

I LEARN STUFF:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY OF DISABLED SENIOR
SECONDARY STUDENTS' SCHOOL EXPERIENCES.

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To Mum

I have neither sonnets nor wreaths of rhymes
In which to crown your honoured name,
But you love me all the same.
I am eternally thankful that I have you in my life.

Abstract

'I learn stuff' explores the school experiences of a group of four senior secondary students who have funding from the Ongoing Reviewable Resource Scheme (ORRS). This thesis is based on a broad definition of student school experience, viewing it as a 'way of talking about' what is important for the participants. It also allows for an examination of the multiple dimensions found within a classroom including relationships, subject material, and how the students interact with these. By using such a definition of experience it positions students as experts with agency in their own lives.

I begin by examining the social (relational) model of disability as it provides the language and framework of *barriers to doing* and *barriers to being*, which I use throughout. It then proceeds to examine human rights frameworks, and finally the New Zealand education and disability policy and legislative context. By drawing on the literature of both Childhood Studies and Disability Studies the thesis benefits from the insights of each discipline and builds a bridge between them.

To explore the overarching research question of "*what are the school experiences of senior secondary ORRS funded students?*" an ethnographic case study approach was taken in conjunction with a social constructionist methodological rationale. The ethical challenges in gaining and recognising student voice and experiences shaped this thesis, and as such they are reviewed as a part of the methodology as well as being integral to the findings. Observations were conducted in a single site over two school terms, using semi-structured interviews which were conducted with four self-selected student participants and three student-selected staff.

The findings are organised into two parts. The first part examines the research ethics issues of: informed consent without parental proxies, gaining access to the student participants in a school setting, the role of the researcher and broken assistive technology. These impacted on and shaped this thesis, but they also make visible the barriers to doing. The second part examines the school experiences of the students within the emergent themes of subjects and activities, and relationships. This served as a framework in which to explore the voices and experiences of the participants.

Firstly, the students provided a context for their school day by describing a "typical day". All of the students described getting up and coming to school. Three out of four described what they did after school or what they liked to do in their spare time. From their experiences came the emergent theme of subjects (e.g. Maths) and activities, the students described liking all of their

classes at some point in the interview process. The students also described activities they participated in both on and off the school campus. This theme revealed the difficulties students have in accessing and participating in these activities, but also their enjoyment in participating in the classroom. Their school experiences also informed their aspirations for the future. Two of the students discussed what they wanted to do both in the near future (the following year) and when they leave school, these were based on subjects they liked or what they thought was going to be a practical job. The second emergent theme relationships, was the most dominant theme discussed by the students and the student selected adults. Within this theme, four types or categories of relationships became evident: Teacher-teacher aide, student-teacher aide, student-teacher and peer relationships. The comments made by the students and the selected adults, revealed the complexities and barriers that students face in interacting with teachers and teacher aides while still maintaining friendships. These of course are experienced at different levels by the students.

From the wealth of data generated by the participants, the discussion focuses on how the barriers to doing and being impact on the students. Finally, the significance of this research is reflected in the hope that disabled students will be recognised as having the same rights and the same agency as their peers, and that they can and do participate in meaningful ways in both research and school environments. Recognising this may open the doors to further research with disabled students whilst also providing an insight into this group of disabled students' school experiences. This thesis helps to redress the lack of disability research in New Zealand. Future research could include an expansion of this study as well as undertaking increasingly participatory approaches with such students.

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Glossary of terms and abbreviations

ASDAN: Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network. ASDAN is New Zealand Qualifications Association (NZQA) recognised educational programme from the United Kingdom.

Child: A child's age range is defined within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as being a person from zero to seventeen. In the context of this thesis *child* and *student* are used interchangeably.

Disability: Is described in relation to the social (relational) model of disability (see Chapter One) and Disability Studies (see Chapter Two) as being the physical and attitudinal barriers faced by people with impairments.

ERO: Education Review Office.

HRC: Human Rights Commission.

Inclusion: A concept that can vary from meaning disabled students in mainstream class to a holistic inclusive society where difference is accepted and valued; it is discussed further in Chapter One.

Integrated settings or classrooms: Where disabled students are in mainstream or regular settings/classrooms but are not fully included.

NZDS: New Zealand Disability Strategy.

ORRS: Ongoing Reviewable Resource Scheme.

RITE: Realising Independence Through Education.

SENCO: Special Needs Coordinator.

SSC: Student Support Centre.

UNCRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

UNCRPD: United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Vox box: A speaking computer (or assistive technology) system that is used as a communication aid

Preface: Places of knowing

I was asked by a Special Needs Coordinator (SENCO) if my own experiences at secondary school influenced my decision about my research topic choice. At the time, knowing that I had mainly negative experiences and thinking that to say so would reflect badly on this project, I said no and tried to put my experiences aside. It was not until I began talking with the students that I realised the importance and the impact that my secondary school education had had. As Campbell (2009) prefaced her description of her experiences of impairment, “this is not meant to be a sob story” (p. 716), but rather an acknowledgement that my own impairment is one of the many influencing factors that led me to write this thesis – part of the *why*.

At the age of thirteen, I sustained a spinal injury by medical misadventure which was then left undiagnosed for two years. After three failed spinal operations the physical implications have meant varying degrees of pain when performing simple tasks. My sum total of secondary education added up to one year, one term and one day instead of the traditional four to five years. I feel that my experiences of impairment position me, as Stainton-Rodgers (2004) and Titchkosky (2003) state, as coming from ‘a place of knowing’. This phrase is generally used in context of emancipatory and/or participatory research (Mercer, 2002). I felt that because the participants were not consulted about every part or the majority of the processes of this thesis, I could not call it such. However, my ‘position of knowing’ gives me a more personal understanding of impairment and enabled certain student participants, by way of their comparison with me, to describe their impairments.

The majority of my interest in the topic therefore stems from my personal experiences of impairment. However, other influences include my mother, to whom this thesis is dedicated. The final influence was a specific semester paper in Inclusive Education at the University of Otago taught by Dr Gill Rutherford. This solidified my interests, gave me a path to follow (Child

Advocacy) and a focus that has ultimately led me to writing this thesis. The title itself is taken from a comment made by a student participant, Cobweb, when she described what she did at school.

Chapter One: Introduction and Background

Disability is here, there and everywhere even when we 'see' it nowhere (Michalko, 2009, p. 67).

Internationally there has been an 'explosion' of writing and research in the field of disability (Michalko, 2009; Titchkosky, 2003). As the above quotation describes, disability is 'everywhere'. Disability by its very nature is both visible and invisible. Recent writing and research however, especially in a New Zealand context, has focused very little on the school experiences of disabled students who have 'multiple' or 'severe' impairments. In relation to education, the New Zealand Human Rights Commission (2010) has noted in general that there is an "absence of data about...[disabled people] and their experiences" (p. 61).

To provide a background to my thesis, this chapter will explore the international human rights framework, specifically, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2007). A human rights framework highlights issues like student participation and voice, both of which are key throughout this thesis. The next section considers how disabled students' rights have or have not been translated into domestic education policy, such as Special Education 2000 (SE2000) and the New Zealand Disability Strategy (NZDS, 2001). Following the example of Cameron (2010) and MacArthur (2009), this thesis will use the language of the social model of disability, which warrants its own brief discussion.

The social (relational) model of disability

The social model of disability was developed by the British Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation [UPIAS] and it describes disability as the societal barriers, including attitudes, which are faced by people living with impairment (Oliver, 1996; Scott-Hill, 2004; Shakespeare, 2006; MacArthur, 2009). The social model sits in contrast to the medicalisation of disability and the medical model of disability which views disability in terms of deficit

(Finkelstein, 1980; 2002; Oliver, 1996; Scott-Hill, 2004; Shakespeare, 2006; Smith, 2009). The dichotomy between the medical and social models has been discussed at length by researchers and some would suggest the dualist arguments negate the complexities of disability (Egan, 1998; Humphrey, 2000; Lawson, 2007; Llewellyn & Hogan, 2000; Lord & Hutchison, 2003; Millar & Morton, 2007; Neilson, 2005). Furthermore, to reproduce such arguments is beyond the scope of this thesis as it primarily seeks to draw on the language or as Thomas (2004) notes, to use the social model as an “organising principle” (p. 581) rather than as a theory or definition of disability. Other researchers like Finkelstein (2002) and Terzi (2005) have discussed how the social model does not address the complexities of disability nor does it use the language that disabled people use (Finkelstein, 2002), whilst Terzi (2005) furthers this by arguing that the social model is theoretically incoherent.

In terms of this thesis, Titchkosky’s (2007) interpretation, adds to the definition or the ‘organising principle’ of the social model by explaining that disability is a “process of meaning-making...an embodiment of fleshy life” (p. 12) and further, that we should examine the “social significance of disability in everyday life” (p. 11). This is theoretically more in keeping with the aims of this thesis as Titchkosky’s idea of disability as embodiment, allows us to view the individual and disability as a whole, not just within the impairment/disability divide.

Furthermore, this thesis also draws on Thomas’ (1999) re-conceptualisation or reframing of the social model as the social relational model which is favoured by researchers like Rutherford (2008). The social relational model views disability as a “relationship between people” (p. 40). With its roots in feminist discourses Thomas (1999) explains that within the social relational model, disability, or the relationship between impaired and non-impaired should be viewed in the same way that patriarchy is, as a social oppression (p.40). Thomas (1999) also makes the distinction between disability and *impairment effects*. Disability is *not* the restriction because of impairment. For example my impairment is the limited mobility I sometimes experience because

of a limp due to my spinal injury; it is transformed into a disability when my limp becomes “a marker for other restrictions of activity which do constitute disability” (p. 41). This includes a denial of rights by those who are in power. Thomas (1999) goes on to describe the dimensions of disability and *impairment effects* as having elements that restrict activity or ‘doing’ and elements that “undermine psycho-emotional well-being” or ‘being’ (p. 157). The social model and the social relational model of disability both shed a light on disability as a social oppression and therefore as a rights issue. The next section examines rights as outlined in international conventions like the UNCRPD.

Human rights framework

A human rights framework makes visible key issues within this thesis, which include participation, education, voice and capacity/capability. With such a focus, it allows this research to draw on the moral and political associations of international conventions such as the UNCRC, ratified by New Zealand in 1993 and UNCRPD ratified by New Zealand in 2008 (Breen, 2004; United Nations, 2007). The Human Rights Commission (HRC) recognises that there are serious challenges to human rights in New Zealand (HRC, 2010). Of the thirty areas listed as a priority in 2010, five are directly relevant to this thesis (priorities 14, 15, 22, 23 and 24). They span the key issues of participation, education and child voice. Before these issues are examined in Chapter Two the UNCRC (1989) and UNCRPD (2007) will be briefly discussed.

The UNCRC (1989) was the first convention to directly address the rights of children as a minority group (Freeman, 2000, 2007). It is also the most successful in terms of signatories with just one member state still to sign, and of those who have signed only the United States of America is yet to ratify the convention (Breen, 2004; Doek, 2009; Freeman 2000; 2007; United Nations, 2010). The articles of UNCRC have been organised by Landsdown (1994) into what she calls the three ‘Ps’: Protection, Provision and Participation.

Rutherford (2008) noted that of the ‘three Ps’, protection and provision have been widely accepted because of their alignment with traditional views of children and childhood as vulnerable (Christensen & Prout, 2002; Rutherford, 2008). Issues within the protection articles range from abuse to discrimination. Provision rights encompass such matters as free education and social services (HRC, 2004; Rutherford, 2008). For the purposes of this thesis and in the context of this discussion the last of the ‘3 Ps’, participation is the most relevant.

Within this thesis there are two levels of participation for student participants: firstly at the level of participating in the research project and secondly participating in school. Participation constructs individuals as having agency and as citizens with the ability to action their rights (Christensen & Prout, 2002; Roche, 1999; Smith, 2007; Taylor & Smith, 2009). It also, as Luluvein (2010) states, “allows for experiences to be shared between more and less experienced” (p. 42). This idea repositions disabled students from being perceived as incompetent to being recognised as experts in their own lives. At different times throughout the research process the idea of disabled students’ participation has been a major issue. An example of this can be found in the ethical approach adopted here, which differs from the traditional research practice where gaining adult consent for children’s participation is the norm. The capacity of disabled students to give informed consent has been a major concern (Sanderson, 2010). Yet as Cohen (1980) noted, judgements based on capacity can be dangerous and are often used to negate basic human rights. The idea of capacity is enshrined in the New Zealand Mental Health Act (1992) and is not found in any education policy. The UNCRPD itself states that “all disabled people enjoy legal capacity....in all aspects of their lives” (Article 12). Furthermore, as the HRC (2010) notes, just because a person has been ‘*diagnosed*’ it does not mean that “they have lost the ability to consent” (p. 43). Therefore capacity was assumed for all students, recognising their right to participate in this research. Furthermore since they were discussing their own school experiences, they were the experts.

Reynaert, Bourverne-de-Bie and Vandeveld (2009) have warned against de-contextualising key phrases or articles within UNCRC and suggest that we should instead examine UNCRC as a whole. However single phrases have often been used to deny rights; therefore it seems only fitting that single phrases should also be used to highlight its violations, especially in regard to disabled students and education.

The UNCRC also established education as a key right for children, yet phrases like “subject to availability” (Article 23) have become synonymous with the maintenance of segregated education and is one of the key reasons the UNCRC is viewed as being stagnant when the educational world has moved on to ideas of inclusion (Peters, 2007). Freeman (2000) notes that the education article in UNCRC only provides integrated education at best. Integration, he explains, is the presence but not necessarily the participation of a disabled student in the classroom.

The later UNCRPD (2007) has updated education articles with explicit mention of *inclusive* education (Article 24). It also builds on the way voice and participation are conceptualised with the addition of alternative communication techniques like sign language and assistive technologies as well as broadening ideas about education, which is re-conceptualised as lifelong learning. Very little literature directly addresses UNCRPD because it is a recent convention. Research which does, found that inclusive and education are mutually defining concepts (Laluvein, 2010; Skär, 2010). Lawson’s (2007) critique of the UNCRPD suggests that even with the refocusing of education to reflect an inclusive education movement, little or no change will happen. The reason is obvious: society is slow to adapt and accept inclusive practices (Irving, Sanderson, & Sanderson, *in press*). Yet updated education articles have reinforced the importance of the inclusion movement, especially at an international level. UNCRPD also reflects the multiplicity of disability by recognizing that it reflects both physical and social barriers and should produce a powerful impetus for signatories to strive for inclusive education.

The HRC has identified inclusive education in New Zealand as a ‘significant issue’ (HRC, 2010). National policy is perhaps more important as it structures the lived reality of disabled students (Olssen, Codd & O’Neill, 2004). Therefore, a brief examination of New Zealand educational policy is necessary to view the ‘deep-seated structures’ or the embedded practices (Millar & Morton, 2007) that ultimately impact on the students.

New Zealand legislation and policy: The structures of education

The Educational Review Office [ERO] (2010) states that “approximately three percent of students [were] identified as high needs” (p.1). The New Zealand education policy that structures the school experiences of this three percent has been described by researchers as “higgledy-piggledy” (Higgins, MacArthur, & Rietveld, 2006, p. 30). It is a mix of policies that has been added with each new development, like inclusive education, but it lacks any policy cohesion (Higgins, MacArthur, & Morton, 2008). The historical developments of the New Zealand compulsory education system that started in 1877 have been traced by Judith Simon (2000). She concludes: “New Zealand education policy, both the policies and the practices within the schools have continued in varying degrees to reproduce social inequalities” (p. 63). McKee (2001) likewise has traced the development of Deaf education in New Zealand from 1880 onwards. However, both agree that the major development in education for all students was the 1989 Education Act (McKee, 2001; Simon, 2000).

This was the first New Zealand law that provided disabled students with the right to attend their local school (Brown, 1999; Brown & Thomson, 2005). As section 8 states:

Equal rights to primary and secondary education---(1) Except as provided in this Part of this Act, people who have special educational needs (whether because of disability or otherwise) have the same rights to enrol and receive education at state schools as people who do not (Ministry of Education, 1989).

The Act allowed children who had been previously denied mainstream educational access to be ‘integrated’ with their peers (Brown & Thomson, 2005; McPhail & Freeman, 2005; Millar &

Morton, 2007). Although this has theoretically opened the doors to disabled students, segregated school settings still exist. Therefore of concern is the maintenance of special education structures, which has continued to segregate students both behind the walls of special schools and within the classrooms of attached units in mainstream schools.

Special and Inclusive education.

The debate over special and inclusive education is widespread and ongoing (Higgins, MacArthur & Morton, 2008; New Zealand Government, 2010; O'Brien & Ryba, 2005).

Special Education is described as “the provision of extra assistance, adapted programmes or learning environments, specialised equipment or materials to support children and young people with accessing the curriculum in a range of settings” (Ministry of Education, 2010a). ‘Special’ education has become a byword for the segregation of disabled students in ‘special’ schools and ‘special’ classrooms (O'Brien & Ryba, 2005). Yet it is not just the locations that define special education. As Ballard (2004) argues it is a “way of thinking about teaching that is embedded in the medical and psychological deficit models” (p. 317). Historically, as Rod Michalko (2009) discusses, “acts of institutionalization and segregation permitted disability to be put ‘out of the way’ of mainstream culture” (p73), effectively silencing disabled students. O'Brien and Ryba (2005) discuss special education labelling in greater detail. Currently special education in New Zealand is enshrined in policy terms in Special Education 2000 (SE2000).

SE2000 as a policy was introduced in 1997 and aimed at producing an inclusive education system (Kearney & Kane, 2006). However as the policy included the creation of funding and resources attached to individual students (Wylie, 2000) and without a clear definition of what inclusion is, the policy has failed to realise inclusion or inclusive practices (Kearney & Kane, 2006). One of the major funding and current categories within SE2000 for students with ‘high needs’ is the Ongoing Reviewable Resource Scheme (ORRS). ORRS is a funding scheme of 136.1 million

dollars that “supports students with the most significant educational needs” (New Zealand Government, 2010, p. 52).

ORRS funding is based on a deficit model of disability, where students are ‘graded on the severity of their impairment’ (New Zealand Government, 2010). For the purposes of this thesis, the label has been taken for identification of student participants because it is the label that can come to define the students through their school lives. Brantlinger (2004) acknowledges that although a deficit theory is not ideal, “...unique need[s] must be acknowledged if extra resources are to be made available...” (p. 18).

Currently, the New Zealand education system is designed to provide a “mix of educational options and choices” (New Zealand Government, 2010, p. 20). This includes special schools and special units within mainstream schools as integrated settings. It does not provide a fully inclusive setting (New Zealand Government, 2010). Special education in a New Zealand context focuses on funding and the procedures to gain the funding and as such it has its own administrative body, Group Special Education (GSE). Special education is seen very much as an ‘appendage’ to general education (Brown & Thomson, 2005). In 2010 the New Zealand Government reviewed special education policy. The document described the spread of funding in terms of a pyramid, which had been previously established (Brown & Thomson, 2005). At the bottom was early childhood and early intervention. The central section of the pyramid is a moderate to high needs category, which contains funding like the Special Education Grant (SEG) given to all public schools. At the top is the funding for the highest needs which includes ORRS funding (New Zealand Government, 2010).

At the end of 2010 “Success for All” was launched after the review. The four year plan continues the ‘higgledy-piggledy’ attempts at inclusion. On one hand it provides more funding for ORRS and emphasises ‘specialist’ teaching while on the other it highlights a commitment to UNCRPD (Ministry of Education, 2010). Maintaining the status quo only means that an inclusive education

system for disabled New Zealand students is so much further away, and continues to be found in theory but not in practice in New Zealand, especially when Ballard suggests (2004) “special education will not help us to achieve inclusion” (p320).

Defining inclusion takes on many forms from the simplistic ‘disabled students within a mainstream classroom’ to a social justice perspective where the focus is on educating *all* students and including *all* within the wider societal context (McPhail & Freeman, 2005). The first definition of inclusion is favoured by government bodies like ERO who describe it as the most “pragmatic” (p. 3) definition. This is implemented through mainstreaming, where students are physically present in regular classrooms (ERO, 2010).

Carrington and Elkins (2002) state that inclusion is “a philosophy of acceptance where all people are valued and treated with respect” (p. 51). Others like Ainscow (1999) describe inclusion in terms of processes and participation: “A process of increasing the participation of pupils in and reducing their exclusion from the cultures, curricula, and communities of their local schools, not forgetting, of course, that education involves many processes that occur outside school” (p. 218). MacArthur (2009) describes the dimensions of inclusion as being linked with presence, participation and achievement. Heshusius (2004) also notes that inclusion in education is reliant on “close relationships” (p. 158) among all stakeholders, including students, parents and teachers.

McPhail and Freeman (2005) make the distinction between societal inclusion and educational inclusion, stating that inclusion has been “colonised by educational discourses” (p. 254). Societal inclusion requires wider, larger and more holistic approaches in every aspect of society, whereas educational inclusion is confined to one aspect of life without addressing the wider society in which it is situated. Ainscow (1999), as noted previously, links school and education to the wider community, and therefore goes some way in bridging the society-education divide as described by Slee (2004), who noted that inclusion has been primarily seen as the domain and responsibility

of education, thereby negating societal responsibility. As a bridging concept, Runswick-Cole and Hodge (2009) have suggested that we should shift perspectives from special education or needs to special rights. Although attaching rights gives this concept a certain amount of power, it still maintains a sense of separation for disabled students. At a New Zealand policy level, one of the few places inclusive education is made explicit is in the New Zealand Disability Strategy (NZDS, 2001).

One of the main objectives of the NZDS, of central importance to this thesis, is the commitment to inclusive education in Objective 3. Millar and Morton (2007) noted that there is a lack of awareness about the NZDS, even though creating awareness of disability is a focus of both the NZDS and UNCRPD. Although this thesis is not focused on inclusion, but rather is about exclusion and is in fact focused on a single education setting, I would still argue that the perspective for this thesis is very much situated within a holistic societal inclusion rather than simply educational inclusion. This allows us to view the students' participation within the school setting as being a part of the wider community culture. Inclusive and special education is a major theme that impacts on the lives of disabled students. The next chapter will explore research that examines multiple educational settings including special, integrated and inclusive practices.

Summary and organisation of thesis

Chapter One has explored the background to this research and introduced some of the key concepts that will be used throughout this thesis, including participation, voice and disability. The social model of disability makes the distinction between impairment and disability. The human rights framework highlights the importance of participation, voice and the right to inclusive education. The background to this thesis concludes with an outline of the national policy that structures what 'type' of education disabled students receive – special, integrated, or inclusive, as well as discussing and defining what inclusion is in the context of this thesis. It is useful at this point before examining the literature to review the organisation of this thesis.

The organisation of this thesis.

This thesis is organised into five chapters. It was prefaced by the personal influences that have led me to choose this topic. The introduction and background have briefly examined the language and the structures of the social model and includes the international conventions and national legislation and policies that have influenced the wider aspects of this thesis. **Chapter Two** briefly outlines the theoretical background of the two major bodies of literature relating to Childhood Studies and Disability Studies. This chapter also seeks to define key concepts of voice and school experience as well as reviewing the international and national contexts for research about disabled students' school experiences.

The methodological rationale of social constructionism and ethnography are examined in **Chapter Three** along with the research method and design. **Chapter Four** is divided into two parts, the first of which highlights the key ethical challenges of this thesis which include access to the students and the roles of both the researcher and support person. The second part examines the key findings, which have been divided into their emergent themes of subjects and activities and relationships. **Chapter Five** discusses these findings and concludes with the significance and implications of the research.

Chapter Two: Literature review

This chapter examines the research literature regarding the experiences of disabled students. Initially the chapter outlines the background of the two bodies of literature of Childhood Studies and Disability Studies. Combining these, as Connors and Stalker (2003) have noted, is at an early stage of theoretical development and as such could be seen as an “uneasy marriage” (p. 23). Their observation is based on the silences and lack of acknowledgement that Childhood Studies and Disability Studies have for each other. This is followed by examining what is meant by voice and students’ school experience, which are two key concepts within this thesis. The chapter then considers some of the previous research with disabled students, nationally and internationally, within the framework of *barriers to being* and *barriers to doing* (Connors & Stalker, 2003; Rutherford, 2008; Thomas, 1999) thereby contextualising this study. Finally, it discusses the research question that emerged from this review of the literature.

Childhood Studies

Childhood Studies is a large body of literature that is focused on the historical and social construction of children and childhood rather than the biological aspects of age (Kehily, 2004). It draws on multiple disciplines including history and sociology or as James (2007) states

With a commitment to interdisciplinarity at its core, and drawing on sociology, anthropology, psychology, history, geography, and law, what united this field of concern was a concern for the socially constructed character of childhood that involves the foci of childhood as a sociocultural space and children’s own perspectives as social actors (p. 263)

Much of the literature traces its roots back to the work of Phillipe Ariés (1962) who traced the socio-historic construction of the concept of ‘childhood’ and ‘child’ (Gittins, 2004; Stainton-Rodgers, 2004). He found that the western concept was constructed by the time in which people lived. Ultimately, the theory that was established and is at the very core of Childhood Studies is

that here is not a single concept of childhood or idea about what the child is, but rather that there are multiple childhoods (Christensen & Prout, 2002; Kehily, 2004; Smith, 2007). Thus, it allows us to recognise that the experiences of a disabled childhood are unique but a part of the phenomenon of childhood nonetheless, not a medical deviancy from the norm.

Within the multiple views of children, as well as a multiplicity of childhood(s) (Kehily, 2004; Smith, 2007), Christensen and Prout (2002) have identified four ways of viewing children and childhood (p. 480): the child as object, subject, social actor and as a participant. These views are considered not as a linear development of socio-historic constructions but as co-existing concepts. They can be applied to, and indeed highlight, perspectives of disabled students as passive and vulnerable (Shakespeare, 2006) thereby allowing a “shift in our thinking about who children are and what childhood looks like” (James, 2004, p. 36). Of the four views James (2004) considers that ‘child as a social actor’ is a key tenet in Childhood Studies as it allows us to view students both as individual participants and as a part of the wider category of ‘child’. Interwoven with a perspective of the child as social actor, is the recognition of children and youth as independent fully realised beings, not passive recipients. As Qvortrup (1994) states, they are “human beings not human becomings” (p. 18). This underpins issues of participant consent. It also positions the student participants as the experts in recounting their lives and experiences.

The “uneasy marriage” between Childhood and Disability Studies, as Connors and Stalker (2003) describe, is found in the “abyss” between Childhood Studies’ lack of recognition of disability and Disability Studies’ adult-centred language (Kelly, 2005, p. 271). Furthermore the use of experiences is acceptable and widely used for research purposes in Childhood Studies whilst within Disability Studies it continues to be contentious because of its links to medical models of disability through a focus on the individual with an impairment rather than the disabling nature of society (Connors & Stalker, 2003; Thomas, 1999). Researchers such as Connors and Stalker (2003), Kelly (2005) and Thomas (1999) have begun to address this issue. As Connors and

Stalker (2003) recognised, when used in tandem, Childhood Studies and Disability Studies each fill the first of these shortcomings. It also provides a useful tool to examine and understand the experiences of the disabled child, balancing recognition of 'disability as an oppression' and the child as competent social actor (Connors & Stalker, 2003; Kelly, 2005; Thomas, 1999).

Disability Studies

Disability Studies attempts to treat seriously one particular inescapable fact: whenever, however disability appears, it appears in the midst of other people (Titchkosky, 2007, p. 37-8).

The term Disability Studies describes the large body of literature that pertains to theorising disability and impairment. Titchkosky (2007) describes Disability Studies in terms of rejection: rejecting disability as an *object* of study and rejecting research that describes disabled people as *overcoming* disability (p. 37). Although it is used as an umbrella term that covers a wide variety of research, there are some shared characteristics. As a key characteristic of Disability Studies, many researchers trace the developments of the models of disability, medical and social models and their impact on our understandings of disability and impairment (Mercer, 2002; Swain & French, 2006). Other characteristics include an awareness of power relationships and communication techniques (Swain & French, 2006). Within Disability Studies there are subgroups which include the sociology of disability favoured by researchers like Thomas (1999; 2007).

Sociological understandings of disability focus on the (re)production of disability and the institutions in which they are formed (Barnes, Mercer, & Shakespeare, 1999). In bridging the gap between Childhood Studies and Disability Studies, both share sociological understandings (sociology of childhood and sociology of disability) with similar ideas from a social constructionist perspective (Connors & Stalker, 2003). A full definition of social constructionism is examined in Chapter Three in relation to the methodological rationale.

Disability Studies also focuses on political agendas and the facilitation of political struggles (Mercer, 2002). Political agendas acknowledge disability as disablism on a par with other 'isms'

like sexism and racism (Thomas, 1999; 2004). This has signalled a shift away from the models of disability that focus on the individual as there is a fear that by individualising impairment there is a risk of creating stronger links with the medical model of disability (Finkelstein, 2002; Thomas, 1999). Conversely, Thomas (2007) argues that theories should indeed examine and engage with both the structures and the individual, thereby creating a richer picture of disability within different contexts as it highlights both theoretical stances and the individual's lived reality. This is key for the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis.

So far the literature review has sought to contextualise the bodies of literature which this thesis draws upon. The following sections briefly outline two key concepts, voice and school experience. The research literature that follows has been examined using the *barriers to doing* and *barriers to being* framework found in Thomas (1999) and Connors and Stalker (2003).

Voice

In this section voice is examined in terms of theoretical position, the physical processes and the right to voice and express an opinion in order to develop a meaning that is relevant. The concept of student voice is central to the theoretical positioning of this thesis as it is linked with participation and the literature regarding Childhood Studies and Disability Studies. There are multiple interpretations of how voice should be characterised. Davis (2000) within Disability Studies suggests that research should seek to express 'polyphonic' or multiple voices. A rights based interpretation of voice shows that it should be included in a way that respects and upholds students as citizens (Smith & Bjerke, 2009). Finally Childhood Studies views the child or student as capable of expressing those voices, which as James (2004) suggests, should "speak boldly within the text" (p. 26).

In this thesis voice has been viewed as both the physical processes of voicing an opinion and the act of 'giving voice' to those students. Lewis (2010) warns that speaking on behalf of others should be done tentatively. Within this thesis I hope that the students' voices are foremost, that

they are seen as capable of expressing their opinions, that they are experts in their own lives and can transform aspects of their daily life. Fielding (2004) further warns against what he describes as the “faddism” (p. 296) of youth voice and the dangers of reinforcing the subjugation of the participants produced by replicating power inequalities. This is especially apparent in the relationship between the interviewer and participant. Fielding (2004) wishes to make visible the continuing ethical issues around student voice, he fears that the explosion of research has created a new norm and in doing so the ethical rigour of such research is not as thorough as it should be in recognising the power inequalities faced by student participants in relation to adult researchers.

Lewis and Porter (2004) argue that rights instruments like the UNCRC assume that there are no barriers for children or students in having a voice or being heard. For disabled students even more than for their non-disabled counterparts, there are many barriers to this process, ranging from the physical act of communication to issues of other people’s perceptions of their capacity and competency. With this said, it is important, as Oliver (1996) asserts, to recognise that the aim of this research is to represent the experiences of the disabled students from their point of view.

Student School Experience

This section first describes why the concept of experience is important and then seeks to provide a definition of school experience in terms of this thesis. Unlike Childhood Studies where experience is a major focus and is an accepted part of the discipline, experience within disability studies is still highly contentious (Connors & Stalker, 2003). However with Oliver’s (1996) assertion above coupled with others (Connors & Stalker, 2003; Kelly, 2005; Thomas, 1999; 2004; 2007; Titchkosky, 2003) there is an increasing amount of focus being placed on experience within Disability Studies. Titchkosky (2003) below identifies the importance of examining experiences when she states:

By staying with disability experience, even in matters as ordinary as everyday movement, disability can begin to be grasped as a place from which the culturally constituted boundaries between the expected and the unexpected, the visible and the invisible, the doing and the non-doing of things can be considered (pp. 17-18).

However, what is meant by student school experience? Thiessen (2007) has described several defining features of research that involves students' school experience. They incorporate the critical examination of "individual and collective worlds of students, with a particular focus on how they navigate and negotiate the dynamic and multi-dimensional demands of their classroom and school lives" (p. 5) which can include the interaction of students in terms of subjects, assessment and teaching approaches as well as relationships (both peer and adult).

The research looks at how students manage the intersection between school and life outside school hours as well as their views and position or role within the classroom (agency and voice). Furthermore Thiessen (2007) goes on to describe the three orientations found within student experience research. These are the social process of the classroom; identities of students within the classroom; and finally participation. Orientation one, Thiessen describes as examining the social processes of the classroom and the thoughts and feelings of the students. Orientation two describes how students are influenced by school and how they adapt to its structures. Orientation three is based on student participation and agency in the classroom. All three orientations draw heavily from Childhood Studies, yet equally they are broad enough so that issues found within Disability Studies can still become visible. Furthermore, aspects of all three can be found throughout this thesis, especially orientation one, the thoughts and feelings of students and orientation three with a focus on student agency.

It is also important to note that the term *experience* changes with context, has multiple meanings and, as Fox (2006) points out, these can be complex. After a lengthy discussion, not replicated here for brevity, Fox (2006) finally settles on a description of the term stating that experience should be used as a way of "talking about what happened, of establishing difference and

similarity, of claiming knowledge that is unassailable” (p. 52). This can be seen as an underlying feature of much of the research involving disabled students’ experiences which also calls for their perceptions or views on topics (Connors & Stalker, 2003; Curtin & Clarke, 2005; Lewis, Robertson, & Parsons, 2007; Reynolds, 2006; Whitehurst, 2006).

Drawing on Fox (2006) and Thiessen (2007) this thesis arrives at a simple definition of experience and what it means. Experience is used as a way of talking about what is important for the participants; using an amalgam of Thiessen’s (2007) three orientations, experience can be seen to place the students as experts in their own lives and furthermore as having agency. It also allows for an examination of the multiple dimensions found within a classroom and how the students interact with these, including relationships and subject material (curriculum). Such a focus is in keeping with the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis discussed earlier and to be further developed in Chapter Three. This part of the literature review has examined key concepts; the next section examines research that focuses on aspects of students’ school experiences within the framework of Thomas’ (1999) *barriers to doing* and *barriers to being*.

Views and experiences of disabled students: What the research says

Traditionally studies about disabled students have focused on the views of adults and non-disabled peers. It is relatively easy to find adult perspectives that discuss disabled children or students and they dominate the literature about disability in an educational context, favouring teachers and parents rather than disabled students (Abernathy & Taylor, 2009; Brown, 1999; Bunch & Valeo, 2004; Carter, 2006; Eisenman, Pleet, Wendry, & McGinley, 2010; Downing, Eichinger & Williams, 1997; Hodge et al., 2009; Prezant & Marshak, 2006; Smith-D’Arezzo & More-Thomas, 2010; Valle, 2009). Within the research on ‘other’ voices, if students or children are involved, they are generally seen within a family context, which for the most part focuses on the impact of having a disabled child, for example the financial burden and the struggle to advocate for them. Mittler’s (1995) study of international family perspectives for the United

Nations found that the greatest impact on the families of people with disabilities was the social attitudes of those around them, including professionals as well as society at large.

Despite the tradition of gaining non-disabled voices, there is a growing body of work based on the research for instance of Davis and Watson (2001) and Slee (2001) who describe the silence of disabled students within educational research. Currently there is more published international research conducted with students than New Zealand based studies, yet despite the small population base and limited research capacity, there has been a growth in research with students. In my review of the literature that examines disabled students' experiences of school, this trend is reflected below. Furthermore the majority of the literature addresses the concerns only of Disability Studies; only a few (Connors & Stalker, 2003; Kelly, 2005; MacArthur & Gaffney, 2001; Rutherford, 2008) recognise the role of Childhood Studies when examining disabled students' experiences.

Research that explores and examines the voices and experiences of students with 'high', 'severe' or 'complex' needs is predominantly qualitative. They range in scale from three (Clark, 2008) to 300 participants (Watson et al., 2000) and they use a variety of methods including ethnographic (Clark, 2008; Watson et al., 2000), case study (MacArthur, McDonald, Simmons & Caswell, 2007), narrative (Ward, 2010), participatory (Reynolds, 2006) and biographical (Curtin & Clarke, 2005). Data collection instruments used interview material almost exclusively; although some like Watson et al. (2000) used observations. The New Zealand studies tend to be small scale which is in part based on the small research capacity whilst the two largest (Reynolds, 2006; Watson et al., 2000) are both British and thus able to draw from a larger population base.

In the New Zealand context, a small group of researchers has produced the bulk of the research about disabled students' experiences at school, and they focus usually on key relationships (Alton-Lee et al., 2006; MacArthur & Gaffney, 2001; Rutherford, 2008; Ward, 2010). The many themes found within the literature will be examined within the framework of Thomas' (1999)

and Connors and Stalker's (2003) *barriers to being* and *barriers to doing*. For disabled students there are multiple *barriers to being* and *barriers to doing* which are dynamic and fluid; in fact some, for instance relationships (adults and peers) can be seen **both** as *barriers to doing* and *barriers to being*.

Barriers to being.

Barriers to being affect the 'big picture' and future outcomes of disabled students Thomas (1999) defines the barriers to being as "the processes which undermine psycho-emotional well being" (p. 157). The three main *barriers to being* that were consistently found across the literature were school choice, attitudes and student aspirations.

As discussed in Chapter One, there has been much discussion about inclusive and special education. MacArthur (2002) noted the importance of the school setting for disabled students. The research that examines student school experience tends to compare mainstream and segregated settings; even when avoiding this comparison (Bjarnason, 2005; Reynolds, 2006). Clark (2008) and Whitehurst (2006) both seek to examine inclusive education in different settings, one in a classroom and the other through performing a play. Inclusive education lessens the barriers for disabled students through participation, acceptance and recognition of their right to be included. Firstly, Clark's (2008) small scale ethnographic study of three students ranging in age from 13-15 was set in a single American inclusive education classroom. It is a good example of why key terms should be defined, as what is considered inclusive in this American classroom would be more akin to an integrated setting in the New Zealand and British education systems, although there are some aspects that differ, including the use of 'push in' teachers. Push in teachers as Clark explained are two additional teachers trained in special education. Lessons were co-taught with the push in teachers with one assuming a similar role to the main teacher while the other chose to help individuals without being attached to any student in particular. Clark observed that the disabled students were accepted as members of the classroom. The teacher

treated all students with respect and equality, walking around the class checking if any student needed help.

The disabled students' attitudes towards the class and teachers varied. For example a student described one of the special education teachers positively, stating "I like him 'cause he's cool..." (p. 16) while others felt that the class was "boring and wastes...time" (p. 16). Some of the participants did not view themselves as being disabled, as they associated disability with physical impairments. Towards the end she focuses on teaching practices, and advocates more inclusive practices in all classrooms. I suggested above that Clark's study was in fact situated in an integrated, rather than an inclusive classroom; the next study examines inclusion in terms of disabled students participating in a play.

Whitehurst's (2006) study with students, who had multiple impairments, included one student who was described as non-verbal. She selected students from a segregated school who had been part of a school play with students from a mainstream school. The play itself was meant to be an exercise in 'inclusion'. Whitehurst sought to design her study so that it would produce the most participation of the students including the non-verbal student. She used predominantly photographs taken throughout the production. There was also the use of a 'talking mat' where the students were given communication aides like phrases and pictures to piece together. She also used a speech and language coordinator to conduct the interviews with the students, although most of these techniques were new to the students. Whitehurst (2006) had hoped to let the students speak for themselves yet she did not use the communication techniques that the students employed. Further, she only used a few direct quotes, focusing instead on the processes of gaining their views as she emphasised the need to elicit the perspectives of students with (severe) impairments.

The quotations Whitehurst (2006) used are primarily when the students reflected on their participation in the production. Some students liked being with the mainstream school students

while others liked the structural or physical aspects. One student stated: “The theatre was impressive” (p. 58). This is in contrast to another student who disliked the theatre exclaiming “I did not like the theatre...it was too crowded...people were banging doors” (p. 58).

Unlike Whitehurst (2006), the Realising Independence Through Education [RITE] (Reynolds, 2006) study did not introduce different communication techniques. It was the first large scale project that specifically involved students who had ‘high’ support or communications needs, but who had the academic ability to study in the mainstream. The research design aimed at being participatory, with the main element of the recruitment processes being self selection for interviews and qualitative questionnaires. Participatory research, as discussed in the preface, involves participants in the creation of the project and other elements within the research design (Mercer, 2002). The study wanted the participant voice to be heard. An effort was made to gain a “true reflection of reality” (p. 16) for the students as the RITE project found that there had been very little work to gain the perspectives of disabled students with high support or communication needs. The large study examined four key aspects of life: 1) Education and employment; 2) Health and social services; 3) Independence and belonging; 4) Transition.

The education and employment section had the largest number of respondents, 21 of whom 11 were described as young people, with one participant over 25 years old. It also examined the perspectives of students in secondary and tertiary settings. As this thesis is concerned with the secondary setting, only the research or discussions describing disabled secondary school students is examined. Like other studies (Clark, 2008; Whitehurst, 2006) the RITE study examined both mainstream and special education settings. Rather than using the comparison of disabled/nondisabled settings, they concentrated on how qualifications were accessed.

The dilemma of attending a special or mainstream school was summed up by Finn who stated: “Effectively it was either go to a school that wouldn't cater for my educational needs or a school that wouldn't cater for my physical needs so I was sort of stuck” (Reynolds, 2006, p. 12).

Another student reflected on how his choice or lack of choice in schools hindered his future academic aspirations. “My choice of GCSEs and choice of A levels was severely affected, even my choice of school. My choice of secondary school was hugely affected as only one school in the area was accessible for wheelchairs” (Reynolds, 2006, p. 17). The researchers advocated for school choice, although many of their participants described having difficulties in both settings.

Participants in Curtin and Clarke’s (2005) study also recognised that in the segregated setting they would not gain the academic achievements they would in a mainstream setting. One student stated, “I felt that [a segregated school] would get me through life but it wouldn’t give me quality or anything” (p. 203). Their small scale study focused on nine students (aged 10-13) from two segregated schools who were physically disabled but “had the cognitive ability to participate” (p. 200). The “individuality” (p. 201) of the students was important to the researchers and they sought to avoid comparisons (mainstream/segregated). All but two of the participants had attended both mainstream and segregated settings for primary school.

Bjarnason (2005) observed that students who were labelled as having multiple or intellectual disabilities were less likely to participate in a mainstream school, which could indicate a disability hierarchy. Bjarnason’s (2005) qualitative study examined the secondary school experiences of 36 16-24 year olds. It formed part of a larger study in which the aim was to examine the first generation of disabled students affected by Icelandic policy revisions between 1998 and 2002 across multiple settings of special school, special classes and general classes. Only five of the 36 participants attended a special school. Many students in this study began in a regular class but were then placed in a special class or school. Bjarnason (2005) cites two main reasons for this: they had been teased or bullied and a special class or school met their needs better. Nevertheless, all the students in Bjarnason’s study who were in the segregated schools described enjoying their time at the school, although some of the participants commented on the repetitive work.

Metaphorically, Bjarnason (2005) described how disabled students exist in the dualistic education system, describing them as “travellers on two roads or nomading in the wilderness between the roads” (p. 124). Bjarnason argues that general education classes, despite being at times problematical, allow disabled students “the promise of greater personal freedom” (p. 124) compared to special schools which offer paternalism and eternal youth. Bjarnason describes special classes as a wasteland where students are excluded from both general and special education, existing in a “limbo of indifference,” never being fully accepted in either setting (Bjarnason, 2005, p. 125). A reason behind the differing experiences of students, Bjarnason suggests, is the organisation of the school settings: the further the students progress through the school levels, the more likely they are to be isolated from their peers. Bjarnason concludes “schooling is a powerful agent for placing these young people on vastly different tracks...either on a track that leads them to an interdependent adulthood or a track within a special world for eternal children” (p.126).

The comparison between mainstream and special education settings features heavily in the literature, especially surrounding school choice (Bjarnason, 2005; Clark, 2008; Curtin & Clarke, 2005; Reynolds, 2006; Whitehurst, 2006). It is important to note that this type of comparison can be unhelpful as it can reinforce stereotypes (Slee, 2001). Conversely, it is also important to examine the wider school structures that limit disabled students’ school choice. At the very least it impacts on both the attitudes of society towards disabled students and disabled students’ aspirations and could be considered as a key barrier to being.

As a barrier to being, attitudes play a role not only in shaping the future of disabled students but also shaping their everyday lives. Adult attitudes predominantly impact students in negative ways with students across the various studies recognising that they are treated differently; for example students in the RITE project noted:

I did get the impression that some of them [teachers] were treating me different to what they treated everyone else. My friend pointed out 'Why is it that the teachers say hello to you and yet they ignore everyone else'. And yeah, I would like to be treated the same as everyone else but obviously that applies to society in general not just through education. (p. 36)

This student recognised that attitudes not only exist within the school environment but also within the wider societal context. The students who were interviewed in Connors and Stalker's (2003) study were often described by adults in terms of their impairment, especially those in segregated settings. Students in this setting also liked being in an environment where there were people with the same impairment. Later on when discussing students' understanding of disability, a student in an integrated setting also described 'sameness' of impairment with another student. Segregated students also labelled themselves in terms of their impairment: for example, a student stated "I'm happy being cerebral palsy" (p. 55). As Connors and Stalker (2003) argue, this is a direct result from being labelled this way by staff at the school. Interestingly, in integrated settings, they found that students were in pseudo-segregated settings both in attached units and within a classroom.

In Lewis, Robertson and Parsons' (2007) project for the British Disability Rights Commission (DRC) the large scale "My school, my family, my life: Telling it like it is", students also discussed teacher attitudes which could be both positive and negative. Positive attitudes included: listening to the students, honesty, respect, being kind and straightforward. As one student stated:

I trust the staff here, the way they act towards you. You can have a laugh with them in lessons and they don't mind you walking around with them while they are doing their duties at lunchtime, it's not like 'oh I can't be bothered now.' (p. 15)

The antithesis of these attitudes came from other students who did not ask what the disabled student wanted directly as well as from teachers who did not take their views into consideration or completely overrode them. An example they gave was through the words of a student who had a visual impairment. When the student told the teacher they could not see the worksheet

they were promptly told not to be 'stupid'. The student gave the teacher a letter explaining and the teacher eventually apologised to the student (p. 15-16).

Directly related to teacher attitudes is subject choice and student aspirations. Lewis et al. (2007) argue that aspirations for students needed to be "realistic and pragmatic" (p. 16). Students were aware of this, as one student pointed out:

I think it was in Year 10, I love gardening, and was there planting something and I thought what the hell am I good at? I'm no good at reading... I love science but I thought I'm crap at that as well 'cause there's a lot of reading involved and I looked down and thought 'plants!' I think (having my condition) you find it hard to read so what do you do? I never ever close my options, always keep them open. I don't think I'd ever close my options actually... if it goes tits up we'll all go in the army! So there's always a back-up plan.... You have to put it (my condition) on your form (job application) or else you're gonna get found out and you might get sacked so it is quite important... they're not supposed to judge you but you get judged no matter what, so I think job applications are an issue but they are an issue for everybody. Everybody's got their own strengths and weaknesses and sometimes you don't always get the job that you want. (p. 18)

This is one of the few studies to examine the aspirations of disabled students; others like Connors and Stalker (2003) focus a little on outcomes. School choice, even in a mainstream versus segregated world is its own barrier to being, as it impacts on the attitudes of others towards disabled students and essentially limits the aspirations of students. As Bjarnason (2005) noted earlier, school impacts not only on the time that students spend there but beyond as well. The next section examines the barriers to doing found in the literature.

Barriers to doing.

Barriers to doing could be considered the barriers that students face in their everyday lives that restrict activity (Thomas, 1999). The predominant barrier to doing is accessibility to the physical school site and to the curriculum (Bjarnason, 2005; MacArthur, McDonald, Simmons-Carlsson, and Caswell, 2007a; Reynolds, 2006).

The qualitative study of MacArthur, McDonald, Simmons-Carlsson, and Caswell (2007a) is one of the few New Zealand studies that examines the perspectives of ORRS funded students

(others include MacArthur & Gaffney, 2001; Rutherford, 2008). The purpose of the case study was to examine how funding affected the students and how policy is implemented. They provide a clear definition of integration that is taken from the NZDS; integration is used to describe disabled students and their families' position in the school and community (p. 111). Although it has a small number of participants, MacArthur et al. (2007a) have created a lengthy and in-depth study. Many of their findings relate to the service area, so I have chosen for brevity to focus on the results that directly relate to students' opinions and/or their experiences of school. MacArthur et al.'s study examined the impact of additional equipment provided for students by other services like occupational therapists. They noted that equipment had a major impact on the students' ability to participate and therefore lessen the barriers to doing as students showed greater independence. Independence however, was lessened and the barriers to doing increased because the majority of the students interviewed lived out of their school zones and therefore were reliant on the taxi services to bring them to school.

It has been noted by other studies that disabled students tend to live far away from their school and the large amount of time spent getting to school limited independence and friendship opportunities (Lewis et al, 2007; Watson et al. 2001). Lewis et al. (2007) noted that students who travelled to school in taxis found that doing so "curbed their independence" (p. 10) by limiting any decisions about when to come to school and when to be picked up. MacArthur et al. (2007a) also found physical barriers in building peer relationships, for example inaccessible playgrounds. This is similar to the "accessible environments" findings of Lewis et al.'s (2007) study that involved students (aged 9-19) and families from England, Scotland and Wales in both special and mainstream settings.

Other barriers to doing include the delivery of and therefore access to the curriculum. Blind students like Örn in Bjarnason's (2005) study found that teachers often forgot to "speak [aloud] the words they put on the blackboard" (p. 118). Students generally found that general upper

secondary schools were not particularly good at meeting the educational, personal and social needs of disabled students, although this was offset by the ability to have friends and some access to the curriculum. The RITE project (Reynolds, 2006) also found that mainstream schools could be physically inaccessible and that within both settings there was a lack of recognition of the right to communicate. The next section examines peer and adult relationships which are viewed as barriers both to being and doing.

Barriers to being and doing: Peer and adult relationships.

Relationships form a major theme throughout the literature (Bjarnason, 2005; Clark, 2008; Connors & Stalker, 2003; Curtin & Clarke, 2005; Lewis et al., 2007; MacArthur et al. 2007a; MacArthur & Gaffney, 2001; Meyer et al., 1998; Reynolds, 2007; Shakespeare, 2006; Van Hove & Loots, 2009; Watson et al., 2001). Peer and adult relationships provide both positive and negative examples of the relationships that disabled students maintain; they in fact show how relationships can lessen and create barriers to both being and doing.

Peer relationships.

Lewis et al. (2007) described peer relationships and in particular positive relationships (friendships) as being an “educational life raft” (p. 11). Peer relationships can play a role in the positive or negative nature of the participants’ school experience. A positive friendship can lessen the barriers to doing and being, whilst a negative relationship (bullying) can strengthen and create barriers. Negotiating peer relationships is an important part of students’ school experiences. In order to explore peer relationships, Meyer et al. (1998) created a typology of relationships that disabled students can experience in educational settings.

Meyer et al.’s (1998) six frames of friendship are (in descending order from positive to negative): 1) Best friend, 2) Regular friend, 3) Just another child, 4) I’ll help, 5) Inclusion child and 6) Ghost or guest. Meyer (2001) describes *best friend* as the person or people with whom you socialise outside school time. *Regular friends* are those you ‘hang out’ with at lunch times. The *just another*

child frame is when genuine inclusion in the classroom is happening and all the students are participating. *I'll help* was seen both as a positive and negative frame; from a parental point of view it is described as being adequate while Meyer (2001) notes that once the helping has ceased so has the relationship. *Inclusion child*, Meyer explained, was where rule bending and special treatment were given to labelled students. Finally *ghost or guest* frame was used to explain how some teachers do not view disabled students as being a part of their classroom. Within this typology we are able to see the 'shades of grey' or the kaleidoscope of relationships which in varying degrees can be barriers to doing and being. In a New Zealand context, MacArthur and Gaffney (2001), Rutherford (2008) and Ward (2010) draw on this framework.

The work of MacArthur and Gaffney (2001) focuses on peer relationships (including bullying) and how adults facilitate positive and inclusive relationships within the school environment. They found that the social processes of 'getting to know' and building friendships was a major barrier for disabled students with communication or physical impairments. Often students across studies (MacArthur et al. 2007a; Watson et al., 2000) identified having shared experiences as being important; or as Curtin and Clarke (2005) report students describing someone as being in "the same boat" as them (p. 208). For example, Ian in MacArthur et al. (2007a) who once went to intermediate where there were other disabled students, stated that he no longer felt like "a 'man from the moon'" (p. 281). On the other hand, being associated with other disabled students was a problem for some students, for example structural arrangements, being placed at the same table or shared transport arrangements, were all outside the control of the student. Staff assumed that disabled students preferred socialising with other disabled students (Watson et al. 2000). As Watson et al. (2000) found this happened only in certain contexts, while non-disabled peers were often placed or seen as helpers/carers.

Without friends students can feel socially and academically isolated. As a participant in Bjarnason's (2005) study, Maria stated: "I needed to learn to do everything on my own...I was

always alone” (p. 119). Bjarnason (2005) further noted that social isolation was a bigger problem at higher secondary levels than at the compulsory level (ages 6-16). This dilemma was also experienced by students in other studies like Lewis et al. (2007). Yet the students thought it was important to have the ability to participate with their non-disabled peers and form friendships with them. As Bjarnason noted schools provided disabled students with a “kaleidoscope of different relationships” (p. 123).

A part of this ‘kaleidoscope’ is experiencing negative peer relationships, generally in the form of bullying. This is a major concern in both national (MacArthur, 2002; MacArthur & Gaffney, 2001; MacArthur et al. 2007a; Ward, 2010) and international studies (Bjarnason, 2005; Clark, 2008; Connors & Stalker, 2003; Curtin & Clarke, 2005; Lewis et al., 2007; Reynolds, 2006; Watson et al., 2001). The link between bullying and disability is made explicit in the *Life as a Disabled Child* project by Watson et al. (2000); when they asked what disability meant to the students, one student replied “we all get picked on” (p. 18). The project explored their experiences and perceptions of 300 11-16 year olds in two locations in Scotland and England and across segregated and mainstream school settings. The aim was to use the information gathered to inform policy and practice. They used both participant observation techniques and interviews for gathering the data. 165 of the 300 students were interviewed and 85 participants invited them into their lives out of school, providing researchers with a full picture of the participants’ lives. Their research explored four key themes: adult surveillance; the creation of the disability category; peer relationships; and identity. In relation to peer relationships, the attitudes of other children provided a major barrier; Watson et al. (2000) noted that disabled students sought to “locate themselves in the world of children” (p. 16) although many participants experienced bullying.

MacArthur and Gaffney (2001) found that bullying was often not witnessed by the teachers or they failed to act on reports. Bullying is not confined to mainstream schools (MacArthur &

Gaffney, 2001, Reynolds, 2006). Even though other studies have shown that bullying is an aspect of both settings, being bullied also featured as a reason for changing schools, either to or from a special school although the majority “endured their torture” (Bjarnason, 2005, p. 116). Marginalisation and bullying impact on the quality of life for disabled students; therefore it is a major barrier to both being and to doing (MacArthur, 2002). It is also a problem during unstructured times like lunch times, which were difficult for some students. As Lewis et al. (2007) suggest, these times require strong friendships to have formed.

Maintaining links with friends beyond school times and the opportunity to participate in mainstream classes is critical for coping and the building of social relationships (Lewis et al., 2007). This was reinforced by Curtin and Clarke’s (2005) research and by the RITE project (2006); both found that participants during the unstructured period of the holidays did not see their friends. The importance of extracurricular activities for disabled students was noted by Lewis et al. (2007) especially in terms of self-esteem, confidence and the transition from high school; a student stated “there’s no limit to what you can do, specially at lunchtime and after school” (p. 6). After school times for their participants tended to be structured formal youth groups rather than informal time spent with friends. The types and levels of participation in extra-curricular activities were based on what types of supports were needed and the amount of planning required to facilitate them. Maintaining friendships was found to be difficult with a student stating: “My friends are the hard part...I don’t see them a lot” (Connors & Stalker, 2003, p. 56). School and the classroom, therefore, are important not only in making but also maintaining peer relationships.

Finally, peer relationships are closely linked with adult relationships within the school setting as they can be the difference between existing in an “adult-centred world” versus a “world of children” (Watson et al., 2001). Adults like teachers and teacher aides can lessen barriers or be

the barrier to forming relationships with peers. The next section examines aspects of the adult relationships again, within the framework of *barriers to being* and *barriers to doing*.

Adult Relationships.

Adult relationships feature heavily within the literature (Bjarnason, 2005; Clark, 2008; Lewis et al., 2007; MacArthur et al., 2007a; Watson et al. 2001). Yet much of what is discussed does not come directly from the student. Traditionally, teacher-student relationships have tended to be examined from the point of view of the teacher, and generally in terms of ‘how to teach’ inclusively (Sadler, 2005). Leaving this area relatively under researched when compared to the studies that involve their non disabled peers by researchers like Jean Rudduck (2007) who has examined in detail what students want in their teachers. More recently however researchers overseas like Giangreco (2010) and in New Zealand like Rutherford (2008) have begun examining teacher aide relationships using student experiences to highlight good and bad practice within the classroom. Furthermore the adult-student relationship (teacher and teacher aide) is critical for student participation and thus for upholding disabled students’ rights to inclusive education (MacArthur et al., 2007b). This section examines both the teacher and teacher aide relationship as *barriers to being* and *doing*.

As a barrier to being and doing one of the first issues is the large amount of time disabled students spend with adults, ranging from taxi drivers to therapists (Watson et al., 2000). Watson et al. (2000) described the surveillance of disabled students in terms of living in adult centred worlds; in a New Zealand context Rutherford (2008) did not find any “pervasive” surveillance (p. 203). Bjarnason (2005) recognised the importance of parents and other family members especially in mainstream general upper secondary schools (sixteen plus) where students like Thór were enabled, through the support and help of family, to participate in general school settings.

Adult relationships are important within the school. Both teacher and teacher aide relationships are important in how a disabled student is perceived, they can determine how the students

participate in the learning structures and furthermore how they interact with their peers in the classroom, as adults tend to be seen as the models of attitudes (MacArthur, 2009; Rutherford, 2008). Attitudes as noted previously are key in the production of *barriers to being*. Studies have shown that the attitudes modelled by teachers can lead to students becoming 'known' through their impairment (Connors & Stalker, 2003; Watson et al., 2001). Yet much of the literature that examines teachers does so in terms of teacher attitudes towards disabled students or in terms of implementing inclusive or not so inclusive pedagogies. Lewis et al. (2007) found that teacher attitudes and student-teacher relationships, especially for those they identified as 'key teachers', were important. For parents and students, finding a positive and helpful teacher came down to "luck and individual personalities" (Lewis et al., 2007, p. 16). Furthermore Sadler (2005) adds to this by observing that successful and positive teacher attitudes towards students with a speech or language impairment met the needs of disabled students because of their knowledge of impairment. Their inclusive beliefs and positive attitudes about the students' position in the mainstream benefited the students, as did their expectations and the type of resources or support they receive. Teacher expectations are a major theme throughout the literature (MacArthur et al., 2007a).

In their 2007 article about a larger project MacArthur, Sharp, Kelly and Gaffney pointed out how teacher expectations can affect the amount of agency a student might have. They examined the negative influences of low expectations which meant that some students like Joanne had to prove their abilities. MacArthur et al. (2007b) also discussed how teacher expectations played an important role in determining what parts of the curriculum the students could participate in. They argued that the ORRS label contributed to low teacher expectations, with an emphasis on essential skills at a basic level for ORRS funded students. If they achieved beyond the basic level of assessment it was suggested that the students would lose their funding. Furthermore, low expectations can create barriers to learning or even undermine a student's learning. They warned

however, that high expectations are not sufficient, but have to be backed up by pedagogical practices, primarily inclusive practices. The students identified four key aspects of good practice: staff attitudes, meeting and making friends, choice making, community links.

Other qualities that lessen the barriers to doing and being in the classroom are discussed by MacArthur (2009) who recognised that teachers needed time to interact with students' families, develop collegial relationships, and foster relationships in the school that are both equitable and respectful. Important attributes of being an inclusive teacher also involve getting to know students, including them in their lessons, listening to their views and supporting them. This is similar to views discussed in MacArthur et al. (2007a; 2007b) as well as international studies (Bjarnason, 2005; Connors & Stalker, 2003; Lewis et al, 2007).

Teachers therefore play an important role in lessening the barriers to doing and being especially through their attitudes and expectations. The relationship between the teacher and teacher aide is also important as both Watson et al. (2006) and Rutherford (2008) noted that when a teacher aide is present, teachers tended to abdicate responsibility for teaching of a disabled student to the unqualified teacher aide while the other students were taught by the teacher. Therefore the relationship that a student maintains with a teacher aide is extremely important in terms of lessening barriers to doing and to being.

This situation also reflects the opposing views about teacher aides which are best captured by the phrase coined by Giangreco et al.'s (1997) 'help or hovering' that echoes throughout the literature. What the role of the teacher aide is and how students experience their support has been the major focus of Gill Rutherford's (2008) PhD. Drawing on previous studies like Broer, Doyle and Giangreco (2005) she found that participants have multiple interpretations of the relationships shared with the teacher aides. The students perceived teacher aides generally in terms of helping, similar to that of Broer et al. (2005), but the students also considered teacher aides as 'different' from teachers who were considered enforcers of the rules. Broer et al.'s study

(2005) found that participants, who were adults with intellectual impairments, reflecting on their school experiences, also had multiple interpretations of paraprofessionals that range from mother/friend/protector to teacher. These interpretations had both negative and positive effects for the participants and in turn reflect the barriers to doing and being.

The type of relationship could be in part due to the varying status of the teacher aide as discussed by Rutherford (2008). In order to maintain a positive relationship across the various classroom settings described by Slee (2001) as the interpersonal cosmology of the classroom, Rutherford (2008) concluded that the personality of the teacher aide must be taken into account. The participants in her study recognised certain personal attributes that were important for effective teacher aiding; compassion, caring, commitment and respect were all identified. This reflects other studies that in part examine adult relationships (Bjarnason, 2005; Connors & Stalker, 2003; Lewis et al., 2007; MacArthur et al., 2007a). Professional knowledge, clear roles and responsibilities were also important, although Rutherford noted that teachers often distanced themselves from the student when there was an additional adult in the classroom.

Students with 'high' and 'complex' needs, both in national and international studies tend to have one-on-one support from teacher aides. Giangreco's (2010) article provides five reasons why this is not adequate. They include the lack of data that guides such policies, both formal and informal. He highlights the negative effects of teacher aide support, which can include dependency and interference, within both teacher and peer relationships. Watson et al. (2000) also noted that the use of teacher aides or Special Needs Assistants (SNA) in mainstream school settings meant that there was an increase in the surveillance within the classroom.

The use of teacher aides inevitably means that there can be a high ratio of adult to child which, as Watson et al. (2000) observed, could be as high as one to one in small classrooms of three to ten. This ratio limits students' autonomy and independence and therefore teacher aides become a barrier to doing and being. They found that students had more autonomy in segregated settings,

because in mainstream settings they would be attached to a SNA and therefore autonomy was less likely due to the increase in surveillance.

Giangreco (2010) argues that there is no theoretical position that supports such a one-on-one role in the classroom and furthermore that teacher aides are not trained or prepared for the job which they are employed to do. This is similar to Rutherford's (2008) New Zealand study which advocates for a compulsory national qualification for teacher aides. Earlier research by Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli and MacFarland (1997) had described how one-on-one support created 'islands in the mainstream'. Giangreco (2010) instead suggests that the teacher aide should 'supplement' the teacher, be a qualified professional, and have supervision. He adds that the roles teacher aides have outside a classroom like 'personal cares' should be recognised as important as they provide opportunities for collaboration between the teacher aide, teacher and student. Adult relationships are seen to be crucially important, especially within the classroom. They directly impact on how disabled students participate and how they are viewed by their peers.

Summary

The studies cover a diverse range of settings and ages of disabled students and many make statements about the diversity of their participants' views and perceptions. However, when viewed thematically, they show that participants from different studies share some common experiences, including issues of accessibility. I would however caution against what seems like a universalising of disabled student views: what can be viewed as being universal in nature, are the *barriers to doing* and *barriers to being*. By considering student views within this framework, we are able to see the commonality of these barriers for disabled students.

There are two major themes within the literature about relationships; 1) Students participate in multiple relationships or a kaleidoscope of relationships (teacher, teacher aide and peers) that can be considered both positive and negative or both the problem and the solution. 2) Students face

multiple barriers to doing and being including attitudinal and physical (Curtin & Clarke, 2005; MacArthur et al., 2007a).

The next section examines the research question. So far there has been a melting pot of ideas that have influenced the research question. They include the multiple views (social and historical) of childhood as understood in Childhood Studies (Kehily, 2004; Smith, 2007). Social (relational) views of disability and impairment effects are examined within Disability Studies. A rights framework builds further on issues of agency, capacity and participation. The two disciplines of Childhood Studies and Disability Studies come together in the key concept of voice, which is used in this thesis to convey both a range of perspectives and the ethical processes of eliciting those views, while recognising the students' right to be listened to. These ideas are incorporated into student school experience which is conceptualised not only as a way of talking about what happens but also as a way of examining the multiple dimensions within the classroom, typically relationships and interaction with the curriculum through subject material (Fox, 2006; Thiessen, 2007).

The literature review itself has shown that in gaining perspectives about disabled students' school experiences a wide range of issues and topics were covered from a 'kaleidoscope of relationships' to accessibility. To incorporate so many influences required the formulation of a broad and flexible research question.

Research Question.

From the numerous influences from the literature review as previously examined, a broad guiding research question was developed: "What are the school experiences of senior secondary ORRS funded students?" This research question enables an examination of all types of experiences in the context of school, social or academic. It also allows the students to discuss issues that are important to them.

As Thiessen (2007) previously identified, many studies that incorporate student experience do so without clear definitions of school experience or even experience. This was particularly true of many studies examined within this literature review, where many took for granted the term experience. It could be because of how experience is conceptualised and in fact rejected by some researchers within disability studies (Finkelstein, 2002). Having provided a definition, previously, of experience I have clarified what it means to represent the experiences of disabled students from their point of view, which is the aim of the thesis.

The question also involves the term ORRS. As stated earlier this is based on a medical model of impairment, which is opposed throughout this thesis. Like Rutherford (2008), I do not endorse the use of impairment labels; however it must be recognised that such labels continue to be used within the education system. Therefore the label was taken because it *is* used by others to identify students with 'high needs'. Furthermore, it was hoped that such a broad question would allow for flexibility, so that the students could ultimately discuss what they felt was important to them and that further interview questions could at times reflect observations. Lastly, by focusing on students' school experiences, this thesis hopes to provide a point from which it can, like other studies, continue to bridge the gap between Childhood Studies and Disability Studies.

In summary, this chapter examined the literature from Childhood Studies and Disability Studies from which this thesis draws its theoretical positioning. It then explored the two key concepts of voice and experience. This was followed by a review of the literature surrounding disabled students' school experiences. Using a broad definition of student school experience the review covered areas such as social relationships and physical barriers. The research question that evolved from this reflects the multiple facets of disabled students' school experience.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Method

Messiou (2006) argues that the start of any research involving children is the voice of the child; for the purpose of this thesis it is both the beginning and the end. Acknowledging this and combining multiple theoretical assumptions to frame disabled student voice within a secondary school context, this research ultimately seeks to highlight the voices and experiences of the student participants. This chapter explores both the methodological rationale and how this was put into place (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). As described in the literature review the main theoretical assumptions for this thesis are drawn from the abundant research of Childhood Studies and Disability Studies. The methodological rationale focuses more specifically on a social constructionist and ethnographic perspective, both of which have informed methods and data analysis, whilst the method explores the ethnographic field work and case study processes and the design of this research. Other areas that will be explored will be the processes of recruitment and data collection that were employed in this research.

Methodology

The methodology seeks to outline the “philosophical framework” (Cresswell, 2007, p. 4) of this thesis. The philosophical framework is set within a wider interpretivist approach, which Neuman (2006) describes as a “systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct and detailed observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds.” (p. 68). From this philosophical assumption a social constructionist and ethnographic methodological rationale are used.

Social Constructionism.

Social constructionism views ideas, beliefs, people and things, as being socially constructed within the context of society, that learning “encompasses the social world as it exists” (Quay, 2003, p. 106). As members of that society we create and impart meaning, but we also recognise the ‘hold’ society has on individuals in shaping meaning (Crotty, 1998). As Holstein and Gubrium (2008) reflect, “constructionist research highlight[s] both the dynamic contours of social reality and the processes by which social reality is put together and assigned meaning” (p. 3). By doing so, it makes visible the disabling nature of ‘social reality’. Furthermore, a social constructionist perspective is helpful in that it allows for the exploration of what Berger and Luckmann (1966) describe as the ‘taken for granted’ nature of the everyday. This is important in terms of this thesis, as it seeks to explore the ‘taken for granted’ experiences of the student participants. The everyday is also a concern for ethnography.

Ethnography.

Ethnography has long been important within qualitative studies. Cresswell (2007) states:

Ethnography involves an extended observation of the group, most often through participant observation, in which the researcher is immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people and observes and interviews the group participants. Ethnographers study the behaviour, the language, and the interaction among members of the culture-sharing group. (p. 68)

The idea of participant-observer is a major contribution of ethnography to this research (Fetterman, 2008; Hobbs, 2007; Luders, 2004). The length of time and immersion in the setting allows for what Geertz terms “thick description” (as cited in Wolff, 2004, p. 49). It also allows for multiple or competing realities of all participants within the research, including the researcher, through emic and etic realities. In other words, both researcher and student are involved in making sense of the everyday activities. Fetterman (2008) describes emic as the reality of the participant and the etic as the researcher’s reality. This then allows for a further exploration of the school culture (Hobbs, 2007) and ultimately how this impacts on the individuals, in this case disabled students, within the school.

Hobbs (2007) goes further when defining ethnography; as he suggests, an ethnographic assumption should examine lives that are not usually visible within society. Within Disability Studies Davis (2000) described the use of ethnography to contribute to the breakdown of oppressive language and practices by making them visible (p. 203). This is done by focusing on how the students experience and negotiate their school day, as ethnography allows the researcher to “recognise that culture and structure are embodied and expressed in everyday social practice” (Davis, 2000, p. 203). Making visible unrecognised cultures, groups or individual lives is therefore a key element in ethnography.

Method

In order to explore the research question, an ethnographic case study approach was taken. This part of the chapter briefly discusses ethnography and case study in terms of method as opposed to methodological rationale as previously examined. This will then be extended into the research design and data collection.

Ethnographic case study.

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) suggest that researchers should start small. As this is my first piece of qualitative research, I have undertaken a case study approach that has allowed me to start small. A case study approach is described as an investigation into a “bounded system...over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information...and reports a case description and case-based themes” (Cresswell, 2007, p. 73). Alton Lee et al. (1999) also noted that a case study within an education context may “illuminate the effects of educational exclusion” (p. 181), because as previously stated it can be used to make visible aspects of the everyday that had previously been taken for granted. A case study approach was used primarily because it allowed me to focus on a small group and the individuals within that group, thereby producing rich and meaningful data.

Research design.

Marshall and Rossman (2011) describe research design as encompassing a rationale for the use of qualitative inquiry, recruitment, role of the researcher, ethics, data collection and data analysis. This section seeks to address these issues by first addressing the rationale behind qualitative study.

The reason I chose qualitative inquiry over quantitative is at first a very simple reason: qualitative inquiry allows voices to be heard. Yet it is more than just allowing voices to be heard; qualitative enquiry allows for the exploration of the lived reality of people, and for researchers to challenge assumptions. Further, qualitative research is able to investigate “diverse perspectives to offer more complex representations of participants as they reason, learn, and interact within various contexts” (Agee, 2002) including school settings.

The nature of qualitative study means that the primary data collection instrument is the researcher (Cresswell, 2007; Yin, 2003). Therefore, the role of the researcher is important. As discussed previously, the position of disabled participants has often been considered in terms of vulnerability, incompetency, or passivity (Cook-Sather, 2002). Research traditions also position the researcher as detached and impartial from the group or participants they are studying (Ballard, 1999). Over the past decades, however, there has been a shift in who is researching disability issues, especially with new approaches to disability research, including a participatory approach (Tregaskis & Goodley, 2005). This has seen a growth in research coming from researchers who position and construct their views from a ‘place of knowing’ which is a stance I identify with as previously mentioned in the preface (Finkelstein, 1980, 2002; Michalko, 2009; Neilson, 2005; Titchkosky, 2003).

In order for the participants’ voices to be heard, the research was designed to enable the greatest amount of flexibility in the techniques employed in the field. This was to compensate for my novice status; it enabled me to interact in a meaningful way and also to learn any communication

techniques needed for students to participate in this research (Mitchell, Franklin, Greco & Bell, 2009). As a participant observer I was able to learn the signals and eye movements of students who were considered non-verbal.

Research ethics.

We *know* that one size does not fit all, yet we continue to attempt to squeeze out research questions and ethical dilemmas into the framework that does not serve well the researched, the researcher or the research community. (Malone, 2003, p. 812)

Research ethics played a major role in shaping this thesis. They provided a guide to my practice especially during the data collection stage (Hopf, 2004; Sanderson, 2010). In disability research with children there is an extensive body of literature stemming from the work of such researchers as Alderson and Goodey (1996) that examines how research with disabled children and young people should and could be conducted. These include ethical issues like informed consent and interviewing techniques as well as access and structures of compliance, privacy and confidentiality and issues of power (Balén et al., 2009; Carlsson, Paterson, Scott-Findlay, Ennfors & Ehrenberg, 2007; Coad & Evans, 2008; Cocks, 2006; Coyne, 2010; Crow, Wiles, Heath & Charles, 2006; Powell & Smith, 2009; Punch, 2002; Sanderson, 2010; Stalker, 1998; Valentine, 1999). The importance of ethical issues to this thesis is highlighted in Chapter Four where other issues of power, privacy and confidentiality are also explored through my observations and participant comments.

Ethics approval, in discussion with the University of Otago Ethics Committee, was granted for three years with the proviso that if there were any unresolved conflicts around student participation without parental consent, a panel would be convened to mediate and discuss the matter. Before any field work took place, school access (site only) consent forms (Appendix A and B), information sheets and consent forms for both stages of data collection were developed for any possible participants including students (Appendix C and Appendix D) and staff (Appendix E). For the students a tick box method was successfully used to indicate

consent/dissent (Gollop, 2000). Informal consent was asked of teachers as a protocol and out of respect for the environment, but adult participants were not involved until the interviewing period where they were selected by the students. Photo release forms were also developed for the participants who were portrayed in the photograph (Appendix F). These made use of the tick box method; however, as well as a yes/no box the students were able to choose where they wished the photos to be used. These options included thesis, presentations and publications. This gave the participants control over the distribution of their photos, which had been altered to conceal their identity. The photographs were initially meant as an additional communication resource and prompts for the interviewed students (Detheridge, 2000). However, I found that students did not want to be photographed in the school environment performing everyday tasks. The photos that were taken were primarily of the Shakespearean play (see Chapter Four) and were going to be more illustrative of student participation, but the context of the photos meant that the people within the school could identify them. Therefore they have not been used. All except one agreed for their photos to be used in all three places. The only one who chose differently wished for her photo to be excluded from presentations only.

The research ethics defined and shaped this thesis to such an extent that the first part of the findings (Chapter Four) is dedicated to the many ethical dilemmas presented in the course of data collection. It will show how ethical issues in Childhood Studies and Disability Studies make visible the perceptions that others have of disabled students.

Recruitment.

Recruitment began with identifying two secondary schools with special education units in two different towns in New Zealand. I informally approached the Special Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) to gauge if they would be happy with my presence in the school. I then formally applied in writing to the principal of each school, detailing my research project and providing school site consent forms (Appendix B). One of the schools did not wish to participate in the

study, citing the lack of parental consent as a key factor. Students at the other school were recruited by self-selection within the set criteria of ORRS funding. I spoke to all senior students in the Student Support Centre and invited them to be interviewed. The students then approached me if they wanted an interview and gave me times when we could meet. The staff interview participants were then selected by the student participants and recruited after student participation.

Demographics.

The school in which I undertook my data collection is a large upper decile school and has both a junior (years 7-8) and senior campus (years 9-15). The school day starts at 8:45 a.m. and finishes at 3:20 p.m. The structure of this time is a 2/2/1 configuration, meaning two periods before an extended interval, two periods before a shortened lunch with 20 minutes of cross campus sustained silent reading incorporated, and one period after lunch. The periods last for 55-50 minutes each. Period times are shortened on Wednesdays when school assemblies are held in the mornings, and also during the Sport and Recreation season (winter). In order to gain a sense of the school I thought it would be useful to include the demographics of the student population both within the school and the Student Support Centre (SSC). The school has a roll of about 1000 students of whom 52 % are male and 48% female at the time of data collection. The SSC at the time of data collection had 27 students over a mixed year group (years 9-15). Fourteen students were female and thirteen male students. The demographics of the SSC go against the current national trends that more disabled males are in units and segregated settings like the SSC (Statistics New Zealand, 2007).

The SSC consisted at the time of interviewing of one large classroom and two smaller classrooms with a kitchen, wet/physiotherapy room and two of the three wheelchair accessible toilets on campus, the other being beside the assembly hall. The SSC is situated in the middle of the sprawling campus attached to the Science and Languages Block and shares a courtyard with

the Audio Visual theatre. It was staffed by two full time teachers and one part-time teacher plus an itinerant reading teacher. At the time of data collection there were also fifteen teacher aides. Being assigned to the SSC is the same as being assigned to any other classroom in the school. Also at the time of data collection the school still maintained a system of streaming. Students can be assigned by the school management through assessments by the school, Group Special Education (GSE) or information provided by the previous school the student attended. This is in consultation with the Head of Department (HOD).

Data Collection.

There were two stages of data collection involving observations and interviews. Firstly, ongoing observations were conducted. However there were two distinct phases within this. The first phase was a 'getting to know' the students, immersing myself within the school and classroom culture. The second phase involved a more specific set of observations in both mainstream classes and the SSC. The second major stage was the interview process. Interviews were conducted with four students and three student nominated staff members.

Observations.

Observations play an important role in the ethnographic tradition, with the majority of data reliant on this method (Fetterman, 2008; Hobbs, 2007; Luders, 2004). Fetterman (2008) discusses the spectrum of ethnographic observations in which at one extreme the amount of participation and observation is minimal and limited while at the other extreme the researcher is described as having 'gone native'. In this study my amount of immersion in the culture of the school and classroom was gradual. Importantly, as recognised by Luders (2004), ethnographic observations should be viewed as "texts" rather than as faithful reproductions of events (p. 228). Flick (2004) has noted that there are three reasons for observations, namely for validation, generalisations and for additional knowledge.

Observations for this thesis were primarily used for additional knowledge of student experiences within the school/class setting. Generalisations are inappropriate when examining specific student experiences. Validation was used only to confirm the accuracy of specific observations. They were ongoing and took place over the last two weeks of term two, all of term three and the final month for senior students in term four before exam leave. This totalled 75 days in the field, averaging four hours a day. This length of time was used to build understanding, gain insight into the everyday mechanics of school and allow the students to get to know me and feel comfortable talking to me.

Field notes were written both onsite and after reflection at the end of the day. As a participant-observer, the writing of field notes often happened outside school, due to two factors. Firstly, as a participant I rarely got the time to take notes onsite. Secondly, there were issues of privacy where both students and staff would want to read any rough notes that I had made throughout the day even if they did not apply to the individual in question. In light of Luders' (2004) comments, I had the freedom to participate without worrying about a minute by minute account of the day.

The observations were conducted both in the Student Support Centre (SSC) and mainstream classrooms. I discussed with the students about how would take notes. This included writing them during the class and the possibility that I would write notes later offsite about what happened in the classroom. For the more specific classroom observations in the mainstream I asked the individual student's permission to join them in the class. Subjects that were held in the SSC, included English, Social Studies, ASDAN which is a skills based course, Reading, Science (for ORRS funded students of varying year levels) with a mainstream Science teacher and a Food for Flatters class. Some of the mainstream classrooms were curriculum adapted, meaning that they were topic based but did fewer or different qualifications. Mainstream classes were Design and Technology (DNT), Information Technology (INT), Food Technology, Horticulture,

Fashion, Maths and Science. School activities such as assemblies, Sport and Recreation and class outings were also observed. It is important to note that in this school the term “mainstream” does not necessarily mean with the students’ peer group (non-disabled/disabled). Many students from this SSC are held back in mainstream junior classes long after their peer group has moved on to the senior levels of school, the reasons for which will be discussed later. In order to gain an idea of what some of the classrooms look like, please refer to Appendix G for class layout diagrams.

Interview participants.

There are two groups of participants represented in the participation of this project; the primary group of student participants and the student-selected staff members. Participant selection for the students was through self-selection. After eight school weeks I asked all of the SSC senior students if they would like to be interviewed. I then made more formal arrangements (day and time of day) with those students who showed interest in being interviewed. The students who chose to participate were asked to provide their own pseudonyms: A.J., Cobweb, Princess and Snookums. I felt that the participants should have the opportunity to have control over their identity and renaming themselves was part of this. All staff and students that did not participate directly also had the same opportunity to choose their own pseudonyms, where students or staff had not chosen one, a random letter was assigned to them. Pseudonyms also allowed participants to have a voice in the research processes and by using their chosen pseudonyms, it recognises participants’ rights and therefore is in keeping with the aims of this research. Pseudonyms were also used to minimise identification, and therefore maintain an element of confidentiality. However all of the participants were advised that complete anonymity was not always possible.

Staff participants (Mrs Black, Dew and Busty La Rue) were selected by the students. I then approached the individual staff members to invite them to be interviewed. The students were asked what I could discuss with the staff members they had selected. Only one student

(Cobweb) did not select a staff member or other adult for me to interview. It is important to note as Rutherford (2008) reminds us that teacher aides in New Zealand have no compulsory training for their position. Neither Busty La Rue nor Dew at the time of interviewing, were trained, although Busty La Rue has since gone on to complete her training certificate.

Silences.

Although the research method is concerned with listening to the voices of students, Lewis and Porter (2006) suggested that silence should be examined more in research, including why and how potential participants decline to participate in any aspect of the research process. They argue further that silence should be considered as a form of voice. Silence in the context of this thesis can be seen in the ten students who declined to be interviewed. They had various reasons. Some showed a preference for being alone and did not wish to participate; others could not participate because of time pressures on both the student and me (the end of the school year). This did mean that a male voice was not represented in this thesis. However, the majority of students at the school who were ORRS funded are female. One of the parents of a student who directly declined, wished for her son to participate, but as he had already said no, I did not coerce or pressure him to participate. In his silence he provides an example of why consent or dissent should always be given by the individual concerned. Had I asked for proxy parental consent, this student might have felt he had no option to say no and therefore would have been coerced into participating. The parent accepted my reasons behind not interviewing her son.

Although I do not seek to highlight the individuals' impairment, I feel it is an important factor in understanding the disabling barriers that the students have to face on a day to day basis and some of the challenges involved in interviewing the students. Table One provides some basic information about the interviewed student participants.

Table 1: Interviewed Students

Student	Age/Sex	Type of Impairment	Number of Interviews	Total time (interview & debriefing)
A.J.	16/Female	Physical	4	4 hours
Cobweb	16/Female	Physical/Intellectual	2	2 hours
Princess	16/Female	Intellectual	1	1 hour
Snookums	19/Female	Physical/Communication	4	4 hours

Interviews.

Interviews were integral to upholding the principles of this research. The interviews were what Hopf (2004) describes as narrative interviews. I took the role of ‘attentive listener’ and encouraged the student participants to narrate their experiences. Taking this position allowed the students and staff to be the ‘expert’ in their own lives and experiences, or as Clandinin and Connelly (1991) have suggested, participants within the space of the interview are “engaged in living, telling and retelling, and reliving” (p. 265) their experiences.

Previous research with disabled students shows that interviews are possible. However, the studies that involved non-verbal students focused on alternative techniques like talking mats, speech therapists as interpreters (Whitehurst, 2006) and picture books (Detheridge, 2000). I felt that talking mats and picture books were not age-appropriate for the senior students and using speech therapists as interpreters would not have been able to be reproduced because it is not consistent with the rationale of this research in light of the human rights framework. Instead, I found it easier to learn the communication techniques the students employed rather than imposing my own ideas of how a student should communicate. The only student who was described by the school as non-verbal was Snookums who preferred to communicate by using gestures and eye movements in her school activities. She also had the option of using her vox

box, which she did in the interviews as well as assistance from her chosen support person who was Busty La Rue, later interviewed as Snookums' nominated staff member.

The interview guide contains the initial open-ended questions I asked the students (Appendix G). The themes that were covered included friends, subjects and aspirations. Interviews were also conducted with three staff members who were selected by the students. The questions asked of the staff were again open-ended, but were predominantly about either the student who selected them, within the parameters of student consent, or the school structures. This was in order to gain specific knowledge and in this sense they were used more for triangulation of the students' material or of any observations I made that needed clarification (Flick, 2004).

The total number of participants who were interviewed was seven. The total number of interviews was fourteen. These lasted between 10-55 minutes and participants were interviewed between one and four times over a period of four weeks. All of the participants chose when they wished to be interviewed, although the place of the interview was subject to free and accessible space within the school at the time they chose. With the exception of one staff member all interviews were conducted on site. For those who participated in more than one interview, questions pertaining to events that may have been observed or issues that they had brought up in previous interviews were discussed. Before each interview each student participant was asked if they wanted a support person to accompany them in the interview. Snookums was the only student who indicated that she would like a support person, her teacher aide Busty La Rue.

The interviews were audio taped with the exception of the first interview with Snookums, which was both video and audio taped. It was thought at the time that I might not be able to interpret Snookums' body language or vocalisations. However, because of the period of time I had spent getting to know the students (including Snookums' communication style) I was able to use audio tape for the rest of her interviews. This was recognised by her primary teacher aide who noted that I was getting to know Snookums better than her. Snookums had become reliant on Busty La

Rue for technical support as she was the only staff member that the HOD had trained in how to use the vox box and she even had a good proportion of her hours dedicated to learning how the vox box works. Importantly, for a student who is described as non-verbal, Snookums did have a range of verbal communications. They were made clearer by listening to them through the dictaphone recordings. One of the biggest joys of analysing this data was the first time I truly heard Snookums' voice.

After each interview, students were given time to talk about issues that might have arisen during the interview. Some used it as a general winding down/free time, and an interview that may have only taken ten minutes might take a further five to forty-five minutes which included gaining consent and debriefing the participant. Table Two (below) provides summary details of the staff participants, including their chosen pseudonyms. Transcripts were verified by students and staff, none of whom asked for anything to be changed. Each has their own copy.

Table 2: Interviewed Staff

Name/Position	Age range/ Sex	Selected by	Number of Interviews	Total Time
Busty La Rue/Teacher Aide	40-50/ Female	Snookums	1	1 hour
Dew/Teacher Aide	40-50/Female	A.J.	1	1 hour
Mrs Black/Teacher	50-60/Female	Princess	1	1 hour

Data Analysis.

Hatch (2002) identified the key aspect of data analysis as being the processing and organising of data in such a way "...so that what has been learned can be communicated to others" (p. 148). To communicate what has been learnt and to organise the raw data an interpretative-descriptive approach was used (Rutherford, 2008; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Wellington, 2000). This

approach allows the researcher to understand how the social world is experienced with the aim of ‘painting a picture’ (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). This enabled the voices of participants to speak boldly within the text (James, 2004) as well as allowing for the diversity of those voices. The interviews were analysed with this in mind.

I spent time transcribing the interviews, which allowed me to listen to the participants and included ‘hearing’ Snookums clearly for the first time. The smallest transcript was three pages and the two largest transcripts were ten pages each (single spaced). I then proceeded to re-read the transcripts, highlighting and making notes in the margins on the transcripts about the general theme of the highlighted section (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). This was done for each transcript. The notes and highlighted sections were then collated and refined into larger themes.

The field notes and additional adult interviews were then scanned for contrasting or comparative examples of the themes, rather than generating any new themes that the students had not discussed. It was important methodologically that the themes were directly taken from the students’ interviews to retain the focus on their voice. Subsequently, two broad themes emerged from the data: Subjects and Activities, and Relationships.

Summary

The key concepts that inform both the theoretical positioning and the methodological/method of this thesis are ethnography and social constructionism. A further layer of case study method was added. These linking and interwoven rationales and methods allowed for a focus on the ‘everyday’ experiences that can be taken for granted. Case study allows for my status as a novice researcher but also for a closer examination of the students’ experiences. The overarching positioning of student voice is evident in the research design that sought to be flexible in order to allow for the greatest participation of the students.

This chapter has also discussed the recruitment processes of gaining access to the school and how the student and staff participants were recruited. It also examines the data collection and analysis processes employed in this thesis. The data collection outlines how the observations and interviews were conducted. The data analysis section describes the interpretive-descriptive techniques used to analyse the raw data which ultimately leads to the creation of the major themes of Subjects and Activities, and Relationships. The findings are organised into two parts. The first part examines the research ethics issues of: informed consent without parental proxies, gaining access to the student participants in a school setting, the role of the researcher and broken assistive technology. The second part examines the school experiences of the students within the emergent themes of subjects and activities, and relationships.

Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part examines the challenges of maintaining ethical practices and in doing so provides a background against which to view the second part of this chapter which explores the emergent themes of subjects and activities, and relationships through the voices of the participants.

Part I: Research Ethics

Valentine (1999) identified key ethical issues of informed consent, access and structures of compliance, privacy and confidentiality, and issues of power. Part of the ethical approach of this research was the commitment to these ethical considerations and furthermore that they be viewed as ongoing and not confined to any particular part of the research process. Many of the issues identified by Valentine (1999) have been previously explained, for example, confidentiality in terms of providing pseudonyms (Gollop, 2000; Grieg, Taylor & Mackay, 2007; Kelly, 2007; Lewis & Porter, 2004; Malone, 2003; Morrow & Richards, 1996). Instead of reproducing what has been said many times, as demonstrated by the wealth of literature, I have decided to focus on the ethical challenges which, although not unique to this thesis, describe key ethical issues that I encountered. It is also important that these challenges highlight the need for ethical rigour. There were many examples of ethical challenges in conducting this research; however for brevity, only a few are described in this chapter. The first challenge is centred on the issue of students' informed consent and the absence of parental (proxy) consent. The next challenge discussed is that of gaining access physically to the students both at a school level and in classrooms. Separate, although related, was the way students and staff constructed my role within these environments. Finally, the issue of privacy and the role of support people in interviews will be examined.

Informed consent without parental consent.

The first major ethical challenge was gaining informed consent (Alderson & Goodey, 1996; Balen et al., 2009; Bloom-Di Cicco & Crabtree, 2006; Powell & Smith, 2009; Punch, 2002; Rodgers, 1999; Sanderson, 2010; Stalker, 1998; Williamson, Goodenough, Kent, & Ascroft, 2005). What is needed for informed consent is voluntary participation that is based on the weighing up of the risks and benefits of participation (Mishna, Antle, & Regehr, 2004). Traditional forms of gaining consent conflicted with this study's theoretical commitment to a human rights framework, especially the students' right to express opinions. Using this as a guideline, any research process that describes assent or proxy parental consent for students with disabilities could be viewed as unethical. Detheridge (2000) and later Whitehurst (2006) confirmed that informed consent had never been obtained by a researcher who involved a participant described as non-verbal. This only emphasised the need to produce research showing that informed consent without adult proxies can be done. Informed consent also should recognise that all students have the intrinsic right to express themselves, and that this should be done, unimpeded by any form of 'gatekeeping' (Powell & Smith, 2009; Sanderson, 2010).

Gaining Access to the Students: A wall of teacher aides.

Gaining access to students is a key concern within a school environment (Cook-Sather, 2002; Powell & Smith, 2009; Sanderson 2010). After I had gained access to the school as described in the research design, access to the students required further negotiation with the multitude of adults in certain classrooms. I established a personal protocol, which reflected respect for the students and staff. This involved introducing myself to the teacher and stating my purpose for being in their classroom. I then asked for their permission to be in the classroom and obtaining this provided me with access to students in the classroom. Just being there did not guarantee 'access' to the students. As I observed in my first ASDAN class, the students were sometimes surrounded by a "wall of teacher aides" (Field Notes, 29/07/09). This class had the most teacher aides of any class I observed, up to ten for a class of twelve. They had students with 'one-on-

one' teacher aides and other small groups of two to three students with a teacher aide leading them through the tasks. The teacher Mrs Bennett (pseudonym) took a small group at the front of the class (Field Notes, 29/07/09). Presented with this situation, I found it easier to participate in the tasks with the students. However there is a fine line between participating and becoming an adult responsible for the students. Aspects of this can be seen in the following section.

Role of the researcher: An extra set of helping hands.

In the preface I positioned myself as coming from a place of knowing. I would argue that this provides me with some common ground or even shared experiences with the students. Although this was part of answering the question of why I chose to conduct this study, it is also important for other reasons, including how I was positioned by the participants, and my role as researcher within an educational context.

Apart from the sharing of common ground, the students and staff each constructed and positioned me as 'someone like them'. The students constructed me in a friendship role while the staff positioned me in a place of authority, as "an extra set of helping hands" (Field Notes, 29/07/09). I felt that in order to build my relationships with the student participants it was important to disclose to them some of my own impairments. There were students who may not have described certain experiences had this affinity not been established. For example, during the second week of my observations Cobweb, who I was sitting beside in class, turned to me during 'down' time and commented "You have a sore back." I replied "Yes, I have what they call chronic pain syndrome." Cobweb then stated "I have *a * syndrome." The nature of Cobweb's syndrome would cause her to be identified therefore it has been censored (Field Notes, 06/08/09).

Conversely, applying the same 'someone like them' lens, the staff constructed my role as someone in authority or as "an extra set of helping hands". Although I had explained that I was merely observing and getting to know the students, I was constantly placed in the role of teacher

aide, contrary to my trying to position myself as a person in a non-authoritative role. This had its problems when the student and staff constructions clashed. There were also times when I felt it was inappropriate for me to be placed in an authoritative role.

An example of this can be found in activities like those at the Riding for the Disabled (RDA). Certain students, including Cobweb and Snookums, are taken out to the RDA facility every Friday morning between interval and lunch time by two teacher aides. The teacher aides lead the students in activities conducted at the RDA facility. During my visits to the facility, one teacher aide kept commenting on how she was finding it difficult to walk and asked if I could walk with a student on a horse. I agreed to do so because the student whom I was directed to help was not confident riding without assistance and had begun to get upset (Field Notes, 29/08/09). As the teacher aide's behaviour was repeated on many occasions at the RDA sessions, the second teacher aide (annoyed at the first because she was not doing her job) asked me to just observe and not help, as I was "not being paid to do this!" (Field Notes, 18/10/09).

There were other times when I thought it was inappropriate for me to be used as "an extra set of helping hands". One such time was during Sport and Recreation swimming. A.J. had asked me to help her get changed. There was meant to be a teacher aide helping the other students, one of whom was Cobweb.

As A.J. and I were walking behind the others after they had got out, she asked me if I could help her get changed. I said if that was O.K. by her then I would gladly help her. This was a deeply personal thing to allow me to do as she only asks people she trusts... Another student also needed help with her knee highs because the teacher aide who was helping her had left the changing room. The student stuck out her leg and said "help me Lara!" A.J., as a part of her condition, wears incontinence underwear to help with the overflow from her catheter.

Cobweb noticed this as I was trying to help A.J. into these. Cobweb came right up to A.J. and me and began in a loud voice asking me "Why is A.J. wearing nappies? Why doesn't she wear underwear?" There was another woman, not part of the group, in the changing room. I tried to say that they were underwear (technically they are) with awesome ballerinas on them. In the end I told her to stop saying that and A.J. passed a comment saying that they were a special type of underwear that she wasn't going to tell Cobweb.... I got the other student tidied up and they went

on the bus back in time for their taxis and said goodbye for the day. (Field Notes, 20/08/09)

Here the competing constructions of my role meant that I had to be both friend and teacher aide in this moment. I also felt that if the other teacher aide had been in the room and Cobweb had received some attention, then this public display and embarrassing moment for A.J. might not have happened. This did not seem to affect my relationship with Cobweb but it did mean that it had caused some embarrassment to A.J., which I felt powerless to prevent.

I began describing this behaviour as a “teacher aide holiday” or TAH (Field Notes, 03/08/09). The characteristics of TAH ranged from where the teacher aide subtly gave up the responsibility for the student or students by passively ignoring those who were requiring assistance, to physically removing themselves from the room or directing me to a student (Field Notes 03/08/09-09/10/09). Although not all of the teacher aides were involved in such behaviour, many of the fifteen teacher aides at one point during my field work tried.

Although I had begun calling it a “teacher aide holiday” because it was originally manifested within the ranks of the teacher aides, this behaviour was not confined solely to them. After almost a month of being a participant-observer during classroom observations of Snookums, I was introduced by a relieving teacher as a teacher aide (Field Notes 31/08/09). I had discussed previously with this teacher that I was a masters student and not a teacher aide; furthermore I had followed my own established protocol of asking for the teacher’s permission to be in the class to observe. She had accepted this and allowed me to be in the class, thus signalling that she accepted my presence. However when I repeated that I was not a teacher aide, that I was observing the class today, she stated curtly, “Well, you can help for today, can’t you!?” (Field Notes, 31/08/09). In this class there were five teacher aides for seven students, six if you included me.

There are benefits in “helping” and becoming a participant-observer, one of which is that you build strong relationships with the students. However, there is a clear difference between **participating** and becoming someone who has authority over the students. This can be seen in my participation in the senior English play. Instead of being placed in authority, I became a true participant, by filling a role and acting beside the students.

Being placed in a position of authority made it difficult for me to break the traditional power roles within the interviews. Conversely, however, it provided me with an inside knowledge of the SSC. Teachers and teacher aides felt that they could say anything they liked to me and often did so. This would have been useful, had that been my intended topic.

Interview interrupted: Conducting onsite interviews.

For ethical reasons it was vital to have privacy in order to conduct my interviews (Alderson & Goodey, 1996; Balen et al., 2009; Ben-Arieh & Anat, 2002; Bloom-Di Cicco & Crabtree, 2006; Cameron & Murphy, 2006; Christensen & Prout (2002); Gelud et al., 2005; Gollop, 2000; Grieg et al., 2007). Finding a place that was onsite and available at the time that the students wanted it proved more difficult than I thought. The school where I was conducting my research had several interview rooms, but only one that was accessible for Snookums and A.J. as the others were up stairs. For the first two interviews I was able to access the interview rooms by booking them through the school system; however, when it came to the later interviews, the rooms were being used by staff. There are many examples of how privacy was compromised as the following illustrates.

During Snookum’s first interview, one of the deputy principals strolled in, mistaking my voice for someone else’s (Student Interview, October, 2009). Similarly at A.J.’s first interview some students came in and asked if they could put their bags in the room. I told them they could but they would not get them back until the interview was over (Student Interview, October, 2009).

After this, I sought out other rooms in which to conduct my interviews. I tried several free rooms in the SSC. This was a hit and miss affair. The students seemed more relaxed but depending on the period, we were either interrupted or left alone. During my final interview with A.J., I was desperate to have some privacy. I went back to the interview room and I locked the door. Two minutes into our interview there was a knock on the door and a language that sounded like a mix of Māori and Spanish was being spoken. Through the door I said that there was an interview in progress. The noise continued so I opened the door and said to the receptionist who had booked the room for me, “I’m sorry but I’m trying to conduct an interview!” (Student Interview, November, 2009). This was not confined to the interviews with the students. During my interview with Dew a teacher aide, the Head of Department (HOD) came in making her excuses for wanting to get something from the room we were interviewing in (Staff Interview, November, 2009).

Privacy or the lack of it impacted on how the participants felt during the interview. Both Dew and A.J., when asked “what could I do better for next time?” told me “to get a room” (Student Interview, October, 2009 & Staff Interview, November, 2009).

Having a voice when your vox box won’t work: The role of a support person.

Snookums was the only student I interviewed who is described as being non-verbal and who uses assistive technology to communicate. For all but one of the interviews she asked for a support person, one of her main teacher aides Busty La Rue, to sit in on the interviews. The first interview was videoed and audio taped. Snookum’s vox box was broken during the holidays and did not work for this interview, so I began to adapt my questions during the interview. After I asked my first question, Busty La Rue took over by pre-empting my questions and by asking her own questions.

I respected Snookums’ wishes to have Busty La Rue as a support person there to help with the vox box and interpreting. Although we had discussed the role that Busty La Rue would take, she

had a habit of taking over the interview and talking about her experiences with Snookums rather than letting Snookums nod or verbalise for herself. (Student Interview(s), October, 2009). I was able to interview Snookums once by herself. Ten minutes into the interview she began demonstrating what she was enjoying at the time. She began using the vox box to say her lines as a lead actor in a Shakespearean play. I joined in and began reciting what I could remember so she could practise (Student Interview, October, 2009).

Nevertheless, the challenge of listening to what Snookums has to say is not confined to the interview but rather is indicative of how she is perceived in the class and school. The same teacher aide in her own interview stated, “Snookums has a vox box and it is her voice and it should be on 24 hours a day so that she can talk, and some teacher aides find it distracting and turn it off, my pet peeve.”(Staff Interview, October, 2009). Busty La Rue identified this as her “pet peeve”, yet I observed that often she turned it off or took the vox box away (Field Notes 10/09/09-23/10/09).

Part I: Summary

The ethical challenges in carrying out research with disabled students in this study highlighted the continuing difficulties found in most research conducted in educational settings with students, including informed consent, conducting onsite interviews and power relationships (Alderson & Goodey, 1996; Balen et al., 2009; Bloom-Di Cicco & Crabtree, 2006; Cameron & Murphy, 2006; Coad & Evans, 2008; Cocks, 2006; Coyne, 2010; Crow et al., 2006; David, Edwards & Allred, 2001; Kelly, 2007; Lewis & Porter, 2004; Punch, 2002; Rodgers, 1999; Sanderson, 2010). The perceptions and actions of adult gatekeepers in ethical terms may silence students by perpetuating myths of incompetency, especially at an everyday level (Sanderson, 2010). Therefore, it was important for me to spend as much time as possible with the students. This allowed me to reach my own understanding of cues from students like Snookums rather than relying on others.

Within the ethnographic observations, there was a balancing act needed in order to maintain relationships with those who are in power (staff) and those who are not (students) and sometimes this balance was not always maintained as a result of the role others placed me in. This was one of the many ways in which research ethics shaped the interactions with both adults and students alike and in a way reflected the status of disabled students within the school. Therefore through the challenges within the research ethics I was able to demonstrate how I maintained relationships with the students, which was one of the most important considerations despite pressure to adhere to the existing hierarchy and traditional views of adult/student relationships. As stated in Chapter Three, student voice is the beginning and the end, therefore it is fitting that the following section begins with the student participants' description of a typical day in their lives.

Part II: School experiences

This section outlines the findings through the major emergent themes of subjects and activities, and relationships. I have sought to adhere to the principles laid down in the methodology/method chapter so that the participants do speak boldly within this text. To contextualise the key themes of this research, it is useful to have the students explain how they view a typical day, so I asked all of the student participants to describe to me a "typical day" and this is what they told me.

A typical day.

A.J.: Ok yep I get up at 7 in the morning or earlier if it needs to be. Get dressed and do my teeth, brush my hair, go to the toilet. Mmmm have my breakfast if I get the time which I don't usually. Feed the dog, wake my sister up if she needs to be woken up, ummmm come to school. Ummmm hang out with my friends till bell time, go to the classes that I have to go to. After school I go to my Dad's, watch t.v till 5:30 or whatever time my Mum picks me up. Ummmm what else do I do, oh I have tea with him which is really good cos it makes, it's easier for Mum so I have them, it's real fun. Ummmm and we go out if we want, if he needs to go out we both go out and do what he has to do in town or wherever he has to go to which is

mostly town, but that's all good. Ummmm what else do we do, I go home, go to my Mum's. Ummmmm take my school clothes out of my bag, hang them up then I go to, oh ring my Aunty up, have a chat with her for half an hour to an hour. Chat with a friend, ring up my other friend, chat to her for a bit and then by that time I'm on the computer if my sister's not on it, which I don't really go on it that much at the moment cos my sister's on it most of the time, but yeah that's mostly what I do. (Student Interview, October, 2009)

Family and friends are important for A.J., as reflected in her description of a typical day, and this includes the time spent with her father. At the time of this interview A.J. and Princess were the only students to come from single parent or divorced families.

Busty La Rue described Snookums' daily routine:

Busty La Rue: There's a routine for Snookums' day because she's in the chair and people need to be helping her, so the taxi driver brings her to school and you bring yourself down. Yeah ummm, you do your classes and some teachers are better than others at asking her to participate and you're pretty, you're happy too aren't you!? Anything they want you to do you are pretty easy going and you'll give it a try. How many boys walked past while I was talking? (laughing)

Snookums: Not many. (Student Interview, October, 2009)

In Snookums' second interview she used the vox box and listed the things she liked to do in a day. Her answers came in the form of questions because she did not have other sentences constructed on the machine.

Snookums: I would like to paint please.

Lara: Is that the reason you come to school, for the painting?

Snookums: I would like to chill out for a while. I would like to chill out for a while. I would like to chill out for a while.

Busty La Rue: Who with?

Snookums: I would like to chill out for a while.

Lara: Do you want to stop the interview?

Snookums: Can I go swimming? (Student Interview, October, 2009)

Here we see in this interview, Snookums' three favourite things to do at school, namely Art, being with friends (or chilling out) and swimming. However when Snookums required

assistance, Busty La Rue took over her interview, again answering for her which was be a continued theme of Snookum's interviews.

Busty La Rue: We've done this as part of her English project and maths. She needed to learn how to tell time so I asked her mother for a detailed running of the day. So you're up about 6:30/7 and the ladies come in and they help you get dressed and toilet and get you ready for school. You have breakfast and then you're off in the taxi, you get to school just after the first bell so we'll say 9:30, you have two classes and somebody feeds you morning tea, you ask when you need to be toileted, we have physiotherapy one every day and swimming twice a week, to keep you mobile. You do English, Art, Science, pretty much any subject we can get you into isn't?

Lara: What about at interval and lunch times, what do you do then?

Busty La Rue: Interval is mainly taken up with having something to eat because its, because I

Snookums: I would like to do some school work please.

Busty La Rue: Hold on I'm speaking, because you can in a min. Because I'm feeding her I don't just want to push it down her throat because she has no swallow reflex. But she can chew so I like to push it to the side of her mouth so she can taste it and chew it so morning tea is taken up a lot with feeding, there's not really a lot of time for anything else and lunch time. One of her friends will come and get her after the first 20, 25 minutes and they will take her outside and she will listen to the gossip. They will play ball, they will take her down to see the boys play rugby so she does socialise. You're picked up in the taxi at about 3:00 and you're taken home and when you get home the ladies, your aides, are there to help you and you get undressed and you have a wash or a shower and you get ready for bed.

Snookums: *laughing*

Busty La Rue: You have tea at about 4:30 yes? Before they leave and then while Mum is organising tea for Dad and herself you play on the computer or you do some art work. Or you do something that involves help from your aides because they're still there aren't they and you gonna use that time with them to do something constructive. Then after they've gone and Mum and Dad have had tea you settle in for a movie or some music or something that you can do on your own don't you? Yes? And then you're in bed by 6:30/7:00 and that's your day. On the vox box you do that as well. That's right now that she has the new vox box she realises she can type so she's been going through her mother's recipe books and typing out her favourite recipes... (Student Interview, October, 2009)

Busty La Rue found it difficult not to speak for Snookums and although she knows most details about Snookums' routines, here we see her once again overriding Snookums' voice. Additionally, we have Busty La Rue's description of the effort made to get Snookums to school and key aspects of her school experience with Snookums, including an effort to foster socialisation. It is

also interesting that a teacher aide should know such detailed information about a student's life outside of the classroom. Busty La Rue and other teacher aides who have worked with Snookums have an intimate connection with her as they are heavily involved in her personal care.

Cobweb in her interview emphatically stated: "I get up, I have breakfast, I brush my teeth, I get on the taxi and come to school" (Student Interview, October, 2009). Cobweb was nervous because she did not know how her Mum would react to her being interviewed by what her parents would consider a stranger. Yet in saying this, Cobweb's personality was to make short statements; therefore this is not decidedly different from how she would usually behave.

Finally, Princess described her typical school day:

I get up, get ready for school. I watch TV and wait for my taxi to come and I come to school and play and have my lunch and all that. Then I hop on my taxi, get dropped off home, watch TV, watch more TV, watch more TV then go to bed.
(Student Interview, November, 2009)

All of the students focused on the routines of the day, like getting up, going to bed and described the activities that happened before and after school time. This provided a linear timeline for the time either side of school, which is important for their experiences of school because they ultimately influence the school day. The next section explores the subjects and activities that the students participate in and describes what happens between the taxis.

"I learn stuff": Subjects and activities.

This is a major theme as all of the students stated what subjects they were in and three of the four students share at least one class together. Cobweb described herself as coming to school to "learn stuff" (Student Interview, October, 2009) which is both the title for this section and the overall thesis as I thought as a statement, it encompassed and summed up many of the feelings of the students. The emergent theme of subjects and activities broadly examines the "stuff" the students do at school. As it is such a broad theme it has been organised into two parts. The first

part of the emergent theme, subjects, explores the 'everyday'. This includes the students' subject likes and/or dislikes and the physical barriers of the classrooms and school. The second part of this theme, activities, includes the extra "stuff" they do during school such as performing in the senior English class play and assemblies. Before this however, the physical structures that the students interact with including the layout of the classrooms will be examined as it provides the context for the students' comments

Physical Structure of the Classrooms and School.

I think every teacher needs to be pretend to be a teacher aide for three days. There is a lot of things that happen. Ummm personal things that need to be done for her or just the fact that you have to push the chair around or manipulate the classes for her and I think that yeah, every teacher that she has should spend time with her and realise that she is in there [to Snookums] aren't ya!?! (Staff Interview, November, 2009)

The physical structure of classrooms and the school campus can impact on students' experiences simply because they are unable to attend certain classes, or the classes that they do attend can be laid out so awkwardly that the students cannot access the lesson materials. The above comment by Busty La Rue shows how difficult it is to manoeuvre Snookums. Snookums was the only student interviewed who uses a wheelchair. She is reliant on the teacher aides to push her to classes, manoeuvre her in the classroom, and on students to push her during interval and lunchtime breaks.

The school has many wheelchair ramps, many at steep inclines. I quickly found out though that most of the heavy swinging doors at the end of the ramps do not have latches on them or other forms of opening such as electronic buttons or sliding doors. This means that although Snookums could go to the building entry, even with a teacher aide pushing the chair, it is difficult to get into the buildings because there is no way to both push and keep a door open. There are also classrooms that Snookums cannot access, for example Horticulture on Fridays in *Z* (not the real name) block. The classroom is up two flights of stairs and there are no elevators. Snookums is confined to the subjects taught in rooms that are physically accessible.

Classroom layouts.

The space the students occupy in the classroom is important. In the mainstream classrooms there can be up to three or more teacher aides attached to four or five students. The classroom layouts also influence where Snookums can sit in the room. Grid layouts of desks means small aisles, which make it hard to manoeuvre Snookums in her wheelchair. The classroom becomes even less accessible with teacher aide overcrowding.

Lara: Do you choose where they get to sit or does the teacher choose where they sit?

Dew: Depends on the class and sometimes it depends on the student. Like certain students need to sit up the front so they can see the whiteboard and other students sometimes sit down the back so they can feel o.k.

Lara: Do you follow them?

Dew: I do. I just usually just try and be. Sometimes I need to be sitting next to them. Otherwise I let them sit up the front and I sit down the back and let them be included with the rest of the students. (Staff Interview, November, 2009)

Many of the practical classes like Food Technology allow for the students to interact with each other. In the Foods class there is seemingly more inclusion of the students because they have to share ovens but also sometimes the teacher directs the teacher aide to help other students mix or chop ingredients (Field Notes, 17/09/09). In many mainstream classes, the SSC students sit in a group close to each other with one or more teacher aides, creating a barrier to social interaction with other students and to building relationships with their teachers.

Subjects.

A.J., Cobweb and Princess share some classes including Horticulture and Information Technology (INT). A.J. and Princess share all the same classes. They all have the same English teacher, but Snookums is year 14 and a couple of years ahead of A.J. Cobweb and Princess and so does not have the same classes.

Likes.

I asked students what their favourite class was, if they had any. A.J explained, "I have different ones each week. My favourite one this week was uh Computers." (Student Interview, November,

2009). It is important to note that the participants' likes and dislikes change on a weekly if not daily basis as demonstrated by the above quotation from A.J; therefore they are dynamic. However, it is interesting that all of the students do describe liking all of their subjects at least once. Princess listed her favourites: "ummmm well I like English, Maths, Science, Computers, Hort. I like all". When I asked her why she liked them all she said, "Well I, my Maths class is easy, English is easy, they're all easy." (Student Interview, November, 2009)

Snookums had clear ideas about what she liked at school and used preset questions from her vox box to describe what she enjoyed. This included Art, 'chilling out' and swimming (Student Interview, October, 2009). A.J. described liking all of her subjects at some stage in the week, "ummmmmm I just like the outdoors. Yeah I just, I've since I've been born I've been doing outdoors stuff, so it's quite good, so that's why I actually got to do it. (Student Interview, September, 2009)

Horticulture was a favourite with Cobweb and Princess who also take the subject. According to Cobweb "it's a cool subject" (Student Interview, October, 2009), in addition to Horticulture, she takes, Art and Design Technology/ Woodwork (DTE) which are optional classes. All students from Year 11 onwards have optional topics added to their core subjects of Maths and English. I had the opportunity to ask A.J. about picking her optional topics. "Not all, but I got to pick that one [Horticulture] so it was quite good!" (Student Interview, September, 2009)

Unlike mainstream students, many of the SSC students do not always get to pick their optional subjects. As demonstrated by the above quote, the students prefer to choose their topics like other students in the school. The school's practice of "mainstreaming" was described by the SENCO as a "parallel system of inclusion" (Field Notes, 05/11/09) in that the school does not mainstream SSC students with their year level, but rather holds them back. In many instances these students are made to repeat their junior classes for the rest of their secondary education (Field Notes, 05/11/09).

In a conversation with a teacher aide it was revealed that this was Cobweb's second year in the same DTE class and that she would be taking it again the following year. There are two explanations for this policy given by both the HOD, who is responsible for the day to day running of the SSC, and the SENCO, who represents central management. The first is that the HOD places students in classes where the mainstream teacher has consented to teach them. The SENCO believes that by requiring students to sit in the same class year after year allows the teacher to get to know the student and the student's needs (Field Notes 05/11/09). I asked Mrs Black how long she thought it took to 'get to know' the students.

Less than a year, probably six months tops. To get to know what makes them tick, probably, what their likes and dislikes are I spend a lot of time when they come in at year nine getting to know what their likes and dislikes are and how they're likely to react to certain things I suppose, yeah. And then after that it's really just about building a long term relationship that I have. I don't know how else to put it, but you certainly don't need years and years to get to know them. Specially if you are prepared to listen to them about their homes and family and their friendships and their boyfriends and who, you know if you are prepared to listen to them on a daily basis about those kinds of things, then you are going to get to know them quickly then aren't you? Establish a rapport quite quickly. (Staff Interview, July 2010)

All of the interviewed students showed a preference for Mrs Black as a teacher; this suggests that her commitment to establishing and building mutual respect has evolved as a good strategy to facilitate positive experiences for both the students and the teacher.

Dislikes.

Two of the four students described subjects that they disliked. During Snookums' interview without a support person, after covering aspects of school she did like, I asked her what she disliked about school, hoping that she could feel freer to state this without other people in the room.

Snookums: Silly Mrs Bennett, Silly Mrs Bennett.

Lara: Why don't you like Silly Mrs Bennett?

Snookums: I feel happy.

Lara: Do you mean ASDAN?

Snookums: *Nods yes* (Student Interview, November, 2009)

The teacher aide who is responsible for adding phrases to her programme had not added ASDAN so she could only use the phrase “Silly Mrs Bennett” in its place. She used the “I feel happy” phrase to indicate that my interpretation of her not liking the teacher was wrong and that it was the subject she did not like.

A.J. in a later interview indicated what subjects she disliked:

The ones I really do not like are study, cos we don't do much in study, we just sit around talking for most of the period. We don't do any study actually, ummm and another I just don't really like at the moment. I have some days I just don't like reading. Some days I do and sometimes I just don't like doing any work at all. Just one of those times, but it's quite good. I do like her [Mrs Sue], I like going to her classes or if we do, if another teacher [Mrs Black] is watching a DVD we'll go into that class instead and watch their DVD even though we've watched it, we'll watch it again. (Student Interview, October, 2009)

Mrs Sue takes a small reading class. However, instead of reading they often do other things like joining in Mrs Black's English class if they are watching a DVD, even though many of the students had already had already seen it, and sometimes they are given free time by Mrs Sue (Field Notes, 30/08/09). The senior students also have two study periods a week. However, the SSC students tended to have three or four study periods where they were left to go to the library or elsewhere in the school. The week A.J. said this; she had had three study periods, two of which were on the same day. The following is a description of what some of the students do during their study period:

Snookums pushed by another student, and three other students left study period in the library to go cheer on the girls' soccer team. We spent most of the time getting there as they took me round the long way. They were the only students walking around the school and the only ones out watching the soccer game. We then had to go back to wait for the taxi (Field Notes, 25/08/09).

All of the ORRS funded students are taxied to and from school every day. As part of their funding they have some allocated to transport costs (Field Notes, 25/08/09). The taxi company

is responsible for delivering students to various schools Although Snookums is collected early; she is nevertheless dropped off up to half an hour late in the morning. Half an hour before other students are released from school, Snookums' taxi is back to pick her up. Therefore, she misses out on the start and finish of the school day, every day. Other disruptions to the school day include being taken out of class for reading recovery or remedial reading. A.J. was the only interviewed student I saw being taken out of classes for this. I had observed that she was being taken out of a class that she had said she loved so I asked her about it:

A.J.: Well she [Mrs Superwoman] used to take me out of it, but now she doesn't. This term I think she's just taking me out of Hort.

Lara: How do you feel about that?

A.J.: Oh it's just writing on Friday, we don't do anything else, so I enjoy it when she takes me out of that cos it's pretty boring. Even though it's my favourite subject, it's real boring on a Friday cos everyone yaks yaks yaks I just get real bored. She'll come and get me and we'll read or have a chat or do whatever we want to do here.

In the third term she was being taken out of INT, a favourite subject, for more remedial reading.

Mrs Superwoman allowed me to sit in on one of their sessions.

Ten minutes into her INT class, Mrs Superwoman walked into the classroom and tapped A.J. on the shoulder. She turned around to me. I got up and asked if I could come in and observe. Mrs Superwoman said that was fine. We went into the Resource room beside the main SSC classroom. A.J. sat alongside Mrs Superwoman who placed a newspaper in front of A.J. She asked A.J. to choose an article from the front page. A.J. randomly selected this by closing her eyes and circling with her finger. Then Mrs Superwoman asked A.J. to read it aloud. The words A.J. got stuck on Mrs Superwoman told her to sound out. Then Mrs Superwoman would start the word and A.J. would anticipate the ending. The HOD came in to see Mrs Superwoman, noticed me and said "Oh you're in here!" and left. Spent 30 mins on the newspaper task and was then released back into the INT class. A.J. said "it's not usually like that. We usually just talk and have a laugh". (Field Notes, 03/10/09)

The impact of my presence is seen clearly here when compared to what A.J. described as happening in the reading lesson. A.J. had in fact identified that they talk rather than read.

Teacher and teacher aide expectations.

As noted earlier, Princess describes her classes as being “easy”. I asked A.J. about teacher expectations.

Lara: Do you think your teachers expect a lot of you?

A.J.: No not really

Lara: How do you feel about that?

A.J. Oh I’m not worried if they do or not, it’s like if we do anything, do, do Maths test or something or any subjects we don’t, we just hang out in the class room and do whatever we want while the other ones are trying to work. It’s all good, at least we get to finish early or if we do finish five minutes early, just in that five minutes we have lunch early and I do my jobs at school that I do and then I hang out with my friends for the rest of lunch. (Student Interview, October, 2009)

A.J.’s nominated person, teacher aide Dew, talked about her expectations of A.J.

Dew: I think she’s got about four credits in Science, so that’s a big achievement for A.J.

Lara: Has she not had any credits before?

Dew: I’m not aware of credits, but maybe she’s got credits in Horticulture and Computer studies and English. She’ll have lots of credits in English and a few in Maths but I don’t go to those subjects so I don’t know. I’m not aware of those.

Lara: Out of all your classes that you have with A.J. which one would, do you like the most and why?

Dew: I love the Foods class because I know that she’s going to take a lot of things away from that. The skills and things like that she’ll be able to take those into her own life. (Staff Interview, November, 2009)

The preference for practical skills over academic skills is shown here by Dew and is a common belief held by many teacher aides in the SSC (Field Notes, 10/08/09). Busty La Rue also talked about the expectations for Snookums, or rather what she hoped Snookums would get out of her time at secondary school. Busty La Rue stated, “When she leaves here, qualifications are not going to mean anything to her. Seriously, what she does, who she does it with and what memory she leaves with are what she’s going to have when she leaves, when she goes...” (Staff Interview, November, 2009). Conversely, Mrs Black describes the importance of the students obtaining qualifications, so that they can have options for life beyond school (Staff Interview, July, 2010).

The students showed a sense of ambiguity about achievement. In some classes, like Mrs Black's, achievement and gaining credits was viewed positively while in other classes it was seen as a stressful exercise.

Activities.

The activities that the interviewed students participate in range from classroom based, SSC based, to school-wide that all students participate in. The students were involved in a number of activities when I was observing them, and all four of the students identified particular school activities that they enjoyed both on and off campus. The activities they participated in were generally not experienced in their day-to-day lives, as discussed by A.J.:

I like doing the plays you know, like what we did last night, I like doing that sort of thing and going to a disco. I like doing that sort of thing which is really good...I just love doing those sort of things at night cos I don't get to do much at home at night.
(Student Interview, November, 2009)

The biggest activity was the yearly Shakespearean play in their English class. All of the students I interviewed participated, as did the staff and I!

"Please kind man, speak again, I am in love with your words": The combined senior SSC English Class Play.
The play was a highlight for all of the student participants and time spent preparing, rehearsing and learning lines was the focus of the Senior English classes in the third term. In the SSC English class, the senior students perform a Shakespearean play every year in front of family, friends, some teachers and some members of the school management. Performing a play is part of the school's outlined English curriculum and the students gain Unit Standard no. 8815, performing a poetic text.

Mrs Black prepared the students for the play by teaching about Shakespeare and his times, reading the play, watching a movie version of the play, creating art work of their favourite character or scene from the play and performing acting activities (Field Notes, 11/08/09-

22/10/10/09). In her interview the day before the performance, Snookums took time to practise her lines and cues:

Snookums: What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

Lara: Do you want to practise?

Snookums: *Nods yes*. Please kind man, speak again I am in love with your words. I can't take my eyes off you. Fairies be kind and courteous to this gentle man.

Lara: Hail I am Peaseblossom! Hail I am Cobweb!

Snookums: Oh Oberon what a bad dream I had. Was I really in love with a donkey?

Lara: Yes, yes you were! Is that what she says?

Snookums: Oh Oberon what a bad dream I had, was I really in love with a donkey?

(Student Interview, October, 2009)

This was the first play Snookums had been in, and she had been given a lead speaking role. It was also the first year she had been in Mrs Black's English class.

The day after the performance A.J. and I talked about it in her last interview. This is what she said about her experience.

A.J.: I enjoyed it. Really enjoyed it aye. First I wasn't that great but when I said my first line I pretty good. It's just like before my first line I'm not that great but afterward it was really good. Really...[interrupted by other students]

...

Lara: Would you be in the play again?

A.J.: Yeah I actually enjoy doing plays. Really enjoyed doing those sort of things eh. It's really good. Last year I wasn't in.

Lara: Is that because it's only for seniors?

A.J. Yeah so I got to go in it this year. Yesss!

Lara: Would you do it again next year?

A.J.: Yeah um. Yeah I would love to do it again next year actually.

Lara: Different play or same play?

A.J.: Same play, same character... It's going to be fun
Hehe!

Lara: So you don't mind learning your lines and everything?

A.J.: It was good cos I learnt them at home as well. So it's quite good yeah. Doing lines there and really, really awesome.

Lara: So you enjoyed playing your characters. Did you enjoy dressing up?

A.J.: It was really awesome, really enjoyed it aye. (Student Interview, October, 2009)

When Dew was being interviewed, she mentioned that A.J. had difficulty with her memory (Staff Interview, November, 2009) and at times A.J. has stated that she does not like reading. Yet A.J. described her enjoyment of learning her lines and taking on her two characters.

Finally, one of the reasons Mrs Black gave for teaching Shakespeare and performing a play in such a public manner is because she feels that parents, other teachers, teacher aides and members of school management do not view the students as being capable of doing such a thing and she likes to prove them wrong. She deliberately chose Shakespeare because of the high status his works have (Field Notes, 10/08/09).

School-wide activities.

In addition to specific SSC activities, there are a few school-wide activities in which the students participate, including the weekly assemblies. Princess, Snookums, A.J. and Cobweb attend these occasionally if the SSC English teacher Mrs Black or a teacher aide goes with them. The times I observed the assemblies are times when I was made responsible for Snookums. My frustration at trying to access the school hall is evident in this observation note:

Took Snookums up to the assembly (TAH day). Students had placed their bags at the top and along the side of the wheelchair ramp so I had to move all of them beforehand (50 or so bags). I asked a student to help me. The student kicked the bag and left. A teacher watched as I cleared the bags in order to get Snookums into the hall. Students began replacing their bags and I did tell them in a stern manner not to leave them there. No one offered assistance. Once seated in the only row wide enough we were joined by Cobweb. Other SSC students sat at the back. Leaving the hall students tried to climb over Snookums and rush in front. We could not go any faster because of the other students in front of us. I said again in a stern manner, "If you want to go in front, go now. Otherwise let us go first!" A teacher who was standing at the side made no effort to clear a path, although smiled at me when I left. (Field Notes, 09/09/09)

This attitude towards both student and assisting adult (me) seemed to be common, especially if the staff member involved has not had any contact, teaching or otherwise, with Snookums. Staff and students have not been made aware that blocking access ramps is not helpful and potentially negates the students' rights to be there. This attitude is in some way reflective of the general attitude towards students and staff members who are attached or associated with the SSC. Mrs Black noted an inequality amongst the staff:

Teaching is a very, what's the word, stratified profession, where the people that have better degrees than you might think they are cleverer than you. In some ways it's a status-ridden profession or hierarchical. There are teachers in the school who think they are cleverer than I because they are teaching scholarship classes and they are turning out the academic crème of the school so they're not interested in what I think about teaching or how I go about teaching my students. That's the last thing they want to know. They're not going to come to me for advice on any teaching method or want anything from me, so you tend to, after a while you tend to go about your business, in that fashion. You just get on with what you have to do and you don't expect to be treated as kind of an equal I suppose yeah. It is a matter that I feel sometimes quite frustrated about and other times I think well as long as I am doing the best for my students that's all I care about really and I don't really care about how they view me. (Staff Interview, July, 2010)

The pervasive culture of the school does not foster inclusion even at a staff level. The school at the time had adopted a values-based school policy in an effort to change the school culture at a student level (Field Notes, 14/09/09). Subjects and activities, what they participate in, what subjects they take, ultimately impact on the future aspirations of the students. A.J. and Snookums both discussed their hopes for the future.

Looking forward.

Snookums and A.J. each had clear ideas of what they wanted to do when they left school. In her first interview, Snookums indicated that she wanted to go to university and study art.

Lara: What do you want to do when you leave school?

Snookums: *looking at camera and me*

Busty La Rue: You want to be on camera when you leave school; you want to go to university?

Snookums: Nods to university

Lara: What do you want to do at university?

Snookums: *Looking around the room*

Lara: Art?

Snookums: *Nods yes* to art

Later Snookums' main teacher aide Busty La Rue said that she did not know that Snookums wanted to do art at university (Field Notes, 19/10/09). In A.J.'s last interview, we discussed the following year (2010) and what she would like to do after she left school:

I would just like to try a couple of things out. Um I'd like to look after old people, I like doing that sort of thing. Do like umm clean houses or whatever cos I mostly like doing everything yeah mostly want to clean houses and you know yeah clean the houses or work at ummm at an old people's home.

Lara: Why do you say it like that? Cos I think it's an awesome job. My oldest friend works at a nursing home. She worked as a carer and then she went to polytech after a few years of care work and became a nurse.

A.J.: Yeah my cousin is at a nursing home. So she's there at the moment. She's really enjoying it and having fun. So I'd really enjoy that sort of thing. (Student Interview. November, 2009)

A.J. was initially embarrassed about wanting to be a carer. After I disclosed my story about my best and oldest friend who is now a nurse, she felt comfortable and discussed further with me her motivation about becoming a carer. Later in the interview she said, "I just really enjoy that type of thing, looking after people, helping people and that which is really good." (Student Interview, November, 2009)

Both Snookums and A.J. had positive perspectives of what they would eventually go on to do post secondary school. A family member and her general love of people influenced A.J., whilst Snookums was influenced purely by the love of creating art. Interestingly, at the time I interviewed them the school had just implemented a post-secondary transition scheme. All of the interviewed students had signed up for it. This had led them both to explore opportunities that exist for them and think about what career path they wished to be on.

The activities that the students participate in are crucial in building relationships. This is recognised by both students and staff. As A.J. discussed at the beginning of this section, she does not get to socialise with her classmates outside of school time. The next section examines some of the types of relationships discussed by the students.

“I like hanging out with HEAPS of people”: Relationships.

Relationships at all levels play a central role at school and in the experience of students. Students have to negotiate and participate in many different types of relationships in a typical day. These include, but are not confined to, teacher-teacher aide, student-teacher aide, student-teacher and student-student (friendships). Students’ voices and experiences remain my most important focus and although I do not seek to describe their experiences through proxies, the relationships of the teacher and teacher aides provide a background to the students’ relationships.

Teacher-Teacher aide Relationships.

In negotiating their classroom environment, students also have to deal with the dynamics, both positive and negative, between the teacher and the teacher aide. In different classes there can be between one to eight teacher aides with either one-on-one support or support for a small group of students. At times and in certain classes, the relationship between teacher and teacher aide was problematical. For example, during a class I observed Mrs Moogey, a teacher aide, talking to A.J. while the teacher was explaining a forthcoming exam. Mrs Moogey paid no attention to the teacher and continued to talk. The teacher asked A.J. to be quiet although she was not the one who was talking and Mrs Moogey continued to talk. Finally, the teacher, in a loud voice, asked Mrs Moogey to stop talking or go to the back of the class, as she could not continue yelling over the top of Mrs Moogey.

I had previously observed this type of behaviour from Mrs Moogey in the same class (Field Notes, 30/08/09). Two weeks later when I was again in that class the behaviour had not changed. Mrs Moogey was repeating word for word what the teacher was saying to A.J.. Later in

an interview, I asked A.J. how she felt about being told off because Mrs Moogey was talking in class: “Mmmm I’m not worried anymore, umm yeah I don’t really mind if we get told off when we’re talking. I wasn’t really listening to Mrs Moogey that day anyway.” (Student Interview, October, 2009)

A.J. is aware that talking over the top of the teacher, including talking to teacher aides, is condoned in the classroom as she also said “...when we’re not supposed to be talking I talk to them but quietly, so the teacher tries not to hear but she does, sometimes. They do let us talk even though we’re not suppose[d] to...” (Student Interview, October, 2009). However, because she has teacher aide support, the teacher sometimes affords her that privilege.

The relationship between teacher and teacher aide could also be positive. I observed that Dew in the food technology classes went around other tables asking if students needed help during the lesson (Field Notes 20/09/09). When asked why she did so in that particular class, she stated that she and the teacher were “trying to get them included with the other students in the class” (Staff Interview, November, 2009). Interested as to whether Dew and Mrs Bart, the food technology teacher, had made a conscious commitment to do so, I asked further if that had been a decision they had made. Dew replied: “Yes, yes, try and keep them included and try to keep them up with the pace of, with the other students, yes. (Staff Interview, November, 2009). She could also see how the relationship between the teacher and the teacher aide could affect the student:

...if you have a good rapport with the teacher then you’re going to work well in that class, if you don’t have a good rapport then you’re not going to have such a good rapport with the student because there will be friction between the teacher and teacher aide and the student. (Staff Interview, November, 2009)

Busty La Rue also talked about the teacher-teacher aide relationship and the role of the teacher aide:

Some of the teachers do look to the teacher aides for the nod in the right direction because they don't know how capable the kids are and they don't want to embarrass the student or make them feel less than what they are. That's fine, that's the part of our job, we're supposed to make the teacher-student relationship run a bit smoother. You know we're here to support the kids and the teacher-student relationship is part of being at school and they need to be sometimes pushed in the right direction. Ummmm you are right, Snookums has a vox box and it is her voice and it should be on and in front of her 24 hours a day so that she can talk and some teacher aides find it distracting and turn it off. My pet peeve, umm, so yes the teacher gets a feeling from the teacher aides on whether and sometimes it's whether the students [are] going to do the work or not, whether the students [are] going to be a problem. If a teacher aide decides that they're not going to pay enough attention to a student the teachers don't pay that attention either because they think, well you know, they're not worth the effort so yes the teacher aide attitude is extremely important. Some teacher aides just don't know how to deal with Snookums, they find it hard to communicate with someone who uses gestures and touches and noise. My first year here I literally spent learning how Snookums talks and I still don't get it right 110 per cent of the time, so other teacher aides are a little wary and step cautiously and then the teachers of course see that and do the same. (Staff Interview, November, 2009)

Busty La Rue saw that it was a part of her job to facilitate the relationship between student and teacher. The only teacher interviewed (through the student nomination process) described her relationships with the teacher aides in her classroom as positive and professional, but noted that the effectiveness of the relationship varies with the teacher aide.

Well I would say my relationship with the teacher aides is quite professional, I keep a certain amount of distance between them and myself. Umm I'm friendly and chatty etc with them but in the classroom I see my task as seeing to the students' needs and the teacher aide as being there as a support, so I establish a reasonable working relationship with the teacher aide rather than a friendship. I've got certain teacher aides that have worked with me for quite a long time and I can work with them without having to explain what I need or what I want, they just know. They know how my methods, what my methods of teaching are and they just get stuck in and do what they see I need to do. With those teacher aides, it's more like there are two teachers in the room working alongside each other because they have learned, or they say they have learned from me what's wanted or what's required. So they just get down and they do it, alongside me so it's more like having two fully trained teachers in the room rather than a teacher and a teacher aide. I speak to them and treat them with that same respect that they would give me so that they are treated like another teacher in the room rather than teacher up on a pedestal and the teacher aide down there somewhere, someone who is...a lesser trained person. I don't treat them like they're lesser trained or of lesser importance than myself. (Staff Interview, July, 2010)

Mrs Black purposely minimised the number of teacher aides in her classroom, because she wished to maintain a relationship with the students. She also felt that the extra adult presence

became more like surveillance of her rather than a working relationship. By maintaining respect for everyone in the classroom, including the teacher aides, she creates an atmosphere of equality, thereby circumventing the hierarchical attitudes within the school, to which she had earlier referred. However she did go on to say that she generally does not get a say in how many teacher aides should be in the classroom.

I felt that I could actually respond and work with the students to some degree without that teacher aide attachment...because to me they seemed to get in the way of me building a relationship with the student. They would be heavily attached to one student perhaps and they would be working with them in such a way as that it would take away perhaps the direction that I had given the student. Umm they were kind of perhaps, they were too, I can't think of a word except perhaps the velcroed bit, they were too velcroed to the student so the student therefore was building a relationship with them rather than with me. So all the talking that was happening in the classroom, all the interaction was happening between the student and the teacher aide rather than between the students and the teacher and I wanted the interaction to be coming between me and the students. And I felt a lot more relaxed when there wasn't someone watching my delivery if you like or judging my delivery or judging my teaching. Sometimes I felt judged, I felt that the teacher aides would be critical of how I did things and I felt more relaxed too without them in the room so for quite a long time I taught with virtually no teacher aides. It's only in this recent couple of years that I have worked with teacher aides perhaps one in the room when other teachers might have two or three or four or five or six in the room whereas I might work with one in the room. I can't really think of many instances where I would have more than one in the room and that one person has usually been someone who's worked with me and liked how I worked and kinda wanted to be working with me. So we are quite well versed in each other's um efforts, or the way we do things and so we have become quite comfortable in each other's company and like I've said it's more like a teacher working alongside a teacher atmosphere. (Staff Interview, July, 2010)

It was important that Mrs Black had partnership with the teacher aides in her classroom, so that she could effectively manage the classroom and the relationships that she wished to have with the students. This will be examined further in the discussion of student-teacher relationships. However, as she suggested, some students have more of a relationship with an attached teacher aide. The perspectives of the students interviewed will now be explored.

Student-Teacher Aide Relationships.

Interestingly, the primary adult relationship in some of the classroom environments is the one that the students have with the teacher aides. This is especially evident when there is a high ratio of teacher aides in the classroom.

Princess and A.J. both talked about the teacher aides. Princess stated “I would be stuck without them” (Student Interview, November, 2009). She did not elaborate how she would be stuck, but she felt that teacher aide assistance was required for her to participate in the mainstream. After talking about her reading class, A.J. had this to say about her teacher aides: “I like reading with some of the teacher aides, well mostly all of them, except one teacher, [snort, eye rolling] well yes but um it’s quite, I do, I do like reading with them but ya know” (Student Interview, October, 2009). Both A.J. and Princess talked about teacher aides in terms of being able to help them succeed especially in their mainstream classes.

In three classes, mainstream maths class, ASDAN and a mainstream INT class, the teacher aide(s) took **primary** responsibility for the students. In the mainstream maths class, two of the students, A.J. and Princess, along with another student from the SSC, sat at the back of the room with two teacher aides who at the beginning of a lesson were given a handout by the teacher and told to go through it. At the same time, the teacher was at the front teaching the rest of the class different work. The teacher remained at the front of the class and did not come back to enquire about the students doing other work (Field Notes, 06/09/09). When I asked A.J. how she felt about this, she said “Yeah I enjoy doing it. I love doing different work. If I’m in a different class I still enjoy it” (Student Interview, October, 2009). Here we see the student-teacher aide relationship evolving to become more like a student-teacher relationship where the teacher aide guides the student through alternative work set by the mainstream teacher.

A further example of this relationship can be found in the INT class where a teacher aide is responsible for teaching the SSC students in the main SSC classroom away from the INT

classroom. She is given the tasks that the students are working through in the other class. A.J., Princess and Cobweb are a part of this smaller group. I asked the teacher aide why they had this practice. The teacher aide felt that it was because the school gave international students preference, so they took the seats that would have been assigned to the SSC students in her class (Field Notes, 17/09/09).

Teacher aides taking the role of the teacher were also observed in other mainstream classes like Fashion. In Fashion, the teacher aide was responsible for the individual SSC student's learning. The teacher ignored the SSC student and chose to discuss the task with the other students in the class. The responsibility of the teacher aide was recognised by the teacher when, on the way out after I thanked her, she said "Well as you can see I don't do any of the work with [this student]. It's all up to the teacher aide" (Field Notes, 25/08/09).

I also asked Dew about this practice of having the teacher aide responsible for the direct supervision of the students. Dew stated, "I haven't been made to actually teach the class but I have been made to get up and look after the class while the teacher left the room and it's quite a daunting feeling being put in charge of all these students when they're misbehaving" (Staff Interview, November, 2009).

There are specific classes where the teacher aides have been given extra responsibilities, which range from instructing the students through a worksheet or using other material in the same class as the teacher (Maths) to having the responsibility for a group of students without the teacher present (INT). The teacher aide's responsibilities also take the form of personal care for some students as seen in Busty La Rue's description of Snookums' "Typical Day". Busty La Rue explained further her relationship with Snookums and the responsibilities this entails:

I feed, change ummm help with personal details that she might need during the day. I take her to and from classes, I help the teacher interpret what she needs and help Snookums do her school work. I programme her vox box so that she has a voice and depending on what the teacher needs I can sometimes programme it so

that she can speak for herself in the classes. Ummmm we paint, we party and yeah just generally her well being. I am her support person in the school, she does the work. I just support her needs and make sure the work is available for her. (Staff Interview, November, 2009)

Busty La Rue sees her primary role is that of support/carer for Snookums. I asked A.J. who she preferred 'helping' her in the class, teacher aide or teacher, she stated: "mmmmmm oh I like both of them ya know they're quite fun but yeah..." (Student Interview, October, 2009). A.J. showed no preference for either the teacher or teacher aide. I observed that A.J. asked certain teachers for assistance, for example, Mrs Black in the SSC, but in her mainstream classes such as Horticultural Theory she relied on the information given to her by the teacher aide (Field Notes, 20/09/09). Mrs Black noted that this type of 'helping' or support role of the teacher aide limits student interaction within the class, especially for students like Snookums:

Students like Snookums who often interacts better without the teacher aide doing the talking for them. For example, the days that the teacher aide is away she often joins in more and has a more inclusive session with her students and friends around her and myself just interacting with her than she would just having the teacher aide beside her doing the talking or the guessing for her. The teacher aide sometimes suggests that Snookums says that or suggests that Snookums means that, when it may not be the case or she may say it far too soon or, you know, not meaning to but not allowing Snookums to have her own voice. (Staff Interview, July, 2010)

As we will see later in the discussion of student-student relationships, Snookums has other effective modes of directly answering questions in class that allow her to have a genuine voice without the help of teacher aides.

Student-Teacher Relationships.

At a secondary school level, students see many different teachers in the course of their day. The students in this study had to navigate between and interact with SSC teachers and mainstream teachers. A.J. and Snookums were the only students to talk about their teachers at any great length. A.J. described their SSC English teacher Mrs Black as being "one of the best teachers ever, EVER!" (Student Interview, November, 2009) because "oh cos she just like does special things for us, she takes us out, mmmm" (Student Interview, November, 2009). In Snookums' interview she described what she felt was Mrs Black's best quality:

Snookums: I feel happy Mrs Black

Busty La Rue: She's put her Mrs Black's name in one, two three times.

Lara: What do you like or dislike about Mrs Black?

Snookums: Mmmm *annoyed.*

Busty La Rue: Yeah I just cleared all the names.

Snookums: I listen to me.

Busty La Rue: Mrs Black listens to her, yes? What else, how does she make you feel?

Snookums: *sighs* *sounds of clicking* I feel happy.

Lara: You feel happy in Mrs Black class?

Snookums: *Nods her head yes* (Student Interview, October, 2009)

Mrs Black was a favourite teacher of all of the students interviewed, as identified and valued by

Snookums. Mrs Black also sees an important part of her job is listening to the students:

I think on the whole the students respect um, I see perhaps myself more of a mothering type of teacher. So often they will come to me with their problems and their worries and um, quite deep problems that they might want to discuss with me and choose to speak to me about them rather than anyone else. Ahh so I think they know I will keep their confidences and that I will try to suggest what I can or try to do what I can to help them with their problems or worries. Um I think that I am still young enough in my ideas and the kind of things I teach them ah to not have them think of me as fuddy duddy, but as someone who is keen to sort of teach them what they are interested in and what's kinda novel or interesting or even fashionable at the moment for young teenagers. So I um make quite an effort to do that for them and I think that's kept the teaching interesting and fresh and also relevant for them and ah their age group. (Staff Interview, July, 2010)

Mrs Black also described the lengths she goes to, to engage the students and make the work relevant for them. She however had been criticised by her HOD for being "too soft" with her students:

...[it was] suggested that to people around us that I'm the sensitive caring one and *another teacher* has to do the hard stuff but BUT *that teacher* doesn't realise that my good relationship with the students is beneficial to everyone in the unit and my understanding of those students helps everyone. (Staff Interview, July, 2010)

This was seen as more of a pedagogical clash between the HOD and Mrs Black who uses different strategies for controlling her class. As she stated, "It's controlled by respect. I think a

lot of it comes down to a mutual respect of each other. I respect the students and I think I've earned their respect" (Staff Interview, July, 2010). The Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) noted that although Mrs Black was a teacher in the SSC, she was the only teacher in the school committed to ideas of inclusion.

A.J. also discussed how she negotiated a system of understanding with her teachers to ask for help during the class:

Yeah it's quite good cos if I need help. Like oh when they're not there and I need help I just, I just "hhermmmm" and the teacher knows it's me cos I do it really funny and she comes over and she's like "yes" and I'm like "I need your help" and she helps me and if the teacher aide goes and helps one of the other kids ummmm I do exactly the same thing and they know it's me. The teacher pisses herself cos she knows it's me and the whole class is quiet and I'll do it and they're all thinking 'whatcha do that for' and it's just to get the teacher. (Student Interview, October, 2009)

Snookums has experienced both the positive and negative qualities of the student-teacher relationship. As stated earlier, in Snookums' second interview she indicated that a positive attribute that some teachers had was that they listened to her. In her next interview, the only one where Busty La Rue was not present, I inquired further. She was using her vox box; this means that there has to be some interpretation of what she was saying, as can be seen by my repetition.

Lara: You know how you said that you like to be listened to, who doesn't listen to you and how do you feel when they don't listen to you?

Snookums: Thistheydontaalikemyhair

Lara: So they just do your hair? How does that make you feel?

Snookums: Hair out

Lara: You want your hair out?

Snookums: *nods yes* (Student Interview, October, 2009).

It is school policy that all female students with long hair have to tie it back – I had my hair out and she loved to run her hands through it and at times would go out of her way to pull on my

hair, but it was not until this interview that I understood why. She simply wanted to wear her hair out sometimes. She went on to say in a later interview “I would like to wear blueshadowmascaraeye. I would like hair, hair out, hair up, yes I whatsup bummer.” (Student Interview, November 2009) It is important to Snookums that people listen to her. In the school environment, she lacks control over where she goes and when, and also how she looks.

A negative aspect to some student-teacher relationships is when the teacher does not meet the needs of their students. This is illustrated by the relationship between Snookums and her Science teacher. Snookums loves Science, but because the teacher does not always have work modified to meet her needs, Snookums is quite often left out of activities that she is willing to participate in. The following observation note illustrates this.

A teacher aide positioned Snookums at the back of the classroom. They had some assignment work. Snookums knew the answers. No teacher aide help, so I drew a diagram for her to point to for one of the questions. The next task was to draw four cells. Mr J. handed out task sheets to everyone in the class, but walked past Snookums without giving her a sheet. I asked if she could have one as she was signalling that she would like to do the task. Mr J. said, “Are you going to do it, are you?” (Half to me, half to Snookums). Snookums nodded yes enthusiastically. I replied “Yes as you can see, she wants to.” Unsure of what actually to do, I used what I had observed with Busty La Rue and painting in the class before and tried successfully to apply it to this. I held the pencil in her hand and got her to make the movement with her wrist. She was making the right movement, but it looked like scribbles. In the air you could see the shape of the cell she was trying to re-create. Although the instructions were to complete this task neatly, I encouraged Snookums to “go for it!” There were three teacher aides in this classroom, none of whom helped Snookums participate in any activities – a TAH day. (Field Notes, 24/08/09)

This could be seen as a failure to facilitate participation from both the teacher and the teacher aides. Busty La Rue explained that “some teachers look at Snookums’ wheelchair and assume that her disability affects every part of her and it doesn’t. Her brain is still functioning and still working...” (Staff Interview, October, 2009).

Overall the students were positive about their teachers and the relationships they have with them, although they show a clear preference for some particular teachers, including Mrs Black.

Some teachers however did not pay close attention to the needs of students like Snookums. Bypassing her in a class limited her participation as did the structure of the lesson, which meant she could not participate without her vox box or a teacher aide speaking on her behalf. Student relationships can play a role in facilitating teacher-student interaction. This along with school friends and out of school friends will be discussed in the following section.

Student-Student Relationships: Friendships.

Three of the four students I interviewed identified a large group of people they would consider their friends, including friends both in and out of school. All four students had friends who did not attend their school.

School friends.

Friends at school play an important role for A.J., Princess and Snookums. School is the major place where they conduct their social relationships outside of family members or care workers. Princess and Snookums both listed their friends, and what they liked to do. A.J. also identified that being with her friends at school was a major reason for attending school.

A.J.: I like hanging out with all of my friends and just like hanging out with is quite fun, yeah having a great chat.

Lara: When do you hang out with them?

A.J. Oh I mostly hang out with them mmmmm. I like hanging out with HEAPS of people. But the past couple of days I've been hanging out with just a couple of people. But my favourite, my friend is actually Princess who's cool. She's a real yeah we have a laugh, we have a bit of fun. All the others don't have laughs but I'm used to them. (Student Interview, October, 2009)

During school hours the students who identified having school friends have areas where they like to congregate. A.J stated "We just hang out around *the SSC* or if we're not there we hang out at the library or the ummmm, up at the canteen cos we're allowed up there so it's quite good." (Student Interview, October, 2009). At the school only senior students are allowed to remain in the canteen seating area; juniors have to leave once they have purchased their food and drink items. For A.J. and Princess it is the first year that they have been able to stay in the

canteen. At times A.J. finds it advantageous to go to the canteen, since one of A.J.'s teacher aides, Mrs Lyme also runs the canteen. As A.J. stated:

Quite good cos like the lady there Mrs Lyme, I've known her for ages. I just go up there if I have no money I'll go "can I have something?" She says "yep you can have it for free!" I go Yeeeeesss! All the others like Princess and them are like "You get it for free and I don't!" (Student Interview, October, 2009)

Snookums, because she has to have the food placed in her mouth by an adult during lunch and interval times, can spend less time with her friends.

Busty La Rue: You do like going out after though don't you?

Snookums: Yeeeeeeeah!

Busty La Rue: Who do you like to be with?

Lara: Yeah well that's what one of my

Busty La Rue: So let's list your classmates: A.

Snookums: Yeeeah.

Busty La Rue: Seriously the camera wants to know who. So there's A, Puck.

Snookums: Puck.

Busty La Rue: Puck, she said her name. A.J?

Snookums: Yeah.

Busty La Rue: C, D, E?

Snookums: Yeeeeeah!

Busty La Rue: E, F, G,

Snookums: G.

Busty La Rue: She said his name too. Gosh it's all boys. There's only a couple of girls in there....(Student Interview, October, 2009)

However, in the classroom Snookums relies and draws on some friendships in particular. For example, in Mrs Black's class, Puck, a female student and one of Snookums' identified friends, will take on a helping role when Snookums' teacher aide is not available. Mrs Black stated:

Puck will help her with the writing or with some of her efforts like drawing or art or paint, she'll help set her up guide her hand or help do things for her like that. But there is a great deal more interaction with her peers without a teacher aide, like

that special relationship that she's got with Puck is very much more obvious when the teacher aide isn't there doing all of the work for Snookums. (Staff Interview, July, 2010)

She observed that this has also helped to facilitate and further their friendship (Staff Interview, July, 2010). I noted that Puck and Snookums had developed a signal/hand squeeze system for answering questions in class (Field Notes, 25/08/09). This only ever happened in Mrs Black's class partly because it was the only class that Snookums and Puck had together and partly because of the commitment that Mrs Black had in facilitating Snookums' independence from the teacher aides.

Princess also listed people she considered her friends, which included A.J. and Snookums. Like A.J., Princess considered that she had "heaps of friends" (Student Interview, November, 2009). She identified interval and lunchtime as the times when she would "play" with them. Princess was also the only student who identified being bullied. Although Cobweb expressed her isolation, she did not mention being bullied nor was any bullying observed.

Princess: I like the mainstream. I like it better, sort of. Cos I get teased in the mainstream, like everyone call me a retard and that.

Lara: So you don't like the mainstream cos you get teased?

Princess: Yeah.

Lara: Do you get teased at the SSC?

Princess: No I get teased because I'm in here, so that's why I want to go to the mainstream. (Student Interview, November, 2009)

Princess found it hard to straddle the two social worlds of the SSC and mainstream. As stated before, when the students were asked about friends, Cobweb was the one exception. In our first interview, she said that she had no friends and that she only came to school "to learn" (Student Interview, October, 2009). Cobweb had transferred from a special education boarding school so did not begin high school with the other students in her classes. At the time of interviewing she had been at the school less than 18 months. Students also found it difficult to interact with Cobweb as she was perceived as being bossy and talked over other students (Field Notes,

16/10/09). However, she maintained an ongoing relationship with her best friend outside of school.

Friends outside school.

Friendships built at school were not continued outside of it. A.J. explained that because of her daily routine, she rarely got time to spend with friends outside school. She generally got more time to be with her school friends, especially Princess, in the school holidays.

Lara: Do you hang out with her after school?

A.J.: Yeah just if, if I get time yeah. But mostly I'm busy but I do get time sometimes so yeah. I usually in the holidays, I do go to her place and hang out with her then so it's quite cool. (Student Interview, November, 2009)

After this interview, A.J. and I sat around and talked more. She told me how her "job" which involves personal care took most of her time up after school which made it hard for her to go to see Princess. Social activities with their peers in after-school hours are limited, almost non-existent. All of the students interviewed have some form of respite care, for example, Cobweb has shared care and spends three days living with her care family. Snookums has in-home care seven days a week and during the weekend she has respite care. Princess has weekend respite care. A.J. has weekend care workers when she is not busy working on her uncle's farm (Field Notes 12/09/09). Furthermore, both A.J. and Snookums have large extended families with whom they spend weekends.

A.J., Cobweb and Snookums identified having friends who were not at the school they attend. In the first interview with Cobweb she described herself as having no friends outside school as well as having none at school (Student Interview, November, 2009). However, when having a general conversation with her in the car after getting costumes for the play, she told me about her friend to whom she wrote a lot because she lived far away (Field Notes, 26/10/09). Cobweb was looking forward to seeing her friend at a school reunion that she was preparing for. In her second interview, Cobweb told me more about her previous school and her friends there. After

the final interview, she said that she finds it hard at her current school because there is no one she can identify with, no one she can sit beside at lunch and interval. This was unlike the students in her previous school, where she described several students with the same syndrome she had, and who she would sit with during these times. A.J. also mentioned times when she had felt isolated from her friends, especially when she described thoughts of loneliness when she was having operations. She said “I’ve been less lonely since then cos I’ve been getting lots of operations, I’ve got lonelier and lonelier but now since I’ve had them all done I’ve got, you know, just I’m happy” (Student Interview October, 2009). Being isolated through bouts of hospitalisation was a difficult subject for A.J. to speak about. I gave her the opportunity not to speak to me about issues that might be upsetting, but she chose to explain saying, “nah, I was going to tell you anyway” (Student Interview, October, 2009). By discussing these issues we discovered that we had the same orthopaedic surgeon.

Lara: He did my back!

A.J.: Oh did he? He did my two feet. Cos my left one turned out and the right one turned in; cos so I had to have them operated on and I got to have a plaster on them. My left was pink and my right one was green. It was awesome! It was awesome! Spend ages though aye.

Lara: You’ve had a lot of ops?

A.J.: Yep I’ve had one on my head, ummm.

Lara: You don’t have to talk about them.

A.J. Nah it’s alright. My head, my two both of my feet, my back and I’ve had five holes in my stomach.

Lara: How do you feel about those?

A.J.: Oh I don’t really feel them unless I’m running or something. I feel my back and I sometimes feel my stomach but all the other ones I’ve had I don’t really feel, so that’s really good. Ummmm, when I have my feet done I had to, no sorry my stomach done, just two years ago. That’s when I had it done. They had to put a tube in, which was really annoying. But it’s quite good now cos they had to change it, cos my other one I had didn’t work and it got real sore. So mostly every two weeks I had to go down to the hospital and check it. Get it checked and they finally got to change it, THANK GOD for that...but it’s quite good now because I haven’t been down to the hospital since that day, so it’s been really good. Hopefully I don’t have to go down there ever again, which I probably will when it gets changed again

cos I think it's suppose to be changed. Aaahh we have to change it every year, which is really good though, nice to get it changed cos I think every year I get it longer and longer, which is really good for me cos I just didn't like the first one I had. I just didn't like that first one, cos it was really small and every time bumped I actually pulled it out, and one day I actually got it out so I had to go the hospital to get it put back in. Man that was a fun day that day...I was lonely as cos my next door neighbours were away. (Student Interview, October, 2009)

Talking about her experiences was hard, but she felt that it was important for me to know. She expressed her feelings of isolation at having to be at home without any members of her support network (friends). It also shows the element of humour that she has when she reflects on her experiences. She remains positive about life-changing experiences, although she wished she did not have to go back to the hospital.

Just like A.J., Cobweb and Snookums also have described feeling lonely because of their impairments. For Cobweb a common shared experience such as someone with the same condition meant to her that she could have people around who understood her; therefore someone to sit with equated to a friendship. At her current school Cobweb sits with a teacher aide during interval and lunch times so I asked Snookums and A.J.'s nominated teacher aides about their role in facilitating friendships.

Facilitating friendships: Teacher aide perspectives.

The teacher aides had different ideas about facilitating friendships. This seems to be related to the perceived 'ability' of the students. A.J. is an outgoing student who relates well with students and adults alike. She is able to navigate between different groups of people. Snookums is also very outgoing, but is restricted by mobility and communication difficulties; however this has not stopped her from forming friendships with other students in the SSC, including her best friend and frequent interpreter Puck. Two of the nominated adults were teacher aides. Dew felt that A.J. was outgoing enough to conduct her own relationships without help, describing A.J. as "willing to give anything a go, very determined, always pleasant to be around" (Staff Interview,

November, 2009). This reflects A.J.'s own philosophy as she commented several times that she likes to give everything a go.

Busty La Rue, on the other hand, felt that it was important to facilitate friendships for Snookums and other students.

I think you need to, it's hard enough, not just Snookums, and not just Snookums, it's hard enough for them all. They spend a lot of their time when they're younger learning how to deal with or compensate for their disability and they miss things like social cues, bully language, how to become friends, they don't learn it because they're too busy on something else, oh like how to walk, how to talk, how to breathe, ya know, so when they get to this age you really need to see their friendships and their social interaction as being at a lower level because they're still learning how do the things that we expect them to do at that age. And you know, it's just a little nudge in the right direction, like you two go and do this together and then they go off and spend three hours (Snookums laughing) laughing and giggling and whatnot together and it's just that they don't know how to approach each other and say, hey I wanna do this, you know. I think it's just modelling, model how and it helps them in a mainstream as well cos they need to know how to approach somebody. But then in saying that there are some people that she doesn't like, does not want to spend time with, and she makes it quite clear that she doesn't want them in her space and if she was mobile she could probably just say goodbye turn around and walk away from them. But because she's not she has other means (to Snookums) don't ya sweetie, and we get you out of there quick (laughing). (Staff Interview, November, 2009)

The teacher aides' views seem to be responding to the 'abilities' of the students they are involved with. Busty La Rue in both Snookums' interview and her own described Snookums:

She is very relaxed, I couldn't be any prouder of her if she was my own. She always tries I've never ever had her ummm, balk at doing something. She'll always give it a go. We had an earthquake simulator here and we literally had to carry her on but she was gonna do it just like everyone else. Yeah it's great fun.... she's got a smile for me every morning even if she is in a foul mood. She smiles at me first to say hello and then the foul mood starts (Laughing) you know she's pretty good. Of all the students I've got she's the least work aren't ya? (Staff Interview, November, 2009)

This is similar to the "gives anything a go" of A.J. (Staff Interview, 05/11/09). However, Busty La Rue recognises that there are multiple facets to Snookums' personality, she does have a bad day and she can be in a "foul mood". The need for 'facilitation' seems to be less now because Snookums, A.J. and Princess have well established friendships with many students in the SSC. I

did not observe any facilitation of friendships in the mainstream classroom. In fact there seems to be a very clear distinction on when and where the students who have teacher aide support in the mainstream are allowed to conduct their friendships. In the classroom there is strict 'monitoring' of student behaviour, to the point where another teacher aide after a maths class, said "our children are the best behaved in the entire class!" (Field Notes, September, 2009)

Both Busty La Rue and Dew showed awareness of the places where the students liked to go during interval and lunchtime breaks. Dew stated, "ummmm not a lot of the time because they usually go out of the support centre and they take themselves off other places but mainly she gets around with Princess who's in the SSC and is mainly in most of her classes, yes" (Staff Interview, November, 2009).

The students who identified having friends at school, maintain their friendships through having shared classes and spaces. Whilst Snookums is more reliant on the efforts of other students, she maintains her friendships through facilitation from staff members, teacher aides and some teachers, as well as occupying the same spaces with her peers.

Part II summary.

The key emergent themes of subjects and activities and relationships served as a framework in which to explore the voices and experiences of the participants. The students provided a context for their school day by describing a "typical day". All of the students described getting up and coming to school. Three out of four (A.J., Princess and Snookums) elaborated on what they did after school or what they liked to do in their spare time.

The emergent theme of subjects and activities is large because all of the students talked about at least some aspect of these topics. The students described liking all of their classes at some point in the interview process. Snookums was the only student to say that she did not like a subject. They also described activities they participated in both on and off the school campus. These included classroom activities like the Shakespearean play. This theme revealed the difficulties

students like Snookums have in accessing and participating in these activities. It also revealed that there are only some dedicated staff members who facilitate the students' participation as well as creating the opportunities. Their school experiences informed their aspirations for the future, as Snookums and A.J. discussed what they wanted to do both in the near future (the following year) and when they leave school. The diversity of experience and the multiplicity of childhoods can best be seen through this theme when comparing Snookums' to other student participants; the inconsistencies in the level of participation are markedly different.

Of all of the emergent themes relationships was the largest. I grouped the types of relationships according to the parties involved. Four types or categories of relationships emerged. The comments made by the students, teacher aides and Mrs Black, revealed the complexities and barriers that students face in interacting with teachers and teacher aides while still maintaining friendships. These of course are experienced at different levels by the students, for example Cobweb, was the only student who described herself as having no friends, although she did describe having friends outside school. The next chapter discusses these findings in light of the literature (Chapter Two) and the social relational model of disability *barriers to being* and *barriers to doing* (Chapter One).

Chapter Five: Discussion

This chapter seeks to provide an answer to the research question: “What are the school experiences of senior secondary ORRS funded students?” Drawing on the literature in Chapter Two the findings will be interpreted using the barriers to doing and being from the social relational model of disability as described by Thomas (1999) and Connor and Stalker (2003).

To begin with, barriers to doing will be examined as they provide the everyday or the micro context, while *barriers to being* provide the ‘big picture’ or the macro context (Thomas, 1999; Rutherford, 2008). I then focus on relationships which in this thesis are viewed as both a barrier to doing and a barrier to being. It is important to note at the outset that the barriers to doing and the *barriers to being* should not be viewed in isolation, but rather as dynamic, interlinking concepts. After considering these barriers together, this chapter then reflects on students’ school experience as outlined by Thiessen (2007). The final sections of this chapter explore the limitations and the significance of this study before considering ideas for future research.

Barriers to doing

Barriers to doing reflect the importance of viewing the everyday experiences of disabled students as they make visible society’s disabling nature (Titchkosky, 2007). The participants in this study face many of the same barriers to doing as those in previous studies (Lewis et al., 2007; MacArthur et al., 2007a; Reynolds, 2006; Watson et al., 2001). The physical accessibility of classrooms and other areas remains a problem in mainstream schools (Lewis et al., 2007; MacArthur et al., 2007a; Watson et al., 2001); the use of taxis that undermine independence (Lewis et al., 2007; Watson et al., 2001) and the lack of recognition of the right to communicate (Reynolds, 2006) are also barriers to doing and experienced by the student participants in this study.

The first barrier to doing and one that impacts daily on the student participants is the physical accessibility of classrooms and the school in general (Bjarnason, 2005; MacArthur et al., 2007a; Reynolds, 2006). Seemingly simple things like having push buttons for every door that had been made partially accessible by wheelchair ramp or even sliding doors on new buildings had not been considered. Furthermore many of the latches that could have held the doors in place so the teacher or teacher aides could take a disabled student like Snookums to class were broken. Other practices like asking students to leave their bags outside the assembly hall, inevitably result in their leaving them on the wheelchair ramps. As a barrier to doing, it also means the students' right to participate in classes or assemblies is negated and their independence and agency is compromised. The undermining of disabled students' independence is not confined to movement within the school but it is also found to a lesser extent in how students get to school (Lewis et al. 2007; Watson et al., 2000). All of the participants describe coming to and from school in a taxi. Snookums' truncated day because of the taxis' schedule, means that she misses an hour of school a day, the equivalent of a full day per week.

Finally, one of the most important barriers to doing is the lack of recognition of the right to communicate as noted by Reynolds (2006) and Article of 12 UNCRC and Article 24 of UNCRPD. An example of this barrier to doing is found in the way Snookums was continually denied 'her voice' by adults, both teachers and teacher aides, many of whom talked over and 'for' her (Busty La Rue) or ignored her (the Science teacher). Voice is a multifaceted concept (Davis, 2000; James, 2004; Lewis, 2010; Smith & Bjerke, 2009) and it is also an important aspect of student school experience for both Thiessen (2007) and Fox (2006). Thiessen (2007) views voice as being contained purely within the classroom context, but in the context of this thesis, voice has broader and more far reaching implications as can be seen both in the classroom and the other areas of my research.

In the classroom context, voice was the most valued in Mrs Black's class. Mrs Black makes an effort to listen to the students and respects them as individuals (Smith & Bjerke, 2009). By doing so Mrs Black enabled the full participation of all students in her class. MacArthur et al. (2007) also acknowledged the use of equipment to facilitate participation. Snookums was the only student participant to use assistive technology for participation, yet as discussed earlier, Mrs Black did not rely on equipment, but on relationships, both the relationship she had with Snookums and Snookums' relationship with her peers (Puck). When the technology broke down, Snookums' participation remained unchanged. The importance of relationships within the classroom will be discussed later as a barrier to both doing and being. The next section examines *barriers to being*.

Barriers to being

Unlike the studies examined in Chapter Two (Bjarnason, 2005; Clark, 2008; Reynolds, 2007; Whitehurst, 2006), the students did not discuss school choice nor did this project seek to examine different settings in an effort to avoid reinforcing the disabled/non-disabled stereotype (Slee, 2001). Although the differences between mainstream and the SSC classrooms were explored, it was done because that is what the students experienced. Yet many of the same barriers were found in the organisation of school structure. These are in turn transmitted through teacher attitudes and finally impact on the aspirations of students.

One of the largest organisational barriers was evident as A.J., Cobweb, Princess and Snookums' placement in the SSC meant that they existed in Bjarnason's "limbo" of pseudo-segregation (p. 125). This reflects the lack of cohesion found within the policies that ultimately structure disabled students' schooling in New Zealand (Higgins et al., 2005). The pseudo-segregated setting of the SSC reinforces traditional views of disabled students as passive, dependent and eternally children (Bjarnason, 2005). Perhaps the best example of the impact of these settings can be found in the school's own practice of a "parallel system of education". As the SENCO

described, this involves making senior disabled students repeatedly take the same few classes with junior students, year in, year out in order ‘to get to know’ the student. It is probably one of the biggest *barriers to being* as it impacts on disabled students’ aspirations by limiting subject choice. Although ‘getting to know’ any student is important, as MacArthur (2009) and Rutherford (2008) note, Mrs Black points out that it does not take years of repeating the same class material to do so. It does however reflect an attitude of indifference towards disabled students and their aspirations.

Teacher attitudes play an important role in both creating and lessening *barriers to being* (Connors & Stalker, 2003; Lewis et al. 2007; Reynolds, 2006). These can be either positive, with attitudes of respect, honesty or kindness that enable participation, or negative attitudes that fail to recognise the views and opinions of the students (Connors & Stalker, 2003; Lewis et al., 2007; Reynolds, 2006). Negative attitudes that reproduce social inequalities have already been demonstrated with Snookums and the Science teacher in accessing the curriculum, so it is perhaps more useful to focus on the positive attitudes that teachers can impart.

The lessening of students’ *barriers to being* through positive attitudes, is found in Mrs Black. Although Mrs Black teaches in the SSC, no other class including those in the SSC recognises the student participants’ agency and voice as Mrs Black’s English class does. This is recognised by the students who not only enjoy the content such as performing in a play but also appreciate that Mrs Black listens and treats them with respect. This reinforces the comments of student participants in Lewis et al.’s study (2007). Also entwined with teacher attitudes, is the idea of expectations; positive attitudes go hand in hand with high expectations.

MacArthur et al. (2007a; 2007b) observed that high expectations are important to participation and agency. Expectations are often discussed without any mention of how students feel about them. In this thesis, A.J. revealed that she was unconcerned at her teachers’ low expectations. In classes like Maths she used that as a trade-off to get out of class earlier. Mrs Black showed high

expectations. By lessening the barriers to doing through high expectations and participation within both the classroom and school environments, Mrs Black has been able to provide pathways beyond secondary school and in doing so can minimise her students' *barriers to being*. This is reflected in the comments that A.J. and Snookums make about their aspirations.

In the major studies about disabled students' experiences of school, very few examine the aspirations of their participants. Connors and Stalker (2003) discussed outcomes; the only study that did examine the issue further was Lewis et al. (2006) who found that aspirations were "realistic and pragmatic" and based on interests. A.J. and Snookums expressed ideas about looking forward that reflected their interests and were somewhat pragmatic. Yet as noted by Connors and Stalker (2003) there remains relatively little examination of disabled students' aspirations.

So far there have been striking similarities between the comments and experiences of A.J., Cobweb, Princess and Snookums with the comments and experiences of other studies; this is particularly true of barriers to doing. The next section examines relationships with peers and adults as barriers to both being and doing.

Barriers to being and doing

Relationships are a key issue found within the literature, both peer (MacArthur & Gaffney, 2001) and adult (Rutherford, 2008). Peer relationships are the first to be examined as both a barrier to being and a barrier to doing. This is followed by a discussion of key adult relationships within the classroom.

Peer Relationships.

The findings of peer relationships in this study, when viewed within Myer et al.'s (1998) typology as previously defined in Chapter Two, showed that the student participants fill three out of the six types of peer relationships: best friend, regular friend, and ghost or guest. The largest frame identified by three out of four student participants was the regular friend. The best friend frame

is arguably one of the most important for academic participation, and it is clearly demonstrated by Snookums and Puck. It was further identified by A.J. who described Princess as her 'best friend', pointing out that she could have a "laugh" with Princess. With the exception of MacArthur and Gaffney (2001) the importance of the best friend frame in academic participation has not been developed further. Although friends as resources were briefly mentioned by Lewis et al. (2007), many studies describe participants' relationships with *non-disabled* peers as being situated within the "I'll help" frame or caring role (Broer et al. 2005; Meyer et al., 1998; Rutherford, 2008).

Cobweb was the only student to state she had no friends. Her isolation could be viewed in terms of the ghost or guest frame as she was socially isolated by and from her peers. Yet how she constructs the idea of friendship, as someone in the same boat or having a shared experience, is strikingly similar to other studies (Connors & Stalker, 2003; Curtin & Clarke, 2005). Connors and Stalker (2003) linked this with a special education/segregated attitude, which could reflect the time Cobweb had spent in a segregated school. Due to her peer isolation Cobweb operated in a distinctly adult-centred world (Watson et al. 2000) to the point where she recognised the importance of coming to school to 'learn stuff', which stood in stark contrast to other student participants who primarily came to 'hang out' with their friends.

Some teacher-student relationships often operate within a ghost or guest frame. An example of this is found in Snookums' science class where she was quite literally ghosted by her teacher who did not structure a lesson that she could participate in. By ignoring her presence the teacher became the barrier to being and doing and furthermore denied her the right to participate. This reinforces the point that adult relationships crucially important within the classroom context (MacArthur et al. 2007b).

Adult relationships.

“Some teachers look at Snookums’ wheelchair and assume that her disability affects every part of her and it doesn’t. Her brain is still functioning and still working...” (Staff Interview, October, 2009).

Adult relationships play a major role in both creating and lessening barriers to doing and being. Close relationships are important for inclusive teaching practices (Heshusius, 2004) and as Watson et al. (1999) discussed, disabled students’ experiences are predominantly adult-centred. As previously noted by MacArthur et al. (2007b) the amount of participation and agency that the students experience is directly linked to the relationships that the students have with the adults in the classroom or school. It is useful firstly to examine the barriers to doing, as this provides a focus for the everyday interactions of students. Of all the adult relationships that students have to negotiate in a day, their main relationship is with the teacher aide. This is consistent with other studies (Broer et al., 2005; Rutherford, 2008).

Both Broer et al. (2005) and Rutherford (2008) noted that teacher aides have multiple and changing roles. Teacher aides in this study take similar roles to those described by Broer et al. (2005) and Rutherford (2008). Both noted that teacher aides could be friend and teacher. In this study their changing roles were seen predominantly through observations as the student participants did not spend time discussing teacher aides. However, through the adult participation selection process, two of the student participants identified two teacher aides as adults who knew them well.

Rutherford (2008) argues that the role of the teacher aide places them in a unique role to mediate on behalf of the student and therefore lessen the barriers to doing. The findings of this study showed that this can be inconsistent and a rather hit and miss affair, as demonstrated by my own experiences in the Science class where I had to ask for the material to enable Snookums to participate, while the actions of Mrs Moogey in Horticulture created more barriers between A.J. and the teacher. This could be because of the lack of role definition identified by Rutherford

(2008) who argued that where this happened, teachers would be more likely to abdicate responsibility to the teacher aide.

Similarly, in this study Busty La Rue noted that teachers look to the teacher aides for guidance in assessing the student's capability. This is problematical, because although the teacher aide may (or may not) have built up a good relationship with the student (Rutherford, 2008), teacher aides in New Zealand are not necessarily equipped with knowledge to assess nor should they assess a student's capability, as this could lead to a disabled student being treated unfairly or their capability undermined (Giangreco, 2010; Rutherford, 2008).

Yet teachers' abdication of their responsibility creates a barrier to doing in the form of dependency, as noted by Giangreco (2010). In this study it was experienced by all participants and expressed by Princess who acknowledged that she would be stuck without a teacher aide. When a teacher abdicates in favour of a teacher aide, Giangreco et al. (1997) described the phenomenon as "islands in the mainstream"; in this study I experienced a 'wall of teacher aides'. This creates a barrier to doing and being. The barrier teacher aides can create was noted by a participant in the RITE study:

Having a classroom assistant or a support worker meant that I wasn't really integrated, I was taught quite separately. Even though I was in a classroom situation I didn't really make any friends while I was there. I was quiet, because I needed a lot of help, I didn't feel integrated so it didn't work very well for me. (Reynolds, 2006, p. 43-44)

Conversely, teacher aides who also abdicated their responsibilities, was also observed in this study. No other studies have examined this. Known throughout the findings as a TAH day, it could be viewed positively as teacher aides hoping to provide some student agency, yet a TAH day or period tended to happen at inappropriate times, like at RDA where it created another barrier to doing. Unlike other studies, teacher aides in this project can also be seen as a barrier to other relationships in the classroom, especially the teacher-student relationship, as noted by Mrs

Black. This is an area that has been unexplored by other studies although Rutherford (2008) and Watson et al. (2000) earlier described the abdication of teacher responsibility.

Teachers are generally viewed in terms of attitudes (Connors & Stalker, 2004; Lewis et al., 2007; Reynolds, 2006) and expectations (MacArthur et al., 2007b) as previously discussed. When examining disabled students' school experiences many of the large studies have failed to examine the teacher perspective or, even more importantly, students' perspectives of teachers. The teacher perspective and student perspective of some teachers, even a limited one as found in this study, enable a broader picture of disabled students' school experiences to emerge. It allows for an exploration of the dynamics of the classroom environment. For example, we can view how the teacher-teacher aide relationship sets the tone for the classroom, how a teacher negotiates the multiple personalities in the class and ultimately how the relationship impacts, either positively or negatively, on the students' barriers to doing and being.

What are disabled students' school experiences?

The previous sections provided a glimpse into this group of disabled students' school experience. We see that experiences can be both positive and negative, but also complex and ordinary (Connors & Stalker, 2003). By examining *barriers to being* and *doing* (Thomas, 1999; Connors & Stalker, 2003), the students' experiences have revealed the disabling structures and practices of the school environment which are often hidden or taken for granted. It might be useful at this point to return to Thiessen's (2007) definition of student school experience as discussed in Chapter Two, keeping in mind the previous discussion of the *barriers to being* and *doing* which the students must confront.

Thiessen (2007) noted that student school experience generally showed how students navigate and negotiate the dynamics of a classroom. This was evident for A.J., Cobweb, Princess and Snookums, especially through their relationships and to a lesser extent their likes/dislikes of

subject material and the activities that they were involved in. The intersection of school and life outside school is also important (Thiessen, 2007).

Very few studies (Connor & Stalker, 2003; Lewis et al., 2007; MacArthur et al., 2007a; Watson et al., 2000) connect the two areas. Yet they are important, especially to the student participants, both for what happens and for what does not happen. For example, I noted that school for many of the student participants was one of the few places they get to 'hang out' with their friends. There are a number of factors which explain the lack of socialisation outside school and these are similar to those given in other studies (Lewis et al., 2007; Watson et al., 2000); they include *barriers to doing*, of which accessibility is an important example. Thus their life outside school highlights the significance of school as a social site.

A.J., Cobweb, Princess and Snookums' experiences within school bear witness to the continual denial of certain rights for disabled students. These range from participation in school and classroom settings to the right to communicate and have a voice (UNCRC, Article 12; UNCRPD, Article 24). We see that these are not isolated instances, but rather a continuing daily disregard of these students' rights. As Thomas (1999) recognised that disability is reliant on relationships, so too is the denial of rights. Thus the importance of relationships, especially in terms of (re)producing disabling barriers, is clearly seen within the adult relationships, although there are individuals (Mrs Black) who choose to lessen the barriers through high expectations and positive attitudes. In doing so, teachers like Mrs Black enable disabled students to have voice and agency so that they can participate in the classroom and at last start to receive an education.

It is easy to dwell only on the negative experiences for the student participants, but it must be acknowledged that despite the barriers to doing and being, these students remain positive. Finally, it can be seen that the students' school experiences centre on two important overarching activities: to socialise with their peers and to 'learn stuff'.

Limitations

There are several major limitations to this study. Gender and cultural diversity was not able to be achieved and the limited timeframe to conduct the field work was always going to be a problem. Furthermore as I conducted my research at a single site, the research processes provide their own limitations. The research processes employed have played an important role in gaining material for this thesis. As well as the importance of maintaining ethical procedures, a critical aspect for successfully gaining student voices included using and learning what communication techniques the students already employ. This seems obvious, but with the growth of researchers exploring the views and opinions of students who have been described as non-verbal, many try to create alternative forms of communication in order to gain good data (Whitehurst, 2006).

Learning the processes that students employ, shows respect for the individual and creates an understanding that cannot be gained by using different tools. Traditional perspectives of research ethics and forcing participants to use different forms of communication potentially create barriers to doing for those students by limiting participation, and *barriers to being* by perpetuating myths of incompetency (Sanderson, 2010). Through student engagement with the research process, disabled student participants were able to show agency and self-determination.

As the data explored a single site, the experiences of other students in different settings – segregated or integrated – were not examined. Other issues like teacher and teacher aide expectations vary, for example there might not be a single teacher like Mrs Black or there may be many. These types of variables could not be explored through the examination of a single site. In saying this, however, the data that I did collect does reflect and reinforce the experiences and views gained in other larger research projects that explored multiple projects with multiple integrated/segregated settings like Watson et al. (2000).

In relation to this group of participants, a major limitation is the silence of the male voice. To have a gender balance would have been ideal. However, the female voice reproduced here is

reflective of the SSC, although I do recognise that statistically across New Zealand there are more male students who are ORRS funded (Statistics New Zealand, 2010).

Unfortunately, cultural diversity was not able to be achieved. All of the female participants were New Zealanders of European descent (Pakeha). In fact, there was only one student on the roll within the SSC who identified as Māori. Finally, the limitation of time was apparent during the interviewing stage. I would have loved to interview Cobweb and Princess more as I feel that the more experience they had in the interviewing processes, the more they would have shared. However, this does not in any way diminish their contribution to this thesis, which has been immense.

Finally, there is my own limitation to consider. As a result of my impairment there were times during the data collection stage when I could only observe and not participate. Yet I hope that I have compensated for this by obtaining a wealth of material that provides a rich and detailed picture of the participants' school experiences. In doing so, I have tried to treat those who gave their time with the respect that they deserve.

Significance and Implications

“Without listening to the often bidden voices of students it is impossible to understand fully the policies and practices of individual schools” (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 1999, p. 150).

Firstly, the significance of this research can be seen in the bridging of Childhood Studies and Disability Studies as begun by researchers like Connors and Stalker (2003). This is particularly seen through the research processes and the theoretical approaches that I used. For example, from Childhood Studies comes the focus on student school experience (Thiessen, 2007) and includes an acknowledgement of student agency. Disability Studies provides the emphasis on communication techniques and the use of the social model which informs the language of this thesis, thereby making visible the (re)production of disabling barriers. Ultimately, by viewing

disabled students within a Childhood Studies framework of competency and agency, the research processes remove barriers to student participation and dispels the myth of the eternal child.

Using a Disability Studies framework allows us to view the barriers of a non-inclusive educational system and society as well as the complexities of disability. Furthermore it highlights the fact that the New Zealand education system is a long way from achieving any sense of inclusion. Yet at the same time, there are teachers who are recognised by students as having the qualities needed to produce inclusion, and all teachers who promote inclusion should be supported by their school and community (Slee, 2001). Understanding the relational aspects of the classroom and their disabling nature (Thomas, 1999) could provide a way in which inclusion is approached, as the top-down approach with policies and international legislation has obviously not produced inclusive outcomes for disabled students.

Arguably the greatest significance of conducting this research can be found within the voices of the participants, who should be recognised as having rights and agency, and that they can and do participate in meaningful ways. I hope that in recognising this and showing it can be done, may open the doors to further research with disabled students without parental proxies, especially as New Zealand ethics committees become aware of current research methods involving disabled students and understand that disabled students have a right to be involved in matters that concern them. In the classrooms where agency and voice were recognised, the barriers both to doing and being were greatly lessened. This has wider policy implications as it reinforces the argument *against* segregation of students in specialist schools and units. The views expressed by A.J., Cobweb, Princess and Snookums are similar to those in other studies (Curtin & Clarke, 2005; Lewis, Parsons & Robertson, 2006; Reynolds, 2006; Watson et al., 2000). This however does not diminish their individuality, but rather highlights the similar way in which disabled students are treated and viewed. Finally, it is hoped that the students' voices within the findings,

provide an insight and impart a sense of understanding of how this group of disabled students experience school.

Ideas for further research

As disability research is relatively under-developed in New Zealand compared with Britain, there is scope for more research that focuses on disabled students' voices and experiences. Future research possibilities directly stemming from this project include extending this study and following disabled students over years rather than months to develop a more detailed picture of their wider educational experiences, not just those that happen at the school site. Research could also be situated within a more participatory framework. A longitudinal study of individuals' post-secondary transition experiences would be interesting in light of A.J.'s and Snookums's comments and it would also allow for an exploration of shifting perspectives on school, as well as relational barriers to both disabled students' experiences and post-secondary outcomes.

It would also be interesting to follow this research with a study about disabled educators, to explore their experiences of teaching or teacher aiding with impairments and whether disabled students have different experiences in classrooms that have disabled educators. This study highlighted issues that teachers and teacher aides face in trying to promote inclusion as well as other issues that were unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis.

Concluding thoughts

The student school experiences of the participants have revealed within the themes of the study, elements of the everyday, the messiness, the complexities and ordinariness of the lives of A.J, Cobweb, Princess and Snookums. Their sharing of experiences makes visible the impact and implications of the barriers to their right to participate that continue to exist. They are also no longer unknown ORRS funded students, but have names, lives and experiences that are worth sharing. Applying a broad definition of experience has allowed an examination of not only learning experiences but the more complex social relationships the students maintain with

teachers, teacher aides and peers. The importance of such research lies in breaking down traditional assumptions and barriers about conducting research with disabled students. I hope I have shown that the disabled students, who have chosen to participate in this study, can do so in meaningful ways.

Finally, the voice of the students has been a major theme and concern of this thesis. It has been the vehicle by which the students have described their school experiences and it illuminates the complexities and ordinariness of being a disabled student. It is there at the beginning as an integral part of the title, and therefore it is only appropriate to hear it again at the end, with Snookums using her vox box to quote a Shakespearean blessing (Student Interview, October, 2009):

Hand in hand with fairy grace, we will sing and bless this place.

Vocalises Yeah!

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Appendices.

Appendix A: Letter and Consent Form For School Access.

Working Title: What are the school experiences of senior secondary school ORRS funded students.
 Lara Sanderson
 c/o Centre for Research on Children and Families
 University of Otago
 P.O. Box 56
 Dunedin.

___/___/2009

To Whom It May Concern,

Hello my name is Lara Sanderson. I am currently a Research Masters candidate at Otago University I am writing to you to enquire if your school would be prepared to take part in my thesis research project:

Working Title: What are the school experiences of senior secondary school ORRS funded students.

My project focuses on the views and perspectives of senior students (aged 16-21 in years 12 and 13) who have been identified as having “high-very high special needs” and who are ORRS funded. The purpose of my thesis project is to gain insight and understanding of their experiences at high school.

If you and your school choose to take part in this project it will involve classroom observations (both written notes and photographed) a small number of interviews with focus students, and one off interviews with teachers, teacher aides and/or caregivers. This will at the most span over two school terms, although how much of that is spent regularly in the classroom will be negotiated with you and the staff involved. Participation in this project is entirely voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity will be respected and unless you wish it otherwise, your school will not be mentioned by name or location. Other ethical considerations including informed consent will be strictly adhered to throughout the research process. If you wish for me to come and speak to your Board of Trustees about this research I am happy to do so..

If you are happy for your school to participate in this research please sign the attached consent form and post in the stamped pre-addressed envelope enclosed. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisors. Thank very much for considering my request.

Yours sincerely,

Lara Sanderson, Masters Candidate

e-mail: sanla679@student.otago.ac.nz

Phone: (03) 479 5038

Supervisors:

Mr. Michael Gaffney
 Centre for Research on Children and Families
 University of Otago
 P.O. Box 56 Dunedin
 (03) 479 5098
 michael.gaffney@otago.ac.nz

Dr Gill Rutherford
 University of Otago College of Education
 University of Otago
 P.O. Box 56 Dunedin
 (03) 479 3804
 gill.rutherford@otago.ac.nz

Appendix B: Consent form for school access.

Working Title: What are the school experiences of senior secondary school ORRS funded students?

I have read the letter concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:-

Participation of the school, staff and students in the project is entirely voluntary;

Individual focus students and classrooms will be asked if they wish to participate in observations (which include both written notes and photographs) and interviews;

The school is free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;

Any school identifying information will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which they will be destroyed;

The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve the anonymity of my school and associated individuals.

On behalf of the school I agree to your presence at school in order to conduct the above research project.

.....

(Signed)

___/___2009

_____ (Name)

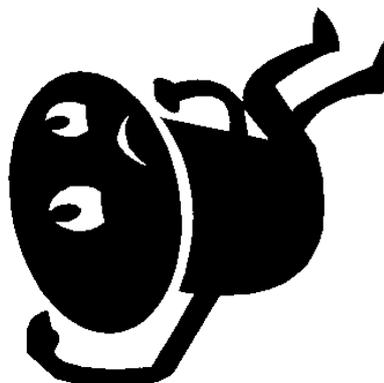
_____ (School)

The University of Otago Human Ethics Committee has reviewed and approved this project

Appendix C: Student Observation Information Sheet.

GENERAL INFORMATION SHEET FOR STUDENTS.

What are school the experiences of senior secondary school ORRS funded students?



If you have any questions please feel free to contact either myself or my supervisors. Thank you.

Lara Sanderson
Centre for Research on Children and Families, P.O. Box 56, University of Otago, Dunedin.
(03) 4795975
sarla679@student.otago.ac.nz

Supervisors:
Michael Gaffney
Centre for Research on Children and Families, P.O. Box 56, University of Otago, Dunedin.
(03) 479 5098
michael.gaffney@otago.ac.nz

Gill Rutherford
University of Otago College of Education, P.O. Box 56, University of Otago, Dunedin.
03)479 3804
gill.rutherford@otago.ac.nz

The University of Otago Human Ethics Committee has reviewed and approved this project.



I have read and/or discussed information about this project and I do not wish to participate. Thank you very much.

_____ (Signed)

_____ (name) / ____/2009

OR signed on behalf of: _____ (Name of Student)

Relationship to student: _____

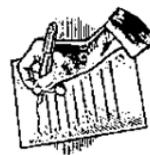
Please detach. _____

General Information for Students.

Hello, my name is Lara Sanderson. Your school has agreed that over the next few months I could be in your school. This is for my university research masters project.

What is this project about?

I would like to learn about the high school experiences of senior students who have a particular type of funding called Ongoing Reviewable Resource Scheme (ORRS).



What will I be doing?

As part of my project I will be spending time in your classroom. This is to learn what happens in the class

When I'm in your classroom I will take notes and photos to help me remember what is happening when I was there.

Students will be asked for permission before I use any photos in which they can be identified.

If I mention you in a report, article or presentation your true name will not be used or the name of your school.



Notes and photos will be locked in a safe place in the University so that only me and my supervisors will see them. Following University protocol, they will be destroyed after five years



What will I have to do?

At the moment, all you have to do is read or be read this information sheet and decide if you would not mind if I was in your classroom.

Later in the project, after I get to know you all I will be asking some students, who have ORRS funding if they would like to be interviewed.



What if I don't want you to write or photograph me?

If you don't want me to include you in my notes and/or photos let me or the teacher know and I will respect that.

What if I don't want to take part at all?

You do not have to take part in my project. Just sign the form on the back of this, tear off and return to the teacher.

If you or your parents want to talk to me I will be around the school or you can make a time that is suitable for you.

Please feel free to share this with your parents. If you want to know more about this project or have any questions, please get in touch with me, the teacher or my supervisors. If you DO NOT wish to participate in the project please return the attached form to your teacher by ___/08/2009. Thank you.

Appendix D: Information Sheet For Individual Focus Students

Working Title: What are the school experiences of senior secondary school ORRS funded students.

____/____/2009

Hello, my name is Lara and I would like to ask you if you would like to take part in the next stage of the project that I am doing for my university Research Masters thesis. You can decide if you would like to take part or not. You don't have to if you don't want to.

What is this project about?

I would like to learn about the high school experiences of senior students who have a particular type of funding called the Ongoing Reviewable Resource Scheme (ORRS).

What will you be asked to do?

I will ask if you would like to participate in some interviews. However this does not mean you have to take part, you can say no at anytime. If you feel better having someone else in the room then you can. They will be told that they are not allowed to repeat anything that is said. I will ask you questions about your life at school in an interview away from everyone else at a time you pick so you can speak openly and honestly.

You will be asked if you want to create a code name so that no one will know that it is you. This is for your privacy. If you don't want to make one up, one will be given to you.

I will also ask you if there is someone like a teacher, teacher-aide and/or parent that you would be happy for me to talk with about your school day as part of the project as well. They will be asked about their relationship with you in an interview like this but only if you want me to.

You can change your mind about the interview. You can leave the interview at anytime. You can also decide not to answer some questions. I will respect your wishes at all times.

What will I write and who will read it?

If it is OK with you, I will video tape or voice record our interview so that I can remember what we discussed. I will then type out the voice recorded information.

I will either give you a copy of the information or read it out to you so you can tell me if what I have said is correct, but you can also change things if you want to. I will also send you a copy of the final project so that you can see what I found out. The notes that I will write will be locked in a safe place in the university so that only me and my supervisors will see them. After five years they will be destroyed.

If you want to know more about this project or have any questions, please get in touch with me or my supervisors. Thank you.

The University of Otago Human Ethics Committee has reviewed and approved this project.

Lara Sanderson or
C.R.C.F
University of Otago
P.O. Box 56, Dunedin
(03)479 5038

Michael Gaffney or
C.R.C.F
University of Otago
P.O. Box 56, Dunedin
(03)479 5098

Gill Rutherford
U.O.C.E
University of Otago
P.O. Box 56, Dunedin
(03)479 3804

Consent Form For Individual Focus Students.

Working Title: What are the school experiences of senior secondary ORRS funded students?
 I have been told about this study and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered in a way that makes sense for me.

I know that:

1. Participation in this study is voluntary, which means that I do not have to take part if I don't want to and nothing bad will happen to me. I can also stop taking part at any time and don't have to give a reason.
2. Anytime I want to stop the interview, that's okay.
3. Lara will video-tape or audio-tape me so that she can remember what I say, but the tape will be destroyed after the study has ended.
4. This project involves an open-questioning technique. Lara will ask me questions about school, community and friendships, but she does not know all of questions that she will ask me because they have not been written beforehand, they also depend on how the interview develops. Although the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the precise questions to be used.
5. If I don't want to answer any or some of the questions, that's fine.
6. If I have any worries or if I have any other questions, then I can talk about these with Lara or others if I wish.
7. The paper and computer files with my answers will only be seen by Lara and the people she is working with. They will keep whatever I say private.
8. Lara will write up the results from this project for her University work. The results may also be written up in journals and talked about at conferences. My name will not be on anything Lara writes, photographs or video tapes in this study.

Please tick one.

Yes, I agree to take part in the project.

No, thank you I do not wish to take part in the project.

.....

(Signed)

___/___/2009

_____ (Name)

Appendix E: Information Sheet For Adult Participants

Working Title: What are the school experiences of senior secondary school ORRS funded students?

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and we thank you for considering our request.

What is the aim of the project?

The aim of this project is to seek the views and experiences of senior secondary ORRS funded students . This is for the completion of my Research Masters Thesis at Otago University.

What type of participants are being sought?

You have been identified by one of the student participants in my project as being someone whom they feel comfortable with you talking to me about them. The project they are involved in seeks to learn more about the high school experiences of senior secondary school students in years 12 and 13 aged between 16-21 and who are funded through the Ongoing Reviewable Resource Scheme (ORRS).

What will participants be asked to do?

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to participate in one interview during the school term that may last approximately one hour. During the interview you will be asked about the student and his/her school environments.

Can participants change their mind and withdraw from the project?

You may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

What data or information will be collected and what use will be made of it?

With your permission, the interview will be audio taped. The interviews with adult participants will be transcribed and then analysed for themes. Following University protocol, the tapes will be wiped upon the completion of my Masters thesis. This raw data will be seen by my supervisors Dr. Gill Rutherford and Mr. Michael Gaffney, transcribers (for audio-taped material) and myself. The transcribed data will be kept by my Supervisor(s) in a locked cabinet for up to five years and then destroyed.

This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning focuses on school and friends. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. Consequently, although the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee is aware of the

general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the precise questions to be used.

In the event that the line of questioning does develop in such a way that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable, you are reminded of your right to decline to answer any particular question(s) and also that you may withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve your anonymity.

If you appear in any pictures that I might like to use for publication or presentations I will ask your permission.

You are most welcome to request a copy of the results of the project should you wish to do so.

Reasonable precautions will be taken to protect and destroy data gathered by email. However, the security of electronically transmitted information cannot be guaranteed. Caution is advised in the electronic transmission of sensitive material.

What if Participants have any Questions?

If you have any questions about my project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:-

Lara Sanderson or
C.R.C.F
University of Otago
P.O. Box 56, Dunedin
(03)479 5038

Michael Gaffney or
C.R.C.F
University of Otago
P.O. Box 56, Dunedin
(03)479 5098

Gill Rutherford
U.O.C.E
University of Otago
P.O. Box 56, Dunedin
(03)479 3804

The University of Otago Human Ethics Committee has reviewed and approved this project.

Consent Form For Adult Participants.

Working Title: What are the school experiences of senior secondary school ORRS funded students?

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:-

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary.
2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;
3. Any video and audio tapes will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which they will be destroyed;
4. This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning includes school, community and friendships. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. In the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind.
5. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity. Lara will ask my permission before using any photos that I might be depicted in.

I agree to take part in this project.

.....

___/___/2009

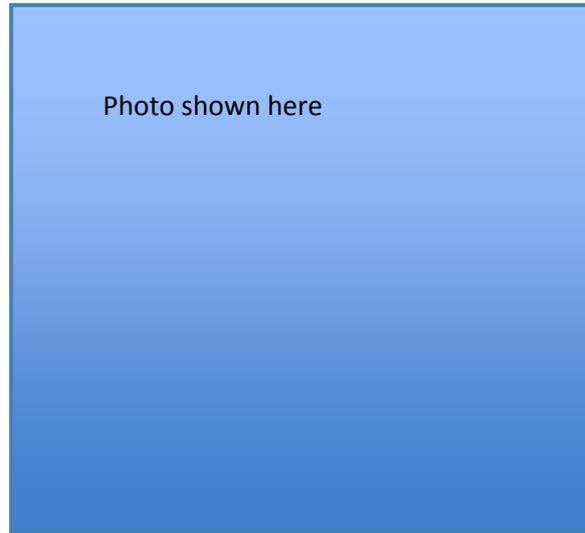
(Signature)

(Name)

Appendix F: Photo Release Form

___/___/2010

Date photo was taken ___/___/2009



I understand that this photo will be used in: (please tick as many as you like)

- final thesis report
- presentations
- publications

It will be used for the purposes of this research only and I agree that it can be included in the way that I have chosen.

(Signature)

___/___/2009

(Name)

Appendix G: Class Diagrams

HORTICULTURE PRACTICAL Period One. Undercover but outside. Lots of movement from mix area and potting table.

Key:



Area for seedling mix



Teacher aides

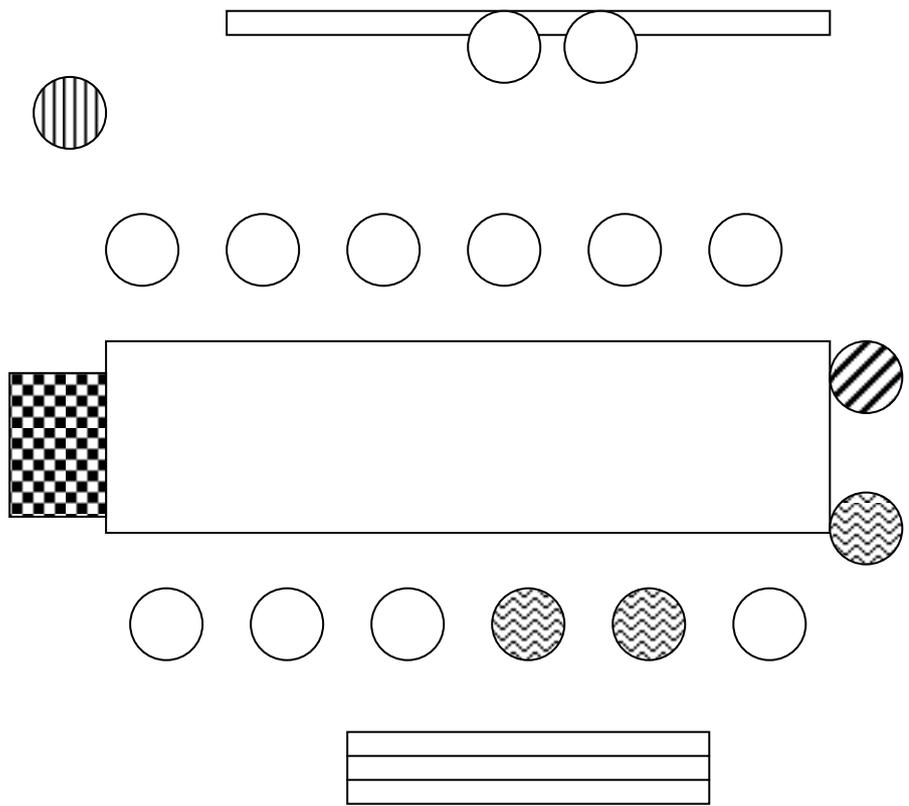


A.J.



Teacher

Layout;



SCIENCE:

Key:



SSC Student & Princess



Dew (Teacher Aide)



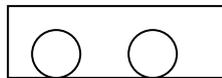
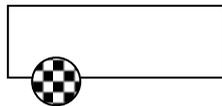
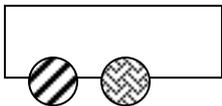
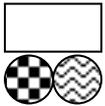
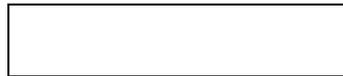
A.J.



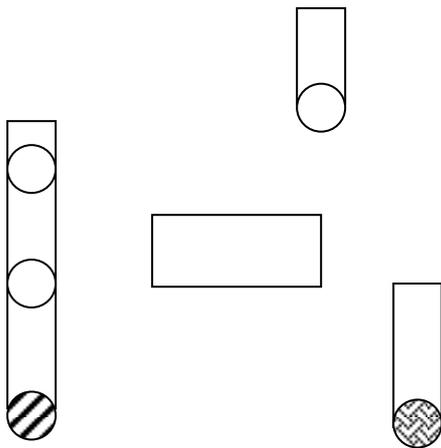
Me



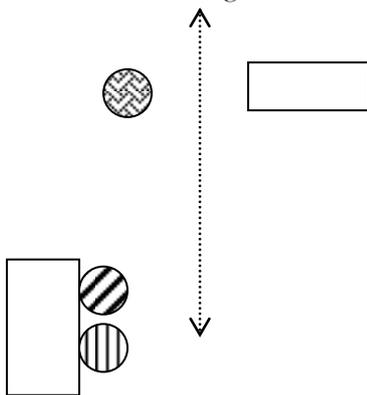
Teacher



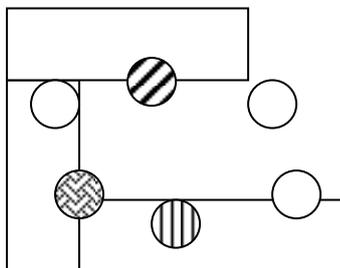
Period 3: INT, main SSC classroom computers.



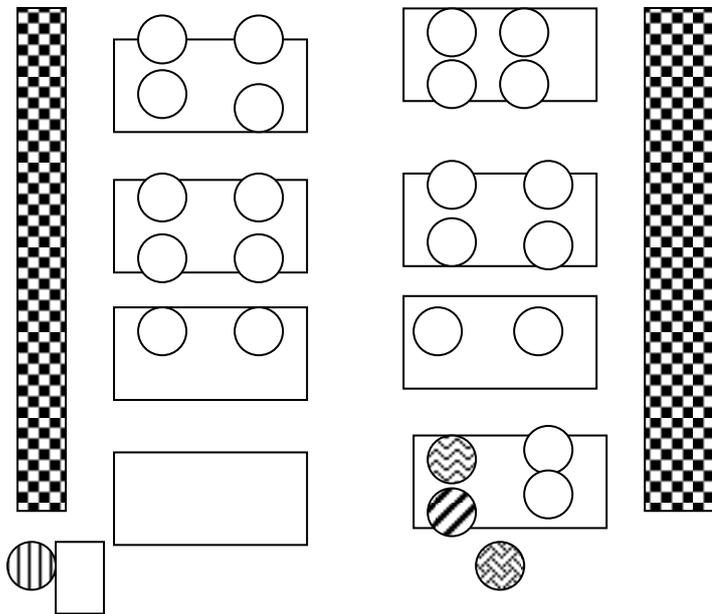
Remedial Reading with Mrs Superwoman:



Reading with Mrs Sue in SSC "Blue Room"



FOOD TECHNOLOGY with Mrs Bart:



Whiteboard

Key:



Oven/Sink/cupboard areas



Teacher aide



A.J.



Teacher *moved around



Me

Appendix H: Interview Guide

Please note: Before the interview the participants will be read (by the interviewer) the information sheet to make sure that they are aware of the nature of the interview and confirm that informed consent has been given. The participant will be briefed on their right to stop at anytime and/ or that they do not have to answer a question if they do not wish to do so.

STUDENT PARTICIPANTS:

What are your favourite subject(s)? What do you like about it/them?

Tell me about what you like/dislike about high school.

What do you want or hope to do after you have left school?

Tell me about what you like doing after school? And in the weekend?

Tell me about your friends. What are they like?

Prompts: What do you like doing together?

When was the last time you did this?

How do you spend your time with them?

*The focus students will have the opportunity to disclose any topics that if they feel uncomfortable with me discussing in the adult interview.

ADULT PARTICIPANTS:

What is your relationship with the student participant?

How long have you (or your child or the student) been at this school?

How would you describe them as a student?

Tell me about how the participant and his/her friends spend their time together.

Do you or have you actively facilitated any of the participant's friendships?