but she is what she is I believe because she's had that nurturing side, total immersion environment that's made her strong and because she knows her own identity she's not prepared to take any nonsense from anyone and that's why she's very good at voicing her opinion, her views. (Felicity, 11/03)

Sarah, from my teaching of inclusive education papers I understood that there was a “Māori” world view of disability that was holistic and inclusive with one fatalistic view being that disability is regarded by some as a punishment for a tapu infringement by a close relative in one's whakapapa (Durie, 1994; Royal Commission on Social Policy, 1988, cited in Bevan-Brown, 1989, p.5) and where the transgression is punished not in the spiritual world but in the physical world (Bevan-Brown, 1989). So your mother's stories about

your exclusion in the kapa haka group motivated me to reread the literature in order to contextualise your experience taking the cultural implications into account, and not over-simplifying the experience from my own cultural perspective. To address issues of my cultural bias I asked one of my Māori colleagues to read your stories and my response chapter.

As I read, I realised I must put “Māori” in quotation marks because I recognised that there is not “one” Māori view of issues. Pere (1988) purports that, “It is convenient for the Pakeha to collectivise ‘the Māori’ and restrict...understanding...” (p.10); similarly, one participant in Kingi and Bray’s (2000) research said, “Māori is only a name, we come from different parts...each iwi (tribe) have their own way you know.” So it is important to recognise a diversity of views: “some Māori have a concept of disability that is defined by colonisation” (Kingi & Bray, p. 24), for example, loss of land so one is not able to grow one’s own food, reflecting a social model perspective of disability (Kingi & Bray). In their research other perspectives include disability as a lack of knowledge of oneself and whakapapa (family genealogy), and the inability to speak te reo. One kaumatua (elder) believed, “We are disabled in the Pakeha world – in our world we’re not” (p. 21). Other participants in Kingi and Bray’s (2000) study recognised disability as, for example, “something like intellectual or physical disability” (p. 22), and another believed, “...we accept people as they are, you know” (p.22) reflecting an ecological worldview. A kaumatua reflected, “Those who were...physically disabled...- nobody seemed to treat them differently to the rest. They were just accepted as whanau – oh that was back in the 40s” (p. 10).

A model of disability under the umbrella of Māori health that is widely acknowledged is Te Whare Tapa Wha (four-pillared house), in which the four cornerstones or pillars of Māori Health – te taha wairua (spirituality), te taha hinengaro (the mind), te taha whanau (family), and te taha tinana (physical) - are prerequisites for health and well-being (Durie, 1994; Kingi & Bray, 2000).

Pere (1988) extended this in her model (which she calls Te Wheke (the octopus)) to include these and four other aspects recognising also mana ake - the absolute uniqueness of a person; mauri – the life-sustaining principle; ha a kore ma a kui ma – the breath of life from forebears; and whatumanawa – the emotional development of the family and individual as a whole. In this framework Sarah, your impairment could be viewed as your unique identity. By excluding you from the competition on the basis of your physical ability, the balance had been upset; “If you break any of those pillars, you break down the learning opportunities of the individual, whether they are special needs or not” (Public Health Nurse cited in Wilkie, 1999, p.16). Thus your social learning opportunities as well as your mana (prestige) had been damaged.

Your exclusion from your kapa haka group could be illustrated by some of these theoretical perspectives. Within this group there was maybe a diversity of views of disability ranging from a deficit/medical model perspective to a social model and including an ecological model. Exclusion reflected a perspective of deficiency and the deficit model, such as was reflected in the story of two participants in Wilkie’s (2001) research who noted:

You never see our Māori people bring out like the blind and deaf very much at the marae. The only one I see is my own girl; you don’t see very many Māori bringing their whanau out, with disabilities anyway [and] they were ignored, that’s all there is to it. (p. 43)

Sarah, your mother described the incidents where you were excluded as, “it’s facing disability in different environments” (Felicity, 11/03), however, as well as a maturing experience I wondered what this exclusion from the kapa haka group, with its consequent focus on difference, meant for your relationships with your peers in the group; many of these students had come through the kura system with you and they were one of the reasons why you

wanted to go to Glover High. The year after the incident you were still going to practices but seemed to be less enthusiastic and said it was, “just ok!” One of your teacher aides had observed, “I know she’s in the cultural group so a lot of people in the cultural group say, ‘Kia ora’ [hello] to her and are very inclusive. But I don’t know if they’re friends. Friends are at another level” (11/03) suggesting you were accepted by your peers as Just Another Friend (Meyer et al., 1998).

### ***Best Friend: We’ve always been friends***

Your friendship with Amy began when you were preschoolers at standing frame and exercise classes for children with spina bifida. You went to different primary schools and it wasn’t until you went to Glover High that you met up again and after a few months of being in the same maths class and talking in the Copeland Centre, you began to form a closer friendship. Your mother saw the development of this friendship, and the friendship with the other girls with spina bifida, as a part of when you “started to acknowledge herself as being a disabled person and then she started being with them” (01/05). In the first interview you described Amy as “one of my mates”, and by the end of the year when I asked you if Amy was your Best Friend you answered, “yes and no. She’s a friend but there’s another friend of mine that I was brought up with and we’re closer. Her name is Roanne and she’s got a baby and lives in a motel just out of town.” In August the next year you said that you had lost contact with Roanne and hadn’t seen her for ages, however you said that Amy was *a* Best Friend. Amy described you as *her* Best Friend. You also had another friend Mere from the kura who went to another high school and she would come and stay at weekends sometimes. Your mother commented, “They just blob out and do girly things” (Felicity, 11/03).

In Year 11 you spent time with Amy at school and apart from both using wheelchairs and having spina bifida, seemed to have only a few things in common:, and you said, “She likes animals and I don’t really like animals. I suppose we both like guys but...who doesn’t!” However, you enjoyed her company – “She’s very nice” - and the next year you ventured out together on frequent shopping trips. Shopping was a new experience for Amy because she was not as independent as you were, reflecting differences in upbringing: Amy’s mother Clare recalls:

Sarah just made Amy more outgoing. Amy would never go to town on her own, now I can’t sort of stop her going out...she’d say, ‘Oh she’ll be right!’ you know and off they’d go. Now Amy’s the same. I’ll say, ‘I’ll take you’, and ‘Na, na. I’ll do it myself’, you know, so it’s been good. (Clare, 03/05)

In your relationship with Amy, although you reciprocally helped each other, you emerged as the leader and dominant member, just as you did in Mary’s story of the role you took in the science group. You modelled confidence and an enthusiasm for life to Amy and this positively and noticeably changed her. Your mother described you as “such an inspiration and role model, not only to Amy but to her mother too, to realise what is there for these kids to do” (01/05).

In Year 11 you talked to your friends on the phone:

Sometimes...when I can be bothered ringing them or when they can be bothered ringing me. I ring Amy or my other friend Katy who lives over here but she doesn’t go to school. She’s older and works at the university.

However, when I talked to Amy in 2005, she said you two talked and texted every day on your cellphones:

I used to ring her every single day after school once she’d got home...and now I just...sometimes I want to do it but I know I can’t. I can text her but it won’t go on.

Felicity told me that they had put your cellphone in your casket.

When you were in Year 12 you spent a lot more time with Amy as a friendship dyad within a wider group of girls who had spina bifida and whom you had known for years, at Amy's house. You shared a taxi with Amy to school and back and sometimes you would stay on at Amy's after school and your mother would pick you up on her way home. Sometimes at weekends you stayed the night at Amy's. Amy recalled:

She was out there! She used to want to party all the time. We didn't go out and party but we had little parties around here...and we had a couple of drinks as well...and get like videos and watch the videos and watch TV. It wasn't like a huge party. (03/05)

Sarah you described some characteristics of a "good friend" as "helpful, caring, understanding, and friendly" and said that Amy was "all those." You elaborated:

She helps me in like...when we're in class she helps me with things I'm stuck with...and she understands like I could tell her anything and everything and she understands and she'll...she's sort of like my counselling sort of thing. She tells me everything that she doesn't tell anyone else.

This closeness and sharing of intimacies developed with time, and was reciprocal (Hartup, 1993) and reflected the Best Friend frame (Meyer et al., 1998); Amy confirmed that in Year 11...

...I talked to her but it wasn't exactly friends with her but after a while we got quite close. I could tell her basically anything but I mean I've got other friends I can tell them. I mean I can tell them things but I can't tell them everything like I used to tell her. If I needed help or advice she used to help me about it so yeah.

Amy missed you: "I would have understood if she was an old, old lady or something and if she just passed away because she was older, but she was only 16 at the time."

***Reflection: Because I am! That's who I am!***

From your stories Sarah, and the stories of the people I interviewed, there emerged a picture of you as a confident, sociable, independent young woman secure in your identity and whose warm, friendly, out-going personality ensured you made the most of your opportunities and enjoyed life. Many of the people that I interviewed spoke very positively about you and who you were: a teacher said, "...very, very assertive" (Key teacher, 10/03); and Amy remembered, "She was funny, really, really funny...really caring, very helpful" (Amy, 12/04). In the first interview your mother said,

Because she knows her own identity, she's not prepared to take any nonsense from anyone...She's very strong...independent...very, very caring...outspoken...she doesn't have a lot of relationships but she has a lot of friends...outgoing and friendly... (Felicity, 11/03)

Later after you had passed away she remembered, "She enjoyed it all because she felt wanted. She felt needed, that she could do things for herself and family" (Felicity, 01/05). Your teacher aides said, "She's so much fun! She's full of life! She's actually quite shy but she covers it up with huge bravado...She's happy when you see her and when she's happy she will start to sing, which is nice" (Teacher Aide, 11/03); and, "She doesn't differentiate between adult and fellow student in the way she talks. She talks on the same level" (Teacher Aide, 11/03). Another teacher had this to say, "She has a great sense of humour, a great personal approach to people. She gets on really well with everybody" (Key teacher, 10/03); and again your mother said, "She just had this way of being able to talk to people" (Felicity, 01/05). Your mother noted that you had good relationships with your taxi drivers to the extent that on your Olympic Day, "one taxi driver was there the whole day with her!" (Felicity, 01/05). Even the neighbours missed the sound of your wheelchair on the gravel. These personal factors saw you as an effective self-advocate with determination borne from a strong sense of self that was nurtured by your

parents and whanau at home, and in your kura years. You did not see yourself as “disabled”, thus reflecting the social model of disability where it is society that disables people. This resonates with Oliver’s (1996) perspective and the New Zealand Disability Strategy (Ministry of Health, 2001) that states:

Disability is not something individuals have. What individuals have is impairment...Disability is the process which happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of the impairments *other* [my italics] people have. (p.9)

This concept of “other”, a term used by the dominant group, is critically analysed in the literature of diversity, for example, Minh-ha (1989), Singh (1995), and Smith (1997; 1999). Similarly, the term “them” [and us] is used to describe “other” people who are “different” in our societies, reflecting a non-inclusive discourse; an inclusive discourse where difference is valued would use the words “everyone” or “all” (Booth & Ainscow, 1998). Smith (1999) writing about indigenous people puts the use of the term “other” in the context of history and power. She purports that it is the stories and accounts of those in power that perpetuates the power with “exclusion, marginalization and denial” (p. 68). The margins become enclosures that exclude, leading to the “dehumanisation of the other” (p. 102). Your stories told of how you were the “other” in an able-bodied school culture when you wanted to play netball; you were “other” in a classroom with a Pakeha teacher who could not pronounce your name; you were “other”, a student with impairment, within your own Māori culture at Glover when you were excluded from the kapa haka team. This concept of “other” was new to you and you had the self-determination to resist it, strongly supported by your mother who said, “That is going against where we’ve come from...We are going to work together in partnership” (Felicity, 11/03), and later, “She never ever thought that way with us. Never, because we didn’t think like that...we

thought about her needs” (Felicity, 01/05). These situations forced you to reflect on who you were and your mother commented, “She started acknowledging her disability and realising she was different but was proving every time that she was just as normal as everybody else!” (Felicity, 01/05)

The presence of the Copeland Centre also highlighted the differences and one concern about this centre was voiced by your new principal, “The isolation factor that the Copeland Centre’s down the other end of the school doesn’t help” (11/04) in reducing barriers to inclusion and changing attitudes of staff and students. He was positive about the role of the centre in changing the climate of the school and wanted to find ways where...

...that kind of atmosphere where kids are really focused on...and there’s a lovely warmth and relationship between pupil and teacher and so somehow that spirit has to influence the school...organise things so they happen in the Copeland Centre...[for example] whanau classes...it’s an attitude of open affection that needs to permeate the school.

I reflected on the irony of his comment as I put it alongside your experience of exclusion in the kapa haka group. This principal was suggesting a reverse mainstreaming concept where the school moved to the Centre rather than the Centre students moving to the mainstream school, although this also happened. He expanded:

I believe in inclusion, yeah, very much so, yeah. But you have got to set it up so it’s right. I mean, some kids obviously can’t be mainstreamed but no I really believe in it and I think from a social justice point of view that it’s imperative that it happens but it’s got to be done well and so it’s got to have the appropriate amount of staff training and so forth. [This school] just leads so far ahead of other schools it’s unbelievable...the way it’s [Copeland Centre] part of the school...just getting kids used to difference [although he was talking about students with disabilities my earlier reflection points to cultural differences as well]...but I think we need to up the ante...more staff training of our staff...the kids need to have more interaction so we set that up...I guess it’s just also raising the profile...I’m interested in their [the staff

in the Copeland Centre] kind of attitude – the warmth thing...they do it really well...I'd like more of that really. (Principal, 11/04)

This principal recognised that changes in the school needed to come from within the school and saw the Copeland Centre as a resource that could work with and teach the mainstream teachers and students, thus enabling the inclusion of all students. Another factor that he felt was important in changing the attitudes of teachers was reducing the number of teacher aides and using that money for professional development so teachers stopped seeing students with special needs as “them” and “other” because at present there was a view that, “they come with a teacher aide so they feel, ‘I don’t have to do anything!’ We’re too heavily dependent on teacher aides” (11/04). His view identified some factors that were barriers to inclusion and that perpetuated the concept of “other” in the classrooms.

Your previous principal cited a recent ERO report that commented, “The students within the school show an extraordinary degree of tolerance.” I discussed the use of the term “tolerance” in Chapter Nine but I would like to highlight this statement and make a link to “otherness” and The New Zealand Disability Strategy (Ministry of Health, 2001) that I included in the beginning of this section which states, “a fully inclusive society...will happen in this country where we have moved forward from exclusion, *tolerance* [my italics] and accommodation of disabled people to a fully inclusive and mutually supportive society” (p. 11). “Tolerance”, in the past, has been seen as positive however, it does not value difference, and perpetuates the concept of “other” and “them and us.”

### ***Your Voice: It needs to be shared***

So, Sarah, I talked to your mother on a hot January afternoon in her classroom as she was preparing for the new school year. We talked for over

an hour and towards the end of our conversation about you and your life experiences she reiterated that both she and you had been very happy to take part in the research and concluded:

It's something that you want to share too, Angela, because I suppose I never realised until she'd passed on what a precious person I had and what I've learnt and it has been as a teacher you should realise, my goodness! This needs to be shared. It needs to be shared so other people can learn from it. (Felicity, 01/05)

Her words reflect the principle of empowerment where by sharing stories, a traditional Māori practice, whanau are empowered:

Presenting positive examples of solutions reached by whanau was aimed at empowering all whanau with special needs children, and all staff dealing with such whanau. The stories give information and options in a way that is easy to understand...whanau were empowered by voicing their own perspective of special educational needs in their own words, and by the research process. (Wilkie, 2001, p. 11)

## Chapter Twelve: Exploring the Threads

In my responses to the students' stories (Chapters Five, Seven, Nine, and Eleven), I examined the range and dynamics of Sam's social relationships on the in-school and out-of-school landscapes; Gemma's patterns of seeking acceptance in groups and the dynamics of her group of friends; the changing social relationships that Adam described alongside some negative and positive environmental influences that affected and contributed to these, including bullying; and Sarah's experiences that described how attitudes about her culture and disability challenged her identity and influenced her social relationships. So, with the sense of Dewey's (1938) notions of continuity, place, and interaction, and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) concept of the three-dimensional narrative space, I go back to the research stories and the temporal landscapes on which they were told and develop further the dialogue that began with the reading of the students' stories and my narrative responses (Gergen & Gergen, 2003), drawing attention to issues that have emerged as significant and suggesting areas for further research.

The narratives of the four young people in this study have been framed from an ecological approach highlighting the interactions between them and their environment. This framing has enabled exploration of the importance of social outcomes in the curriculum. Within the social model of disability, I have examined those environmental factors shaped by the socio-cultural context of the school and wider context that impact on students' perceptions of each other, acting as possible barriers to establishing social relationships and friendships. I also discussed those aspects of the ecological environment, including pedagogical practices in classrooms, that facilitate social relationships.

I hope there will be an on-going dialogue on school landscapes among teachers in particular, as we seek ways of promoting "practical wisdom" as

praxis, by improving our pedagogy within an ethic of caring, and fulfil Gemma's wish that "teachers will think about what it is like for someone with a disability." To improve pedagogic quality that facilitates and supports positive academic *and* social outcomes, we must critically reflect on the discourses – both the official discourses and the hidden curriculum - and how these shape our pedagogy. We need to examine our beliefs and our stereotypes and talk together about how these are perpetuated on the local school landscapes and on the national and global landscapes on which schools are situated, and reflect on the stories we live by and the stories we would like to be our own.

As I read and reread the students' stories, some of them caused me to reflect in more depth and recognise threads that wove through them. The stories led me to critically examine these threads and the discourses that they suggested. In this chapter I return to my research question and analyse and explore some of the dominant threads in the stories and how these shaped Sam's, Gemma's, Adam's, and Sarah's experiences of their social relationships and friendships on the in-school landscape, and subsequently on the out-of-school landscape.

### *Friendships of Youth with Disabilities*

My study using a narrative inquiry methodology supports and expands on previous research on the friendships of youth with disabilities within a sociology of childhood and adolescence. Many of these studies explored the social relationships of students with moderate and/or severe intellectual disabilities (e.g. Helmstetter et al., 1994; Hendricksen et al., 1996; Meyer et al., 1998; Peck et al., 1990). Because many of the students were non-verbal, the studies used observations, surveys, and/ or interviews with peers without disabilities as well as with teachers and paraprofessionals. A few

studies included students with disabilities (e.g. Kennedy, Shikla, & Fryxell, 1997 used focus group interviews; Rosenblum, 1998, used telephone surveys). All these studies were in North America; the only study in New Zealand that explores the social relationships of youth with disabilities is MacArthur and Gaffney's (2001) study that focuses on bullying.

The strength of my study lies in the students' stories - the voices of four students with physical disabilities. Their perspectives have elaborated and expanded what we know about the friendships and social relationships of students with disabilities in secondary schools and contributes to a growing research literature in several ways. Firstly, my study was limited to students with severe physical disabilities and complements and extends previously cited research on students with severe intellectual disabilities. Secondly, the nature of the students' social experiences can inform the shaping of future research questions and further observations and interviews. Thirdly, their stories reveal insights into how the social-ecological context in New Zealand may shape the perceptions of peers without disabilities, with implications for staff in secondary schools as they cater for the needs of *all* students.

In the next sections I highlight the themes relating to the nature of friendships and the contextual factors that shape friendships, that emerged from my study.

### *Nature of Friendships*

The four students in my study reported that they had a range of friendships; this supports the literature that describes traditional friendship stages and patterns including conflict in relationships (e.g. Fehr, 1996; Levinger, 1983).

*Frames of friendship.* From their study of students with severe disabilities Meyer and her colleagues (1998) described six frames of

friendship. The students in my study described relationships that fitted these six frames in different contexts; for example, Adam's comments show that he was a Ghost in his social studies class but that he was Just Another Kid in science. The students' stories revealed that in some classes they were Inclusion Kids when they became islands in the mainstream because of seating arrangements and teacher aide practices; this meant for Sarah and Adam that beyond a "Hello" reminiscent of the Guy Syndrome, often the only interactions were with other Inclusion Kids, or adults. Sarah in particular built up fun/playful repartee with her teacher aides and some teachers, rather than enjoying these relationships with her other classmates. All the students had Regular Friends with peers who did not have disabilities and all the students described peers who helped them (I'll Help).

The four students said that they had Best Friends, however, their stories about their Best Friends described a frame that seems somewhat different to that proposed by Meyer and her colleagues (1998). The friendships described by the students might best be considered "close" rather than "best" friendships, with Close Friends being more special than Regular Friends but not quite achieving Best Friend status. For Sam this differentiation was marked not by the ability to share concerns and worries (Hartup, 1993), but by length and consistency of the friendship. Interestingly, Gemma's stories supported a new Close Friend frame rather than a Best Friend relationship with Olivia, as that friendship was not characterised by reciprocity as represented in previous research (e.g. Hatfield et al., 1979).

Furthermore, the students' stories identified another pattern: the two students who had the most severe disabilities of the four, Adam and Sarah, both had Best Friends who had severe disabilities and who used wheelchairs too; they had this in common. This concurs with MacArthur and Gaffney's (2001) research where they suggest that students with disabilities find some comfort in making friends with peers with disabilities "who share their view

of the world [and] where explanations about their disability are not necessary" (p. 15). Sam and Gemma's Best and Close friends did not have disabilities. It was a limitation of my research that I was not able to interview Sam and Gemma's friends. Further research could explore the nature and patterns of Best Friendships and interview a greater number of Best Friend dyads in order to explore similarities and differences in dynamics of Best Friendships between students who both have disabilities and between students where one friend has a disability. The nature of Close Friendships within a hierarchy of friendships could also be examined.

*Friendship groups.* Previous research with adolescents without disabilities reports that Best Friends are highly embedded in friendship groups (Schnorr, 1997; Urberg et al., 1995). Supporting this research, Sam and Adam described their entrée into groups through Best Friend relationships; Sam's Regular Friends and some of Adam's Regular Friends were friends of their Best and Close Friends but these Regular Friendships were often not very close and were even conflictual; this concurs with Urberg et al.'s (1995) findings that rarely was everyone in the group friends. Sam's Best Friend Andrew was in one group and Paul his Close Friend was in another group. Sam considered some of the other students in the groups to be Regular Friends. However, he did not like some of them and only continued to mix with them because he wanted to be near Andrew and Paul. Adam's early stories told of a group of friends who were Karen's friends; when this group disbanded he remained friends with Karen. His other group included BJ and Ben – Ben was a Close Friend but not a Best Friend (in the previous year, Ben was only a Regular Friend whilst BJ had "main" friend status). Gemma's stories also indicated that being in a group was vital for her acceptance and identity (Bagwell, 2004; Brown, 1990). As with Sam and Adam, her stories supported the research in that her Best and Close Friends were part of her group and that there were also conflictual relationships. Her description of

the “levels” in the groups concurs with previous research (e.g. Eder, 1985, Epstein, 1989; Griffiths, 1995) that identifies hierarchies in group dynamics and shares features of the pathways and changes to friendships over time and circumstance reported in the literature on friendships generally (e.g. Bukowski et al., 1996; Kupersmidt & Dodge, 2004).

However, Sarah’s relationship with Amy was not embedded in a close group at school - they had a group of friends who also had spina bifida, went to different schools and met at Amy’s house. She did not talk about belonging to a subgroup of close friends at school. Although the students in the group with whom Sarah had come through primary school were in the same whanau form class and the kapa haka group, at formtime she did not sit with them, and at intervals and lunchtimes she did not hang out with them. Sarah’s stories show us then, how much more could be learned about in-class dynamics within specific cultural contexts and how they shape social relationships.

Overseas research has examined the dynamics of youth group relationships generally (e.g. Brown, 1990; Brown & Klute, 2003; Nilan, 1991); future research studies in New Zealand secondary schools could focus on the nature and dynamics of groups of students who all have disabilities, or groups of students with and without disabilities. Such research could build on understandings that have emerged in my study.

*Purposes of friendships.* Grenot-Scheyer, Harry and colleagues (1998) noted that friendships and social relationships serve different functions throughout childhood and adolescence and the four students in this study described why friends were important to them. Sam recognised that friends and the purposes of friendship changed with age; while he felt that friends he had when he left school would be important for helping him with life issues, he considered that school friends had a different function. Both Sam and Adam said that friends at school were important so they weren’t alone at

school; friends were someone to hang out with at lunchtime. Sam recognised that friends expected you to hang out with them in order to maintain the friendship. Adam, who had been bullied, also noted that friends were able to stick up for you and indeed he stuck up for his friends when they were bullied; this supports Geisthardt and Munsch's (1996) finding that positive relations with peers are a source of support when students are bullied.

Sarah did not feel that it was important to see school friends out of school; she had other friends that she saw out of school. She did see Amy on both landscapes. One of the reasons Gemma gave for wanting friends at school was to demonstrate her acceptance by her peers, and she saw friendships extending to the out of school landscape with telephone calls, shopping trips, and other activities.

The students also described other purposes that friends fulfilled: Sam said a friend was someone who listened to you, respected you, helped ("doesn't mind having to do extra things for me sometimes"), and importantly, someone who accepts you for who you are and "doesn't expect you to be someone you're not." Adam said that friends were someone to talk to and friends should be "nice." Gemma believed that trust was very important, they shouldn't "bitch about you" or be nasty; they should be able to share a joke and she reflected that friends were the most important things in the world. As well as a counselling role for Best Friends, Sarah wanted helpful, caring, understanding and friendly friends. This "counselling" role, or sharing your intimate thoughts and concerns is widely supported by the literature (e.g. Epstein, 1989; Hartup, 1993; Meyer et al., 1998).

All the students mentioned activities which they engaged in on the out-of-school landscape with friends. Adam, however, said that he did not have friends other than family friends at home. Reasons for this were difficulty of transport combined with parent demands for his mother in looking after two boys with disabilities; this was also reported by Baker and Donnelly (2001).

Further research could explore ways that these barriers could be surmounted, for example, with tangible support for families such as Adam's, so friendships can be facilitated.

*Bullying and rejection.* Despite the friendships that the students enjoyed, Sam, Gemma, and Adam experienced rejection by some peers; Adam and Gemma also reported bullying by students. MacArthur and Gaffney (2001) stated that nine out of the eleven students they interviewed described being bullied at school. For Gemma this resulted in isolation and loneliness as Pavri and Monda-Amaya (2001) and MacArthur and Gaffney (2001) described, although Adam said he did not feel lonely at school if his brother was around. Furthermore, Pivik and her colleagues' (2002) study describe isolation and bullying as intentional attitudinal barriers to social inclusion. Recent research on teasing of children with autism suggests that disabilities can place children at risk both for being the target of a high level of what is otherwise typical peer interaction behaviour, as well as for over-reacting to teasing (Heerey, Capps, Keltner, & Kring, 2005). If a student with disabilities does not understand the nature of teasing, teasing could be over-interpreted as bullying and/or rejection. It might be interesting to investigate through future observational research whether the kinds of interactions these students saw as bullying could actually be forms of teasing—a behaviour that is a normal part of children's interactions. Furthermore, although my research has identified bullying of students with disabilities, future research could extend recent studies that sought a range of students' perspectives of bullying and violence in New Zealand schools (e.g. Carroll-Lind, 2006; Nairn & Smith, 2002). Some of the factors that shape peers' perceptions of students with disabilities that cause them to be bullied, excluded, or not chosen as friends are included in the next section.

### *Contextual Factors that Shape Friendships*

The social model of disability has been useful in exploring the structural barriers to friendship and positive social relationships of the four students at school, as it focuses on the collective rather than the individual and structures rather than context. The ecological model complements and extends the social model in a manner relevant to the lives of Sam, Gemma, Adam, and Sarah. The social model is further extended in my discussion of gender issues later in this chapter. The concept of social ecology introduced by Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1979) recognises the wider context in which schools are situated and that discourses and beliefs in the macrosystem can affect interactions at the micro level of the school. Some threads that emerged from the students' stories highlighted that the perceptions of peers towards youth with disabilities may be shaped by these discourses and beliefs creating "social distance" (Davis & Watson, 2001, p. 681), thus influencing the establishment and sustainability of friendships between youth with and without disabilities. This could suggest that students with disabilities are passive in this process. However, the students reported instances when they actively resisted these perceptions demonstrating personal agency. The frameworks of Pivik et al. (2002) and Baker and Donnelly (2001) are useful in identifying the nature of structural and contextual factors that influence whether students become friends and whether these relationships are sustained. Pivik et al.'s (2002) unintentional and intentional barriers, and Baker and Donnelly's (2001) societal factors include both gender issues and issues related to curriculum and pedagogy.

*Gender.* Gender was one factor that threaded through the students' stories. Sam and Adam both made comments that reflected there were gender issues in their school contexts that affected their social relationships. Sam related that he felt excluded because the boys in Physical Education became

more competitive and teachers did not encourage him to take part in school competitive sport. He also wondered whether being able to talk about personal concerns with Paul was because he was influenced by his relationships with girls. Adam told of being called homosexual names and how his Best Friend was a girl. All the students had female teacher aides. Societal beliefs about masculinity and disability can create intentional and unintentional barriers for boys with disabilities and this caused me to reflect on whether it is harder for boys with disabilities, than it is for girls with disabilities, to establish friendships.

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 851) describe a socio-cultural context where “hegemonic masculinity is related to particular ways of representing and using male bodies” whereby the body is a form of physical capital. Concepts about what it means to be male are perpetuated by the media and support the subordination and exclusion of homosexuals and males with disabilities because they do not fit the stereotyped ideals of power, competitiveness, strength, and independence. On a hierarchy of masculinities, males with disabilities are “positioned on the margins and [inhabit] a borderline space” (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003, p. 23). Connell and Messerschmidt have also noted that women occupy spaces in relation to men wherein femininity is constructed in subordinate relations to all forms of masculinity. Sam and Adam’s stories support this cited literature and other studies that have explored the nature of hegemonic masculinity and its shaping of gendered social relations in high schools (e.g. Burgess, Edwards, & Skinner, 2003; Davies & Hunt, 1994; Haywood & Mac an Ghail, 1996; Light & Kirk, 2000; Martino, 1999; Swain, 2005); and more specifically in physical education in high schools (e.g. Brown, 2005; Parker, 1996; Sparkes, 2004). In some contexts Sam and Adam were seen as less masculine than their peers and excluded; in Adam’s case his disability was linked with homosexuality. These perceptions affected their social relationships as some students

marginalised them perhaps because the presence of a disability contradicted stereotyped ideals of what it means to be male. Sam's experience in PE in a school where the prospectus describes the First Fifteen<sup>21</sup> as "heroes" reflects Sparkes (2004) discussion of how the "master" or grand narratives shape the experiences and identities of boys as they are internalised through physical education - a context where hegemonic masculinity is legitimised (Burgess et al., 2003). A mother in Baker and Donnelly's (2001) Australian study endorsed this view: "It's very hard for people to cope with something that's less than perfect. And society is always teaching us to strive for the best and to be perfect. Most people can't cope with anyone less than that" (p. 73).

One grand narrative supports the stereotyped female as weak, powerless, dependent, and needing help, characteristics that are also linked to males with disabilities. It could be argued that this view of boys with disabilities underpins the provision of teacher aides to support them. It is perceived that people with disabilities need caring, nurturing and mothering in a dependent relationship (Gemma reported that a male peer saw that she was in need of a "helper lady"; Sam also said that he didn't want to have a "mother" in the playground when he was with his peers). The attribution of such caring, nurturing roles to *female* teacher aides is also consistent with another grand narrative of "ideal" femininity as exhibiting those qualities.

Essentialising narratives of femininity see parallels with the criticism of the social model of disability that essentialises disability as a category; the model "runs the danger of continuing to exclude the experiences of various grouping such as women..." (Watson, 2004, p. 101). Oliver (2004) acknowledges such criticism and agrees that the social model has not incorporated social divisions such as gender but that it "does not mean that it cannot ever do so" (p. 23). An expansion of the social model of disability

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<sup>21</sup> The school's top rugby team.

allows for an analysis of the intersection of disablement with, for example, ethnicity groupings and gender (Watson, 2004).

The “feminisation of disability” whereby disability is feminised is a term I have used to describe the complex intersections of these stereotyped negative and positive characteristics attributed to femininity and reflected in perceptions of, and interacting with, people with disabilities. Identifying these dynamics in the feminisation of disability may help to explain how the politics of the gendered construction of the caring and support of people with disabilities in society and schools affects the social experiences of students with disabilities. For example, Adam and Sam, as young men with disabilities, both had female teacher aides. Because of his disability Adam was more dependent on his aides than Sam, which reinforced the perception of him as a marginalised male and may account for him being called homosexual names. (There is a large literature on homosexuality and marginalisation – see, for example, Connell, 1996; Gerschick & Miller, 1995; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998; Swain, 2005). Sam described how the presence of his teacher aide stopped him from chatting to his friends; even if she wasn’t there, others seemed to believe he still needed her, thus reinforcing the perception by his peers that he was not independent and still needed mothering at a time when they were exploring their identities and what it means to be male. Neither Gemma nor Sarah commented on whether teacher aides affected how their peers perceived them, yet I observed how Sarah and other students with disabilities became islands in the mainstream so there was little interaction with the rest of the class. This supports research that reported that the presence of a teacher aide could limit social interaction (Giangreco, 2003; Thorburn, 1997).

So for some boys with disabilities, there may be a perception that they are weak and dependent and needing care and nurturance. These negative perceptions can confound their efforts as they are trying to establish

friendships whilst also seeking their identity as young men; my study suggests that this could make it harder for a boy with a disability to make friends, particularly close male friends. Adam's Best Friend was a girl, his Close Friend Ben was also marginalised and bullied by his peers; Sam's Close Friend Paul had what Sam described as female influences. These perceptions also illustrate the feminisation of disability.

The preponderance of female teacher aides involved in the caring and support of students with disabilities sees parallels with the research that explores the feminisation of teaching (e.g. Acker, 1995; Cortina & San Roman, 2006; Griffin, 1997; Vogt, 2002). The stories in my study resonate with this research that describes how low pay, poor job security, and low status characterise a feminised teaching workforce, and addresses a gap in the research, as in teaching and early childhood education, teacher aiding is a predominantly female occupation. As has been pointed out, "A feminised profession that is burdened by a lack of social status...relegates women to work considered to be feminine" (Cortina & San Roman, 2006, p. 16) and I argue that this undervaluing perpetuates the negative elements of the feminisation of disability.

These researchers also note that female teachers (and I add, teacher aides) influence the socialisation of children, particularly in the transition from primary to secondary school – a factor that is obvious in Sam's stories. This raises questions about how teacher aides are selected to work with particular students; perhaps assigning male teacher aides to male students would assist in challenging the stereotyped perceptions that work to marginalise male students with disabilities. Male teacher aides may facilitate entrée into "boys' talk" and activities and emphasise similarities rather than differences between boys with and without disabilities, thus creating more opportunities to make friends. Furthermore, male teacher aides could be positive models of caring and support as a masculine function, thus positively

opening up currently narrow forms of hegemonic masculinity. The issues of gender and disability, including the employment of males in what is a feminised occupation, and the impact of the gender of teacher aides on the socialisation of male students with disabilities are areas that could be explored in future research.

*Curriculum and pedagogy.* In inclusive schools, teachers play a key role in creating relational learning communities in their classrooms that do...

not generate 'us' and 'other' distinctions but include all of 'us'...diversity is valued, addressed and integral to instructional strategies. Caring and support is integrated into pedagogy and evident in the practices of teachers and students." (Alton-Lee, 2003, p. 89)

Teachers might reflect on whom they regard as "other" in their classrooms. In inclusive classrooms, there are no "others"; we teach "all" students both academic and social skills - "other" is an artificial distinction that "permeates social thought and [hegemonic] discourse" (Caltabiano, Hil, & Frangos, 1997, p. 7).

All the students in my study reported that they liked working in groups as they liked sharing the task, but they also enjoyed working with their peers. In contrast, when they were seated with their teacher aides, they were likely to be separated from their peers. This separation hindered social interaction: the students wanted to talk to their friends and recognised the presence of a teacher aide as separating them from the rest of the class. They noted that they usually sat at the front with spare seats around them. They were not enabled to seek the "natural" support of their peers, supporting previous research (e.g. Giangreco, et al., 1997). Sam reflected that his friends were helpful which meant he didn't need his teacher aide so much.

The New Zealand Curriculum Framework includes principles to address the needs of *all* students and essential skills such as social and cooperative skills (MOE, 1993); the Draft Curriculum (MOE, 2006a) includes

principles and values to address areas of respect and equity based on human rights and social justice, as well as developing the key competencies of relating to others and participation. However, there is pressure on secondary school teachers to teach the academic content and cover the curriculum/syllabus so students are not disadvantaged in the national assessment process. Consequently, many secondary educators do not see it as their role to teach the essential skills such as cooperation or other positive social interaction behaviours. The tendency to emphasise subject matter and assessment outcomes rather than the facilitation of conditions for teaching and learning works against addressing students' socio-emotional needs (Booth, 2003). Research on secondary school pedagogy supports the use of cooperative learning as a means to constructing understanding alongside the purpose of addressing students' social competencies and relationships (Brophy, 2001). The students' stories indicated that they would welcome this as a more frequently used classroom practice. Their views about the importance of social relationships on the in-class landscape and its inclusion in effective pedagogies are supported by recent New Zealand research (e.g. Alton-Lee, 2003; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007; MOE, 2006b). Future research could monitor and evaluate the development of these pedagogies in improving the social outcomes of youth with disabilities. It might also be interesting to investigate whether typical students would benefit from more focus on their social and emotional development as well.

### *Agency*

By expanding the structural analysis of the social model of disability to include language and experience, disabled people's personal and social agency can be explored in more depth (Corker, 1999). Earlier in the

discussion, I acknowledged the students' descriptions of situations in which they actively exercised personal agency in challenging the perceptions of peers who marginalised them, and identified how they could proactively make friends. "Agency" aligns with The Draft Curriculum's (MOE, 2006a) key competencies of thinking and managing self, competencies that are shaped by interactions with people in social contexts. My study shows that the students were able to reflect on their friendships and describe their part in enabling these relationships, and this expands previous cited research on observed social relationships of students with disabilities. In particular, my research illuminates how the four students as "critical social actors" (Davis & Watson, 2001, p. 672) contested cultural ideals, assumptions and perceptions, and considered their part in making friends; they created the stories they wished to live by on the in-school and out-of-school landscapes.

Sam described his agency in terms of his actions and how he was able to assess and evaluate what he had to do to get friends, what made him appear different to his peers, and how could he take more control of the situation within the constraints of the school structure. This was one of the main threads that wove through his stories. As Sam matured, he began to actively oppose the stereotypes and embedded perceptions of his peers, and his stories illuminate how he was agentic. In order to be agentic, Sam had to reflect on some of the factors that made him appear different and less acceptable. He reflected on his first year when he had trouble with his triad friendship with Jason and Carl. He did so again when his teacher aide was being changed. He learned that crying and being "emotional" was not acceptable to his male peers; these behaviours made them uncomfortable and created social distance. At this time he went to the Learning Support Centre as a safe house because his teacher aide was there. In the centre he wasn't "different", though he reflected that there was a stigma attached to the Centre and it made him appear different in front of his peers. So he chose to spend

less time in the centre and go out with his peers without disabilities instead. He reflected that if he wanted to make friends with his peers, he would have to spend time with them. He used words like “motivated” and “determined” when talking about what had caused him to act. He had made a deliberate choice. Although he kept extra books and his wheelchairs at the Centre, he said, “I don’t really come back there unless I have to.”

Sam identified two practices that impacted on his peers’ perception of him as different, with feminised characteristics of weak, dependent, mothered, and needing help. The first of these was the constant presence of his female teacher aide. This perpetuated the perception that “needing help” and being helped was not a masculine state, which in turn affected social relationships because his peers would not sit with him in class. These stories reflect previous research reports where the presence of teacher aides is identified as a barrier to social interaction and contributes to differentiation (Block, 2000; Giangreco et al., 1997; Giangreco & Doyle, 2002; Pivik et al., 2002). Consequently, he suggested that he did not need his female teacher aide and he worked hard to write the work himself. Secondly, he identified the chair lift as a barrier to being perceived as one of the boys. The chair lift was an issue that Sam took to the principal. The chair lift was installed for him when he first went to Hillview and enabled him to get upstairs in one classroom block, but only the teacher aide could unlock it and he had to wait for her to do so, thus highlighting his dependence on her (students in Pivik et al.’s, 2002, study in Canada, reported similar problems with key access). This often made him late to computer and English classes, and he had to leave early before all the other students rushed down the stairs in order to get on the lift. He wanted to be trusted with a key however the principal wouldn’t allow this because of safety issues. The chair lift was also slow, exacerbating his visibility in the presence of peers and the amount of time he was made to feel different. Similarly, in Davis and Watson’s (2001) study, students also

questioned school safety rules and complained this was overprotection, and resented it.

Sam used his crutches a lot of the time even though he became tired, but he felt that his wheelchair made him different too. He rejected a laptop because that would make him look different in class; transporting it was a problem too when he used his crutches and had to carry his bag. Another thing he did to be one of the boys was buy the current card game craze so he wouldn't be left out, "I kind of felt a bit left out, I'd just have to sit and watch and it was relatively boring."

Adam demonstrated his agency in some similar ways to Sam. After settling into high school and learning to make choices, he became assertive in telling his key teacher, teacher aides, and physiotherapists what he wanted. Because of his weakening physical condition he was not able to be without a teacher aide for long periods, and he did not try to take part in sports and PE as Sam did in his first two years at school. Adam rejected this avenue to demonstrate his masculinity (Gerschick & Miller, 1995) and like Sam developed his sense of self as a young male through academic pursuits, taking pride in achieving well, particularly in maths and science, challenging perceptions that he was "stupid." This supports Connell's (1996) work that explores this dynamic: it shows that able-bodied young men who are achieving academically can achieve one form of hegemonic masculinity; however, the visibility of Adam's disability presented ambivalence for some of his peers and he was bullied.

Adam identified the places that he needed to be on the out-of-class landscape in order to be in proximity with friends (Hartup, 1993) ), but he did not seek to be agentic on the out-of-school landscape as he did not ring friends or invite any school friends to his house. At school, he spent time with friends, and he sat in the courtyard near the auditorium. He found that proximity to friends provided him with some protection from bullying, as

“they would stick up for us.” Adam actively resisted bullying by seeking adult help; he did not deal directly with the name-calling and bullying himself perhaps fearing retaliation and getting physically hurt. He also tried to ignore the bullies and modelled this behaviour to his brother Jim who tended to react to the bullying. Adam identified that Ben’s and Jim’s reactions to bullying positively reinforced the bullies’ actions and the problem persisted. While these stories support research that describes the internalising (crying and anxiety) and externalising (anger and aggression) of problems (Hodges et al., 1997; Hodges & Perry, 1999), more importantly they show Adam’s ability to be reflective and agentic.

Gemma’s self-concept was dependent on having close friends. She tried very hard to make friends, resisting being marginalised because of her vision impairment. Her stories described how she identified that she should be proactive and agentic in initiating friendships. Like Sam, she was motivated and determined despite being rejected by a number of groups. She chose to move from group to group as she searched for “a group like me”, rang her friends frequently and demonstrated resilience and agency in the friendship making process, asking to join specific groups. In hindsight and maturity she reflected that she changed her behaviour so as to be acceptable to each group.

Sarah also demonstrated strong agency as she recognised that to make friends without disabilities she would need to be in proximity thus she chose to spend less time in the Copeland Centre although at times she chose to be there because that is where her best friend Amy spent a lot of her time. She felt secure in her “difference” and who she was as a young Māori girl with a disability and assertively stated her objections to her exclusion from netball at Seapoint and the kapa haka group at Glover High School. She did not seek to be the “same” as her peers on order to fit in; for example, she rejected peer pressure to follow a “cool” dress code at school.

Sam, Gemma, Adam, and Sarah each responded to his/her socio-cultural context and sought to practise agency in resisting some of the ways in which they had been storied, proactively storying themselves as friends. In various ways they explored their identities as they interacted with their peers and restoried themselves as young people with disabilities amid friendships and positive social relationships. Future research studies could build on the perspectives of the students in my study by listening to more voices of youth with disabilities and in particular, encourage the participants to reflect on their own agency in shaping their social relationships and friendships. These perspectives could be sought in similar research studies to mine that focus directly on student voice and their experiences in different types of secondary schools – single-sex, integrated, and also in bilingual and immersion programmes.

### *A Caveat*

I acknowledge that the nature of my research that focuses on the experiences of four students with physical disabilities in four co-educational New Zealand secondary does not enable generalisation to other socio-cultural contexts, however, I suggest it does generate ideas that can extend and promote future research in this area. Future research attempting any generalisation regarding the extent to which our secondary schools support or fail to support children's social relationships would require more case studies and studies across school types.

### *Conclusion*

I hope that my study and reflections on my participants' stories have begun for my readers, your own reflection and beginning dialogue about the issues I have been exploring. In particular, I hope that teachers and

researchers will continue this dialogue in the context of their own schools, reflect on the stories they live by within the discourses on their school landscapes and visualise the kind of schools and society they want, and we want for our children and grandchildren to live and work in. The research in this thesis provides support for promoting “practical wisdom” as praxis in our schools (Van Manen, 1997, p. 32); embracing inclusive values and attitudes, knowledge and pedagogy within an ecological model on the school landscape and on the macro landscape; and examining the way disability is constructed by social barriers and constraints. Such a multi-level approach can be adopted to address the academic and social needs of *all* our students so *all* students belong. This will ensure that students are never Guests or Ghosts in our classrooms but are Just Another Kid with Regular, Close, and Best Friends who help one another as they share their lives.

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## Appendix A.1

### Letter to Board of Trustees

Dear Chairperson

I am a trained teacher and I work at Massey University College of Education at the Ruawharo Centre in Napier where I teach papers in the B.Ed(Tchg) Programme. I am also studying and doing research for my PhD.

My research is titled "The experiences of students with disabilities who are included in secondary schools." This interest has grown out of my experience teaching in a secondary school. I am interested to hear the voices of students and their stories of their time in school with a view to informing educators of the perspectives of students with disabilities. The stories of their parents/caregivers and siblings, teachers, teacher aides and peers will give a holistic picture.

To undertake this study I need your consent to conduct this research with the principal, teachers, teacher aides, and students in your school. I would also request permission to have access to some policy documents that relate to my research, for example, equity, the education of students with special needs.

I have included an Information Sheet for you so you can see what the study involves and what it would mean for the participants in your school.

If you would like to discuss my proposal could you please phone me at 834 4566; or email me at [A.R.Ward@massey.ac.nz](mailto:A.R.Ward@massey.ac.nz), or post me the enclosed Expression of Interest form with a time to contact you, so we can arrange for me to attend a Board of Trustees meeting to discuss it. If you do not have any further questions and agree to me conducting my research in your school, a consent form and a stamped addressed envelope are enclosed.

Yours sincerely

Angela Ward

## Appendix A.2

### Letter to Principals

Dear Principal

I am a trained teacher and I work at Massey University College of Education at the Ruawharo Centre in Napier where I teach papers in the B.Ed(Tchg) Programme. I am also studying and doing research for my PhD.

My research is titled "The experiences of students with disabilities who are included in secondary schools." This interest has grown out of my experience teaching in a secondary school. I am interested to hear the voices of students and their stories of their time in school with a view to informing educators of the perspectives of students with disabilities. The stories of their parents/caregivers and siblings, principals, teachers, teacher aides and peers will give a holistic picture.

To undertake this study I need your assistance in approaching students with disabilities in your school, and their parents who might be interested in participating. The students need to be included for all classes; be on the Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Scheme (ORRS); verbal; and be interested in participating over the period of a year.

I have included an Information Sheet for you so you can see what the study involves and what it would mean for the students and their parents, and your school.

If you would like to help me with the research and would like to discuss my proposal could you please phone me at 06 834 4566; or email [A.R.Ward@massey.ac.nz](mailto:A.R.Ward@massey.ac.nz), or post me the enclosed Expression of Interest form with a time to contact you, so we can arrange a meeting.

Yours sincerely

Angela Ward

## Appendix A.3

### Letter to Participating Student

Dear Student

My name is Angela Ward and I used to teach in a high school. I am interested in hearing the stories of students with disabilities at high school.

I would like to come and talk to you about what it is like for you at school. This would involve four sessions - some this year and some next. These can be in a place you would like – perhaps at school or at home. I would like to audio-tape our conversations.

I also want to talk to some of your teachers and teacher aides, your parents/caregivers, and brothers and sister if they would like to take part, your principal and some of the students in your class to learn more about your school. I want to observe in your classes – the other students will not know you are part of this research study.

When I write about your experience I will not use the name of your school, or your real name – you could choose another one that I could use, so no-one else will know they are your stories. The tapes will be kept in a safe place and you can have a copy of them if you would like to.

You do not have to take part in this research. If you decide to take part you can refuse to answer any particular questions that you do not want to answer. You can say you do not want to be part of the research at any time, even if you agreed and signed the consent form. I am happy to answer any questions you might have at any time. At the end of the research you will be able to read what I have written.

Please talk about this with your parents/caregivers. If you and your parents/caregivers would like to share your stories about high school with me, your parents/caregivers will send me the enclosed Expression of Interest form so I can contact you.

Thank you for reading and thinking about this.

Your sincerely

Angela Ward

## Appendix A.4

### Letter to Participating Students' Parents/Caregivers

Dear Parent/Caregiver

I am a trained teacher and I work at Massey University College of Education at the Ruawharo Centre in Napier where I teach papers in the B.Ed(Tchg) Programme. I am also studying and doing research for my PhD.

My research is titled "The experiences of students with disabilities who are included in secondary schools." This interest has grown out of my experience teaching in a secondary school. I am interested to hear the voices of students with disabilities and their stories of their time in school, with a view to informing educators of the perspectives of students with disabilities. The stories of their parents/caregivers and siblings, principals, teachers, teacher aides and peers will give a holistic picture.

I have approached the principal of your school to make this initial contact with you. I have enclosed an information sheet for you and your child, and I ask that you talk about my study with your family and consider being part of it. I would be happy to discuss the research with you and would appreciate a reply either by phone or e mail, or on the enclosed Expression of Interest form which is provided with a stamped addressed envelope.

Thank you for reading and thinking about this.

Yours sincerely

Angela Ward

## Appendix A.5

### Letter to Siblings

Dear *(Name of sibling)*

My name is Angela Ward and I used to teach in a high school. I am interested in hearing the stories of students with disabilities at high school. *(Name of brother/sister)* has been at *(Name of high school)* this year and I would like to talk to you about what it is like to have a *(brother/sister)* at high school.

This would involve a short interview that could be in a place you would like –maybe at home when I come to talk to your parents/caregivers. I would like to audio-tape our conversations.

When I write about our conversation I will not use your real name – you could choose another one that I could use, so no-one else will know they are your stories. The tapes will be kept in a safe place and you can have a copy of them if you would like to.

You do not have to take part in this research. If you decide to take part you can refuse to answer any particular questions that you do not want to answer. You can say you do not want to be part of the research at any time, even if you agreed and signed the consent form. I am happy to answer any questions you might have at any time. At the end of the research you will be able to read what I have written.

Please talk about this with your parents/caregivers. If you would like to share your stories with me, you or your parents/caregivers will be able to tell me when I come to talk to them.

Thank you for reading and thinking about this.

Yours sincerely

Angela Ward

## Appendix A.6

### Letter to Teachers

Dear Class Teacher

I am a trained teacher and I work at Massey University College of Education at the Ruawharo Centre in Napier where I teach papers in the B.Ed(Tchg) Programme. I am also studying and doing research for my PhD.

My research is titled "The experiences of students with disabilities who are included in secondary schools." This interest has grown out of my experience teaching in a secondary school. I am interested to hear the voices of students and their stories of their time in school with a view to informing educators of the perspectives of students. The stories of their parents/caregivers and siblings, teachers, teacher aides and peers will give a holistic picture.

I would like to observe the dynamics of the participation and interactions of students in a variety of classrooms, to provide a context for participants' stories of their experience. I would also like to interview some teachers to hear their experiences of having a student with a disability in their classrooms. I have included an Information Sheet for you so you can see what the study involves and what it would mean for you to take part. You could agree to the observation and/or the interview.

If you agree to take part, I will arrange a time to suit you, through (*Name of liaison teacher*).

Thank you for reading and thinking about this.

Yours sincerely

Angela Ward

## Appendix A.7

### Letter to Teacher Aides

Dear Teacher Aide

I am a trained teacher and I work at Massey University College of Education at the Ruawhoro Centre in Napier where I teach papers in the B.Ed(Tchg) Programme. I am also studying and doing research for my PhD.

My research is titled "The experiences of students with disabilities who are included in secondary schools." This interest has grown out of my experience teaching in a secondary school. I am interested to hear the voices of students and their stories of their time in school with a view to informing educators of the perspectives of students. The stories of their parents/caregivers and siblings, teachers, teacher aides and peers will give a holistic picture.

I would like to interview you to hear your experiences of aiding (*Name of student*). I have included an Information Sheet so you can see what the study involves. Your participation would involve a 30-45 minute interview at school.

If you agree to take part, I will arrange a time to suit you, through (*Name of liaison teacher*).

Thank you for reading and thinking about this.

Yours sincerely

Angela Ward

## Appendix A.8

### Letter to Peers

Dear (*Name of peer*)

My name is Angela Ward and I used to teach in a high school. You may remember me coming into observe in some of your classes last year. I am interested in hearing the stories of students with disabilities at high school. (*Name of participating student*) was in your class last year and as you were one of (*his/her*) friends I would like to come and talk to you about what it was like in your classrooms.

This would involve a short interview that could be in a place you would like for example, at your home, or at the College of Education in Prebensen Drive. I would like to audio-tape our conversations.

When I write about your experience I will not use the name of your school, or your real name – you could choose another one that I could use, so no-one else will know they are your stories. The tapes will be kept in a safe place and you can have a copy of them if you would like to.

You do not have to take part in this research. If you decide to take part you can refuse to answer any particular questions that you do not want to answer. You can say you do not want to be part of the research at any time, even if you agreed and signed the consent form. I am happy to answer any questions you might have at any time. At the end of the research you will be able to read what I have written.

Please talk about this with your parents/caregivers. If you would like to share your stories about high school with me, please send me the enclosed Expression of Interest form so I can contact you, or give me a ring

Thank you for reading and thinking about this.

Your sincerely

Angela Ward

## Appendix B

### INFORMATION SHEET

#### The Social Experiences of Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Secondary Schools

##### 1. Who am I?

My name is Angela Ward and I am a lecturer with the Massey University College of Education at the Ruawharo Centre in Napier. I have a Masters in Education (Special Education) and I am currently undertaking research as the requirement for my PhD dissertation.

##### 2. What is the study about?

The purpose of my study is to explore the experiences of students with disabilities who are fully included in secondary school. I particularly want to focus on social interactions, relationships and friendships in inclusive educational settings. I am interested in hearing children's voices and using their stories of their experiences to inform teachers and interested professionals. As well as talking to students with disabilities I would also like to talk to their parents/caregivers, siblings, principals, teachers, teacher aides and peers.

##### 3. What will you have to do?

The number of interviews/observations and time involved is outlined in the accompanying letter.

##### 4. Participants rights

Participants have the right:

- to decline to participate;
- to refuse to answer any particular questions;
- to withdraw from the study at any time;
- to ask questions about the study at any time during participation;
- to provide information on the understanding that their names will not be used unless they give permission to the researcher;
- to be given access to a summary of the findings when it is concluded

Interviews will be audio-taped. I will transcribe them and pseudonyms will be used throughout the study. The tapes and transcriptions will be stored in lockable cabinets. At the completion of the study participants will have the option to retain the tapes (or copies); have the tapes destroyed or consent to their storage in a research archive. By using pseudonyms, transcribing the tapes myself, and storing the data securely I will try to ensure that anonymity and confidentiality is ensured. To the extent that Hawke's Bay and Manawatu are small communities, I cannot guarantee this. It should be noted that Massey University requires data used in research to be kept in a secure situation for five years.

Initially the data will be used in the writing of my doctoral dissertation. Access to this will be made available to you. I will subsequently write academic articles and also present my findings at academic conferences.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Ethics Committee, Palmerston North protocol 02/52. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Chair, Massey University Regional Human Ethics Committee: Palmerston North. Telephone 06 350 5249, email [S.V.Rumball@massey.ac.nz](mailto:S.V.Rumball@massey.ac.nz).

I can be contacted at the Ruawhoro Centre, telephone 06 834 4566, email [A.R.Ward@massey.ac.nz](mailto:A.R.Ward@massey.ac.nz) My supervisors are Professor Luanna Meyer, Massey University, telephone 06 356 9099, email [L.Meyer@massey.ac.nz](mailto:L.Meyer@massey.ac.nz) and Dr Judith Loveridge at the Massey College of Education: Palmerston North, telephone 06 356 9099, email [J.Loveridge@massey.ac.nz](mailto:J.Loveridge@massey.ac.nz)

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. The study is important to parents/caregivers, teachers and most of all, students. Hearing the voice of students and those who know them well is vital if the best education is to be provided for all children. I am happy to discuss the study, procedures and issues of anonymity and confidentiality or other queries with you so please do not hesitate to contact me.

## Appendix C

### Expression of Interest

Dear Angela

I have read your letter about your research concerning the experiences of students with disabilities in secondary schools and I am interested to talk to you to arrange a time to discuss it

You can contact me by phone at \_\_\_\_\_

A good day/time for me would be \_\_\_\_\_

Yours sincerely

## Appendix D.1

### CONSENT FORM – Board of Trustees

The Social Experiences of Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Secondary Schools.

We have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to us. Our questions have been answered to our satisfaction, and we understand that we may ask further questions at any time.

We understand we have the right to withdraw our school from the study at any time.

We understand that the name of the school, or the names of the participants will not be used and that pseudonyms will be used.

The information will be used only for this research, publications and presentations arising from this research project.

We agree to our school being part of the study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Designation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D.2

### CONSENT FORM – Principals

#### The Social Experiences of Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Secondary Schools.

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name or the name of this school will not be used without my permission.

The information will be used only for this research, publications and presentations arising from this research project.

I agree that the researcher can observe in the school and speak to teachers, teacher aides and students' peers.

I agree to provide access to the student's records that are relevant to the study, if the parent consents to this. I know that the information will remain anonymous and confidential.

I agree to provide access to policy documents as agreed by the Board of Trustees.

I agree to interviews being audio-taped.

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audio-tape to be turned off at any time during the interviews.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix D.3

#### CONSENT FORM – Participating Students

##### The Social Experiences of Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Secondary Schools.

I.....would like to take part in the study.

I know that I can decide not to take part at any time.

I know that I do not have to answer any of the questions.

I know that the conversations will be audio-taped.

I know that my real name or the name of my school will not be used.

I know that the researcher will keep the tapes in a safe place.

I know that I can read what the researcher writes about me.

I agree to the researcher talking to the principal, teachers, teacher aides, selected peers

I know that the researcher will not interview any student without my consent.

I agree to the researcher observing in my classes.

I agree to the researcher reading my records if they will be useful in the research.

I know that this information will be kept anonymous and confidential.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D.4

### CONSENT FORM – Participating Students’ Parents/Caregivers

#### The Social Experiences of Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Secondary Schools.

I agree to \_\_\_\_\_ taking part in the study.

I know that she/he can decide not to take part at any time.

I know that she/he does not have to answer any of the questions.

I know that the conversations will be audio-taped.

I know that her/his real name or the name of her/his school will not be used.

I know that the researcher will keep the tapes in a safe place.

I know that \_\_\_\_\_ can read what the researcher writes about her/him.

I agree that the researcher can talk to the principal, teachers, teacher aides, peers about my child’s experience in high school.

I agree that the researcher can access and use my child’s records if they are relevant to the research.

I know that all information will be kept anonymous and confidential.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D.5

### CONSENT FORM – Parents/Caregivers

#### The Social Experiences of Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Secondary Schools.

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission.

The information will be used only for this research, publications and presentations arising from this research project.

I agree to the interviews being audio-taped.

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audio-tape to be turned off at any time during the interviews.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D.6

### CONSENT FORM – Teachers

#### The Social Experiences of Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Secondary Schools.

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name or the name of this school will not be used without my permission.

The information will be used only for this research, publications, and presentations arising from this research project.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

#### Observations

I agree to the researcher observing in my classroom. I know my name and the names of students will not be used in the research.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Interviews

I agree to be interviewed and I understand I have the right to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to interviews being audio-taped.

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audio-tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D.7

### CONSENT FORM- Teacher Aides

**The Social Experiences of Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Secondary Schools.**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name or the name of this school will not be used without my permission.

I understand that the information will be used only for this research and publications and presentations arising from this research project.

I agree to interviews being audio-taped.

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audio-tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D.8

### CONSENT FORM – Siblings/Parents

#### The Social Experiences of Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Secondary Schools.

I \_\_\_\_\_ would like to take part in the study.

I know that I can decide not to take part at any time.

I know that I do not have to answer any of the questions.

I know that the conversation will be audio-taped.

I know that my real name or the name of (*Name of brother's/sister's*) school will not be used.

I know that Angela will keep the tapes in a safe place.

I know that I can read what Angela writes about me.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Parent:**

I agree to \_\_\_\_\_ taking part in the study.

I know that she/he can decide not to take part at any time.

I know that she/he does not have to answer any of the questions.

I know that the conversations will be audio-taped.

I know that his/her real name or the name of (*Name of brother's/sister's*) school will not be used.

I know that the researcher will keep the tapes in a safe place.

I know that (*Name of sibling*) can read what the researcher writes about him/her.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D.9

### CONSENT FORM – Peers/Parents/Caregivers

#### The Social Experiences of Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Secondary Schools.

I \_\_\_\_\_ would like to take part in the study.

I know that I can decide not to take part at any time.

I know that I do not have to answer any of the questions.

I know that the conversation will be audio-taped.

I know that my real name or the name of (*Name of student*) school will not be used.

I know that Angela will keep the tapes in a safe place.

I know that I can read what Angela writes about me.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent:**

I agree to \_\_\_\_\_ taking part in the study.

I know that she/he can decide not to take part at any time.

I know that she/he does not have to answer any of the questions.

I know that the conversations will be audio-taped.

I know that her/his real name or the name of (*Name of student*) school will not be used.

I know that the researcher will keep the tapes in a safe place.

I know that my daughter/son can read what the researcher writes about her/him.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E

### Letter to Class Peers and Parents/Caregivers

Dear Student/ Parent-Caregiver,

My name is Angela Ward and I am a lecturer with the Massey University College of Education at the Ruawharo Centre in Napier. I am currently undertaking research in some secondary schools for my PhD dissertation. The study is exploring the interactions of students with their teachers and peers.

I wish to observe in your son/daughter's class as part of this study. I will be not looking at individual students, but the general interactions in the class. Although I will be taking notes, the school, teachers, and students will not be identified by name in any written or oral reports arising from the study. This research has the consent of your school's Board of Trustees.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Ethics Committee, Palmerston North protocol 02/52. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research please contact Professor Sylvia V Rumball, Chair, Massey University Regional Human Ethics Committee: Palmerston North, telephone (06) 350 5249, email [S.V.Rumball@massey.ac.nz](mailto:S.V.Rumball@massey.ac.nz).

I can be contacted at the Ruawharo Centre, telephone (06) 834 4566, email [A.R.Ward@massey.ac.nz](mailto:A.R.Ward@massey.ac.nz). My supervisors are Professor Luanna Meyer, Massey University, telephone (06) 356 9099. Email [L.Meyer@massey.ac.nz](mailto:L.Meyer@massey.ac.nz) and Dr Judith Loveridge at the Massey College of Education: Palmerston North, telephone (06) 356 9099, email [J.Loveridge@massey.ac.nz](mailto:J.Loveridge@massey.ac.nz)

If you do **not** wish your son/daughter to be part of this study, please complete the form below, return it to the school and I will ensure that I do not take any notes about your son/daughter. You have the right not to participate; withdraw from the study at any time; or ask questions of the researcher at any time.

Thank-you for taking the time to read this letter. The study is important to students and teachers, as well as parent and caregivers.

Yours sincerely,

Angela Ward

.....

I \_\_\_\_\_ do **not** give my consent for my  
child \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the research study.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F.

### CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

#### The Social Experiences of Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Secondary Schools

This is an agreement made on:

BETWEEN Angela Ward, Massey University College of Education, Napier.

AND *(name of transcriber)*

I *(Name of transcriber)* agree not to disclose or communicate any of the confidential information she receives from Angela Ward related to the research project that has been approved by the Massey University Human Ethic Committee (PN Protocol 02/52).

I will not retain or copy any information involving the research project.

Signed:

Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

Occupation\_\_\_\_\_

In the Presence of:

Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

Occupation\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix G.

### Interview Schedules

#### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – Principals

##### **Interview One:**

This will be an interview early in the study. The questions are not set in concrete but are there as probes to get the principal's perspective on the inclusion of the student with disabilities, not just related to academic outcomes but also social outcomes.

- Could you tell me about the school's policy on students with special needs? Inclusion?
- What happens in practice?
- Can you tell me about (*Name of student*) and how she/he is doing in the mainstream?
- Do you think the inclusive programme is working for him/her? Have any changes had to be made to programmes/environment etc?
- Have all teachers been happy to have\_\_\_\_\_ in their class?
- Have you noticed how he/she fits into his/her classes? Playground?
- Has she/he got any particular friends?
- Do you think being in the school is a positive social experience?...a positive academic experience?

##### **Interview Two:**

This interview will be at the conclusion of the study. The purpose will be to clarify any issues that have arisen. I will seek to understand if there have been any changes to school policy; to organisation; to the participant students' circumstances. I will ask the principal to reflect on issues of inclusion and having the participants learning alongside their same-age peers from a social and academic perspective. I will ask him/her to tell stories of the inclusion of the participants particularly related to social relationships and development of friendships.

#### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – Parents

##### **Interview One:**

This interview will be to find out some of the student's background... schools... hobbies...interests...schooling...friends...relationships...the student's social and academic experiences at this school...hopes for their child...

**Interview Two:**

After transcribing the tape of the first interview I will write a response/letter and send it to the parent/caregiver to read. This second interview will begin with issues that arise from this letter. I then would like to explore in more depth the experiences of their child from their point of view particularly his/her social relationships and friends.

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE– Participating Students**

**Interview one:** The purpose of this interview is to establish a trusting relationship with the student. The interview is to be an informal conversation rather than fixed researcher question – participant response. The aim is to get the student to feel comfortable with the interview process and ‘chat’ informally with me.

I will begin by asking general questions e.g.

- Could you tell me about your family?
- Could you tell me about the schools you have been to?...the teachers you had?...the things you did?...
- What do you like doing when you are not at school?...hobbies?...clubs?...pets?...
- When did you come to this school?
- Could you tell me about what you did at school today? What subjects are you taking? Who are your teachers?

The conversation will allow the student to talk with me probing to find out what is his/her experience of high school – likes and dislikes...subjects...teachers...what do you do at interval...what do you do at lunchtime...how do you get to school...who do you spend time with???

**Interviews two, three, four:**

After I have transcribed the tape of the previous interview I will write a response in the form of a letter. I will begin the next conversation and read, or let the student read, the response. This will be a starter for the subsequent conversation.

- Did I get things right about our previous conversation? Would you like to change anything? Add anything?

We can discuss anything that comes up from my response.

- What have you been doing since we last talked? Activities in and out of school...holidays etc
- Can you tell me about \_\_\_\_\_ (*subject*)? What do you do in that class? Do you have a special friend in that class? Do any of the students help you? Who do you help? Is the school work hard?...easy?...do you get a lot of homework?
- General probes to get the student to share with me his/her experience of school...emotional reactions to events/classes etc...social

relationships...friends...hanging out...things that are cool...inviting friends home...being invited to other's homes...after school/weekend activities.

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE - Teachers**

There will one interview per teacher at the end of either of the two academic years of the study. The interview will be an informal conversation and the following questions are probes to find out the teacher's perspective of having \_\_\_\_\_ in his/her class and how he/she encourages social interaction in the class.

- Could you tell me about \_\_\_\_\_ in your class? How is she/he doing? Does he/she fit in well? Able to do the work? Work well in groups? Get help from other students? Give help to other students? Depend on the teachers aide? Independent? Mix with the other students? Gets asked to be in groups/teams? Have any special friendships – can you tell me about these? Do you enjoy having him/her in your class? Why? Any difficulties or concerns?
- Do you think that \_\_\_\_\_ has positive social experiences at school? Tell me about them. Are \_\_\_\_\_'s academic experiences positive?

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – Teacher Aides**

There will one interview per teacher aide at the end of either of the two academic years of the study. The interview will be an informal conversation and the following questions are probes to find out the teacher aide's perspective of his/her role as \_\_\_\_\_'s teacher aide and how/if he/she encourages social interaction in the class and out of class.

- Can you tell me how long you have been \_\_\_\_\_'s teacher aide? Tell me about it? What do you do? How do you help \_\_\_\_\_? Do you ever work with the other students in the class? Do you find it easy to work in the classes with \_\_\_\_? Does \_\_\_\_\_ have any friends in any of the classes? Does \_\_\_ sit with this friend/s? Does \_\_\_\_\_ spend time with the friend at interval or lunchtime? What do you do at interval or lunchtime? What does \_\_\_\_\_ do at interval and lunchtime? Do you think \_\_\_\_\_ is happy at school? What parts of school does \_\_\_\_\_ enjoy most? Does \_\_\_\_\_ work in groups in classes? On his/her own? In pairs? Are there any buddy systems? Do you think school is a positive social experience for \_\_\_\_\_? Is it a positive academic experience?

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – Peers**

This will be an informal conversation with a peer from \_\_\_\_\_ class. This will be a 'chat' and the questions are probes to find out his/her perspective of a student with a disability in the class.

- Could you tell me what you enjoy about school? About after school? Hobbies? Clubs? School activities? Work?
- Do you have any special friends at school? Do they come to your house – you to their houses?

- Are you friends with \_\_\_\_\_? Does \_\_\_\_\_ have any friends in the class? In other classes?
- Do you ever work with \_\_\_\_\_ in a group? Do you choose him/her? Does the teacher choose the groups?
- Does the teacher aide only help \_\_\_\_\_? do others help \_\_\_\_\_? Teacher? Other students?
- What does \_\_\_\_\_ do at interval? Lunchtime?
- What do you think it would be like to have a disability and be in your class? In this school?

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – Siblings

There will be one conversation with a sibling – at a time of the parents' second interview. This is intended to be a short conversation. It will begin with general 'chatty' questions about the child's school, pets, interests etc.

- (*Name of brother or sister*) has been at (*Name of high school*) for ? years now? Does he/she tell you what he/she does at school? Can you tell me about what he/she does at school?
- Can you tell me about your friends? Do they come home to play? Do you go to their house?
- Does \_\_\_\_\_ have any friends? Has he/she told you about any friends he/she has at school? Have you met them? Here? Where?
- Do you like school? Why/why not?
- Do you think \_\_\_\_\_ likes school? Why? Why not?

## Appendix H.

### The Process of Representing the Prose Transcript Texts into Poetic Form.

**Step 1:** I imported transcripts from Q6 into a Word file. This is part of a transcript coded Friends/Special friends.

```

+++++
+++++
+++ ON-LINE DOCUMENT: Sam2ndInt04
January 21 2004 - End of Year 10
+++++
+++++
[Sam2ndInt04: 383 - 414]
and then the next thing he'll be real helpful...so I don't know!

```

ARW: Ok...what about Paul? He was really helpful, wasn't he...in Art?

Sam2: Yep.

ARW: Tell me about Paul.

Sam2: Um Paul...is one of my...probably like my second best friend and um he's very helpful and I hang out with him at lunch times sometimes too but and I would probably not hang other with people because all they do is talk about computer games and go hang out with Paul but the only problem with that is....he...he...the...he doesn't...he um...he hangs out with like...five girls and he doesn't... at lunchtimes and stuff and I like don't really want to do that (laugh)...it's like he hangs out with five girls and you can kind of ...it's kind of ...you can...oh I don't know...it's just a bit weird it's just a bit weird but anyway...

ARW: Don't you like the girls?

Sam2: Oh they're all right but I just think it's a bit weird...he kind of doesn't have any friends that are guys ... except for me...but yes...he just hangs out with girls all the time...I mean it's ...I...all he talks about is like...you can kind of see it taking effect...it kind of affects the way he acts hanging around with all those girls...no offence to him but it kind of does...he's just...different...he's not always like...he's just weird sometimes but he's cool but he's weird sometimes and like everyone is the school knows that but he's...I don't

really know how to put it...it's just I don't like hanging out with all girls...and I find it a bit weird that that is what he does but mum says that that's just him...yes...

**Step 2:** As I was going to represent Sam's stories about Paul, I deleted all the material that did not relate to this including coding material and my questions.

Sam2: Um Paul...is one of my...probably like my second best friend and um he's very helpful and I hang out with him at lunch times sometimes too but and I would probably not hang out with other people because all they do is talk about computer games and go hang out with Paul but the only problem with that is...he...he...the...he doesn't...he um...he hangs out with like...five girls and he doesn't... at lunchtimes and stuff and I like don't really want to do that (laugh)...it's like he hangs out with five girls and you can kind of ...it's kind of ...you can...oh I don't know...it's just a bit weird it's just a bit weird but anyway...

Sam2: Oh they're all right but I just think it's a bit weird...he kind of doesn't have any friends that are guys ... except for me...but yes...he just hangs out with girls all the time...I mean it's ...I...all he talks about is like...you can kind of see it taking effect...it kind of affects the way he acts hanging around with all those girls...no offence to him but it kind of does...he's just...different...he's not always like...he's just weird sometimes but he's cool but he's weird sometimes and like everyone in the school knows that but he's...I don't really know how to put it...it's just I don't like hanging out with all girls...and I find it a bit weird that that is what he does but mum says that that's just him...yes...

**Step 3:** I deleted words such as "um"; Sam's name; stammered words; words begun but not continued; my comments e.g. (laugh), some minor pauses (...)

Paul is one of my...probably like my second best friend and he's very helpful and I hang out with him at lunch times sometimes too and I would probably not hang out with other people because all they do is talk about computer games and go hang out with Paul but the only problem with that is he hangs out with like five girls at lunchtimes and stuff and I like don't really want to do that it's like he hangs out with five girls oh I don't know...it's just a bit weird it's just a bit weird but anyway...

Oh they're all right but I just think it's a bit weird...he kind

of doesn't have any friends that are guys except for me but yes...he just hangs out with girls all the time. You can kind of see it taking effect...it kind of affects the way he acts hanging around with all those girls...no offence to him but it kind of does...he's just...different...he's not always like...he's just weird sometimes but he's cool but he's weird sometimes and like everyone is the school knows that but he's...I don't really know how to put it...it's just I don't like hanging out with all girls...and I find it a bit weird that that is what he does but mum says that that's just him...yes...

**Step 4:** I arranged the phrases in the lines of prose into poetic form.

Paul is one of my...  
 probably like my second best friend and  
 he's very helpful  
 and I hang out with him  
 at lunch times sometimes too  
 and I would probably not hang out with other people  
 because all they do is talk about computer games  
 and go hang out with Paul  
 but the only problem with that is  
 he hangs out with like five girls  
 at lunchtimes and stuff  
 and I like don't really want to do that  
 it's like he hangs out with five girls  
 and oh I don't know...  
 it's just a bit weird  
 it's just a bit weird  
 but anyway...

Oh they're all right  
 but I just think it's a bit weird...  
 he kind of doesn't have any friends that are guys ...  
 except for me...but yes...  
 he just hangs out with girls all the time.  
 You can kind of see it taking effect...  
 it kind of affects the way he acts  
 hanging around with all those girls.  
 no offence to him  
 but it kind of does.  
 He's just...different.  
 he's not always like...  
 he's just weird sometimes

but he's cool  
 but he's weird  
 sometimes  
 and like everyone is the school knows that  
 but he's...I don't really know how to put it...  
 it's just I don't like hanging out with all  
 girls...  
 and I find it a bit weird that that is what he does  
 but mum says  
 that that's just him...  
 yes...

**Step 5:** In the final poem I have

- included "*Paul is a close friend*" from another interview to act as a sub-title for this section;
- inserted lines 3-5 from another interview in order to temporally contextualise this friendship;
- omitted "It's like he hangs out with five girls" as it is repetitious without effect;
- omitted some conjunctions e.g. "and" and "but";
- inserted full stops and capitals to enhance meaning,
- inserted (...) to indicate where the student did not complete the sentence, or paused before continuing. I did this to keep the authenticity of the student's speech.

### *Paul is a close friend*

Paul is one of my...  
 probably like my second best friend.  
 I didn't know him before.

### *He used to hang out with a whole lot of guys*

At primary school

He's very helpful  
 and I hang out with him  
 at lunch times sometimes too  
 I would probably not hang out with other people  
 Because all they do  
 is talk about computer games  
 and go hang out with Paul.  
 The only problem with that is

he hangs out  
with like five girls  
at lunchtimes and stuff  
and I like don't really want to do that!  
It's just a bit weird.  
It's just a bit weird  
but anyway...

Oh they're all right.  
I just think it's a bit weird.  
He kind of doesn't have any friends that are guys.  
Except for me.  
But yes...  
He just hangs out with girls all the time.  
You can kind of see it taking effect.  
It kind of affects the way he acts  
hanging around with all those girls.  
No offence to him  
but it kind of does.  
He's just...different.  
he's not always like...  
He's just weird sometimes  
but he's cool  
but he's weird sometimes.  
Like everyone is the school knows that.  
I don't really know how to put it..  
It's just I don't like hanging out with all girls.  
I find it a bit weird  
that is what he does  
but mum says  
that that's just him...  
yes...