

# Us & Them:

Being at a residential school, perspectives from  
students, staff and whanau

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## **Abstract**

Residential special education for students with diverse learning needs continues to be one of the most complex and contested areas on the education spectrum. This thesis explores a live-in boarding school for girls with special learning, social, emotional, and behavioural needs. The participants view was sought to understand the value placed on the school by those who use and provide the services.

The methodological approach was a case study design underpinned by a constructivist paradigm. Twelve participants volunteered to be interviewed. The participants were made up from three stakeholder groups these were teachers, residential workers, students' and parents/whānau. An inductive content analysis procedure was used to identify four overarching themes.

Overall, all stakeholders thought the school served a purpose and they strongly support a continuum of services, including special residential schools. However, there is clearly a stigma attached to the school, which seems to be a barrier to the school operating in a more inclusive way. This setting the participants believed was more inclusive for the girls as they did not experience the marginalization of the mainstream.

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

This thesis reports on the experience of students, parents/whānau, teachers and residential workers attending, teaching, or having a child at one residential school for girls with special learning, social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties in New Zealand. The research examines the perceptions and experiences of major stakeholders in order to ascertain the place of residential special schooling on the education continuum. The inquiry draws on qualitative face-to-face and phone interviews conducted between the period of October 2010 to December 2010. The researcher aims to provide an understanding of and insight into the topic of special residential education for girls in a New Zealand (NZ) context.

The case study school is a residential intervention school for up to 80 girls aged 8-18 years of age, with special learning, social, emotional and/or behavioural needs. The intervention facilities, programs, and services are designed to meet specific and collective learning needs over a two-year period in order to successfully reintegrate the students into their home, school, and communities. Depending on individual circumstances, placement at the school is considered the most appropriate way to increase learning and achievement, by providing a significantly modified/adapted curriculum program enabling specific individual learning needs to be met. The intervention program is designed to enhance personal and social skills, to manage behaviour appropriately in a variety of settings, and to enable the student to reintegrate into an age appropriate education environment in their home community. The students come to the school from all over New Zealand.

The students represent culturally, or linguistically diverse (CLD) and economically disadvantaged people. Many receive care from foster families or significant others, aside from their birth parents. Placement at the school generally does not exceed two years, though special provision can be applied for where extreme circumstances promote an extended stay of the student. The individual education plans (IEP) and individual behaviour plans (IBP) approach of the school is based on the biological/medical model located within the functional deficit paradigm. The students are assessed and individualised according to summative and formative assessment measures during enrolment. The standardised outcome measures are then used as a basis of individualised behaviour and



education plans addressing cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioural development, interwoven throughout the school and residential treatment programme.

The intervention programme designed specifically for the school has its origin in a range of systemic and psychodynamic approaches, including the problem solving framework, applied behaviour analysis, Glaser control theory, and cognitive therapy as applied by therapeutic counsellors.

### **1.1 Residential education**

Residential Special Education is a contemporary issue in New Zealand that is currently contested under the Special Education 2000 (SE 2000) policy review. Despite research demonstrating that students with emotional and behavioural disorders (EBD) in residential schools claim to have positive perceptions of their experience (Copper, 1993; Harris et al., 2008; Hornby & Witt, 2008; Polat & Farrell, 2002; Jahnukainen, 2004). The international focus on inclusion and mainstreaming has led to the closure of many.

The students, for whom residential special education is designed, often have limited opportunities for their voices to be heard. To date, there is no literature in New Zealand on the perceived experiences of residential education for girls with EBD. While I acknowledge the complex issues associated with defining the term EBD (Wearmouth et al., 2005), for the purposes of this study, EBD refers to students who have been, or continue to be, excluded from mainstream provision because of the ‘problematic’ behaviour they present (Wearmouth et al., 2005).

Participating in education is pivotal to student achievement and is a fundamental requirement for all children and young people under the Education Act 1989 (MOE, 2009). As well as being a legislative requirement, participation in education denotes a sense of belonging to the mainstream social system and is associated with long-term success and wellbeing (Munford & Sanders, 2007). Over time, if young people remove themselves, or are removed without attending an alternative education provision, “patterns of non-attendance can place students at risk of poor achievement and early drop-out, thus compromising their later outcomes in life across a range of social and economic measures” (DSAU, Attendance in New Zealand Schools 2009, p. 5). In a recent survey on attendance

in NZ schools (2009) investigating the relationship between absence, school and student level factors, evidence showed growing exclusionary behaviours associated with student attendance at the high school level for both males and females. Of significance to this study is “the rapid increase in the unjustified and intermittent unjustified absence rates for both males and females from year 9 to year 13”, all of which mirror survey results from the period 2006 and 2004 (DSAU, Attendance in New Zealand Schools in 2009, p. 10). However in terms of gender significance there is minimal disparity in overall absence rates evident between males and females (11.4% for males and 11.7% for females) and total unjustified absence rates (4.1% for males and 4.2% for females) (DSAU, Attendance in New Zealand Schools in 2009, p. 10). With the current international and national drive towards inclusion and mainstreaming, the promotion of student participation in and commitment to education is paramount in achieving reduced numbers of suspensions, exclusions, and early-leaving rates, as well as increasing school attendance rates.

The NZ Ministry of Education (MOE) has recently collaborated with other education sector agencies leading to the formation of Intensive Behaviour Services (IBS). IBS has been created as an integral part of the MOE’s Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) action plan implementing PB4L and initiatives delivered across New Zealand schools. The IBS (2011) document provides evidence from American research showing that 36% of “disabled” students and 55% of students with EBD leave school with no qualifications. They also further provide evidence illustrating that 72% of African American students with EBD leave school with no qualifications (IBS, 2011, p. 2). While IBS stated it was difficult to report on NZ statistics of specific EBD school leavers, NZ statistics do provide a generalised indication of the rising rates of school leavers with no formal qualifications:

In the decade from 1991 to 2000, approximately 9,000 young people left high schools each year with no formal school qualifications. With the national school leaving age having been raised to 16 years in 1993, the majority of these students were aged between 16 and 18 years. As a percentage of the total number of school leavers each year, students leaving without gaining any qualifications increased slightly between 1991 and 2000. In 1991, the almost 8,400 students who left school with no qualifications constituted 16 percent of all school leavers. By 2000, the number of school leavers without qualifications was close to 10,300, or 19 percent of all young people leaving school that year. This decade high was also

reached in 1996 ([www.stats.gov.nz](http://www.stats.gov.nz), Skill training for school leavers with no qualifications, p. 1)

Intensive behaviour services were developed in response to recent residential schools evaluation research, conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Education (MOE) by the Education Review Office (ERO, 2008). This research evidence had the following residential school outcomes:

- Schools intake numbers were not providing for the number of students intended -84/105
- Management practices were inconsistent
- The schools were historically isolated and relied on traditional paradigms such as competition rather than collaboration
- The schools were not designed specifically to meet the needs of gender specific requirements
- Transition and reintegration was a problematic area (IBS, 2008, p. 3).

In response to the international drive towards greater inclusion, the IBS aims on increasing the capacity and capability of local behaviour support teams to develop, implement, and evaluate effective inclusive intervention services. This approach will address the growing numbers of behaviour challenges identified in schools enabling students to remain in their home and school communities.

The present study explores a live-in boarding school for girls with special learning, social, emotional or behavioural difficulties in New Zealand, through the perspectives and experiences of major stake holders, teachers, support staff, whānau and, in particular, the students.

## **1.2 An inclusive system**

With the current international and national drive towards inclusion and mainstreaming, the tension between traditional policy and practice and contemporary movements for a more inclusive social system, continues to gain momentum and the chasm dividing the two paradoxical systems continues to grow. This has resulted in the uncertainty currently gripping special education and its place in the NZ education continuum.

### **1.3 Competing Paradigms within New Zealand Education System**

The New Zealand (NZ) education system currently operates within two competing theoretical frameworks: the historical functional deficit or within person model, and the ecological systems or environment persons' model (Moore et al., 1999). The two conceptual paradigms represent conflicting ideologies, an outcome of NZ's complex historical processes evident in education (Moore et al., 1999). The functional deficit model rests on the biological/medical paradigm that views individuals who deviate from the 'norm' as having a pathological condition (Wearmouth et al., 2005). The functional deficit paradigm is saturated in the rhetoric of diagnosis/prescription; the individual is assessed, categorized accordingly and prescribed treatment through remediation (Clark & Dyson, 1998). An ecological model, on the other hand, represents the shifting ideological and sociological concerns in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and is characterized by rhetoric of differentiation, collaboration and strength based approaches to diversity and is firmly grounded in the human rights value on equality of opportunity (Clark, Dyson, Millward & Skidmore, 1997). Allan, Brown, and Riddell aptly describe the two paradigms: "Individual and social models of disability might be characterized as also 'personal troubles' or 'public issues'" (Allan, Brown & Riddell, 1998, p. 22).

Broadly speaking, the two paradigms reflect the opposing conceptualizations evident within both the specialized/segregated and the inclusive/human rights approaches to difference and diversity (Ainscow, 2007). Two fundamental concepts drive the polarized condition of the NZ theoretical basis: access (a right to education), and equity (rights in education) (Wearmouth et al., 2005). Philosophically, the complexities inherent within the education system correspond with competing ideologies driven by political, social, and economic climates dividing global market capitalist movements and that of the values framework evident in human rights movements (Clark & Dyson, 1998; Wearmouth et al., 2005). These theoretical paradigms affect residential education as a contemporary issue. In this case, while providing a service for students and families who are ejected from the mainstream system according to the functional deficit paradigm, the mere existence of a residential school threatens the inclusive paradigm and is, therefore, at risk of closure.

## 1.4 The Policy Context

There is renewed concern about the increasing marginalisation of young people with special education needs at a time when resources for special provision are under threat. The New Zealand special education 2000 policy was recently reviewed in consultation with schools and local authorities regarding the provision of special education providers and especially the feasibility of residential special schools as methods to support students with identified high needs. Outlining five key components under review; transitions and agencies working together; funding and resource use; high quality services; and being accountable in outcomes, Heather Roy, Minister of Special Education commented on the intent of the review in ensuring that the NZ education system is both receptive to and effective in, providing for students with the high learning needs (Ministry of Education, Special Education Review 2010). The public response to the review of the Special Education 2010 discussion document details a multiplicity of viewpoints on the key components, however especially relevant to this thesis are the key themes emerging from the question (1b) “How could schools work together to succeed” and the subsequent four options outlined to the public, designed as stated by the Ministry “to stimulate discussion, rather than prompt respondents to select a preferred option. The options were:

Option A – the current system

Option B – no special schools

Option C – special schools as resource centres

Option D – current system but open access to special schools” (Ministry of Education, Special Education Review 2010, p. 18).

The response indicated, as stated in the review document, “Most respondents did not express a preference outright, but did express support (19 per cent) for retaining special schools in some form. One per cent wanted special schools closed and regular schools improved” (Ministry of Education, Review of Special Education Public Response Summary, p. 29). The key themes were identified as:

1. Schools working together
2. Options for special schools.

The NZ special education 2000 policy document is founded on the following aspiration, “The aim of government’s special education policy is to improve learning outcomes for all children and young people with special education needs at their local school, early

childhood centre, or wherever they are educated” (Ministry of Education Special Education Policy, p. 1). The implication of this aspiration is that we have to think how the intervention supports the young people to improve in their learning outcomes. This study makes visible some of the underpinning beliefs about empowerment that are embedded within Rose Livingston (RL) (pseudo identity protection name) Special Residential Girls’ School.

There is increasing awareness of the inequitable resource access and management within the NZ special education system, which results in unequal provision. The special education review reflects the government’s attempt to address the paradoxical education policy and practice in NZ in alignment with the United Nations Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the NZ Disability Strategy alongside the identified disability issues outcome framework.

The United Nations Rights of Persons with Disabilities advocates a universal right to learning and challenges all educators to reflect on the relationship between the kinds of education they pursue and the message they are conveying to students about diversity, difference and place in the larger society. We have a responsibility to provide experiences and create educational environments where young people can access freely and easily, build relationships of care for each other, for the place itself and the wider community and to promote life-long learning.

This thesis intends to contribute to our understanding of the residential special school landscapes from the perspectives of those who attended or have a young person attend a particular residential setting.

Today there is growing consensus within education that it is a universal right to (be able to) access and promote quality education for all students, including those with disabilities. The importance of promoting the right of every child and young person with a disability “to express his/her view pertaining to his/her education and life skills” as defined by article 23:1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Unesco.org). This right is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and addressed in several significant, internationally approved declarations, including the World Declaration for education for all (1990), the standard rules on the equalisation of opportunities for persons with disability

(1993), the UNESCO Salamanca statement and framework for action (1994), and the DATEA Framework for action (2000).

With the increase in diagnosed disability for children and youth, the complexity of provision access is further illustrated and it was the government's intention to review the current special education 2000 policy to further seek multiple stakeholders' perspectives of the best practice and policy to ensure all children have equitable opportunities. However, a limited student voice was present in this review. As Lloyd and Davies (1994) comment: "There is an important role for empirical research in providing the means for children to reflect on their educational experience and provide insights for policy makers and practitioners into the adequacy and effectiveness of provision" (Lloyd & Davies, 1994, p. 11).

Students with disabilities have important things to voice about the best practice for their unique needs; we must find ways to listen (Keefe, Moore, & Duff, 2006). Yet there are very few research studies involving children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities that have sought perspectives of residential schooling, and this is surprising because students are the real experts on their education.

This study will attempt to fill the gap in special education residential placement research for girls with EBD. This research explored the following questions:

The central research question guiding this study is:

What is the place of a residential special school for girls with EBD in New Zealand?

### **1.5 Locating oneself in the study**

This study was motivated from the culmination of teaching, research, and school experiences related to understanding student behaviour that differs from the norm in some form or fashion and my sincere longing for social justice, cultural responsiveness, and equitable opportunity for all students. My teaching career began in 2002 when I completed high school and embarked on a degree in primary teaching through the University of Massey. However, I quickly became disillusioned with the inequity I felt the classroom situation fostered and began to search for alternative education paradigms. This then led me to Rudolf Steiner education, completing a Diploma in Rudolf Steiner Education,

primary teaching during 2008. However, I continued to labour over individual students' disaffection from school in hope of reconciling difference, diversity, and deviance within the school landscape. Meeting structural opposition, personal conflict and a general lacklustre approach from people in positions of power, I searched for further theoretical/practical understanding. In this search, I enrolled in the Master of Education programme and began taking courses of interest surrounding student behaviour, intervention, prevention, and theoretical underpinnings of education philosophy.

This then took me more deeply into special education, mainstreaming and inclusive theoretical paradigms. More specifically, I realised I needed to understand special education from an insider's perspective before I could make an educable decision in relation to my personal position. Taking courses at Victoria University during 2009 provided an opportunity to work alongside the case study residential school supporting an individual student, their teachers, and residential staff to implement and evaluate an intervention plan. A case study student at RL in Term 2 2009 broadened this interest further revealing a once silenced voice, that of the student as a source of rich knowledge, experience, insight, intuition and potentiality in informing policy and practice.

Seeking the students' own views in relation to emotional and behavioural difficulties in the classroom appeared to be vital in constructing an effective intervention together with parents, principals, and teachers within the school. Central to this achievement were fundamental dilemmas in providing the means whereby the student and the researcher could engage in a shared mechanism in order to effectively communicate, understand, relate, respond, interpret, and present student views accurately and within an ethic of caring. This led to unknown terrain trialling therapeutic techniques such as Janice Wearmouth's "talking stones" interview methodology, taking a participant/observer role and generally immersing myself in the school culture, becoming a familiar and trusted person. Through the work involved in Educ 506/507 I developed a positive working relationship with the school, staff, and students, all of which led me to want to carry out my thesis research in the school, researching specifically the place of residential schooling with girls with special learning, social emotional or behavioural needs.

This study builds on my pilot project during 2009, the research of Hornby & Witte (2008) located within New Zealand, and the work of Harris, Barlow & Moli (2008) looking at



multiple perspectives of EBD residential schooling. It also seeks to contribute to the larger literature base of student autonomy (Copper, 1993). New Zealand's SE 2000 policy, currently under review, puts residential services at risk of closing without reviewing the evidence or seeking to understand the perspective of the students, staff and parents involved. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate one of the current issues in special education in New Zealand, focusing on one special residential school and the key participants.

## **1.6 Overview of the thesis**

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter has provided a rationale for the research, identifying the need for continuing investigation into the place of special residential education and in particular for girls with EBD. The second chapter reviews the literature in the converging fields of research that inform this study; these are: mainstream, specialised, and inclusive schooling, residential and specialised educational provision, international and national residential student EBD research, student perspective literature, best practice and instructional services for EBD.

Chapter 3 details the methodological approach adopted in this research including the design, data collection, and data analysis methods. It describes how qualitative data were collected through face-to-face and telephone interviews and the quantitative content analysis method used to analyse these. In Chapter 4 the findings from the data gathered are analysed and presented. Key themes from each participant group are discussed individually and analysis is drawn within and across all four groups. Chapter 5 discusses these findings in relation to the literature, making suggestions for future research, and recommendations to improve the learning environment for learners with special learning needs across the range of educational settings and provides a summary of the entire thesis.

## **1.7 Limitations of the research**

The purpose of this research is to understand from the perspectives of key stakeholders the place of residential schooling in the education continuum from those who either attend or who have a young person attending the residential special girls school. The research does not attempt to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the curriculum delivered at Rose Livingston, to make any conclusions about the quality of the teaching offered nor to compare the different teaching and learning classrooms to each other.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

Educating learners with special educational needs continues to be one of the most controversial and complex issues permeating educators worldwide. In a recent literature review investigating the contested and dynamic elements of addressing how best to educate learners with special learning needs Mitchell (2010) suggests a systematic analysis and asks pertinent questions such as:

What is education? What are schools for? How best to teach diverse learners? How should they be assessed? How should they be classified; indeed should they be classified at all? How important is the place in which they are educated? What choices should their parents have? What supports do they require? How should they be funded? How can the agencies that are involved in their education, health and welfare be coordinated? (Mitchell, 2010, p.15).

However, If this review were to explore literature in all of these fields, both internationally and nationally, the extent of this would be overwhelmingly large, for these issues can be seen as, ‘a microcosm of education more generally and, indeed, of society as a whole?’ (Mitchell, 2010, p.15). An initial investigation into NZ literature surrounding residential special education and students with EBD revealed a paucity of research in this area. It was then decided an investigation into international and national literature concerning this group would more thoroughly address those areas specific to the research study focus. These are: residential special education, inclusion/exclusion, EBD, student autonomy and best practice evidence.

The purpose of this review is to explore both national and international trends in the education of students with special learning, social, emotional and behavioural needs, with the aim of informing the Ministry of Education’s current review of special education, specifically in relation to the place of special residential education and of contributing to the larger literature base concerning emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) research and special residential education. The review follows the established procedures, including published research in journals, theoretical contributions, and previous reviews of the literature. Reports and publications were identified through searches of on-line databases, international journals and leading books.

The literature review is organised into five themes that inform all aspects of this study. The first theme looks at the current New Zealand education paradigms responding to students with diverse learning needs: mainstream, specialised, and inclusive schooling. The second theme looks at residential and specialised education provision. The third theme explores existing international and national residential student EBD research, the fourth looks at best evidence practice for EBD students within instructional environments and finally the fifth theme looks at the role of student perspective in educational research with diverse learners.

## **2.1 Introduction**

Over recent years an increasing amount of attention has been given to the needs of students identified as having emotional and behavioural difficulties (Wearmouth et al., 2005).

However, the provision of effective programming identified by researchers and academics has been largely dependent on government policy, professional development programmes and teacher mindfulness (Sellman, 2009) as well as administrative issues such as funding, resources and time management (Wearmouth et al., 2005). This has resulted in a broad spectrum of implemented policy and practice shaped by individual approaches, all of which appear to be perpetuating the divide between inclusive rationales and specialised service provision (Jahnukainen, 2001), similar to other paradigmatic divisions within global education (Clark, Dyson, Millward, & Skidmore, 1997). Mitchell (2010) summarises the contested state of special education concisely in his literature review investigating the current conditions surrounding special education, SWSEN, (Students with special educational needs):

The coexistence of inclusive education provisions and special schools (which is the case in almost every country) suggests that choices must be exercised as to where SWSEN are 'placed'. In this process, the relative weight given to the preferences of SWSEN and their parents and those who administer education systems constitutes a major point of tension (Mitchell, 2010, p. 9).

Historically, special education has embodied a range of different ideas or paradigms, each placing the individual with disabilities and/or difficulties at differing points in relation to their environment. The New Zealand Special Education system currently operates out of a mix of both the traditional functional deficit and the contemporary ecological and social

model. However, this mix is now the focus of contested views. As stated in the Ministry of Education's (MOE) review document (2010)

The current system provides for a mix of educational options and choices for parents but it is criticised by those who favour a system without special schools. It is also questioned by people who think that the Ministry makes it too hard for students to enrol in special schools. The current system provides choice for those who think special schools have a role in meeting some needs and for those who think most students have a better future in regular schools (MOE, Special Education Review 2010, p. 18).

The following section investigates these differing theoretical frameworks further.

## **2.2 Competing Ideologies: Mainstream, Inclusive or Exclusive Special Education**

Globally, the theoretical frameworks underpinning education and disability are part of an on-going review process (Mittler, 2000). Special Education owes its conception to the theories governing the functional deficit model and continues to be a cause of contention worldwide (Ware, 2004; Mitchell, 2010). Modern advances in human rights clearly identify the inequitable function of this model (Clark & Dyson, 1998), conceived under the moral Eugenics principles (Ware, 2004) in the early 1900s.

Meyer et al., (2010) comment on the role special education plays in the continued monocultural orientation of mainstream education: "special education practices in action also provide a mechanism that enables mainstream educational systems to avoid accommodating diverse learners" (2). These authors seek not to condemn residential specialized schooling per se, however, understand the role of specialized provision as a socially constructed oppressive mechanism (Meyer et al., 2010).

However, the historical functional deficit model continues to operate within the NZ inclusion based education system, complicating and conflicting, the contemporary theoretical shifts evident within the inclusive paradigm (Moore et al., 1999). As part of the national and international commitment to this paradigm shift, several policy documents governing the disability sector and special education have endeavoured to advance inclusion based education orientation (Moore et al., 1999). Relevant to this study was the:

the *NZ Education Act (1989)*, *The Rights Of The Child International Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994)*, *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)*, *NZ Special Education 2000 (1996) policy document*, *United Nations Disability Strategy (2008)*, and the *United Nations Human Rights Act (1948)*.

The New Zealand special education 2000 policy document is constructed on the inclusive theoretical framework, however there remains, as widely documented (MOE, 2009), a substantial gap between policy rhetoric and practice modalities within our current special education system. Mitchell (2010), in his review on inclusion, discusses the role of individual teachers' approach to student behavior as embodying both the functional deficit discourse and/or the social ecological orientated discourses, noting the 'discourse of deviance and the discourse of inclusion' (p.123). This in itself deepens the extent of the divided paradigms and further illustrates the degree of the change process inherent in paradigm shifts within socially constructed systems.

Currently, New Zealand's Special Education 2000 policy document is under review as part of an annual ten year report. This project has been influenced by a number of international and national movements for civil rights and social justice within the disability sector. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the New Zealand Disability Strategy serve as conceptual frameworks underscoring the current SE 2000 policy review. The identified disability issues evidence based outcomes framework also informs the review document as well as legislative guidelines within the Education Act 1989.

Furthermore, as part of the Government's commitment to the international focus on inclusion within the disability sector, New Zealand has recently signed and agreed to the United Nations project focused on achieving equality of opportunity, equity and access for people with disabilities to participate as citizens of the world. The United Nations' current drive to support and promote inclusive policy and practice, challenges educators, policy makers and government officials to reflect on the relationship between the kinds of education they pursue and the message they are conveying to students about diversity, difference and place in the larger society. The human rights access maintains that as a society we have a responsibility to provide experiences and create educational settings children and young people can access freely and easily, can build relationships of care for

each other, for the place itself and the wider community, as well as supporting life-long learning for all learners (UNESCO, 2008). As Hornby and Witte (2008) state: “These are also the goals of education for children and adolescents with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD), including the small minority of pupils with EBD whose needs are so severe that they need to spend part of their school careers in residential special schools” (Hornby & Witte, 2008, p.79). However, it appears the inclusive ideals of education are not meeting the needs of this student population and that the numbers of students educated outside of the mainstream classroom setting is increasing (Hornby & Witte, 2008; Mitchell, 2010), along with growing numbers of youth crime rates and other marginalised sectors of society (Munford & Saunders, 2008). This study contributes to our understanding of what these ‘places’ should be like from the perspective of those currently residing in one special residential school setting.

### **2.3 Residential and Specialized Provision**

Historically, residential schools for EBD students have been, largely neglected by the academic research community (Smith, McKay & Chakrabarti, 2004). Furthermore, the absence of EBD student perspective in disability research has perpetuated the disability sector’s acceptable silence and further marginalized this disability group (Sellman, 2009). More recently, there has been a move towards separating EBD disability research aside from disability research in general, due to the increasing awareness of this disability sector’s silenced voice and overall marginalisation in relation to educational and vocational achievement (Copper, 1995; Jahnukainen, 2001; Farrell & Polat, 2003; Hornby & Witt, 2008; Smith et al., 2004; Schuh & Caneda, 1997; Wood & Cronin, 1999).

Residential schools have tended to be criticised on the basis of the segregation, exclusion and institutionalization of their contextual landscapes (Cole, 1986). Often they are removed from city centres, at some distance from students’ local communities, and have been historically represented through sensationalised negative media portrayal (Cole, 1986). Moreover, inclusion advocates (Artiles & Bal, 2008; Ballard, 1998; Lipsky & Gartner, 1996; Mittler, 2000; McLeskey & Waldron, 1995; Skiba et al., 2008; Skidmore, 2004; Skitric, 1991) have highlighted residential education as further disabling students into marginalized participants of society, excluded from their communities, at risk of total dislocation of cultural/social identity and embodying ‘excluded/different from other’ attitudes (Artiles, Klingner, & Tate, 2006; Skiba et al., 2008). Furthermore, they argue that

the expense to run such provision drains EBD funding and specialist teacher resources with little to no long term results (Artiles & Bal, 2008; Skiba et al., 2008). Smith and Davies (1995) comment: “the Centre for Studies on Inclusive education has recently demonstrated that the increased percentage of the school population now being referred to segregated special schools is linked to the operation of market forces in the mainstream sector” (Smith & Davies, 1995, p. 5). Consequently, residential special provision has come to be seen as a social construction, designed to serve the economic drive by providing a segregated ‘place’ for individuals unsuitable in market economies.

However, on the other hand, researchers drawing from empirical data on EBD student perspectives clearly articulate the positive experiences students’ record on residential and special schooling (Copper, 1995; Jahnukainen, 2001; Polat & Farrell, 2002; Smith et al., 2004; Schuh & Caneda, 1997; Witt & Hornby, 2008). As Copper (1993) comments: “uncritical integrationist dogma tends to ignore the effects of bad mainstream schools. Whilst integration may be desirable, is it always possible?” (Copper, 1993, p. 89). These authors argue that the present state of mainstream schools is detrimental to EBD students’ academic schooling and social/emotional self-development and that residential and special schooling offers positive learning experiences, through quality instructional environments and relationships (Copper, 1993; Harris et al., 2008; Jahnukainen, 2001; Schuh & Caneda, 1997; Smith et al., 2004).

Residential school effectiveness for students with EBD, as previously noted, lacks a substantial empirical base (Hornby & Witte, 2008), however is showing an increasing trend supporting the mechanical and constructive processes evident in resident school practices for students with EBD. Researchers have reported on the students’ positive memories and experiences of supportive teaching staff as a key element in the perceived difference in residential education to that of mainstream. They also note: quality friendships, broader life experience opportunities, increased self-esteem, increased skills to handle difficult emotions and general feelings of positive school based learning (Copper, 1994; Hornby & Witt, 2008). This evidence continues to weigh heavily against inclusive advocates who condemn residential schools as institutions that marginalize, dehumanise, and further damage vulnerable youth of society. Smith and Davies (1994) comment on the importance of the truth of observations or evidence given by the young people interviewed in research studies. They note, that the fact of the matter remains the same, the perception

of the student is a reality for them and in turn affects how they perceive their situation, all of which influences how they behave (Smith & Davies, 1994).

More recently there has been a move towards documenting the post school outcome measures of residential schooling in an attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of residential schooling in an inclusive education system (Hornby & Witt, 2008; Polat & Farrell, 2002). However, the use of mono cultural outcome measures results in a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby students attending residential intervention provision are shown to have little success later in life in such measures as: employment, independent financial security, relationship status and community involvement. The authors of these particular studies discuss the outcome measures as a result of inefficient transition processes and inefficient long-term support mechanisms, post residential intervention. Hornby and Witte discuss the NZ context:

Despite the work that the residential school had done to attempt to get these students back on successful academic and behavioural trajectories, their return to mainstream schools had eventuated in 27 of them leaving school early with no qualifications whatsoever, which resulted in the majority of them having poor employment prospects (Hornby & Witte, 2008, p. 90).

These authors also refer to the situation of mainstream schooling and teacher education suggesting that better special needs training for teachers in mainstream schools could result in improving outcomes for EBD students (Hornby & Witte, 2008).

Overall, the often, paradoxical paradigms have prevented a clear evidence based understanding of best practice for EBD students evolving in New Zealand. New Zealand's 2000 policy, currently under review puts residential services at risk of closing without reviewing the evidence or seeking to understand the perspective of the students, staff and parents involved. This study, therefore, also seeks to investigate one of the current issues in special education in New Zealand, focusing on one special residential school and the key participants.

## **2.4 Emotionally and behaviourally disordered youth**

Highlighted in the recent New Zealand Disability issues framework was the increasing amounts of students identified as having special social, emotional, behavioural or learning disabilities, with as many as 1100 more students with the highest needs identified in recent



statistics (Ministry of Education Special Education Review Handbook, 2009). Recent international research also asserts the growing youth crime rate, and increasing relationship of disability, disaffection, truancy and juvenile crime (Wearmouth et al., 2005). Furthermore, current national and international research illustrates the substandard achievement levels of past special education student's livelihood, employment, relationship, and education status documented in post school outcome literature (Hornby & Witte, 2008; Jahnukainen, 2001; Polat & Farrell, 2003; Smith & Davies, 1994). More recently, it has been acknowledged that students with EBD like symptoms are among the most marginalised peoples of the world (Hornby & Witt, 2008). They are more likely to drop out of school earlier than any other disability group and that of the general population. Evidence shows that these students experience overall lower school grades, fail more courses, experience higher rates of retention in grades, and are more likely to spend time in residential facilities than any other disability group (Hornby & Witt, 2008). Hornby and Witte (2008) comment "It has been suggested that students with EBD experience less educational success than any other group of students, with or without disabilities" (Hornby & Witte, 2008, p. 80). Furthermore, these students are also less likely to graduate from high school, attend post-secondary education, be employed after high school, and frequently did not keep the jobs they did have. Celia Lashlie in her recent book *The Power of Mothers* documents the increase in numbers of women in NZ prisons as doubling in the last decade "230 in April 1999 compared with 480 in November 2009" (Lashlie, 2010, p. 146). She further notes the characteristics of the growing numbers of women in NZ prisons as a population that is "unemployed, low educational achievement, high rate of mental health incidents, high rates of abuse and trauma, high rates of drug and alcohol abuse, and often a single custodial parent" (Lashlie, 2010, p. 146). From this research it is clear that students with EBD are not being adequately prepared to succeed in their adult life. Furthermore, the failure to attend to this population groups' choice to remove themselves from mainstream institutions greatly reduces their economic input and may eventually cost society through acts of criminality (Smith & Davies, 1994).

## **2.5 Gender Inequities within emotionally and behaviourally disordered youth**

It is now widely acknowledged that the field of residential special education, and specifically that of EBD, is largely composed of boys in comparison to the minority of girls contributing to this population. The limited amount of empirical research that has been conducted in this field has largely constituted studies of boys' residential special

schools (Copper, 1993; Polat & Farrell, 2002; Smith et al., 2004). Mitchell (2010) in his review of special education dedicates a section of his report to the gender inequities in special education. He comments on the increasing amounts of international evidence showing significant gender differences in learning and achievement levels as well as in access to special education (Mitchell, 2010). Furthermore, Mitchell notes the general ratio of male to females in special education since the 1960's as 2:1 and 3:1 (Mitchell, 2010).

It is also well documented that women and girls with disabilities face a triple jeopardy for poverty, unemployment, and poor long-term livelihood because of their marginalized position of gender, living in poverty and disability status (Simpson, 2010; Hawker & Matsebula, 2008). Hawker & Matsebula (2008) in their article on women with disabilities state: "Women with disabilities, especially in developing countries, are certainly one of the most marginalized groups of people in the world" (Hawker & Matsebula, *Women with Disabilities*, p. 9).

Within a New Zealand context, Hornby and Witte (2008) conducted an evaluation research study at one of three residential special schools in New Zealand providing education for children with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties. These authors intended to evaluate the extent of residential special education meeting the larger education goals for students with EBD in a New Zealand setting through conducting in-depth post school outcome based interviews with adult graduates of the school. The specific areas of focus included post school: education, employment and community adjustment. The authors also intended to understand ways in which this educational provision could be made more effective in meeting the needs for this participant group. The residential special school however did not address adolescent intervention, instead focused on the age group between 7 and 13 years; presenting behaviours which were viewed as chronic and unable to be met in mainstream schools and having an intellectual ability within the average range or above. The participants consisted of 29 young people, 14 male and 7 female, conducted 10-14 years after they had left the school. Participants' age when they began attending the school ranged from 8.0 to 12.9 years and the length of time spent at the school ranged from 10 to 30 months. Significant to this study, was the research results investigating post-school employment and the authors note on the inequitable gender outcome measures clearly evidenced: "Only one of the seven female ex-students had a job at the time of the study

and she was working part-time” (Hornby & Witte, 2008, p. 89). Mitchell, (2010) summarises the literature on the gender imbalances in special education stating:

It should be noted from the outset that in the field of special education, some writers portray the gender imbalance as reflecting either or both an over-identification of males and an under-identification of girls (Mitchell, 2010, p. 47).

Hornby and Witte (2008) suggest that the studies’ findings could mean one of two things, either that it was ‘easier for the male ex-students to find jobs, or that the female ex-students had become more involved in child rearing and therefore had not sought employment to the same extent as the males’ (p. 89). However Hawker & Matsebula (2008) note that:

The impact of this triple discrimination is that women are often shunned, isolated and subjected to abuse, resulting in a lack of self-esteem so they often do not access the services that may be available to enhance their abilities (Hawker & Matsebula, 2008, p. 19).

Gender bias also affects girls in general and special education, and places women and girls with disabilities in a socially constructed disadvantaged position. This marginalized position is further deepened by a lack of scholarly research focused on girls with disabilities and specifically EBD within residential special schools. Those studies that do exist have focused either on boys exclusively (Copper, 1993; Polat & Farrell, 2002) or on mixed EBD residential schools (Hornby and Witte, 2008; Jahnukainen, 2001) and girls in self-contained settings for students with emotional and behavioral disorders (e.g., Barese, 2002; Jones, 2001).

## **2.6 Best practice and instructional services for EBD**

One current debate among educators working with students with EBD focuses on the format for delivering instructional services to this group of students (Jahnukainen, 2001; Smith & Davies, 1994). Researchers generally agree the core curriculum in schools does not adequately meet the needs of these students and a differential approach needs to be taken (Schuh & Caneda, 1997; Copper, 1994; Smith & Davies, 1994). Research also supports the benefits of like minds being together (Schuh & Caneda, 1997). However, two paradigms currently exist concerning the provision for students with EBD and whether their needs are best met through specialized programs for low ability ranked groups or inclusive mixed ability classrooms.

Specialised programs often take place outside of the classroom, where students of similar ability are placed together for instruction. Research also asserts that withdrawal or residential programs are the most commonly implemented approach for ability grouping EBD learners (Schuh & Caneda, 1997). In New Zealand, there is a Ministry of Education focus on educating diverse students in inclusive, mixed ability classroom settings through differential instruction (MOE, 2000). However, it is widely recognized that despite the inclusive rhetoric, the number of students educated outside of the mainstream classroom is increasing (MOE, 2009). Smith and Davies (1994) comment on this situation in the UK, noting especially the prevalence of EBD related residential placement: “of the 12,002 pupils attending the 215 residential special schools in England and Wales in 1994 the majority is placed on grounds of behaviour and/or behavioural difficulties” (Smith & Davies, 1994, pp. 3-4). Mitchell (2010) also makes reference to the competing neo-liberal market philosophies being counter-productive to including those students who are less likely to produce measurable outcome based results stating that:

There is evidence that the population of special schools is undergoing change. For example, recent data from England shows a gradual increase in the number and percentages of SWSN attending special schools as having behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders (Mitchell, 2010, pp. 11-12)

In the past two decades research completed in New Zealand on provision for disability students has identified enrichment delivered through withdrawal programs as the most common strategy employed by schools to meet the needs of their disability students. Included in this broad category are students with EBD (MOE, 2009). However, there is limited research available on residential withdrawal programs (Hornby & Witte, 2008).

Moreover, contemporary approaches to research and writing on the inclusion/mainstream/special education paradigms endeavour to not buy into the existing binary either/or approach, and instead seek to promote inclusive practice through articulating student perspective of best evidence synthesis. These authors concentrate on identifying and publishing effective strategies for teachers willing to integrate diversity in the classroom. These authors work towards the ideal creation of an inclusive society, yet recognize the positive role residential schooling provision can provide students with EBD

in supporting their school experiences (Cole, 1986; Hornby & Witte, 2008; Polat & Farrell, 2002; Copper, 1993). However, as Smith and Davies (1994) note: “the extensive amount of behaviour research focusing on the ‘mechanics’ of management can too readily distract attention from the central players” (2) furthermore this approach neglects to really articulate what special education provision means for the students inhabiting them (Smith & Davies, 1994).

There has, however, been a more recent trend within the academic community towards moving away from binary, either/or, approaches to the longstanding inclusion/exclusion debate, towards a more unitary approach to theorizing and conceptualizing the current state, the proposed move and the overall benefits a universal learning approach brings. Mitchell (2010) elaborates:

In education, it is usually referred to as ‘Universal Design for Learning’ (UDL), which ‘refers to the creation of differentiated learning experiences that minimise the need for modifications for particular circumstances or individuals’ (Villa et al., 2005, p.35). Thus, rather than adapting things for individuals at a later time, UDL environments are created from the outset to be accessible to everyone. In other words, ‘pre-fitting’ not ‘retrofitting’ is the aim (Mitchell, 2010, p. 201).

Artiles & Bal (2008) take this one step further when they note that the problem lies not in special education being ‘bad’ but in the mainstream’s inability to cater for an increasingly diverse student population. As Meyer and Evans (2006) commented in their recent literature review on intervention with challenging behaviour in children and youth with developmental disabilities:

“Our meta-analysis results reveal that an effective intervention is likely to involve peers, be organised by a professional or teacher, and can be carried out in a number of controlled contexts (residential/home, school, treatment room), whereas lower effect sizes occurred with wider settings in the presence of complex “real life” events. Involving family members and siblings in the intervention did not necessarily result in significantly better outcomes. However, given the short time period during which published interventions monitored outcomes, we don’t know the extent to which positive results achieved in a controlled setting will generalise and maintain to the child’s natural environment” (Meyer & Evans, 2006, p. 10).

This evidence illustrates the complex dynamics inherent in the two theoretical positions dividing the inclusive and segregated real life situations.

## **2.7 Student Perspective Literature**

Evidence addressing the processes and outcomes of interventions for students with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties has only recently been identified, and is still relatively limited. There has however, been some exploration of the perspectives of students themselves on their experiences of treatment and care in residential settings (Polat & Farrell, 2002). Six previous studies have included interviews with current and ex-pupils of residential schools for children with EBD (Copper, 1993; Harris, Barlow & Moli 2008; Hornby & Witte, 2008; Jahnukainen, 2001; Polat & Farrell, 2002; Smith, Meltonay & Chakrabarti, 2004). Within a New Zealand context, Hornby and Witte (2008) interviewed 29 ex-students and or parents/caregivers, 10-14 years after they had left the intervention resident school. Authors focused on findings of post school outcomes such as educational achievement, employment record, and community adjustment. Their in-depth retrospective outcome based study shares many features and conclusions with earlier accounts of research in the UK (Polat & Farrell, 2002; Jahnukainen, 2004).

One of the main findings from the review of the literature was convincing evidence that residential schooling for EBD was a positive experience for the students. Copper (1993) interviewed pupils and staff in a UK context at two residential special schools for boys aged 11-19 years, focusing on the experience and effect of residential schooling using a comparative analysis between two schools to document findings on EBD related issues. Copper's (1993) study showed an overwhelming positive response. Farrell & Polat (2003) interviewed 26 ex pupils in Finland. These authors used semi-structured interviews, with specific sample criteria such as amount of time out of school, and time spent in school to measure post school outcomes, such as: job security, financial security, further education prospects and general livelihood conditions.

More recently, Harris, Barlow & Moli (2008) moved beyond the borders and included multiple stakeholders perspectives and experiences of one residential school for students with EBD within a UK context. The authors intended to contribute to the research base by providing illuminating perspectives from the students, teachers and parents involved in the school. This study is the first in the field of residential schooling experiences of students

with EBD, examining multiple perspectives of stakeholders in order to elicit experiences and effects of residential school from multiple views situated in Great Britain. The overwhelming positive evidence of these studies continues to weigh heavily against inclusion advocates who appear to condemn residential schools as institutions that marginalise, dehumanise, and further damage vulnerable youth of society.

Furthermore, there has been a link between low self-esteem and behaviour resulting in the academic community's advocacy for more student discourse and self-advocacy within research and school domains as it is evidenced to support the positive development of self-esteem (Bishop et al., 2001; Bishop et al., 2003; Glynn et al., 1997). In a recent study on *Involving children and young people in research in educational settings* Loveridge discusses the various rationales over the past 30 years given for involving students in research as reflecting the particular 'historical moment and context in which they emerged and in which they have subsequently developed or faded away' (Loveridge, 2010, p. 105). She also notes the move away from understanding students as objects acted upon, to subjects co-participating in the active creation of both their realities and the representation of this perspective reality in research and other discipline settings (Loveridge, 2010). This authorisation of student perspective in school settings and research agendas has been linked to five particular 'stances' within interpretative frameworks, these are, "constructivist pedagogies, critical pedagogies, post-modern and post-structuralist feminist pedagogies, educational researchers' perspectives, and social critics stance" (Loveridge, 2010, pp. 106-109).

A related theme is the interconnectedness and interdependence of the relationships in young people's lives such as extended families, peers, teachers and other adults within their nucleus and as Loveridge (2010) asserts 'must be incorporated into thinking about if, how, when and why to involve children and young people in research' (165). Most significantly, however, a consistent theme in the literature surrounding student perspective in research and specifically that of disability research is that research should directly or indirectly benefit participants as well as promoting the dignity and equality of all persons. As stated in the convention on the Rights of People with disabilities, Article 6 (2) states:

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the full development, advancement and empowerment of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of the human rights and

fundamental freedoms set out in the present convention” (UN convention on the Rights of People with disabilities, 2008, article 6).

## **2.8 Summary**

This research builds on the work of Hornby & Witte (2008) through the study of student perspective of residential special schooling for EBD in a NZ context, furthering the literature base by the inclusion of multiple stakeholders’ perspectives using a case study approach. It also seeks to contribute to the larger literature base of student autonomy that is in seeking the voice of the student, specifically that of the often marginalized disability sector of students with EBD. Despite the current advocacy of student voice in academic literature, there is still a paucity of EBD research in specialist settings, especially in New Zealand. With the current special needs funding provision under review this study is timely.

It is anticipated that this research will add to current New Zealand research for children and youth with EBD, as little research has been undertaken on both EBD student perspective and residential intervention programs. It is also anticipated that the students voice will allow Rose Livingston School and any other providers for schools offering withdrawal intervention placement, to reflect on current programming and encourage the use of student voice in disability research.



## Chapter Three

### Methodology

#### 3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe how the research was accomplished. The methodology was designed to answer the following research questions.

The central research question guiding this study is:

What is the place of a residential special school for girls with EBD in New Zealand?

The subsequent research questions guiding this study are:

1. What are the girls' perspectives of their experiences attending a residential special school setting?
2. What perspective do the girls have of the school, the programme, their home context, and the base school?
3. What is the teachers' support staff, parents', and whānau; experiences and perspectives on residential experiences for girls identified with EBD?
4. How do these perspectives fit with the development of Special Education provision in New Zealand?

This research used a case study research design, using qualitative procedures (Merriam, 1998) underpinned by the emancipation paradigm (Barnes, 2003). Qualitative procedures enable the researcher to describe the participants' experience through in-depth interviews (Merriam, 1998).

Case study research can inform policy modifications, with an emphasis on seeking to improve rather than proving what currently exists (Merriam, 1998). The intention of this study is to contribute to the EBD and residential education knowledge base (Barnes & Mercer, 1997) while also increasing the understanding of residential programmes in New Zealand. Merriam (2002) describes case study research as an investigation in which the larger contextual factors are seen to affect the ways in which individuals construct reality. In order to answer the research questions, it became apparent that a case study would be most suitable as it seeks to make meaning of and understand a phenomenon. This reflects

the idea of constructive qualitative research in that people actively construct and reconstruct meanings that their life experiences have for them (Christensen & Johnson, 2002).

### **3.2 Description of the Research Design**

The research design for this study was qualitative as the researcher aims to provide understanding and insight into the topic of special residential education for girls in a New Zealand context. The case is bounded by attending, teaching, or having a child at the residential school for girls in order to understand the place of the school in New Zealand from the perspective of the participants.

#### *Case Study*

The use of case study was appropriate for this research because it focuses on the particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic characteristics of a single bounded unit (Christensen & Johnson, 2008). In case study research, participants can be regarded as ‘actors’ with the research giving voice to their perspectives (Merriam, 1998). Although one case study is not enough to provide, or make any generalizations about the place of residential schools on the educational continuum (Yin, 1994), this methodology allowed the researcher to gather information that is concrete and contextualized, and so yields insight from a close up view that might not otherwise be possible to obtain (Merriam, 1998). As the information gathered is from the voices of those involved, it forms local knowledge.

The participant’s view is sought to understand the value placed on the school by those who use and provide the services. This research aims to gauge the impact the school has on the lives of the students, how this contributes toward their achieving their long-term goals, and the place in which the participants see this residential school in providing services for girls with emotional and behavioural disorders.

The case study is a specific, intensive description and analysis of an individual or social unit such as a group, institution or community (Merriam, 2002). The purpose of employing a case study approach is to explore a single entity, a bounded system (Smith, 1978). A case study seeks to understand the dynamics present within this single setting. The purpose is

not to predict the outcome, but to tell a story through which there is a search for understanding, knowing there is no ultimate answer (Senge, 1990).

The case study methodology, like other methodological designs, has endured continuing criticism and it is necessary to acknowledge the shortcomings of the design. The issue of generalisation is perhaps the most significant and more relevant than with other designs, as the case study focuses on a bounded system, and cannot be generalised across phenomena or situations as easily as other research designs. Stake (2000) suggests, however, that readers can learn vicariously from an encounter with the case through the researcher's narrative description. Erikson (1986) adds that since the general lies in the particular, what we can learn in a particular case can be transferred to similar situations.

One of the aims of this research was to invite students, staff, and whanau to share their experiences of learning difficulties and/or disabilities and secondary education in order to inform policy and practice in secondary schools and institutions. Erikson (1992) states:

(the) focus of judgment about what generalizes from one setting to the next lies with the reader of the report rather than with the writer... the reader must ask... how does the situation the author describes resemble what goes on around here (Erikson, 1992, p. 10).

This case study is bounded by the selection of one residential school, but several participants. This approach is taken in order to extend case study research to multiple participants in a single setting enabling cross case analysis, a significant degree of both depth and width of analysis, and extended time frames for research data gathering, in a single study (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

In response to criticism that case study design can be weak in theory, and merely replicate one variety of theoretical findings for another, it is vital that the case study is situated in a strong theoretical foundation. This research seeks to be naturalistic, reflective, political and strategic, as such critical policy scholarship provides a theoretical justification.

### **3.3 Theoretical Foundation**

#### *Emancipation Research*

The participants in this research are often marginalized in the research findings. The current study sought to ensure that the research process would empower the participants

rather than further relegate their experiences and opinions. The emancipation paradigm positions the researcher firmly within the social model providing the ontological basis for disability research. The key ethical principle of social research also informs the researcher's relationship to the study, this is the intention: "to discover voices that have been hindered" and to "work to bring awareness to the thoughts, ideas, and experiences not commonly heard" (Lietz, Longer and Furman, 2006, p. 456).

Rose Livingston (RL) residential girls school, may be considered a minority voice as the school has a high percentage of Māori and Pacific Island students (45%) compared to national averages and is a decile 3 school, indicating students draw from an area of relatively low socio-economic wealth. Both of these indicators are mentioned by Fancy (2004) as being features of students who were likely to be unsuccessful in our school system. The students, parents, and community are traditionally those "voices" that have been silenced by a majority voice.

It is now believed that the research agenda reflects the interests and world-views of the researcher and, that for this reason, research can never be value free (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The emancipation research approach provides a multi method framework for listening to disabled participants (Sullivan, 2006) which requires the researcher to make explicit its moral and ethical commitment to civil rights and social justice (Oliver, 1992). The choice of research methods is not limited by either quantitative or qualitative strategies. Instead, the emancipation approach advocates an array of research strategies on the premise that the methods support the fundamental philosophical orientation of the research (Sullivan, 2006). Sullivan (2006) comments: "The rationale of the emancipation disability research paradigm is the production of research that has some meaningful practical outcome for disabled people" (Sullivan, 2006, p. 11). The primary objective is to change the social relations of research (Oliver, 1992).

The emancipation research paradigm provides a multi method framework specifically designed for disability research. The emancipation approach was first developed by Paul Hunt in 1981 in an attempt to highlight the oppressive research practice of what Sullivan (2006) terms the 'normalisation principle in the 1970's and 1980's' (p.190) active within disability studies, serving to promote unequal power relationships and further perpetuate social marginalisation (Sullivan, 2006). This approach was influenced by the political

movements within the disability sector during the 1970's resulting in the social model (1975) whereby the re-conceptualisation and separation of the terminology surrounding impairment and disability were differentiated; impairment was conceived as a bodily function and “disability the negative social response to impairment” (Sullivan, 2006, p. 179). This re-conceptualisation led to the development of a theoretical perspective that reversed the traditional individualistic, deficit approach to difference and instead positioned disability within commonality, identifying structural barriers inherent within the ‘disability society’ (Sullivan, 2006, p. 180). This resulted in what Sullivan terms ‘a new orthodoxy in disability research’ (Sullivan, 2006, p. 181) an action research ideology wherein the principle of effective change underpins the basis for all disability research. The intention was to transform the ‘social relations of research production’ (Sullivan, 2006, p. 181) by positioning the researcher at the service of the researched potentially increases the social equality and equity movements within the disability sector. The research relationship was premised on the extent of the commitment to expose oppressive conditions, and actively progress autonomy and self-governing mechanisms, in order to ‘extend the control disabled people had over their own lives’ (Sullivan, 2006, p. 181). This paradigm is firmly grounded in the social model.

### **3.4 Setting**

#### **The School Setting**

##### *Setting and Participants*

One residential school for girls was selected for this study. Considerations of accessibility and willingness to participate were prime considerations in the choice of school, as well as the gender specific, study orientation.

##### *The School and its Practices*

The case study school is a residential school providing education and resident care for up to 80 girls aged 8-18 years of age, with special learning, social, emotional and/or behavioural needs. The students come from all over New Zealand.

Demographically, the school is located in an urban location. It is attractively set within the parameters of 9 hectares including an orchard horticulture area, childcare centre, polytechnic primary industries centre, staff houses, and historic outbuildings. The school

buildings, landscape, and organization reflect the residential and teaching needs of the school. Facilities include a gymnasium, swimming pool, library, tennis court, adventure playground, sports field, and recreation areas. The school is well resourced and staffed by teachers, teacher support workers, residential social and support workers, counsellors, domestic, and administration staff.

### *Function*

The residential girls' school functions as an intensive wrap around intervention. The provision is designed with 24-hour support and supervision as well as 7 day a week programs.

### *Educational Program*

Initially all of the girls attend school 'on campus'. Once the girls have found their niche within the school environment, a small number are gradually mainstreamed into local schools for specific curriculum subject extension, others into training institutions or work experience placements. In the school and residence, each student works to a specifically devised individual education (IEP) and behaviour program (IBP) specified to their own academic, social, emotional and behavioural needs. Each program is set up after consultation with the student, their whānau, contributing school education specialists, and other involved agencies as well as school staff. Students' progress is closely monitored and the program is regularly reviewed. Parents and whānau are always involved in any major decision. The education program works from the current academic, social, emotional, and behavioural levels of each individual girl and on providing compassionate scaffolding to support individual success in a wide spectrum of individual and social situations.

### *The Residential Program*

Rose Livingston is a 24- hour care, per day school, where students both live and learn. Twenty- one residential social workers are split between both the cottages and the flats, attending to the student's everyday functional needs, providing leisure time and social skills programs. Students are allocated a caseworker wherein individual residential goals relative to personal health, safety, social, emotional, and behavioural skills are progressively built into everyday interactional routines. The residential focus is on incidental learning within a free-moving environment. Each caseworker has a caseload of eight students. Planning and assessment needs, relative to individual and collective case

specific dynamics, are regularly reviewed and new goals are established. With a focus on managing self within a free moving community environment, and with the opportunity to request assistance when needed, the students learn new mechanisms to support their own wellbeing within a safe and supportive environment.

### *Residential School Brief History*

The residential school for girls with special learning needs opened in New Zealand in 1916. The historical analysis of the school reveals an intimate relationship with New Zealand's social, contextual, political, and administrative trajectories of colonial rule and development (Wearmouth et al., 2005). The early twentieth century New Zealand legislative policy, infrastructure, and, resource access was heavily influenced by the Victorian thinking governing the new colony (Wearmouth et al., 2005). Consequently, the Industrial Schools Act of 1882 saw the development of an industrial schools branch of the Education department whose primary responsibility was to administer all child 'welfare' institutions as a response to the growing numbers of 'less fortunate' children (Wearmouth et al., 2005). These included reformatories, for both girls and boys in Christchurch, receiving homes (where children were committed while decisions were made about their future) in Wellington, Auckland and Dunedin and several industrial schools, housing what was termed 'destitute, neglected, delinquent and disabled' children (Wearmouth et al., 2005).

The central features of New Zealand's child welfare system were defined during the period of 1900 through to WW1, including Children's Courts and the juvenile probation system (Wearmouth et al., 2005). The Infant Life Protection Act 1907 and the Mental Defectives Act 1911 represented the growing concern for the welfare of the nation's children (Wearmouth et al., 2005). In 1909, the Industrial Schools Branch was renamed the Special Schools Branch, as part of the international movement to become more child-centred and less as a child slave exploitation institution (O'Conner, 2008). This focus endeavoured to move from punitive practice towards a more reformatory approach to child rehabilitation. However, these institutions were unable to meet the needs of the students termed 'mentally defective' who needed training and support rather than reformation and required the establishment of another segregated residence to house these children. In 1919, a special school for boys of 'feeble mind' was established in South Canterbury surpassing the need for the original South Island boys' home for 'defectives' (O'Connor, 2008). Consequently,

in 1916 the special residential school opened for girls of ‘feeble mind’, intending to accommodate the ‘mentally defected’ within a segregated institutional education setting (O’Connor, 2008).

Although the residential girls school originated during the period of Victorian influence as an attempt to segregate and isolate the different and diverse, over the last 90 years there have been substantial movements and transformations at the legislative, educational and administrative levels within special education provision, policy and practice modalities. This shift has resulted in several national and international movements of integration, mainstreaming and therapeutic rationales for residential treatment programs. This gradual shift over time reflects the discourse used to describe disability with rhetoric movements such as ‘backward’, ‘intellectually handicapped’, and now more commonly accepted is ‘learning disabled’.

The girl’s residential school in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a product of sustained transformation evident in New Zealand Special Education. However, with the current climate of inclusive practice, the question remains what place is there for residential intervention schooling for girls with EBD within an ecological inclusive paradigm?

### **3.5 Selection of participants**

#### *Participant Sample*

This research employed a closed population, non-probability sample of three students, their teachers, residential workers, and parents/whānau enrolled at the residential girls’ school. This process necessitated seeking permission from the Board of Trustees management committee, the school principal, teachers, residential staff, parents/whānau, and students. It then required the participation of the teaching staff to identify potential candidates based on the selection criteria. The participant sample criteria aimed to maximize the opportunity for investigating the impact of attending the residential school for young adolescent girls. The criteria requirements included: Three x student participants, length of stay (no less than one year), age range of participants (14-17 years), and specific diagnosis including emotional and behavioural difficulties identified on assessment referral profile as well as three x parent/whānau participants, 3 x teacher participants, three x residential participants.



The researcher was conscious of the need for representation from a range of ages and ethnic groups. However, it was not possible to plan the diversity of the participants. This is primarily because of the voluntary nature of the research study (Christensen & Johnson, 2008).

### *Teachers*

| <b>Position</b>      | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Ethnicity</b> | <b>Teaching Experience</b> |
|----------------------|---------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| Upper School Teacher | Female        | E                | Primary School Teacher     |
| Upper School Teacher | Male          | E                | Primary School Teacher     |
| Upper School Teacher | Male          | E                | Secondary School Teacher   |

### *Student*

| <i>Student</i> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Ethnicity</b> | <b>Age<br/>As 10/10</b> |
|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Gemma          | Female        | E                | 17                      |
| Ally           | Female        | M                | 16                      |
| Joette         | Female        | E/M              | 14                      |

### *Whānau*

| <b>Whānau</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Ethnicity</b> | <b>Role</b>                |
|---------------|---------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| Margaret      | F             | E                | Mother/adopted             |
| Edith         | F             | E                | Grandmother/legal Guardian |
| Grace         | F             | M                | Nan/legal Guardian         |

### *Residential workers*

| <b>Residential Workers</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Ethnicity</b> | <b>Role</b> |
|----------------------------|---------------|------------------|-------------|
|----------------------------|---------------|------------------|-------------|

|        |   |   |                     |
|--------|---|---|---------------------|
| Alice  | F | A | Program Coordinator |
| Leah   | F | E | Program Coordinator |
| Robert | M | E | Program Coordinator |

**Table 1: Participants**

Three students currently attending the residential school volunteered to participate in the study. All three girls were considered ‘school leavers’ at RL special residential girls’ school. They were in their final term of the two-year tenure of the intervention education faculty. Of the three girls involved in the study, two were enrolled in a form of secondary mainstream education for the following year, one student was enrolled in her local special needs unit, and the other was moving onto a mainstream boarding school, with the third participant planning to enter the work force. The girls ranged in age from 14-17 years with the mean ( $x = 15.6$ ).

Of the three students, two had future goals and dreams and one was working towards higher education through courses and certificates in her chosen area of focus. Of the three girls, two identified themselves as Māori and one European. Two of the three girls were legally under the care of a family member, (other than their parents) and the third participant was formally adopted at birth.

Three teachers from the upper school volunteered to participate in the study. Two of the three teachers were male and they had been teaching at RL for 5 years, the third teacher, female, had been teaching at RL ten years. All three teaching participants were European; however, one teacher incorporated Te Reo Māori into her curriculum lessons where possible.

Three residential social workers volunteered to participate in the study. Two of the three staff members were female, one male. All three were program co-coordinators and had been at the school for a minimum of 8 years and up to 20 years.

### **3.6 Ethical considerations**

This section discusses my role as the researcher, the ethical issues related to this study, and, how the data was analysed. The ethical issues in conducting this research were centred on constructing appropriate methods for informed consent; privacy and confidentiality (see

Appendix 1 for informed consent). The participants' rights within the research project were paramount.

This research employed a closed population, non-probability sample of three students, teachers and residential staff and parents/whānau enrolled at the residential girls' school. This process necessitated seeking permission from the Board of Trustees management committee, the school principal, teachers, residential staff, parents/whānau, and students. It then required the participation of the teaching staff to identify potential candidates based on the selection criteria. The participant sample criteria aimed to maximize the opportunity for investigating the impact of attending the residential school.

Owing to the sensitive nature of contexts within special education and power relationships within schools, commitment to ensuring all parties' personal safety at all times was paramount. This was made clear to the participants when written informed consent was sought with guarantee given of full confidentiality during data collection and final write up, as well as the right to withdraw at any given time. The study was approved by the Victoria University Faculty of Education Human Ethics Committee and complied with those expectations. Consent was obtained from the five stakeholders, including the Board of Trustees and Executive Principal, students, parents/whānau, and teachers. This was achieved through a formal meeting presenting the research outline, and subsequent information sheets outlining key components of the study, explaining how the interviews would be constructed and what the purposes and uses of the research findings would be.

#### *Teacher Participants and Residential staff members*

Teachers and residential staff were initially invited to participate in this research via staff meetings. The researcher arranged with both the teaching and residential management an appropriate time to attend a staff meeting and present the research agenda, explaining the purpose of the research, and their involvement. The second part of the meeting was spent going over the information sheet and the consent form ensuring those who volunteered did so with informed consent.

#### *Student Participants*

The researcher approached the classroom teachers who then invited the potential student participants individually and privately to participate, explaining the project and what would

be required, giving the student regular opportunities to ask questions and decline. The students were aware that they did not have to answer any questions they did not want to and could withdraw from the project at any time. All three students did decide to participate and the teacher negotiated a time for the researcher and the potential participant student to meet in private to explain the project purpose, informed consent, and their right to withdraw, as well as the participant confidentiality. The researcher clearly explained to the students how they would be interviewed and gave them a list of questions to read prior to the interview.

### *Parent/Whānau Participants*

An initial phone conversation was conducted by a senior staff member responsible for transition and parental relations. She introduced the idea of the research and determined the interest of the parents to participate. All three parent/guardian responded positively to the idea of participating in the research project and agreed to discussing this further with the researcher. The researcher then phoned the parent participants and discussed the research, to explain the project purpose, informed consent, and their right to withdraw, as well as the participant confidentiality. The researcher clearly explained to the parent/guardians how they would be interviewed and, with their permission, sent them a list of questions, an initial introductory letter and information sheet about the project asking for confirmation of interest by signing and returning the consent form in the accompanying post-paid envelope.

Once the informed consent was received, the researcher then contacted the parents/whānau, who confirmed interest and arranged a convenient time for the interviews to take place.

When conducting individual interviews with students, teachers and residential staff every effort to ensure a safe environment for the discussion of sensitive topics was agreed on with participants, and this took place at a pre-negotiated time. The students' safety was paramount in this study. For this reason, specific measures were incorporated into the interview procedure with students.

Firstly, before proceeding with the one-to-one, in-person interviews, the researcher verbally checked that each participant understood the purpose and nature of the study.

Using clear language and supporting information pamphlets, the researcher reiterated that they were aware of their right to refuse to participate, to withdraw at any time, to have a support person of their choice with them during the interview, and that they could choose what they wanted to talk about. The researcher also explained the measures taken to protect their personal privacy and confidentiality rights.

Furthermore, the researcher outlined the interview boundaries and scope, illustrating the use of the voice recording device ensuring each student participant understood their right to control the on/off switch, and emphasizing the intent of the research; it is about the students' residential and mainstream school experiences and not their personal lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). To further the collaborative intention of the research project and the students control over the process, the researcher invited the students to choose or contribute a suggestion for their pseudonym, with the understanding that, to ensure participant confidentiality, the researcher may use a similar but different name in the report phase stage (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

The researcher then opened the interview with a series of broad, open-ended questions intending to support the participant to transition into the interview process and to stimulate conversation; these questions included the participant's name, date of birth, position in the family (i.e., the number of older and younger siblings), schools attended, any disabilities/health issues they may have. Any hesitation to respond to the questions was interpreted by the researcher as an opportunity to reaffirm to the participant that they could choose when they wanted to talk and when they did not and that not to talk or share information is their right, and not an obligation (Christensen & Johnson, 2008). This process aided the researcher in re-affirming student participation is voluntary and that the participant is in control at all times during our discussions (Christensen & Johnson, 2008).

The participant was then reminded that the purpose of the interview was for the researcher to listen to their perspectives and experiences around being at a residential school.

### *Reporting to participants*

The participants were informed that the information collected would be used confidentially in three ways. Firstly, a summary report that would be given to the participants, secondly to complete a MEd research project for the researcher, thirdly, the information may be used

for a journal article or conference presentation. Further, the participants were made aware that the data would be destroyed at the completion of this project. The interviews were recorded on digital audio and transcribed by the researcher. All audio material was then wiped. Transcripts were discussed with the participants in follow up meetings and sent to parent/whānau participants in order that the contents could be verified, and the participants were asked to add or omit further information if they wished. The basis of analysis was formed by the questions asked in the interviews.

### *Researcher role*

The researcher did have prior contact with the case study school as part of a professional development university paper. While visiting the residential school for a proceeding paper, the role of the researcher had strict boundaries: to maintain confidentiality, to empower the school to engage in student behaviour intervention, to ensure that the school was self-determining in agreeing to the intervention strategies and procedures, and to ensure a culture of responsibility rather than blame (Wearmouth et al., 2005). These ground rules meant that the researcher was involved in a support role as a guide (Barnes, 1997) throughout the intervention and evaluation review process.

Nevertheless, this prior role of the researcher has an influence on the present project, and some bias may be present in the study as a result (Christensen & Johnson, 2008). The researcher realizes that to some extent all research is subjective, historically situated, and political, and that an inequity of power always exists between the researcher and the research participants (Booth & Booth, 1996). For this reason, much effort was taken in the design and the research procedures to minimize both the bias and the inequity (Christensen & Johnson, 2008).

The emancipation framework has illuminated the qualitative fieldwork research processes. This enabled the researcher to both reflect on her presence and response to participants, but also to remain conscious of the critical/social constructivist orientation I brought to the field study. This was vital as I attempted to co-create research data and faithfully communicate participant perspectives (Booth & Booth, 1996; Merriam, 1998; Oliver, 1992).

### 3.7 Procedures

The primary mode of data collection for this case study was individual interviews with students, interviews with parents, teachers, and residential staff to provide contextual information about the structure and daily operating of the school in order to create a clear picture of the case study school. This research employed digital-recorded interviews in order to construct participant text. Digital recording the interviews ensured transcripts captured a true record of the participant's voice. It also supported the researcher to engage in natural dialogical conversation by freeing the researcher of the note taking process, as well as allowing the researcher to gain cues about non-verbal responses as directed by Booth & Booth (1996).

The individual interviews were guided by semi structured, in-depth qualitative interview procedures in order to elicit participants' perceptions and experiences based on the emancipation approach. The researcher used an interview guide (see Appendix 2) and the questions were specifically designed, to accommodate issues of power and engagement by employing both open-ended and closed question response (Booth & Booth, 1996). These focused on aspects of the girls' school life including perception of the school in general, the learning and curriculum, the specialist programmes and the living arrangements.

The choice to include multiple stakeholder participant individual interviews as varied data gathering techniques and sources of information was utilized in order to produce research trustworthiness through data and method triangulation (Christensen & Johnson, 2008).

|   | Sources        | Description       | Details   |
|---|----------------|-------------------|---|
| A | Students       | <u>Interviews</u> | 3 x 20-40 minute face to face interviews including transcript verification  |
| B | Parents/Whānau | <u>Interviews</u> | 1 x 20-40 minute phone recorded interviews per participant. Transcripts were verified via post with participants. |
| C | Teachers       | <u>Interviews</u> | 3 x 20-40 minute face to face interviews including transcript verification  |

|   | Sources             | Description                | Details  |
|---|---------------------|----------------------------|--|
| D | Residential workers | <u>Interviews</u>          | 3 x 20-40 minute face to face interviews including transcript verification |
| E | Observations        | Field notes, setting notes | Research Journal   |

Table 2: Data Collection

### 3.8 Data Collection Methods

#### *Interviews*

The first encounter with a participant was either through a telephone conversation (parents/whānau) or in person (students, teachers and residential staff), to verify willingness to engage in the study. These conversations of about 15-30 minutes established a connection with the participant. In addition, I provided details about the study and obtained initial verbal consent. I assured confidentiality and protection of participants' identities. Materials were sent by mail only with the permission of the participant.

During the initial contact, I set up dates and times to conduct the interview with the participant. Most of the interviews took place in either the school library or a designated classroom, free from contact with other staff or students. Written consent was obtained at this first face-to-face meeting. Digital recording of the interviews were in total between 1 and 3 hours per participant, and they were the primary method used to obtain the perceptions and experiences of being or having a child attend a special residential school.

The interviews comprised three general areas. First, each participant was asked to give a background leading up to placement at the school. This framework supported the researcher to understand, from the participants' experience, how past events and perceptions shaped their lives and their understanding of the students' lives. Secondly, the participants' were asked about their long-term goals (for themselves, their daughters, or the students) and the support of the school and outside resources. Finally, participants' were asked to provide personal reflections on the residential experience.

Throughout the interviews, I acted as a facilitator, interrupting only to clarify points and to refocus the participants. All interviews were transcribed immediately after the interview had taken place. A copy was either sent or distributed to each participant either personally



or via the appropriate means. For those distributed via post or administration, a cover letter was included requesting any further explanatory details participants may want to add and/or omit to the transcribed interview. Finally, all participants either met in person or were phoned to clarify the content of the transcripts.

### *Individual Interviews*

When conducting individual interviews with students and teachers every effort to ensure a safe environment for the discussion of sensitive issues was agreed on with the participants. The researcher's presence was understood to potentially limit the contributions the students were able to make (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). For this reason, the project's purpose was reiterated at the beginning of the individual interviews, as well as clear boundaries and scope, emphasizing the intent of the research; it was about the students' residential school experiences and not their personal lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

The researcher then reaffirmed to the participants that at any time they became uncomfortable and wanted to discontinue the interview, they could, without any questions asked. The courtesy with which they were treated, adequate time for them to complete responses, and the developed trust between the researcher and the participant was a reciprocal process of interpersonal negotiation based on the researcher's ethical principles guiding the social research (Merriam, 1998). The interviewer and respondent interaction was built on the researcher's subjective values of respectful, non-judgmental, non-threatening, interested, and sympathetic listening skills (Merriam, 1998). The participants were assured confidentiality in all report phase stages (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

### **3.9 Data Analysis Method**

The following section outlines the data analysis procedures used to generalise and organise the interview data. As suggested by Glaser (1992), this study utilises content analysis originally introduced by Berelson in 1952.

#### *Content Analysis Procedures*

This research intends to present the perceptions and experiences of attending or having a child attend a special residential school through the voice of the students, staff, and parents/whānau of Rose Livingston Special Residential Girls School. Voice is "the use of language to paint a picture of one's reality, one's experience in one's world" (Wink, 2000,

p. 69). The choice to use content analysis allows the perspective of the participants to remain at the forefront through an analysis technique grounding the findings in the data. Content analysis provides a way to represent the perspective of the participants with an objective, scientific approach. The aim was to inductively construct meaning from the data.

Content analysis is, concerned with whole text analysis and is fundamentally a coding operation and data interpreting process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Merriam (1998) comments on the use of content analysis in qualitative studies: “the communication of meaning is the focus” and ‘essentially, quantitative content analysis looks for insights in which situations, settings, styles, images, meanings and nuances are key topics” (Merriam, 1998, p. 160) which is appropriate for this study, that seeks to discover how this special residential school is perceived and experienced by its students, staff, parents and whānau.

Content analysis provided a way to represent the perspective of the participants with an objective, scientific approach. Since the content represents the means through which one person and in this instance, a group communicates with another, it is important for communication research that it is described with accuracy and is interpreted with insight (Berelson, 1971, p. 15).

Berelson (1971) writes that there is no single system of categories that could be devised in order for us to interpret communication content as the human experience is so rich with such variances in cause and effect. The scientific method of content analysis however allows “an objective, systemic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (p. 19).

As a research technique content analysis aims at “a quantitative classification of a given body of content in terms of a system of categories devised to yield data relevant to specific hypotheses concerning that content” (Kaplan & Goldson, 1943, cited in Berelson, 1971, p. 15). Although the data is quantified, content analysis supports the qualitative value of the data through description. Berg (2004) states that content analysis may focus on either quantitative or qualitative aspects of communication messages (Berg, 2004, p. 268), while Smith (1975, p. 218) explains that both qualitative and quantitative blends can be applied “because qualitative analysis deals with the forms and antecedent-consequent patterns of form, while quantitative analysis deals with duration and frequency of form”. This allows

the researcher to not only describe the phenomenon but also to recognise patterns in the data. Content analysis attempts to show objectively the nature and the relative strength of the stimuli applied to the reader or listener (Waples & Berelson, 1941).

Glassner and Loughlin, (1987) state content analysis provides a method for obtaining good access to the words of the text or transcribed accounts offered by subjects. This in turn offers an opportunity for the investigator to learn about how subjects or the authors of textual materials view their social worlds (Berg, 2004, p. 269). Berg goes on to state that content analysis is a passport to listening to the words of the text and supports a better understanding of the perspective(s) of the producer of these words (Berg, 2004).

In this approach, the analytic strategy of constant comparison (multiple reviews of the transcript) is used to deconstruct the text into salient themes, and then reassemble themes through categorization and interpretation using a coding paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) The researcher hand sorted the transcribed interview data, coding all themes. This involved reading and re-reading each transcript until the essences of the themes were discovered. The criteria for determining the salience of thematic content included frequency of reference both within an individual interview transcript, and reference to the theme in several interview transcripts, thematic content expressed with intensity, omission of the thematic content ethically implicated, and unusual thematic content (Berg, 2002).

These were then grouped into categories of similar data, which informed the development of participant group themes. During this process, I discussed and shared developing themes with my supervisor, Dr Catherine Savage to ensure credibility, and was provided with further grounded data feedback. The themes became the findings of the study, in which the participants voices are used extensively to best describe their perceptions and experiences of being at, or having a child attend, a residential special school.

This study followed the framework for content analysis suggested by Miles and Huberman (cited in Punch, 2005) which has three main components:

- Data reduction;
- Data display;
- Drawing and verifying conclusions.

### **3.10 Coding Procedures**

#### *Data Reduction*

The process of content analysis refers to an objective coding scheme applied to the data to condense and quantify (Berg, 2004). These units were taken as ‘manifest meaning’ (Berg, 2004, p. 265) with the paraphrase written from the text to describe the content. This process aims to condense the content, which can then be sorted into categories according to similarity.

The categories were determined inductively and the researcher immersed herself in the interview transcripts in order to identify the themes that appeared meaningful to the participants of each message. The development of inductive categories enabled the researcher to ground these categories in the data. As Berg (2004) suggests, seven major elements in written messages can be counted in content analysis, commenting that “the theme is a more useful unit to count. In its simplest form, a theme is a simple sentence, a string of words with a subject and a predicate” (p. 273).

All relevant content in the text was coded and analysed in terms of the research aims, with irrelevant text grouped together under 'miscellaneous'. Every theme (made up of words, phrases and sentences) in a given text was counted in this analysis. The counting of themes consisted of a numerological ordering and corresponding code relevant to the participant group. This requirement is meant to eliminate the partial or biased analyses in which only those elements in the content are selected which fit the analyst’s thesis (Berelson, 1971, p. 17). This process was monitored by the researcher’s supervisor, who kept the researcher grounded in the data by drawing attention to the participants’ language, ensuring the themes were paraphrased with codes and not analytic constructs at this stage. Once all transcripts had been coded, the themes were scrutinized several times by the researcher and her supervisor to ensure continuity and consistency were objectively applied with the initial coding scheme.

A point of controversy for content analysts is the application of manifest content (those elements that are physically present and accountable) or the coding of more latent content (the analysis is extended to an interpretive reading of the symbolism underlying the physical data) (Berg, 2004). Manifest content is comparable to the surface structure present in the message and the latent content is the deep structural meaning conveyed in the

message (Berg, 2004, p. 269). The transcripts in this research were coded with manifest content only to avoid the researcher reading into the participant’s interviews with her own set of worldviews and bias. The researcher’s supervisor also continually monitored the refinement of the content analysis throughout the entire three-stage process.

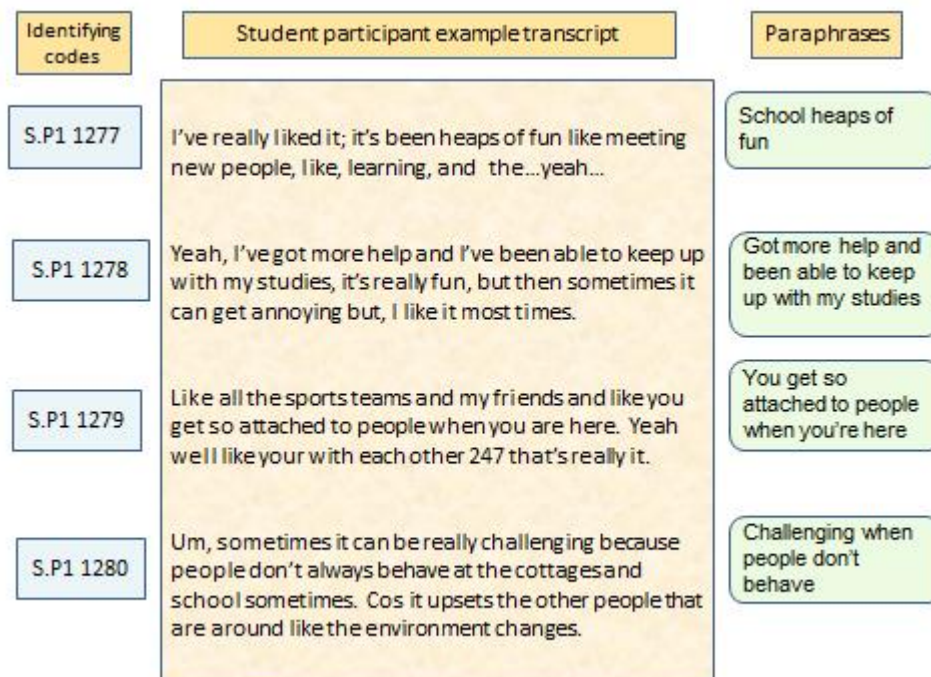
*Paraphrasing*

For the purpose of this research, it is vital that the participants’ voices are described in their words rather than a meaning imposed by the researcher and for this reason, manifest content was paraphrased.

In data analysis a frequently used form is ‘in vivo’ paraphrases. In vivo paraphrases are labels for categories or themes that are phrased in the exact words of the participants, rather than in the words of the researcher or in social science terms (Creswell, 2005, p. 404). Researchers identify these words by examining, in this instance, the passages of transcripts to locate phrases mentioned by participants that capture the intent of a category.

The table below gives an example of a single page of transcript coded using in vivo paraphrases. The coding system on the left-hand side of the page enables the researcher to locate the text after it has been sorted into categories.

Figure 1: In-vivo Coding Procedures



### 3.11 Sorting/Categorisation Procedures

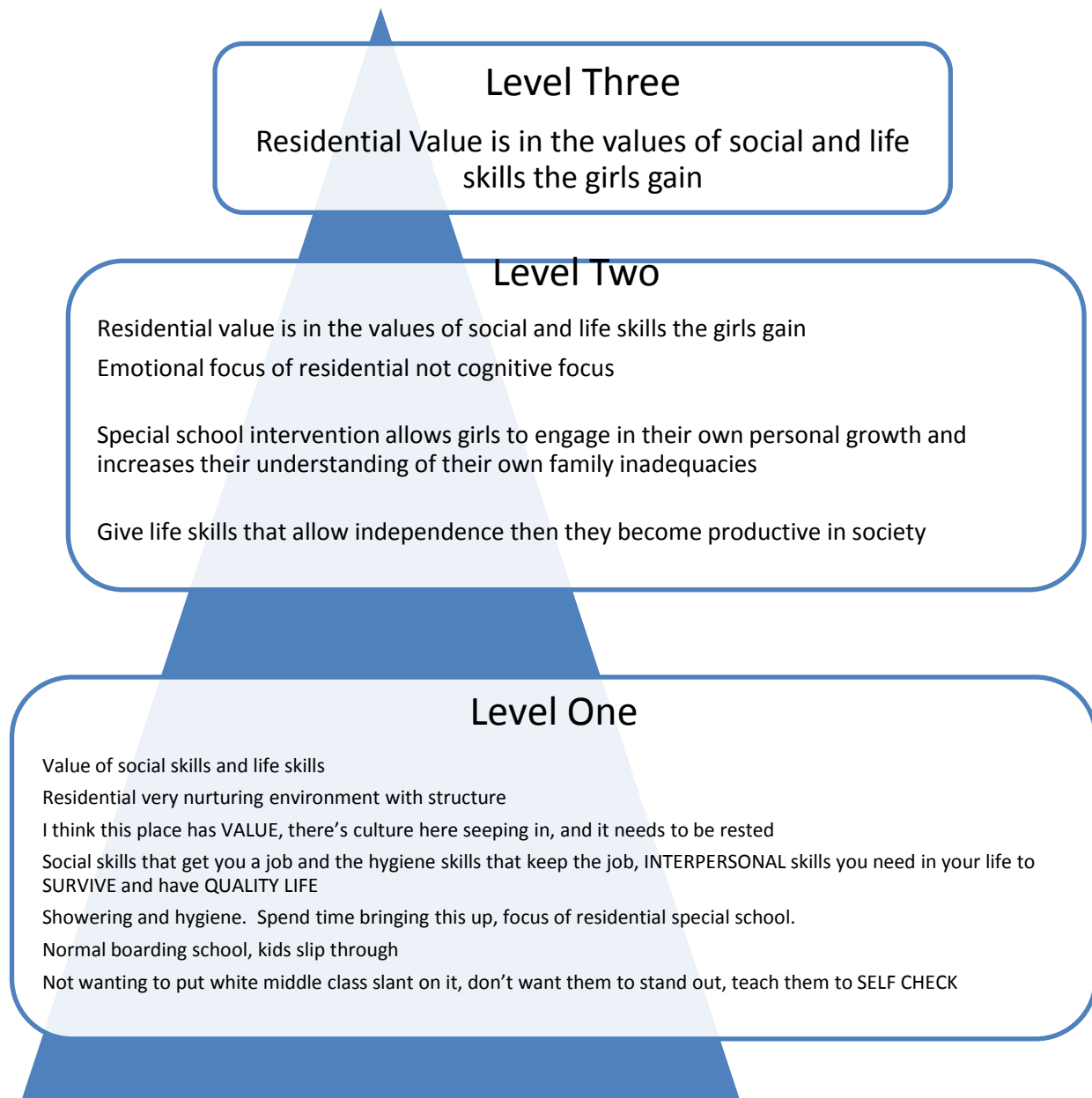
The categories researchers use in a content analysis can be determined inductively, deductively, or can be a combination of both (Strauss, 1987). In a deductive approach, researchers use categorical schemes, suggested by a theoretical perspective. Whereas, the use of inductive categories allows researchers to ground these categories to the data from which they derive (Berg, 2004, p. 273).

The categories in this analysis were inductive, in that they came directly from the content. Berg (2004) supports this approach and claims that the development of categories in any content analysis must derive from inductive reference concerning the patterns that emerge in the data (p. 276).

The initial inductive content analysis of all participant group interviews resulted in 301 separate *in vivo* codes from 1400 items. Specifically the teaching participants had 124 *in vivo* codes, residential workers 87 *in vivo* codes, and both the parents and students each had 45 *in vivo* codes. Owing to the large amount of data, each participant group was separately analysed and condensed further within the thematic framework, for example, residential workers were grouped together, parents, students and teachers. Participant group themes were then ranked in a frequency table and, from this analysis; the codes were further condensed into inferential codes. Once each participant group was ranked and coded, it was apparent that a further level of axial coding could take place and the interview data could be grouped into further refined analytic constructs or themes.

In essence, the categorization moved through levels of generalization beginning at level 1, then levels 2 and 3. At each level the categories were sorted based on similarity of the content and frequency in the data. For instance, the following table gives an example of the residential theme on ‘the value of life skills’, category development through the levels and the accompanying *in vivo* paraphrases derived from the content in the transcribed interviews.

Figure 2: Level of Sorting



### 3.12 Frequency Displays

The data for each participant group was organised and displayed using frequency tables. The quantification in a content analysis is the single characteristic on which all definitions agree (Berg, 2004). Berg suggests that the content units are coded, sorted and the frequency with which they occur can then be used to show the magnitude of this observation (Berg, 2004). Using descriptive statistics allows the researcher to calculate the cumulative percentage. In turn, this shows the significance of each theme within participant groups, as well as illustrating collectively what the participants within each group, talked mostly about. However, Berg (2004, p. 270) warns researchers that they must

remain mindful that these are descriptive statistics, and that that proportions and frequency distributions do not necessarily reflect the nature of the data or variables. Therefore, the magnitudes accompany the overall analysis and are not presented in isolation (Berg, 2004, p. 270). Table 3.3 below illustrates a frequency table.

**Table 3: Parent Frequency Table**

| Rank order | Theme  | Content units |
|------------|--|---------------|
| 1          | <b>I find a big difference when she comes back from RL, she needs to balance home and school but I'm more confident with her going to high school now than what I've ever been</b> | <b>27</b>     |
|            | I'm more confident with her going to high school now than what I've ever been  | 7             |
|            | She needs to balance it aye  | 6             |
|            | I find a big difference when she comes back from RL  | 5             |
|            | She was a little apprehensive being away from her family because it was the first time   | 5             |
|            | There's definitely a change since she's been down there, she's come a long way   | 4             |
|            |  |               |
| 2          | <b>It was difficult for me too...I knew nothing about this kind of thing...and I didn't like CYF's, I didn't trust them</b>  | <b>26</b>     |
|            | Personal History   | 13            |
|            | It was difficult for me too...I didn't know what to do...I knew nothing about this kind of thing. And I tried everything.  | 7             |
|            | I didn't like CYP's, I didn't trust them   | 6             |
|            |  |               |
| 3          | <b>It's given her an Education Opportunity that she may not of got where she was because there wasn't the time or energy or the teacher</b>  | <b>26</b>     |
|            | Short term intervention of special school is good  | 5             |
|            | The schools been such a support to her and this is what all those girls need   | 4             |
|            | The first thing I thought about was her education  | 4             |
|            | Education is the greatest thing you can have above all other things  | 4             |
|            | It's what's best for the child that matters  | 3             |
|            | One-on-one level of care.  | 2             |
|            | She would of never got that here   | 2             |
|            |  |               |
| 4          | <b>She had a lot of friends but the wrong friends, she was willing to go, we talked about it being for her own good</b>  | <b>16</b>     |
|            | She was willing to go, we talked about it being for her own good   | 4             |
|            | Terrified when first going to RL   | 6             |
|            | She had a lot of friends but the wrong friends   | 6             |
|            |  |               |
|            | <b>Professionals picked up on her behaviour and recommended RL. They've taught her a lot of things, she can be Independent now, she will find her niche as they say beyond RL</b>  | <b>15</b>     |
|            | Professional picked up on her behaviour and recommended RL   | 6             |
|            | They've taught her a lot of things, she can be Independent, she's more independent now   | 5             |
|            | She will find her niche as they say beyond RL  | 4             |



### **3.13 Drawing and verifying conclusions**

The data resulting from the level three content analysis were then analysed to move from the specific through to the abstract following the method of comparing and abstracting as suggested by Punch (2005). To organise, compare and summarise the data sources pie graphs were created to show both major themes across participant groups and interconnecting themes resulting from each of the data sources.

### **3.14 Reliability and Validity of Data**

Bell (1993) defines reliability as ‘the extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions’ (p. 63). It has also been described as ‘the consistency, accuracy, and stability’ of the data collected (Bell, 1993, p. 273). As the aim of this case study is to gain understanding through ‘thick rich description’ (Merriam, 1998) only one case study school is researched. The reliability therefore, is very limited and generalizations cannot be made on the basis of this study (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Bell (1993) defines validity as ‘whether an item measures or describes what it is supposed to measure or describe (p. 650) while MacNaughton, Rolfe and Siraj-Blatchford (2001) defines validity as ‘the process of establishing the ‘truth’ of research outcomes’ (p. 274) and the way this is established depends on the paradigm in which it is framed.

From this, it can be argued that because this case study presents the voices of the participants that the data is valid. Further validity is added through member checking and supervision. Participants were invited to comment on the interview transcriptions to ensure these were conveyed accurately and to omit or add any further information before signing and verifying the contents of the interview material. The researcher’s supervisor also checked all data at every stage of the collection, analysis, and documentation process. Drawing on the perspective of the four groups of participants ensures that the findings taken from the data will be triangulated. However, as the data has been collected from only one school, it must be regarded as being valid within a limited boundary, and cannot be generalized to a greater extent (Christensen & Johnson, 2008).

### *Internal, External Validity and Reliability*

For the purposes of this study, internal validity was addressed by clarifying the purpose of the study and the research questions at the outset of the study and ensuring the data collection, analysis and recording methods could be justified as being suitable to achieve the purpose of the research. This process establishes a chain of reference (Yin, 2002). The use of multiple participant group interviews as sources of information promotes convergent lines of inquiry through data and method triangulation (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

### *External Validity*

The case study of RL is a single case study, designed to gain a better understanding of the place of residential schooling on the education continuum. Data was collected from the current major stakeholders' perspectives and experiences, therefore any generalizations, will relate principally to this group only, but could be used to compare to stakeholders perspectives in a similar program.

### *Possible Limitations*

The case study students may not represent a proportional cross-section of the EBD students. The research relies on the professional understanding of the researcher regarding EBD education. Students involved may wish to portray only the positive points and aspects they wish the researcher to report on, creating bias; and the research may highlight other areas of concern, which cannot be dealt with in this study.

## **3.15 Summary of Methodology**

This research was designed to answer the research questions arising from an investigation into the current literature. The study was carried out within a constructivist paradigm using a largely qualitative design. It is a case study investigating the place of residential schooling in the educational continuum in NZ. The data collection consisted of 12 participants and up to 3 face-to-face interviews each, carried out over the period of ten weeks in term 4, 2010. Of central importance, was designing a method that would enable the voice of the stakeholders to be presented accurately and objectively, as they had not had a significant presence in current research in New Zealand concerning residential special education, and specifically that for girls with EBD. Content analysis, in which inductive coding and sorting were used, allowed the themes and conclusions to emerge

from the data. Research reliability and validity strategies were included in all stages of the research agenda in order to ensure trustworthiness of findings.

## Chapter Four

### Findings

#### 4.0 Introduction

This section reports the findings from the content analysis. A discussion of the level three analysis categories is given for each participant group. A pie graph for each participant group has been constructed using the frequency with which themes occur to demonstrate quantitatively how often the themes occurred during the interviews. To support this data, quotes that have been taken directly from interview transcripts to ground the discussion in the participants' authentic voice. In the following section, the analysis of all four participant groups collectively is presented and discussed across the data set in order to determine similarities and differences across the participants as stakeholders in the case study.

#### PART 1 – Students

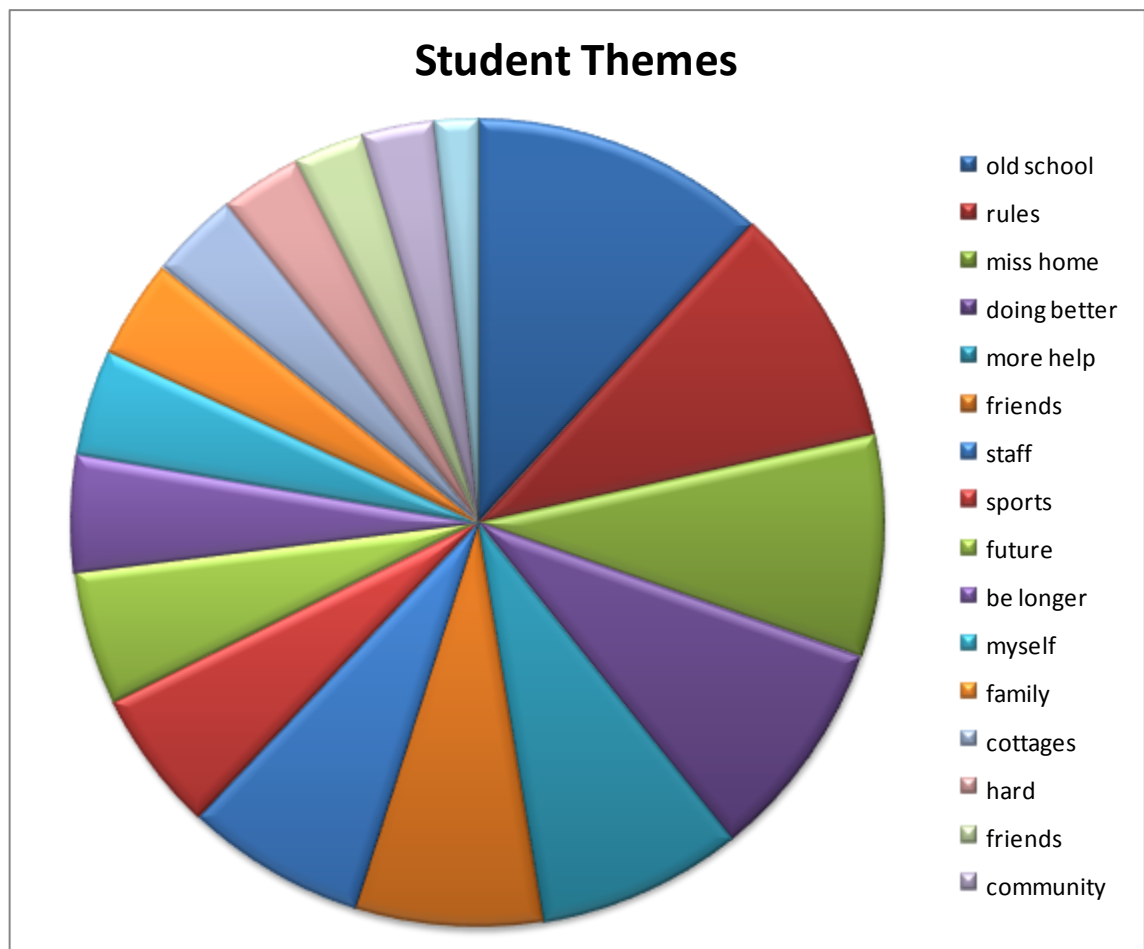


Figure 3: Student Themes

#### 4.1.1 Student Major Themes

There were four major themes that recurred in the data. They made up approximately 40% of all the content transcribed.

##### *In my old school I didn't get any support and was bullied, I didn't like it much and didn't go much*

The largest area discussed by the student participants was their perceptions and experiences of their old school. This theme was made up of 33 content units. The student participants looked back (in retrospect) at their old school settings as largely not meeting their individual needs. I asked Gemma "Can you tell me about the school you were at before you came here"?

*"I was at a mixed school, I was at college and I was doing 6 periods a day, I didn't really like it, cos I like use to get picked on and things like that" ...*

I then asked Gemma if she could describe her old school and she said:

*"I use to just sit in the back of the class and try and figure out myself, and then If I couldn't do it, I'd just sit in the back and stay quiet and wouldn't ask for help or anything, ... I use to like bottle things up and like shut myself down kind of thing and it wasn't a good feeling, but now I'm like more open and things, and now everything's open – I know how to do it now" ...*

The student participants talked about the lack of support from teaching staff and the general unease associated with previous schooling experiences. All girls reported a definite change in their educational experience. As an example, here is Ally's description of her last school and how RL is different:

*"for the old school, a lot of bullying in that one and teachers don't care if you're leaving out of school and cos Rose Livingston you get, the staff would help you, and you'll get everything sorted with who that person is, but with the old school I never got the support, my staff didn't care and they didn't want to help out and sort, they'd say "oh you can sort it, you're old enough and sorts" ....*

This predominant theme demonstrates the extent to which the schooling environment had changed for the girls. They willingly spoke of their previous school experiences and the changes in their attitude to learning since attending RL.

***I don't like all the rules, especially yellow cards!***

The second largest area discussed by the student participants was the disciplinary regime at RL and the associated rules and regulations. This theme was made up of 27 content units. Overall the findings indicated that, the girls had mixed opinions towards the rules, however, they clearly expressed their perception of the school's approach to the use of the "thinking room" as torture, stating, "*The thinking room is torture.*" Furthermore, both Ally and Gemma felt that the use of yellow cards as a disciplinary technique was not an effective means of addressing key behavioural areas and that it did little to achieve the desired results. I asked Ally if there was anything she would change about RL, she said:

*"I would change the yellow cards. Cos, it's not helping the girls, cos it's making them worser .... it's what pushes some of the girls' buttons they get put on it just for nothing and saying that, the staff say "I heard you say this, you're going on a yellow card for it" and in their head their saying "I didn't do it, so why are you blaming me for it"*

I asked Ally "what would you do instead to help?"

*"Student leaders could talk to the students, and see how everything's going or is something upsetting...but there's, sometimes girls need to be on their own and then they'll come back and tell you, and giving them like a bit of space before you start shoving anything in their faces...yeah..."*

On the other hand, Joette thought the use of the thinking room was a fair way to handle some of the girls' behaviour. I asked Joette "How do you find the behaviour programs here"?

*She said "Yeah it's fair, it gives them a place to calm down and realise what they've done".*

The three girls had various opinions about the rules and regulations at RL. These varied between accepting that rules were necessary to considering aspects of the behavioural plans to be torturous. This indicated that the girls were very conscious of the discipline regime and placed a significant amount of importance on how this aspect of the school was handled.

***I miss my home; it's good to go home***

The third largest area talked about by the girls was the transition, adjustment, and being away from home experienced by attending a boarding school setting. This theme was

made up of 25 content units. Overall, the girls expressed they did experience feelings of ‘missing home’ and that they looked forward to going home for the holidays. However, once they had settled into RL the girls tended to report feeling more ambivalent, they were pleased to be back at RL after the holidays, commenting that they felt a greater sense of independence, responsibility, and autonomy being away from home. I asked Gemma to “describe what helped or not when she first arrived at this school, how she settled into RL?” she said:

*“I didn’t really settle into RL., it took me quite a while, like it took me about a year to kind of get used to it, um, I think it was cos I was away from my family, and yeah I’m pretty much a home girl, I hate being away from home, but then I kind of don’t hate it, like sometimes I want to get away and don’t want to come back”...*

I asked her what it was like when you return to school. Gemma said:

*“I don’t want to come back yeah, nah I do want to come back sometimes just to like get away from home and see my mates again but then I don’t want to come back to the routines, the rules, going up the street with a friend, and stuff and yeah like getting back into the whole routine again, getting up at 7 in the morning...”*

And Ally succinctly illustrated the cycle of the settling in period, when she said:

*“When I first started it was pretty hard, tryna get use to everything and tryna get separated from your parents”... and follows with “yeah, once I got settled into RL I just didn’t get home sick, I made quite a lot of friends from different places”.*

The three girls expressed their perceptions of experiencing homesickness when they first arrived at RL; however, this is in general, not too different to what girls in boarding schools would report. They did not appear to adopt any anxiety or feelings of dissonance with family despite being away.

### ***I am doing better now that I am at this school***

The fourth largest group the girls discussed was the progress they had made academically and socially since attending RL. This theme was made up of 25 content units, sharing equal placing in terms of importance with the theme, missing home. All three girls expressed the idea that they had more confidence and independence now and that it felt good to be at this school, that this school was a lot of fun and that most girls liked it.

Gemma tells me about what school was like for her before she came to RL:

*“I didn’t like school, pretty much everyone says they hate school and I was pretty much one of those people, that didn’t like school, didn’t want to go to school, in the end I only went to school, pretty much for friends and morning tea and lunch,, but some of the classes I did get along with and so I did kinda like school but majority I hated school...”*

Now that she is at RL Gemma says:

*“Um, I found it quite easy. I found the work quite easy and I found myself not in the back of the class and I was more co-operative, I would, pretty much put my hand up to do anything, um, and if I did need help then I would just walk up to the teacher or I’d put my hand up and say excuse me miss “I don’t understand this”.*

I asked Gemma to describe what it’s been like to be at RL and she said:

*“Um, it’s been ok in some areas and it’s been fun as well um but it’s been quite good because it’s helped a lot with my learning um and it’s brought a couple of my levels up, like my maths and um my reading and things and my spelling...”*

All three girls reported dramatically different approaches to their experience of school and learning while at RL. They shifted from sitting in the back of the class, remaining anonymous, to becoming an active member of the learning community, participating in and responding to the challenges of extending themselves. They were able to witness the differing behaviour in the two school based environments.

#### **4.1.2 Students Secondary Themes**

The students six secondary themes make up 40% of the data collected. These are: help and encouragement, friends, staff, sports, future, and length of time.

##### ***I get more help and encouragement at this school***

This was the fifth largest theme discussed by the girls throughout the interview process and consisted of 23 content units. The girls all made reference to RL being their preferred setting for schooling due to smaller classes and increased teaching one-to-one support and encouragement in comparison to their previous school. Joette comments:

*“...It’s like, at this school you get more help, and it’s more encouragement. I’ve really liked it, it’s been heaps of fun, like meeting new people, like, learning and yeah I’ve got more help and I’ve been able to keep up with my studies” ...*



All three girls perceived the smaller classes, one-on-one support, community setting, and encouragement from the intimate relationships between staff and students as being more conducive to a productive learning environment. They experienced greater outcome based success in their academic achievements and attributed this to the previously mentioned particulars within the school structure.

***It can be challenging getting on with other girls***

The sixth most important theme discussed by the girls over the course of the interviews was the difficulties of getting on with other girls. This theme consisted of 21 content units. The girls talked about the challenge of communal living and the 24/7 living and schooling challenges created by the living arrangements within the setting. They felt that friendship issues were emphasized by being in this living situation, with Gemma stating: *“There are lots of friendship issues at this school”* but they also understood that this was part of being at a boarding school and over time they had adjusted to the human relationship dynamics.

*“I would probably have to say there’s a lot of like friendship issues and rumours and things going around... and Ally said: getting along with others... you see them 24/7 and live in the same house hold” ...*

*“Sometimes it can be really challenging because people don’t always behave at the cottages and school sometimes” (Joette)*

However, although the setting created further relationship challenges it also reinforced the girls’ confidence and created opportunities for the girls to develop their social skills within intimate boundaries associated with residential living. Joette said:

*“Like I’m not as shy as I was, and I’ve learnt that you can also like make other friends like other people... I’ve got the confidence now, I wouldn’t have gone up to like somebody else and said like “what’s your name, and hi and all that I’ll be the ones that would be standing quite” ...*

The girls recognized the strengths of the experience of living and learning as a collective however, also identified the more delicate aspects of interpersonal relations and the patience and skills they needed in order to effectively diffuse negative energies. This was not unlike other boarding school situations.

***There are extra things to do after school and I really like the sport***

The seventh most discussed theme, consisting of 16 content units was the perceived benefits of being able to participate in the extra curricula activities offered at RL. The girls all commented on their enjoyment of the various different activities and events they were able to participate in while being at RL. Joette said she enjoyed being busy and in the “*hustle bustle rushing flow*” and that when she went home it was ‘*boring*’ as there was no activities or events.

*“We do more activities and it’s not so boring and you learn heaps”... “Like enviro studies, recycling and we are a green gold school – we help the environment..., there’s more like education programs and like things like we never got to do team building skills, like working together, being a leader, role-model....yeah we get to go on camps, like environment camps, like Arthurs Pass... you get to do activities and fun stuff... there’s kapa haka and there’s like singing, I do kapa haka in the afternoon – we do swimming lessons like every Monday with this school it is with a special instructor we go to the aquatic centre” (Joette)*

The three girls commented on their enjoyment of the sporting opportunities, that they were able to experience and participate in new sports, join teams, play competitively out in the community, as well as the various extra curricula activities such as camping and day trips. These were all valuable and enjoyable experiences in the girls’ perceptions.

***I have thought about the future and what I want to do***

The eighth most discussed theme, made up of 15 content units, was dreams and goals for their future. Two of the girls had plans, ideas, and goals as to what they needed to do to get closer to achieving their individual personal goals in comparison to previous schooling experiences pre RL, they both stated they had not been focused on their future and goals. One of the three students however, said she had no dreams or goals for the future but that she was enrolled to go to the special unit school in her home community. I asked Ally “what is your long term goal for yourself?” and she said, “Don’t have one” so I probe “any dreams”? Ally says “no”. Joette knows exactly what she wants to be, when I ask, she said without hesitation: “a scientist”. Gemma tells us about going for a job:

*“I applied for a job, a life guarding job, well it was really recreation sports coordinator and life guard management or something, I just found out, like the schools been helping with that as well and finding out things from them and we just found out that I didn’t get it. .... So now we don’t actually know what I’m going to do at the end of the year... I would hate to stay home that’s all I know.*

*I wouldn't want to be at home. Like I wouldn't wanna stay at home sitting down watching DVD's all day, I was gonna like see if I could do like a training course, like a sports training course or something, or join a club or something."*

Of the three students, 2 out of 3 had thought about the future and had a clear idea about what they were working towards – they had a vision and a dream. The other student did not have a clear vision beyond having to go to school, for the future.

***I have learnt about myself, my behaviour and can control myself better***

The ninth most discussed area during the interviews, consisting of 12 content units, was the self-development the girls reported during their time at RL. Overall, the girls felt that they had learnt more about themselves through the experience of being away from home, they had learnt more about their behaviour and how to control it, or handle situations differently, and that they felt in general a greater sense of 'know thyself' being applicable to their situation.

I asked Joette if she can tell me about new ways she has learnt to deal with challenging situations and she said, *"I just really ignore it. Even sometimes, I'll get upset but I won't show aggression so then... I just walk away."*

I asked Ally how RL has helped her and she says: *"It's kinda helped with tryna stay out of trouble" ... um, like keeping out of that person's way and not putting your nose into other people's business"*.

I asked Gemma if she would recommend this school to other girls and families and she said:

*"Yip. I would because like for the time that I have experienced here its, it has gone fast like everyone says, but like you learn a whole lot of different things, like you learn who you actually are and well when I first started I didn't really know who like, or I wasn't really trusting myself, I didn't know who I was in a way. Then yeah for like now till then, um I've actually like stopped and thought about things and like found out a whole like different story about myself and like what I've liked"...*

These excerpts illustrate the personal development, coupled with the maturation cycles the girls undertook simultaneously, during their time at RL. They recognized some of their own behaviours, triggers, reactions and responses to situations and were able to reflect on

their past behaviours in a positive frame of reference, allowing them to reconstruct and personalize certain experiences in order to glean clarity and make changes accordingly.

***When you first come it's a bit difficult, it was scary at first***

The tenth most important theme, made up of 12 content units was the 'scary' feelings associated with being away from home and arriving at a new place, one where they were going to be spending the next ten weeks in, all alone. The girls felt living in the cottages were like being at home but essentially different. They had adjusted to cottage life, the dynamics of sharing with 20 other girls and could comfortably live in this setting. Joette comments: "yeah, you get used to it, you go with the flow".

*"At first, when you first come. It's a bit difficult; I don't have a reason why."*

Gemma also comments when I ask her about living in the cottages: "Um I didn't like that. No, it was really noisy and um there were a lot more rules to it. And, yeah I felt like my head was gona blow"...

The girls commented on the adjustment period that had to take place when they first arrived at RL the initial adjustment of being away from family, friends, familiarity can be fearsome and on-top of the 'newness' of it all it can also be strange adjusting to new cultures and ways of doing things.

**4.1.3 Minor Themes**

The final four themes; I have made some good friends, People judge the schools, I would be here longer if I could, and the staff are friendly not friendly, did not occur regularly and were mentioned briefly by students.

***I have made some really good friends at this school***

The girls comment on the friendships they have made over the two years they have been at (RL). This theme was made up of 9 content units. They mention how attached you become to these friendships and they know they will miss their friends dearly when they return home.

*Joette said: "Yeah, I've got so attached to this school. I don't want to leave, it's annoying. Cos, you like make so many friends and there from like all round the country and you still keep in touch with them, some friends you do, but then you won't get to see your teachers, all the time at RL and then you have to go away"...*

### ***People in the community judge the school***

The girls strongly felt the negative casting eye of community judgment towards the special school. This theme consisted of 8 content units. They had experiences and feelings of awkwardness when people in their home and local community asked about the school they went to and had in some instance preferred not to disclose if they perceived the person would judge them. In other instances, when they felt genuine interest from the inquiring person they were openly proud to discuss their placement and experiences being at RL. I asked Gemma: “When you tell people you’re at RL are you proud to be here?”

*She said: “Um, sometimes I don’t say it because they know that it’s a special, like special school for girls and so I don’t tell them cos, like, I can pretty much tell their gonna say something and take it the wrong way and then some people I tell because I know that they won’t do anything. but I am proud of this school, and when I do tell people I do have like that glow or smile/look everything you can find. But like when I tell people that I haven’t told before, or I haven’t met before I’m just like yeah, I don’t like smile or anything yeah...”*

### ***I would be here longer if I could***

The three girls each had a slightly different perspective on the length of time they would prefer to spend at RL. Gemma felt the two year time period was too long and it should be optional how long you stay. Elle didn’t want to go home, full stop. Joette felt that the placement time was too short and that it should be extended further by at least a year and expressed the fact that if she could she would stay at RL for her entire high school years. I asked Gemma: “is there anything you would change about RL if you could?” and she said:

*“Um, the length of time and being here like two years, that yeah...yeah I probably would make it optional, yeah...” ... “I find it too hard, like 2.5 years is hard enough, um and I already want to go back, um I would, if it was a year then I would be ok, yeah two years is just yeah... a long time to go... but um, yeah I was like yeah either a year or just under a year”.*

In contrast when I asked Joette how she feels about leaving and she said:

*“I kind of feel sad to leave, because you only get two years and then it doesn’t feel long enough, it’s like you’ve never been here, it’s like it goes too fast, it’s not like you’ve been there for ages, two years is not enough, I think....”*

### ***Staff – friendly/not friendly***

Overall, the girls appeared to be very perceptive in analysing staff member’s personal attributes and inner workings. Ally felt some of the staff were not genuine, were unapproachable and that she hadn’t formed that tight ‘bond’ with all staff members,

whereas Joette felt that staff and students were like one big family and that she could trust all staff members. Gemma would rather turn to the other girls for support.

Ally comments:

*“You know Mr. Smith he really cares; the other male teachers are just there for work”.*

I ask Gemma about someone she trusts and she said:

*“I don’t really trust staff and most of the time I don’t want to listen and so I kind of like go to the girls and stuff, they’ll understand, they would have been through it as well, or they’re gonna go through it soon”* however, Gemma felt a tight bond with her teacher aide: *“my teacher aide she’d probably have to be kind of like my mum, yeah my school mother um, and I kind of feel like she, she like understands, like understands me more than the other teachers I’ve had and um like if I’m feeling upset or something then she is there for me” ....*

The girls comment on the small community setting within the school that creates a more intimate relationship between the staff and students allowing it to feel more like an extended family situation rather than strangers learning together. Joette commented:

*“Yeah I don’t want to leave, like the teachers and staff, you like end up being a big family... and you like, you notice like things and people that like if you’re at a normal school, like mainstream and you’re like changing classes all the time you wouldn’t really notice that”*

## PART 2: Parents

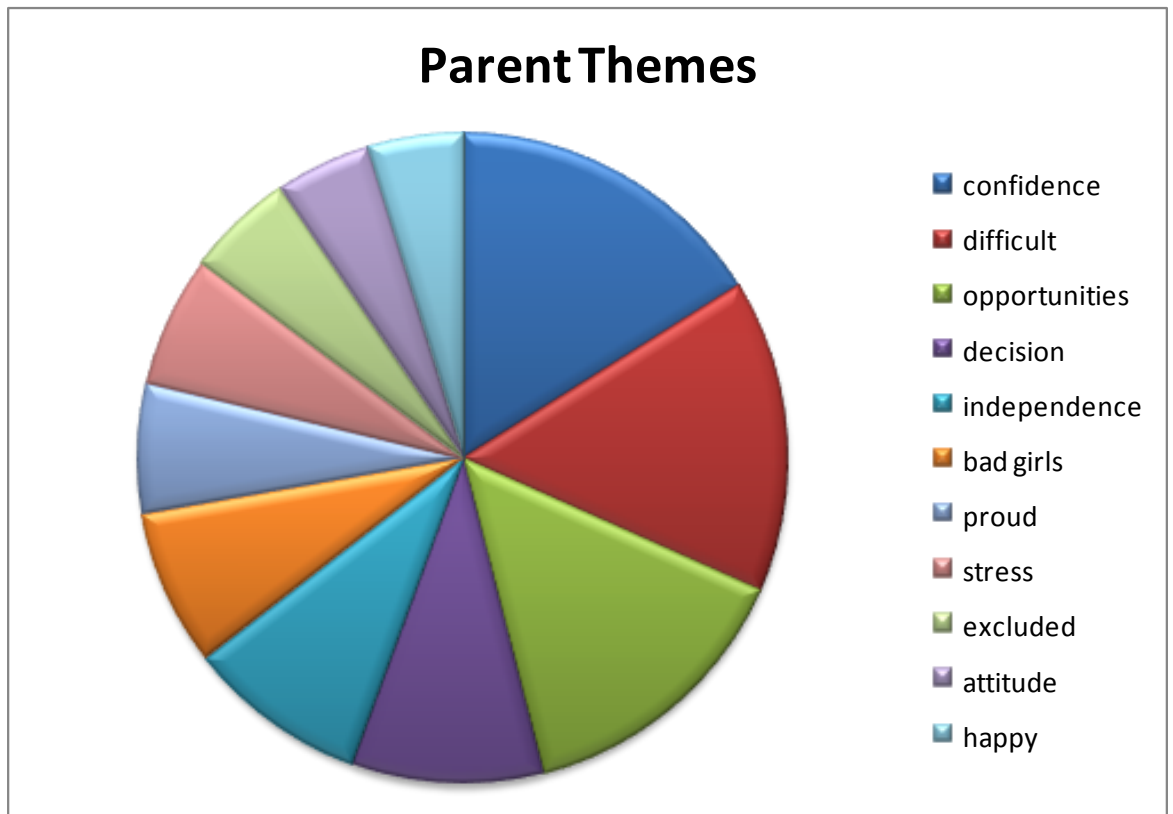


Figure 4: Parent Themes

### 4.2.1 Parent Major Themes

The first four themes made up over 60% of the data. The parents talked most about the confidence their girls had developed, the challenges they had had, the opportunities for the girls and finally the difficulty making the decision to send their daughters to RL.

*I find a big difference when she comes back from RL, she needs to balance home and school, but I'm more confident with her going to high school now than what I've ever been*

The largest area of importance, made up of 27 content units, for the parent/whānau participants was the positive changes they have witnessed in the girls over the two year period they have been at RL. The parent participants discussed the difference they have found especially when they come home for the holidays. They commented that the most noticeable visible sign was in the girl's levels of maturity and independence. They felt the girls had gained a tremendous amount of maturity and felt more confident with their moving onto their next stage after the intervention. However, it was noted that they found

it somewhat challenging meeting the girls' needs for activity. When home in the holidays they became easily bored and tired of the normal household routines.

Margaret comments:

*“Because of course she’s only home for the school holidays and she was coming home one weekend a term, but she didn’t want to come home this term, “No she said, I’m having too much fun at school” okay, and she said “oh, but I get bored mum, there’s such a lot happening at R.L”. I mean she loves shopping and things like that and in town there is hardly any shops, so it is hard for her and I know that but she’s also got to realize that, you know I keep saying to her “well you know you’re going to be home for six weeks in the school holidays” “I do realize that mum” and I said “well you know, you’ve got to adapt to that” ...*

Grace comments:

*“you know Ally is quite a, here I go again she’s ah yeah she’s learning how to eat you know the healthy food (we giggle) healthy food and you know she was quite a big eater before she went there but they sort of, and yeah the two years she’s been there she comes home and she goes “Oh I don’t cook this” cos we’re Māori aye, we’re Māori and I like to cook, you know cook a boil up now and then and she goes “oww, I don’t like boil up” and I said “you know” she comes back all you know cos she’s going back to the healthy food so she needs to balance it aye” .....*

And Edith adds:

*“I know they don’t like leaving their families but they are certainly improved you know... I’ve noticed that from picking her up from the airport and meeting the parents...the schools been such a support to her and this what all of those girls need, you see it when they come back...I think it’s been wonderful and no I’m not doubting it”.*

This was the largest theme discussed by the parents/whānau participants in their interviews which implies that a significant leap in confidence and independence had taken place but that the student adjusting when back at home was still an area of difficulty. In the perspective of the parents/whānau there became a certain expectation for activity and the parents noted the certain judgmental gaze upon home routines and structures now they had two places of residence. The parents/whānau continually worked on balancing this with the girls over the period of the intervention however, felt that this was a small matter, compared to the long-term benefits they witnessed in the girls maturity and independence.



*It was difficult for me too... I knew nothing about this kind of thing...and I don't like CYP's... I didn't trust them...*

The second largest area talked about by the parent/whānau participants was the personal history of the girl's academic experiences prior to attending RL. This theme was made up of 26 content units. All three girls had experienced educational difficulties and encountered various forms of adversity in the process of determining applicable interventions and agency support.

Edith describes the time leading up to Gemma coming to RL:

*"Oh yes, well she had a year at [old] college and she really had struggles that's why she was going for the clinic at Peaches and Cream, that's why they recommended that she had a problem, definitely had a problem mainly because she didn't have a fellow, ah her background, before she came to me she had four schools, I mean four primary schools is too much and it's just too much for them to catch up and people don't know them and I didn't like CYPF's I didn't trust them, I'm sorry, I've had so many terrible tales from them and then these four people – she was determined to take them off us"*

Margret tells me about Joette's previous school:

*"Ah it was pretty hard at times. It was pretty hard for her at times. She got very frustrated um we only had three hours a week with an um, with an extra teacher for her and we tried ORR'S twice, we put in for ORR'S twice through the school who were very, very good but we got turned down and as one of the teachers said: "you've got to be deaf, blind and dumb...In once instance, my late husband and I we paid for an extra three hours a week, at 24 dollars an hour, it was shocking actually, but we paid for a year, so we could get full tuition for her. That was just for a year and then we couldn't afford it... in the end she'd got sort of pushed up the back of the class, because she wasn't disruptive but she needed extra attention. It was difficult for me too because I didn't know what to do. I knew nothing about this kind of thing. And I tried everything. We had IEP's every three months but, but even though they say there, going to follow through, they never did. Things they promised me from one IEP to another IEP just didn't happen."*

And Grace also had a difficult time in accessing appropriate support for Ally and it wasn't until she reached high school that she was given extra support, Grace tells us:

*"It wasn't until that one teacher otherwise Ally would never be there because I was never told of it, yeah because before she went there she was to (a local high school) you know and she was getting teaching aid extra help there so she had a little bit of help when she was there but there was nothing about school, especially for her, you know for a girl in her situation aye, there was no talk about it, until I got to high school"*

From these accounts, it appears that the girls' prior educational experiences were framed by adversity with minimal support systems in place. The parents/whānau all indicated the stress involved in dealing with government procedures and agency requirements and that if it was not for particular individuals on the learning journey, they would not have been able to access the appropriate support their particular situation required.

***It's given her an education opportunity that she may not have got where she was because there wasn't the time or energy or the teachers.***

The parents and whānau third most significantly discussed area of importance in the interviews was the choice to send the girls to the special residential intervention school because of the educational opportunity not available in their home communities. This theme was made up of 24 content units. The parents and whānau commented on the exceptional opportunity to have one-on-one teacher or teacher aid support, the low student ratios 2:12, to have their individual needs catered for and for the general level of care RL could offer the parents, Margaret states: "*the first thing I thought about was her education*". Furthermore, the parents were mixed in the length of time they believed the students should spend at the school, Margaret believed "*short term intervention of the school is good*" and Grace felt that 2 years wasn't long enough stating: "*I'd prefer longer.*"

However, the overall choice to follow through and accept placement at the residential girls school as a short term intervention was an educational choice because they felt the students' needs would not and could not be met if they remained at their previous education provision, as Grace stated: "*It's what's best for the child that matters*" Edith said: "*Education is the greatest thing you can have above all other things*"

I asked Margaret if coming to RL had hindered Joette in any way and this was her response:

*"Absolutely not. NO, it's enhanced her life. It's given her more confidence, it's given her an education that she may not have got where she was because there wasn't the time or energy or the teachers. No, I would recommend RL to anyone. Absolutely"*.

Edith shares a story about Gemma's leaps and bounds in self-esteem since attending RL:

*"Oh gosh yes, her old teacher couldn't believe it was the same girl. And, she had only been there 2 years! When he came down to visit the school he was so impressed with Gemma – and he was at the school and there's definitely a change. To get a one-to-one basis or even two or three people your teaching,*

*you've got so much ahead of you than if, you know, in a class of 30 or 28 or something, I would be extremely proud of her school" ....*

And Grace adds:

*"She [was] quite a hard girl to keep her at school before she came there yeah and she was getting frustrated .... since she's been down there she sort of, she's come a long way from there since she's been there... they have taught her a lot of things, you know, a lot of things right from hygiene to health, everything for her eye flattening you know at the moment she's flattening and she can be independent so quite a few things".*

The parents and whānau expressed their sincere appreciation for the positive changes both intrinsically and extrinsically, they had experienced in the girls' social and emotional development. They perceived the girls' wellbeing to have increased significantly over the course of the intervention and felt secure in their ability to carry out normal livelihood functions with a mature outlook and positive attitude.

***She had a lot of friends, but the wrong friends, she was willing to go, we talked about it being for her own good***

The fourth biggest group concerning parents was making the decision to send their girls' to RL was based on the fact that it would be for their "own good". This theme made up the top four most discussed areas on the pie graph and consisted of 16 content units. The parents discussed the options and opportunities of a higher education the school could offer them and although the students were reluctant to leave behind the familiarity of home, school, and community, they were willing to go because they knew their needs weren't being met.

Edith comments on the decision to come to RL:

*"Oh yeah well when we heard about it and of course at the time she was a little apprehensive being away from her family because it was the first time, but she took it on quite well and the schools been such a support to her and this is what all those girls need, you see it when they come back...I know they don't like leaving their families but they are certainly improved you know...I've noticed that from picking her up from the airport and meeting the parents and some of them Gem's gone to their places and stayed and they're all looked after which is good" ...*

Margaret comments:

*The first thing that came into my mind was the ratio of teachers to pupils, the education side of it, was the very first thing because I thought if Joette doesn't get this education now it's going to be beyond her" ...But, I don't know if it's normal for girls to be horrible to each other all the time or was it just because*

*of Joette, I don't know but I have noticed that since she's been at RL she's lost all her friends she had at [her old school]..”*

The experience of packing up and going far away to school was terrifying for them but at the same time, they kept firmly believing in the opportunity of a better education and the long-term benefits this would have for their daughters.

#### **4.2.2 Parent Secondary Themes**

Six secondary themes discussed by parents and whānau, these were: Independence, bad girls, proud, stress, excluded, attitude.

***Professionals picked up on her behaviour and recommended RL. They've taught her a lot of things she can be independent now; she will find her niche as they say beyond RL.***

Following closely behind in terms of importance, was the topical theme of how the parents/whānau came to consider RL as an educational provision option. This ranked fifth in the frequency table and is made up of 15 content units. Overall, it was felt that if it wasn't for a certain individual person or professional stepping in and discussing this option with the parents they would never have known about RL.

Grace comments:

*“Um I actually got it through once she was at Girls High there was a teacher there she sort of picked up on Ally's behaviour and I didn't know anything about RL until she actually put it through for me, .. this was about 2008, Ally started there in 2009 she did everything for me to get her there yeah she was very good you know she knew Al had a problem at school, you know, learning and that, so she suggested, and I didn't know anything about it, and she sort of came over to my house and talked to us about it, and my response was, “oh that sounds quite good”.*

Margaret felt the independence Joette gained throughout the intervention duration has made all the difference to her decision to invest in a local boarding school, an option not previously considered.

She comments:

*“Oh look, I would hate to think. I would hate to think what it would be like. I think for me, that I would be a nervous wreck, I would be pulling my hair out and for her, she would be feeling as though she wasn't going to be accepted anywhere. Yeah, no, yeah that's something that I would hate to think about”.*

For Edith, Gemma is moving into a career and she has no doubt that *“She will find her niche as they say beyond RL (and is confident) Gemma will find work” ...*

For Grace with Ally she has expressed her deep concern for her safety and does worry about her going back into her home community and education setting. Although, she has enrolled Ally in the special unit at a local high school she feels anxious about her educational future and likelihood to remain at school. Grace comments:

*“Two years is not long enough that’s my opinion anyway...you know, cos she’s quite how would I put it, you know she worries me, you know I’ll be stressed out – I’m telling you the truth, I’ll be stressed out, I know that down there they are keeping an eye on her sort of thing, you know what I mean...yeah I would prefer longer than two years” ...*

The parents/whānau had various opinions about the length of stay and future of the girls beyond RL. These varied between agreeing with the two year time tenure and having a bright outlook for the future prospects, to considering aspects of the home environment as unsafe and preferring the length of placement was longer.

***RL that’s for bad kids you know, family thought I was dropping her in a school for the mentally insane, there’s a lot of Māori girls out there that need that extra help and they don’t know about it***

The sixth most discussed area by the parents/whānau was the outside knowledge or lack of knowledge about the education intervention RL provided for those girls whose needs were not being met in their local schooling provision. This theme was made up of 13 content units. Margaret recalled the negative perceptions she encountered from her immediate family and the outside community upon enrolling Joette at RL:

*‘My family thought I was dropping her in a school for the mentally insane’*

Margaret further elaborates on the negative outside perception she encountered from her local community:

*“We had a child psychologist coming in, he came in often. And when I actually told him about RL he said “oh no, Joette won’t be very good there, oh no don’t put her in there, no”.*

Margaret also felt amongst the negative local image, was a lot of unknown or poorly spread local community knowledge of the school. She relayed the story of Joette’s previous headmistress a local woman from a local school having never heard of the school and Margaret felt this was a terrible reflection of the knowledge and/or access parents and whānau have of the educational options available, as *“a lot of girls really benefit from the intervention”*.

Grace also agreed that the general education community's knowledge of RL was severely hindered which, in turn, removed the amount of parents/whānau aware of the school. From her perspective:

*“There's a lot of Māori girls out there that need that extra help and they don't know about it”...*

Edith felt that the Ministry should be made aware of the positive perception she and other parents/whānau held about the positive impact the intervention had made on Gemma's social and academic progress. Edith commented that she was thoroughly proud of the school and speaks highly about it to people in her home community, commenting:

*“I would be extremely proud of her school and I'll tell them when I see them because I think it's a marvellous school and I must ring the education board too because that sort of thing must get back to them”.*

The parents/whānau had various opinions about the negative labels associated with attending a special residential school. This indicated that the parents/whānau were very conscious of the social implication of the intervention placement and that they placed considerable importance on the wider NZ social network becoming more aware of the positive role this school played in the educational continuum currently offered in NZ.

### ***I am proud of the school***

Following the negative labels associated with attending a special residential school was the theme that the parents/whānau were very proud of the school. This was made up of 11 content units. All three parents agreed that they felt a school like RL should be in all main centres, that it served a real need in the special education NZ community,

Edith says:

*“I would be extremely proud of your school and I'll tell them when I see them because I think it's a marvellous school”*

Margaret stated:

*“I really think a school like Rose Livingston should be in all main centres”*

Grace adds:

*“they should have more, more schools like that too around – I think they should have, you know, up in the North Island as well you know it's what's best for the child that matters”.*

The parents and whānau all expressed their positive perception of the intervention the school provided and that they felt more schools like RL should be placed around NZ.

***It's very stressful dealing with learning difficulties***

Equally important to the parents/whānau was the mental stress associated with having a learning disability. This theme consisted of 11 content units. Edith felt that the mental stress of life on top of having learning disabilities caused “*further difficulties for the girls and that the struggle of society is only increasing the need to have schools like Rose Livingston*” as options for the girls and boys who are unable to learn in the mainstream setting. Edith further elaborates:

*“Nothing wrong with Gemma at all, she’s just limited in her English because she had the problem and of course her mother was too. Everything was back to front and I had to take her into school and start her off again because everything was back to front and they didn’t recognize it at the school because that was overcrowded ... they just put all the children together you know and it’s not on really, each child is very important to me no matter if it’s my child or somebody else’s they need to have the same sort of care”.*

***My daughter was ostracized in the big classes of her old school***

Edith felt that Gemma got “*pushed out, ostracized*” in the mainstream setting and that “*overcrowded classes didn’t meet specific learning needs.*” Edith comments:

*“The classes at [old school] are very, I don’t know if you’ve been there but they are crowded, there quite big classes of thirty odd and I think that’s too high for any teacher to try and get through all of them if there’s a lot of them and they push them all into one sort of group and you know you just don’t know where you stand really”...*

It was apparent from all three parents that the girls’ previous education setting did not meet their specific learning needs and that they were getting pushed to the back or the outside.

***She has an attitude on her***

Grace felt that Ally still had some emotional and behavioural issues but that the intervention had supported her in working on these:

*“She’s got an attitude on her and they are working on it down there, she goes into that mood and nobody knows what’s wrong with her”.*

For Edith and Margaret they are very pleased with the level of development that has taken place in the emotional and behavioural realm. Edith comments on Gemma’s development:

*“I, well I think she’s starting to express herself more, she’s coming out and talking more. She used to get a bit verbal and a bit swearsy ... times, but it has*

*improved a lot since she has been there but before that she was a very angry little girl, and she usually comes down and realizes and in another few hours she's back into herself again".*

Margaret comments:

*"No she's very good actually she's um, well she doesn't have any mood swings or things like that, like some of the girls. She's not angry, she never gets angry ever. You know because she sometimes tells me about some of the girls getting angry and that some of them are screaming and kicking and carrying on and oh... I think "oh thank God you're not like that" but Joette says, oh she said: "I try and calm them down mum"... "Oh you're a mother hen Joette".*

The parents/whānau had various opinions about the girls' social and emotional development. These varied between experiencing positive changes in their ability to control emotions, to continually experiencing emotional and behavioural issues. However, the parents/whānau did articulate that they were able to discuss these matters with the girls now and that they were pro- active in supporting the girls to work through these difficulties with the help of the school.

#### **4.2.3 Parent Minor Theme**

There was one minor theme; the whānau commented that their child loved it at school.

##### ***She loves it there***

All three parents commented on how much the girls enjoyed being at the school and how they often cannot wait to get back after the holidays. They also noted the difference in the girls' general attitude and happiness in life. Edith comments on Gemma's development since her placement at RL:

*"She's happy, she's different altogether and respectful of herself now". She just loves it there; she loves all the caregivers and talks very warmly about them..."*

Margaret says of Joette:

*"She just loves it there she loves all the caregivers, and talks very warmly about them".*

From these comments it was clear that the parents/whānau had very positive perceptions of the girls' attitudes towards being at a special residential school.



## PART 3: Teachers

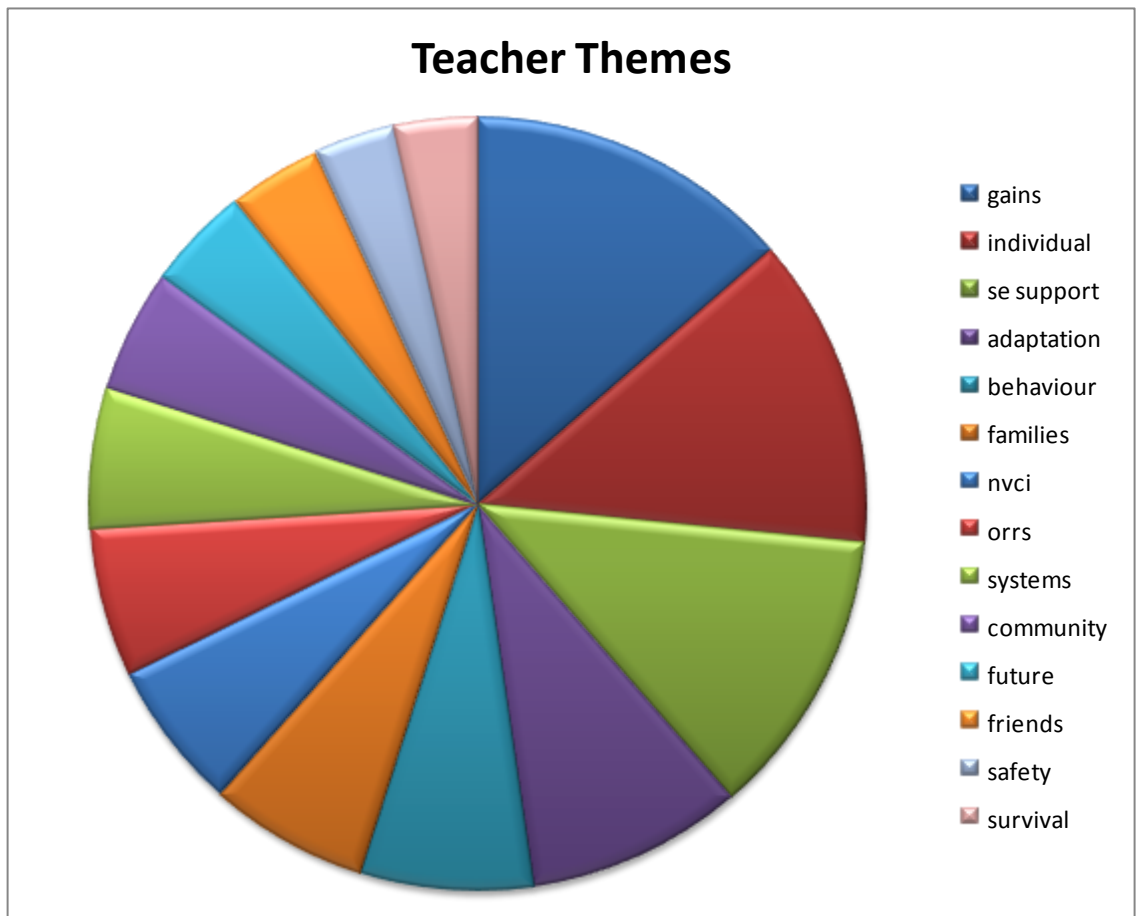


Figure 5: Teachers Themes

### 4.3.1 Teachers' Major Themes

There are four major themes that make up over 40 % of the data, six secondary themes that make up approximately 40 % of the data, and four minor themes contributing to 20 % of the data.

#### *Most students gain a tremendous amount in the long term in relation to academic and social progress*

This was the largest group of identified benefits discussed by the teachers. This theme was made up of 63 content units. Understandably, they focused on the educational and social/emotional learning development for the students. As a group, the teachers commented on the overall holistic package the residential school offered the students; Michael comments:

*“Residential setting, school, and staff provide stability and build student independence” also stating that the ‘intervention of school doubles learning’.*

I ask Michael how effective the school is, he comments:

*“It supplies the girls with dietary knowledge, hygiene knowledge, knowledge about for the first time ever, they know where their academic abilities are and they can think “oh my god, I am here because I am way behind” you know, for some it’s a bit hard but they quickly realize that everyone else are kind of, in the same boat”.*

Michael further elaborates:

*“I find it’s very powerful to have them here 24/7 full-stop, because that means it is all embracing and all encompassing” ... “Most gain a tremendous amount academically and socially”.*

However, in order for the students to achieve both academically and socially,

Michael commented:

*“the key to this school and student success is to buy in and I think probably, one of the most effective things of this school is the 24/7 care, residential because the girls have to, there is a lot of pressure on them to buy in, they can’t just go home and dump it all on their family everyday”.*

The teaching staff clearly felt that the special residential school was a pivotal intervention for these girls and, not only enabled their education to develop, but also, facilitated the development of social skills, all of which had an overall positive long term effect on the academic and social progress enabling them to return to mainstream equipped to succeed.

***Special school creates feeling of inclusion for girls and can more adequately cater to their individual learning needs and allows them to prosper***

The second most important theme discussed by the teachers was the inclusion the girls received by attending a special residential school. This theme consisted of 60 content units. The teachers articulated their belief in the inclusive pedagogy within the segregated setting. The inclusion the girls received, by being with other ‘like minds’ far outweighs the separation experienced in their previous schooling environment and that the girls no longer felt on the ‘margins’ of mainstream. Vanessa retells an example of inclusion:

*“Some of these girls are exposed to an environment they have never seen before, beach, mountains, skiing, camping, like they are the kids that don’t go on camp because they might wet the bed and so on but here they are not excluded from anything... our community employs students for work experience and with that they give us feedback on things they need to improve on”*

The interview data revealed teachers believe that RL provides the girls with a safe, structured, predictable environment that allows the girls to feel a sense of security and to belong in a group where disability was not what differentiated them from others instead it was what united them. The teachers felt that the openness the students could feel in being accepted for who they were, as they were, and their ability as educators to meet the individual specific learning needs, increased the students' academic and social confidence.

Michael comments:

*“Lesson planning and planning for special needs is individual based and geared around specific needs of students.”*

I ask Vanessa what additional experiences the girls get that they might not get at their day school, Vanessa comments:

*“Pastoral care – they get individual learning program, they get um a sense of belonging, some of them don't even have that, some of them don't even know what house they are going home to...regularity, routine, stability, control boundaries, safety, opportunities to be rewarded, and they work towards self-independence, and I think we get to really identify the students by having them 24 hours in totality”.*

The teaching participants felt that the girls were able to invest their trust in the teachers and it was acceptable to get extra help and attention offered through the *“targeted teaching focus and student centred approach to curriculum”*. Michael comments on the overall degree of resources available to the students:

*“School environment has the people, money and practitioners on site to support high needs”.*

The teachers unanimously agreed being at a residential school fostered a greater sense of community, belonging and wellbeing than the previous school experiences the students had been involved in. They also felt that the specialist support systems in place at the school could not be reproduced in a mainstream setting, making the residential school a unique schooling opportunity for those students who required these services.

***Special needs units and developments in mainstream setting have plenty of specialist support however; some still require extra support of teachers in the field.***

The third largest area discussed by teaching participants was the extra support some students require alongside the already heavily supported inclusion system. This area consisted of 56 content units. Teaching participants commented on the extra support

implemented in the mainstream more recently and noted that although there is a greater degree of targeted teaching and learning, as well as special needs practitioners and accommodations, this still leaves a gap. Vanessa comments:

*“Sometimes there isn’t a suitable place for the student to go...I think we like to think that there is all these schools out there but we struggle to find suitable places”.*

Not all students’ individual needs are being met and these are largely the students that benefit the most from R.L intervention as Vanessa notes: *“yes inclusion, yes mainstream”* yet she felt that the intervention faculty is a necessary component, alongside the mainstream education spectrum of provision. Vanessa elaborates

*“I see this inclusion as a fantastic idea, that hasn’t worked. When I see inclusion works is fine up to intermediate, why doesn’t it work? Because teenagers become hormonal, nasty, vindictive, and pecking. We find that the girls get up to the intermediate level and they start to really struggle, they are seeing themselves as different, they are told they are different, they are bullied, their self-esteem drops. I believe at this time they are too fragile and their peers too intolerant and it becomes very difficult for them”.*

The teachers felt that rather than focusing on the continual conflict of inclusion, mainstreaming, and exclusion, the NZ education system should instead focus on providing a full range of options on the educational spectrum for NZ families and whānau. Michael comments:

*“If the girls didn’t come here and stayed in their old school they would keep falling behind or wouldn’t go”...This school is part of the puzzle, it’s not for everybody, special schools have to have a place”...*

The teaching participants commented on the new partnership approach and roles with government agencies working alongside special education as not being more effective, Michael notes:

*“New special needs partnership roles with government agencies were not really more effective”*

Vanessa adds:

*“Inclusion is a fantastic idea that hasn’t worked”... “It’s very well to have this inclusion idea when the rest of our system is working against this system”.*

The teachers continually reinforced their perception of the role of special residential provision as a fundamental and necessary educational provision that caters to the special educational needs for young adults in NZ society.

***Special curriculum is adapted to meet the balance of life and social skills and has adapted teaching methods***

The fourth largest area discussed by the teaching participants was the special curriculum adaptation utilized at RL. This theme consisted of 42 content units. The teachers discussed the balance sought in the adaptations of the special curriculum with that of the counterpart in mainstream. Staff noted the focus on both the academic and social skills development as essential to meeting the students overall needs, Vanessa comments:

*“We teach the students how to be responsible and independent”.*

Participants noted how these more specialized concerns would be taken as ‘givens’ in the mainstream setting and that the students attending RL needed to be taught these skills that most adolescent girls would already possess. Michael elaborates:

*“Ok so they have individualized education plans IEP’s specific to academic and social and it’s very much a 50/50 split, um in a mainstream school you are pretty much expected by high school age to have your social stuff sorted out, and it concentrates on the academic, whereas we concentrate on the social skills/life skills as well as the academic”.*

The teaching participants emphasized the targeted teaching and learning areas integrated into R.L pedagogy as key components to the girls’ successful social and emotional development. Academic outcomes are delicately balanced with social and life skills in order to meet the holistic needs of the students. This strengthens the girls’ sense of self and builds their esteem in order that they can reintegrate into their home communities effectively.

#### **4.3.2 Secondary Themes**

There were also six secondary themes: these comprised of behaviour and boundaries, parents and home life, non-violent crisis intervention, future restructure of ORRS funding, management decisions, and community.

***Behaviour and boundaries***

The fifth largest theme discussed by the teaching participants was behaviour and boundaries. This theme consisted of 33 content units. The teachers discussed the IBP as being “*Integral to special Ed*” because it specifically addressed the social, emotional, and behavioural concerns for each individual and provided an accurate, organically occurring

set of objectives to implement in any given situation. As well as providing a framework to meet the presenting difficulty, it also encouraged students to take responsibility for their actions. Michael comments:

*(the) “School wide behaviour manual is very important” and that the “school focuses on individual circumstances of girls and their taking ownership of their behaviour”.*

Michael elaborates further on the philosophical framework underscoring the pedagogy practised at RL: (the)

*“Behaviour philosophy is built around the consequences of the real world – society with rules and expectations”.*

Vanessa reinforces the position of this theoretical framework in the day to day practices, stating that the:

*“School focuses on moving away from controlling behaviours of students to (the) students owning choices and consequences”.*

The behaviour management policy and practice implemented across the school is an integral part of the success of the students’ academic and social development.

### ***Parents and home life varies amongst the students***

The sixth largest area discussed by the teaching participants, concerned the girls’ parents and whānau and the home environment. This theme consisted of 31 content units. The teaching participants commented on the role of parents/whānau in the education of the girls noting specifically that their familiar/social historical biography did impede on the work of both special and mainstream schools in various different ways, with one teacher stating: *“Home environment can hinder student success”.*

I ask Matthew, “In what ways do you think being resident on site helps the girls”?

Matthew retells an example to qualify his point:

*“I guess, a lot of them haven’t had good homes so having like a few stable people in their life is a first sometimes, and the residential staff I suppose, sort of take on that mum role, or dad role in some cases, and they are good at it, I suppose, and for the girls knowing that support is down there and having boundaries is huge because the rat bag ones tend to walk all over mum at home – I’ve got a student here whose mum is nearly completely blind and more limited than her, so you know she is the more powerful person in the relationship most of the time “I’m not going to school today” well “yes you are, you have to” “no I am not”, what are you going to do about it because you can’t drive me, because you can’t drive? I can walk but I’m not going to”.*

However, Vanessa commented that there were also many benefits for the family/whānau in sending girls to Rose Livingston, as Vanessa notes:

*“Parents are rewarded by student happiness, independence and improvements during their stay at the school”.*

The teaching participants discussed a variety of home related areas. These ranged from the biographical history of the parents/whānau inflicting on the students success both at the school and when they return home, to the gratitude parents and whānau expressed to the school for the positive changes in the girls’ social, emotional, and academic development. They also expressed their perception that the parents/whānau should be given more choice in the special education placement of the student.

### ***Non-violent crisis intervention (NVC) ‘we will make you’ – half way between youth justice and mainstream***

The seventh largest area discussed by the teaching participants was the use of NVC. This theme area consisted of 29 content units. The school behaviour manual supports Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) philosophy, however, alongside this the school heavily invests in NVC training for all staff members and uses this in any situation where the students’ behaviour is escalating and is likely to put either the individuals safety at risk or will involve the destruction of property. In this instance, the student is physically restrained and taken to a thinking room where the door is locked. The school teachers feel this is a necessary component to the therapeutic intervention work they do with the students as Michael notes:

*“There is the possibility of using non-violent crisis intervention, physically transporting the girls if we have too – which is something you would see in an um youth justice facility. You wouldn’t see in a mainstream school and we use it here as a last resort – so we are half-way in between mainstream and youth justice...but one of the important things about this school is that the backstop is there. Actually yes you will do it, we will make you. That has a big influence on a lot of these girls who have spent their lives saying nah... you can’t make me and this time we say well sorry, but we will make you”.*

The philosophy underpinning the teaching staff’s use of NVC is to keep the individual safe, and to work towards changing some of the entrenched, high end level behaviour. This is a highly controversial area within special education, however from the teaching participants’ perspective an effective behaviour management principle and practice.

### ***Future restructure of ORRS funded students and staff ideas and envisions***

The eighth largest area discussed by the teaching participants was the future restructure of special education. This theme consisted of 24 content units. The teachers all had future envisions of how they felt the special education future of NZ could be developed. Matthew notes:

*“Like any school or institution change takes a little while”.*

Michael comments:

*“I think the special needs review will be really interesting to see if anything happens out of that, and I am hoping it will, because I think special needs has always been a kind of tag-on....what I would like to see is more money for the individual students who have very high needs, to actually cater to their needs. Every school has to dip into its own pot of money, to top up, even the ORRS funding, the primary schools then have to top that up to what they think the real needs are. They need a bigger pool and a wider acceptance of ORRS nominated students, it’s very hard to get ORRS applications”.*

The teaching participants had considered the special education review and each had their own perspective on how they felt the future of special education could more thoroughly meet the needs of the students.

### ***Management decisions – a million systems in place here***

The ninth largest area discussed by teaching participants was the management systems currently operating at RL. This theme consisted of 27 content units. Michael comments on the progressive research and management focus for the future of increasing the school evidence base:

*(we are) “Looking at getting more long term data on the future of past students and have been increasing the data management system to more thoroughly record individual student behaviour during intervention”.*

It was clear to the teaching participants that the use of evidence driven data management systems enhances the reliability of management structures and increases the positive management of student behaviour.

### ***Community***

The tenth largest area discussed by the teachers was the role of community in the girls’ lives. This area consisted of 24 content units. The teachers discussed the student



involvement in community prior to the intervention placement as minimal. They felt that the intervention and reintegration program supports the girls to re-connect with their wider home community in a more positive and meaningful way, prior to attending RL. Vanessa notes:

*“For a lot of the girls’ community wasn’t a dominant part of their lives before coming here, we connect them to their communities during reintegration and during their stay here”.*

The teachers also made reference to the pivotal role reintegration plays in student success settling back into their home communities

*“Reintegration is key to student success post Rose Livingston intervention”.*

While they attend Rose Livingston, they are exposed to and have the option of participating in a wide range of events and activities with the wider community in the region. This exposure initiates the transition process of reacquainting the students in their home communities during reintegration.

### **4.3.3 Minor Themes**

There were three minor themes these were the challenge of the girls envisioning their future, friendship difficulties and the double edged sword of being labelled a special school.

#### ***Challenge when girls cannot see themselves in the future***

The teachers discussed the latent focus in the adapted social and learning skills curriculum being built around self-actualization and perception broadening techniques. Michael discussed the “*envisioning*” process he takes students through as individuals beginning with their current academic and social place and how far they could extend themselves from this basis if they worked hard and held a vision of this goal.

Michael comments:

*“We have to show them visually, I find, so things like um there IEPs, you can show them there, you know, they’ll just say “oh readings a waste of time, I am a hopeless reader” whatever, and you can show them well here’s your IEP, here’s your reading age, it says your reading at a 10 year old level, do you remember what you were when you came here, “no”, ok well let’s look at the old data when you came you were reading at a seven year level”, ok, this is a book you couldn’t read, “oh that’s a baby’s book” they say, “right so that’s what you couldn’t read (visually) this is the book you are reading now, see all*

*that hard work, “yeah ok”, so what do you need to do yourself, right ok, keep working, keep working at it”. I find the visual stuff is good”.*

The teaching staff discussed their pedagogy and their endeavour to bring a very concrete element to all learning activities in order to teach the girls projection skills. The teaching participants implemented a number of specific teaching techniques to broaden the girls’ sense of self.

### ***Friendship difficulties***

The teaching staff noted the issue of friendships striking a particular difficulty for some of the girls and that in designing the adaptive curriculum around individual IEP programs these more specific concerns could be addressed and monitored. Specific learning programs could also be put in both residential and school wide association plans. Michael elaborates:

*“And probably another challenge for me, which is the same for a lot of teachers, is that um some of these girls find friendships really difficult. They have the best intentions of being friends, but they lack a lot of the basic skills necessary to be friends. They can’t share with other friends, they won’t share their friend with this friend, or they won’t share their stuff or they’ll yell at their friend and wonder why they won’t be their friend anymore”.*

### ***Double edged sword of school isolated, why aren’t there more places – why are there not more special schools***

The final two themes discussed by the teaching participants, consisting of 16 content units each was the isolated position of being a special residential school and the possibility of extending these schools around the greater NZ region. The double edged sword of the school is centred on one central premise; it is isolated in one sense, yet it also provides students with safety and protection. The combined extra curricula and limited life experiences, the girls get experiences at RL that enrich their lives. Matthew summarises:

*“I just don’t think you would ever find a system that works for everybody, you know one philosophy, I suppose that works for everybody, there’s got to be a bit of give and take”.*

## PART 4: Residential Staff

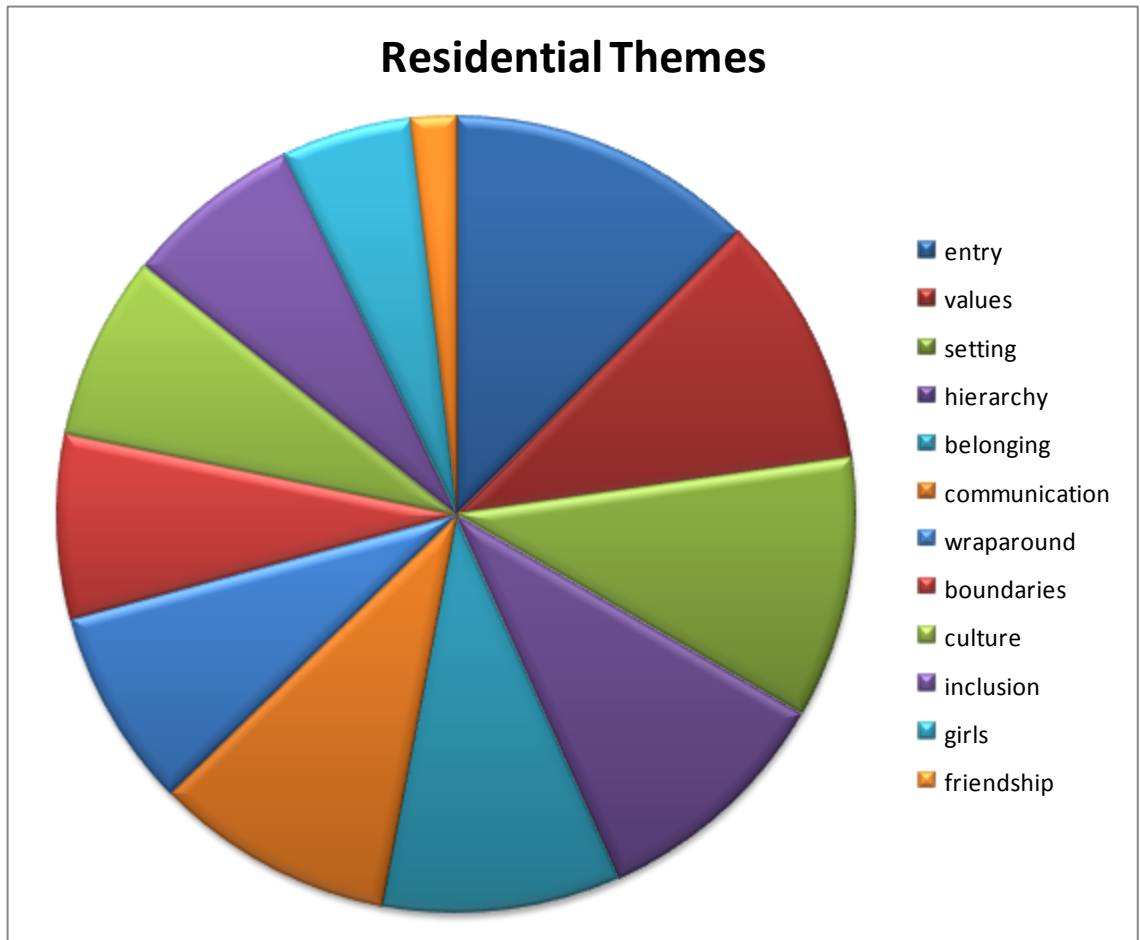


Figure 6: Residential Themes

### 4.4.1 Residential Major Themes

There are four major themes that make up 40 % of the data, six secondary themes that make up a further 50% of the data and two minor themes.

#### *Entry Issues*

The largest theme as indicated in the pie graph was entry issues, consisting of 40 content units. Residential staff addressed the pertinent issues associated with the practicalities within the system structure. Of the most pressing concerns was the current management procedure in the enrolment process and the large ratio of staff to students in the cottage setting. Staff raised the point that in the past the enrolment process was structured to monitor intake numbers in order to ensure there was a more one-to-one setting when the girls and their whānau first arrive. They have noticed the significant impact of increased

amounts of intake numbers on the reduced level of emotional care available to the individual families due to the increasing numbers. Leah comments:

*“Now that’s(coming to a new school) really hard because you have a new school, you’re away from home, you have to get into the pecking order, you have your peers checking huh she’s got the label jacket she will be popular that will give them a lot of clout. When you have a whole lot of new girls who can’t, well I feel you can’t keep a hold on all of the girls. Smaller numbers coming in, I found was better and getting to know the family”.*

Clearly the staff interviewed felt that the pressures of running at a minimal cost meant that some of the practices in the residential cottages were compromised. As Robert comments on the “reapportion” of funding in order to prioritize and accommodate students and family’s needs in the residential faculty, he notes:

*“the money can be re-apportioned you know, it wouldn’t cost any more than just a shuffling of coin, from one side to the other, but I mean, those are all possibilities” and that in terms of structural and management issues ‘softness has strength’.*

The issues highlighted centred on economic allocations and management structures and procedures. The residential staff identified that there were practices, policies and procedures that influenced their practices in the residence. Staff indicated that the same ideology currently implemented in the school setting could apply to the residential setting whereby instead of having large cottages, they could have smaller units and this would remove the volume, remove the stimulus and enable intensive emotional and behavioural support structures catering to individual needs more specifically.

### ***Residential value is in the values of social and life skills the girls gain***

The second largest theme as indicated in the pie graph was the residential value of the school. This theme consisted of 34 content units. The residential value of the school largely centres on the interpersonal and intrapersonal skills based focus. This includes emotional intelligence areas largely taken for granted in a mainstream setting such as friendship skills, interpreting behaviour, responding, and relating to staff, and students in a free moving setting. Interactions also play a crucial role in the girl’s developmental processes. Robert elaborates:

*“And more incidentally, so it’s not just curriculum or specific targets that you are dealing with or just social and life skills, its all, all interaction. You know, and that’s interpersonal skills the girls may not or may have...everything is, has potential for a learning experience...so incidental things just pitched at the*

*individual it's, relevant, it's real time and it creates strong association for them because your imparting theory, but also doing the practical, and so they have a link with one and the other, because a lot of our kids, the link doesn't establish very well".*

The residential setting incorporates the girls' individual personal development areas such as safety, hygiene, health, personal grooming, and general livelihood functions essential to individual independence and self-governing. Although it is a collective free moving living environment, within the collective the individual is given greater self-autonomy, Robert elaborates:

*"We give life-skills that allow independence then they become productive in society".*

The residential staff discussed their opinion that the focus on the emotional and social realm allows the girls to transcend personal limitations such as personal histories and to go on an inward journey of personal development. The residential aspect of the school focus more exclusively on specific life skills and social skills than normal mainstream boarding schools and they teach the girls fundamental adaptive skills.

***Institutional setting of residential is by-product of being a mass free moving setting, but it does provide a sense of security and safety for the girls.***

The third largest theme discussed by staff was the institutional aspect of the residential setting. This theme consisted of 34 content units. Staff acknowledged the institutional element of the school however; they attribute this to structural arrangements rather than to intrinsic principles of operation or management.

Structurally the residential setting differs to a home setting substantially, because of the large numbers of students per cottage (24), and the economic funding allocation ratio of staff to students restricts the amount of freedom and therefore establishes a more institutionalized structure such as mass eating, health and hygiene routines. Staff do, however, endeavour to defuse this management structure as much as they are able to through the use of strategic programming and grouping of numbers. Robert comments:

*"With special needs, they learn best with structure and routine. They don't like surprises and they learn through repetition so you can only have that in a consistent fashion through routine. So that's the rationale behind it".*

Alice adds: *“The institutional part of life, you know we do a bit of that and we have to do a bit of that, but I think some of that also adds security, it’s safety, it’s, knowing routines”*.

Overall, staff perceived the focus of the residential structure serves to promote a sense of safety and security for the students by providing consistent, reliable, functional training whereby routine and ritual are fundamental components.

### ***Hierarchical, egocentric and some self-serving behaviour***

The final major theme discussed by staff concerned the current management system. This theme consisted of 32 content units. Residential staff shared their frustrations and concerns in the management of the residential setting. Collectively, they felt the current hierarchical power arrangements worked against the central premise of their work and served to hinder the work they did with the girls. Staff felt that the two systems, the school and residence, work in opposition to each other and have led to the fractured state of staff harmony currently evident within the divided top-down approach.

Robert elaborates:

*“I’m starting to hear from colleagues their feeling that these are questions that should be asked by senior leadership, you know, ... they might be dealing with the ministry and all sorts of other compliant, requirements and things like that, but they are removed, and decisions that come from on high that aren’t coming from the coal face are often misattributed, they aren’t helpful, and they prevent us from doing what we do best and I think there needs to be a complete shuffle in thinking around that”*.

Residential staff voiced their concerns regarding the superficial features of professional development programs, unsafe workplace practices, and the need to address the team personality dimensions.

Leah comments:

*“Current residential approach to professional development is superficial”*.

Alice further adds:

*“I think the thing here, is that we are not coming from a position of collaboration and that we are coming from a position of blame and that’s just the culture, and I don’t think it’s always been this way, and I don’t think it will always be this way....but I do think it’s a safety issue, people are “oh it’s you, it’s not me” ...that’s one of the biggest things I have put it down to, is tolerance”*.

The residential participants highlighted and indicated key areas of concern. It was noted that the current managerial style is a traditional top-down structure. Residential staff perceived that this approach works against the internal progress made in addressing the ‘culture of blame’. Robert comments:

*“Love working with the kids, it’s the big kids that cause all the problems”.*

#### **4.4.2 Residential Secondary Themes**

##### ***Segregated setting of school vs. segregated emotional and physical segregation in home communities, collective belonging***

The fifth most important area discussed by staff was the segregated position of a special school in relation to the community setting. This theme consisted of 31 content units. Residential staff acknowledged the widely spread debate regarding the segregated setting a special school occupies in comparison to the community mainstream setting. However, they firmly believed that inclusion starts with each other and that although in technical terms the logistical situation of the girls does separate them, they experience the collective belonging and inclusion to a far greater degree than previously experienced in their home settings.

Alice elaborates:

*“ I do think there is a huge inclusion in here, I know that there isn’t such a huge inclusion within the community, but to me inclusion starts with each other, because a lot of these girls have never had inclusion, they might be in the school with the boys and girls but there’s no inclusion in it ...once they get that, it builds their self-esteem to be able to go to the community, to be able to go across to the local school...you know this school isn’t for everybody, but I do think that the inclusion the girls get here is actually a lot better than the actual exclusion they get from in a mainstream school”.*

Robert further adds:

*“Just the thing of being or having a friend. I think coming from the mainstream they have always been the bottom of the heap, they have always been picked on by the bullies, and some of their behaviour is defence mechanisms because of that...so when they find that there are other girls like them suddenly the hierarchical thing changes, suddenly they are not the bottom of the heap, suddenly they can sit and talk with people and people are actually showing interest in them, suddenly the world is different”.*

The staff expressed the fact that 90% of these girls had never had a friend or friendships before coming to RL and that their developmental focus on social and life skills is because of the segregated, isolated and alienated position the girls formally occupied in society.

***Residential staff must keep emphasis on communication***

The sixth most discussed area was staff communication. This theme consisted of 31 content units. The residential staff stressed the shift in thinking that they felt needed to take place in order to reconcile the fragmented attitudes apparent in staff and management. They felt that a move towards greater tolerance of difference rather than the deficit approach of “fixing” would enable staff to support each other, to become strength focused and would increase general motivation and morale that in their opinion currently was holding them back. Alice elaborates:

*“I mean we have been given this thing at the moment on, they want some ideas on how to fix these things, you know we have these problems we have these things that people have identified as these problems and so putting it out there “what do you think” and I think the biggest thing that keeps coming back to me is tolerance, there is no tolerance here anymore and you know they talk about communication being the biggest issue, but I don’t always communicate effectively, I am running from here to there but there is little tolerance”.*

Communication was essential in ensuring the residential provisions effective management and day to day running. Staff noted that because of the 24/7 wrap around approach to the students’ learning and care, the residential staff numbers far exceeded the teaching staff and the shift work relied exclusively on effective communication channels between all staff members. Again, the communication frequency was linked to staff morale and it was noted that the deficit climate amongst some staff members worked against the greater good of the residential component, currently perceived as undervalued.

***Residential school has 24/7 wrap around approach to students learning***

The seventh most discussed topic area concerned the 24/7 wrap around approach to student learning. This theme consisted of 26 content units. The residential staff felt that the 24/7 wrap around approach to student learning characterized the unique level of care the intervention provides for the girls and is part of the outstanding progress many students make in their time at Rose Livingston.

Robert commented on the 24/7 wrap around approach as a cornerstone to the girl’s success as it enabled the incidental learning to gain maximum velocity by providing countless opportunities for the students to experience the bridge between theory and practice, often missing in EBD students’ development. This included learning new ways to respond to



situations that are more in alignment with the desired result, to practise feeling/relating/responding and to view situations in new ways.

Robert comments:

*“So incidental things just pitched at the individual its, its relevant, its real time and it creates strong association for them because your imparting theory, but also doing the practical, and so they have a link with one and the other, because a lot of our kids the link doesn’t establish very well”.*

The incidental 24/7 wrap around approach to the residential setting, provides countless opportunities for the girls as a collective and for the individual in a more home like environment where the free moving setting resembled more closely the mainstream world.

Robert elaborates:

*“And more incidentally so it’s not just curriculum or specific targets that you are dealing with or just social and life skills, its all, all interaction. You know, and that’s interpersonal skills the girls may not or may have, that’s hygiene as you come across things, it’s bed routines, all routines, its everything you have a responsibility for to supervise can and is potentially a teaching and learning experience, and that’s I think your definition of the 24/7 wrap around, everything is, has potential for a learning experience”.*

The staff felt that this is what separated the pivotal role of a residential setting from that of a day school setting. Because of the clinical nature of the school environment it restricted the real life compatibility of experience the girls are likely to encounter, in what Robert calls "real time" situations where the skills learnt at RL can be drawn on. These skills enable the girls’ to have quality life experiences.

### ***Consistency and choices key to ABA***

The eighth most discussed area was consistency and choices in relation to the application of applied behaviour analysis (ABA). This theme consisted of 24 content units. The residential staff discussed choice as being pivotal to the ABA theory application in a free moving setting. They perceived the benefits of applying the principals of ABA through teaching choice and consequence the girls learn to support their own individual development both intrinsically and extrinsically. Alice notes:

*“We do a lot of choice stuff, ... I try to encourage them to make the choices for themselves and to think, and ask the question, I put it back to them you know what do you think, because most of the time they do have it right, so it builds their confidence”.*

Robert further elaborates:

*“Consistency is the hallmark...everything really we try to achieve is early intervention, its acknowledging those anxieties, giving them time, listening to them, reflect back, paraphrasing and so forth but consistency in its implementation is the key”.*

Alice states:

*“I would say 99% of the time the ABA is effective and I think the 1 percent of the time that it doesn't work is because it's not used consistently”.*

The residential staff perceived the benefits of having an across the board behaviour manual as a fundamental component of the success in supporting the girls to learn new ways of responding and relating to situations. However, it was noted, that consistency in its application was pivotal to the overall success.

***Creating social worker role for parental relations and relationship building, also need to address cultural side!***

The ninth most discussed topic was the relationship between home and school. This theme consisted of 24 content units. Residential staff referred to the future revision of parent/whānau relationships. They felt that increasing emphasis needed to be put on building and maintaining parent/whānau relationships in order for student progress, learning, and development to be effectively transferred to the home setting. Robert elaborates:

*“I mean RL is looking at developing a parenting program in some form or another, and I'm very interested in seeing how it turns out, because I think there is a real need”.*

Alice states:

*“We do do a lot of work with parents, but it's not the intensity, to me that is needed”*

The residential staff expressed a desire to form closer alliances with parents/whānau and to have further on-going support with past and current students' family/whānau. This, ties in with the gap in cultural expertise and integration noticed and acknowledged by residential staff. The staff report that cultural knowledge is limited and cultural integration of rituals and activities is limited.

### ***Inclusive ideology***

The tenth most important area discussed by staff concerned inclusive ideology. This theme consisted of 23 content units. Residential staff strongly agreed that the intervention this school provides meets a real NZ need and that when inclusion ideology is considered it must be within the larger global framework in relation to education, Robert comments: *“Special education must be considered in the context of the global picture of the state of education”*. Staff felt that this particular minority group has very real and specific needs currently un-catered for in the mainstream setting, however as Robert comments: *“The problem is how best to cater to a minority group with specific needs in a world that is measured by money and power”?*

They do not believe they have all the answers nor that they provide an exclusively efficient service but that within the wider picture they meet a very real need.

### **4.4.3 Residential Minor Themes**

***Girls’ and boys’ behaviour is particularly different and has different long-term outcomes.***

Residential staff believe girls learn by relating to the world in an emotional way and that the fundamental feature of their learning to relate in more positive ways rests on their coming to terms with the emotional self, the feeling realm. This is where the residential focus on life skills and social skills enables them to interconnect maturation alongside emotional and behavioural developmental levels. Once the girls adjust to adolescence and the associated feelings, they more readily achieve a state of emotional equilibrium.

Robert comments:

*“I think the world’s full of distraction, and adolescent teenagers, the whole sexuality thing is a huge distraction and it’s a risk, a lot of our girls are vulnerable and I think two years out of that mix isn’t going to harm and it does enhance their learning because the distractions are minimised”*.

Residential staff believed two years is just long enough for the girls to get a ‘handle’ on this emotional part of life and some girls would benefit from an extended period of intervention.

*“There is a real dilemma with girls particularly because they are entering into puberty and are coming to terms with the whole emotional part of life the two year time tenure is only just enough time for some of them to get a handle on that part of their life”*.

Staff perceived the benefits of the single sex residential setting enabled the girls to focus on fundamental social and emotional development exclusively without adding any further distractions.

***Friendship issues can and does create a lot of stress for the girls***

Residential staff noted that one of the largest areas creating turbulence and conflict is friendship issues. The girls often find friendship issues difficult to manage and this is highlighted within the free moving group dynamics. Robert elaborates:

*“But it’s interesting though, I think of all the issues that I would see in a residential setting it is a friendship issue that is the most significant and creates the most stress for the girls. Is she my friend now, is she not my friend?” Just the thing of being or having a friend”.*

The staff stated that for some of the girls this is the first time they have had friends so they are learning fundamental friendship skills such as sharing friends, and not engaging in more negative behaviours such as becoming possessive, jealous, controlling, and domineering.

## 4.5 Cross Case Analysis

An analysis of all the data revealed major similarities and differences in the data;

### Similarities across data

1. Overall all stakeholders thought the school served a purpose, it was clear the parents in particular and the students felt it meet their needs.
2. Teachers, parents/whānau and residential workers strongly support a continuum of services, including special residential schools.
3. Inclusive education when situated within a broader global context includes moving beyond the 'physical placement' of girls with EBD and instead promotes learning communities built on cultures, structures and practices that accommodate diversity.

### Differences across data

1. There appears to be some deficit theorising from the teachers about the students' home and community setting. This could potentially reduce the positive collaboration and participation of the parents/whānau in the partnership model.
2. There is clearly a stigma attached to the school which seems to be a barrier to the school operating in a more inclusive way.
3. The girls perceived the friendship issues they encountered as problematic and difficult terrain to negotiate, whereas the other stakeholders did not.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

This research explores a live-in boarding school for girls with special learning, social, emotional or behavioural difficulties in New Zealand, through the perspectives and experiences of major stake holders, teachers, residential support staff, whānau, and in particular the students. The participants' views were sought to understand the value placed on the school by those who use and provide the services. This research aimed to gauge the impact the school has on the lives of the students, how this contributes toward their achieving their goals, and the place in which the participants see this residential school in providing services for girls with emotional and behavioural disorders.

This chapter draws together findings from this research with existing literature about residential special education, inclusive education, and EBD learning. Four overarching themes have emerged from the data sources:

1. The purpose of the residential special school.  
Overall, all stakeholders thought the school served a purpose, it was clear the parents in particular and the students felt it meet their needs.
2. A continuum of services.  
Teachers, parents/whānau, and residential workers strongly support a continuum of services, including special residential schools. However, there is clearly a stigma attached to the school, which seems to be a barrier to the school operating in a more inclusive way.
3. The definition of Inclusive education.  
Inclusive education when situated within a broader global context includes moving beyond the 'physical placement' of girls with EBD and instead promotes learning communities built on cultures, structures, and practices that accommodate diversity. This setting, the *participants* believed, was more inclusive for the girls as they did not experience the marginalization of the mainstream.
4. Competing Paradigms.  
There appeared to be competing paradigms operating within the system, social work versus educational – that is the residential workers found it challenging to operate in an educational setting.

This chapter discusses each of these themes in relation to the existing literature. In order to answer the main research question, *What is the place of a residential special school for girls with EBD in New Zealand*, this chapter is divided into two sections. Section A, begins by summarizing the role of residential special education in meeting the needs of this particular population group, it then proceeds to outline and answer the subsequent research questions, these are:

- What are the girls' perspectives of their experiences attending a residential special school setting?
- What perspective do the girls have of the school, the programme, their home context, and the base school?
- What are the teachers' support staff, parents', and whānau; experiences and perspectives on residential experiences for girls identified with EBD?
- How do these perspectives fit with the development of Special Education provision in New Zealand?

Section B discusses the cross data themes with the literature and raises issues that require further investigation

## Section A

### **5.1 The 'place' of a residential special school for girls with EBD in NZ**

The participants in this study expressed their belief that this residential special school did have a place in the education of girls with EBD in NZ. Each participant group discussed various rationales and reasons underscoring their particular perceptions of the benefits of placement at RL. The students reported improvements in curriculum key competency areas, moving up levels in foundation subjects, achievement in attaining course certificates, and work experience. They also reported increased levels of self-esteem, belonging, and general wellbeing. This was attributed to feelings of safety, community, and mutually reinforcing relationships where the girls felt their individual needs were met.

The teachers reported their perception and experiences working at RL through the positive changes they witnessed in the girls self-esteem and consequent self-efficacy. They commented on the two-fold role of academic achievement and the acquisition of practical skills attained through work placements in the community sector or through specific skill based programs as meeting, two fundamental needs they felt were previously un-meet in the girls' education prior placement. Teaching participants believed RL was a vital

placement in supporting the girls to overcome both self-imposed limitations and socially based marginalization at a crucial time in the girls' development.

Residential staff perceived the intervention placement at RL met a real need particularly in terms of the social and emotional skills they were able to impart supporting the girls to form bridges between skill learning and practice particularly in relation to identifying feelings and how to manage these feelings. They reported on the life skills taught and the acquisition of functional training in supporting the girls' quality of life. Residential staff believed that the life skills the girls learnt while being at RL enabled them to participate in society, to be independent and meet their own needs, and to become functioning productive members of the larger social fabric. They felt strongly that the life skills the girls attained not only enabled them to eventually contribute to the larger market place but also contributed to their ability to maintain this position, as Alice said, *"it's all very well to get a job but if you don't have hygiene skills you won't keep the job"*. Staff perceived the residential component of the intervention was now more widely being recognized in the social media, in terms of the importance of social and life skills in becoming an active member of society.

## **5.2 What are the girls' perspectives of attending a residential special school setting?**

The girls' perceptions of attending RL were positive in relation to the quality of education, care, and support. In particular, the girls valued the smaller classes, the one-to-one academic attention where they were not afraid to ask for the help they needed or to further clarify by asking questions, and the intimate relationships between trusted staff members and in some cases within their friendship groups. They also clearly articulated their appreciation for the residential after-school recreational opportunities to participate in extra curricula activities and sports teams as well as the regular weekend programmes and outings. The girls felt that the two-fold service of RL supported them to not only make significant academic improvements but also allowed them to explore further interests, and participate in activities and events. These experiences enabled their personal sense of achievement and built a repertoire of success stories as described in the interviews. The combined result of these two complimentary components of RL appeared to positively increase the girls' self-esteem, and build overall higher levels of self-efficacy in learning and achievement.



The girls' described how staff and new experiences had contributed to building their self-worth as they felt their individual needs were met through genuine attention to their particular social, emotional and learning needs. They reported that they were *listened to*, that their *feelings mattered*, and that they were encouraged to express these in new and positive ways. This then enabled the appropriate support and care to be implemented and pitched at both the individual and collective community social and emotional needs. Most importantly, they expressed the perception that they felt they belonged and that their well-being was being adequately catered too. Through the specific targeted teaching and social/emotional programs, the girls expressed their perception of feeling more confident about having and meeting their own needs and that they had thought about the future and their long-term goals.

There were some concerns expressed by the girls, in particular friendship issues associated with being at an 'all-girls' boarding school where they both live and learn together and the negative impact this can have on the overall learning environment. The girls discussed the dynamics of the relationships and the groupings of the girls within friendships as being a difficult trajectory to navigate, however felt that it did not impinge on their overall learning and achievement. The literature surrounding the impact of gender specific education provision differs slightly in their orientation to the negative effects of the placement and instead focuses more specifically on forming relationships with the opposite sex (Polat & Farrell, 2002) rather than on the friendship difficulties as highlighted by the girls in this study.

The second concern the girls raised was the negative impact and stereotypes associated with being at or attending a residential special school. This is a well-recognized and publicized aspect in the literature concerning the inclusion/exclusion debate and is centred on the disadvantages of taking a young person out of their community and isolating them from the larger social fabric surrounding mainstream society (Polat & Farrell, 2002; Jahnukainen, 2001). However, the girls did not feel disadvantaged in belonging to their home community setting, more specifically, they felt the labelling and judgment by the local community in attending the special residential school. Polat and Farrell (2002) discuss the negative stereotyping associated with special education as the heart of the inclusion debate and suggest that special schools adequately prepare students for "the

problems they may face as a consequence of being placed there” (Polat & Farrell, 2002, p. 107).

The negative impact of being labelled a special school student is a complex area in which a detailed discussion lies beyond the scope of this thesis. In the context of the inclusion/mainstream/special school debate, the level of care and support a residential facility caters to including evenings and weekends and the appropriately structured educational opportunities the special school attends to would be difficult to replicate in the wider NZ community (Polat & Farrell, 2002).

In considering the significance of these findings it is important to contextualize the girls’ perceptions and experiences alongside their personal history. For a large number of the girls attending RL, their educational experiences have been marked by difficulty, exclusion, marginalization, and general maladaptive behaviours. Therefore their ability to both acknowledge the benefits of their education at RL, and actively participate in a learning community, where their experiences were built around personal successes and visible progress, suggests that (the place of) special residential education can make a difference to the quality of these girls lives, despite the negative perceptions held by the community. This research suggests that there is work to be done with communities around inclusion, diversity, and difference.

### **5.3 What perspective do the girls have of the school, the program, their home context, and the base school?**

The finding that the girls had positive perceptions and experiences of their time at the residential school reflects the general findings in the literature from previous research which reports positive views of residential schooling experiences (Copper, 1993; Jahnukainen, 2001; Polat & Farrell, 2002; Smith et al., 2004). A significant finding from the participants was the specific help they had in addressing their learning difficulties and the academic achievements they had gained by understanding their own emotional wellbeing and learning how to control their behaviour. The finding that almost all of the girls had negative memories from their previous mainstream schooling experiences also supported the findings from previous studies reporting the negative comparisons students made between residential and mainstream schools (Copper, 1993; Jahnukainen, 2001; Polat & Farrell, 2002; Smith et al., 2004). Example’s of these were the feelings of

isolation and lack of support from their teachers they had experienced in mainstream schools. The girls expressed their perception of the teachers not ‘caring’ if you were in class or not and that they did not take the time to explain lessons to the individual, that they set work deadlines and wondered why they were not doing as they were ‘told’.

This highlighted both the findings in the literature and the findings from this study concerning the impact of staff relationships on the students’ sense of wellbeing (Copper, 1993; Jahnukainen, 2001; Polat & Farrell, 2002). The girls stressed the importance of the relationship between staff and students and illustrated this by explaining that the time taken to explain lesson content, illustrate and constructively scaffold individual learning needs, encouraged the girls to feel safer in extending their knowledge and in pushing past previous boundaries. This was perceived as a valuable commodity in comparison to what the girls perceived as the lack of care, understanding, support, or acknowledgement by mainstream counterparts. This reinforces a common finding in the literature that mainstream teachers would benefit from further professional development in areas to do with special educational learning needs (Hornby & Witt, 2008; Wearmouth et al., 2005).

The importance of high quality staff relationships on adolescent achievement is a re-occurring theme in both the literature surrounding EBD residential special education and for Māori youth. In particular the concern is for Māori who as an ethnic group continue to be over represented in the learning and behaviour difficulties in NZ schools and residential facilities (Ministry of Education, 2009). It is well documented that the assertive discipline programme is not culturally situated in the NZ setting and therefore does not include the cultural values and preferences of Māori adolescents and their parents and whānau (Wearmouth et al., 2005). Bishop (2006) identified the importance of balancing behaviour management programs with Māori cultural perspectives and culturally appropriate learning and behaviour resources. Bishop and Berryman (2006) locate the key principle to the problems in all facets of education in the quality of relationships between teachers and students. Quality relationships between practitioners and students move beyond visible symbols of care and become effective because they promote student learning.

The visibility and invisibility of culture is also primarily linked to improving Māori student learning achievement. Bishop (2006) discussed the difficulties associated with *outsiders* understanding the invisible superiority of western cultures

marginalisation of Māori people because it is in the experiential realm that these dynamics are experienced. While, the interview questions did not address this topic area directly, two of the participants in this study were Māori and Māori whānau stated that they felt RL was an effective intervention for Māori girls. However, only 4 content units were recorded by the staff participants and these were related to what was perceived as the lack of culturally responsive practices in the residential facility. Leah commented on what she perceived to be ‘not so much of the cultural side and doesn’t seem to have developed here yet’ further adding ‘One girl, a spiritual girl I didn’t feel her needs were being met for her Māori culture’. In Bishops (2006) study cultural differences were seen not in the protocols or visible elements of culture embodied in schools but more subversively in the marginalisation of Māori ways of seeing and responding to the world. The findings from this study revealed that culture was an area that needs to be more thoroughly addressed.

For practitioners seeking to understand Maori adolescents, it is necessary to comprehend the culture (values, beliefs, practices and preferred ways of knowing and learning). In essence, the identity of being Māori, and all that this entails. Māori students should feel they are able to bring who they are into the school and residential setting. It was clear from the findings in this research that this is definitely an area needing further investigation, as these girls are removed from their home culture and context, it is vital that they experience aspects of their own culture, in daily living.

MacFarlane (1997) suggests that teachers and in this case residential staff can intentionally, work towards the acquisition of learning more things about Māori and Māori ways, and this in itself, has the potential to be a powerful tool to assist in the relationship process of those students who present difficult behaviour.

#### **5.4 What are the teachers’ support staff, parents’, and whānau; experiences and perspectives on residential experiences for girls identified with EBD?**

##### Teachers Perceptions

The teaching staff felt that the girls were able to make significant improvements in their academic progress because of the social and emotional development that takes place simultaneously through the adapted curriculum, which maintains the delicate balance of both social and academic skill based training. Staff felt the curriculum was effective and

they were able to describe practices which demonstrated individual learning, planning for diversity, curriculum adaption, social, and life skills and targeted teaching methods. However, there was some deficit theorising evidenced by teachers in terms of expectation, family background and personal history factors leading to conflict between the culture of the students and the culture of the school. Wearmouth (2009) describes this as the ‘default setting’ where practitioners view their own culture as ‘normal’ and other cultures that differ from this as deviant or deficient (Wearmouth, 2009). This can create unintentional barriers to learning.

In contrast the residential workers felt that family and whānau could potentially be more involved in the therapeutic aspects of the intervention programme. The staff recognised the role of parents/whānau as a three-fold partnership model, and indicated that the development of positive relationships was essential to the work they do in the residential provision. They also felt the school was effective but expressed frustration at not being able to work in a more holistic way. Macfarlane (1997) cites research carried out by Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko and Fernandez (1989), stating that in order to succeed with difficult students, alternative centres need to be communities of support.

The education paradigm clearly prevailed in this context, first and foremost it was a school, secondly a residential facility. The residential workers perceived that many of the opportunities for social learning occurred within the residential context, indicating that if the school and residential workers were able to work together in a more collaborative partnership way, the students would have more opportunities to learn and practice new skills across the board.

### Residential social workers perceptions

Residential staff perceived the intervention placement at RL met a real need, particularly in terms of the social and emotional skills they were able to impart, supporting the girls to build bridges between the missing links they had not formed, in relation to feeling, communicating and action models of wellbeing. This included the modelling and presentation of theory, demonstration of the new strategies and skills, practice of the new skills in a secure setting and feedback about the performance of the practice. Staff discussed the early engagement between the staff members and the students and highlighted several components of intervention practice drawing particular attention to the

subtle ways in which the intervention plans (IEP) and (IBP) creates an environment within which small steps contribute to the overall change process.

Residential staff discussed the combination of factors that contributed to the 24/7 wrap around approach and felt that these would be difficult to replicate in communities around NZ. Contributing factors included, the small class sizes and high adult to student ratio 2:12 (maximum); the 24/7 consistency between residential staff and school staff, on site counselling, safety in the environment, the option to advance to independent flatting situations, community work placements, extra-curricular activities and programs seven days a week as well as regular outdoor education adventures.

The residential programme focuses on age appropriate self-care and life skills, individual and group activities, onsite and off-site activities all of which has a very clear set of commonly agreed behavioural expectations underpinning all aspects of the program. Hornby and Witte (2008) comment in their residential study about the need for further consideration of what aspects of the residential school programme were successful in managing learning and behavioural difficulties, in order that ‘as many as possible of these elements can be implemented in mainstream schools’ (Hornby & Witte, 2008, p. 106). Key components reported by the residential staff as being pertinent to the work they do with the students are outlined below, this is the role and actions of relationships.

### ***Compassionate scaffolding***

The early processes of compassionate scaffolding, creating structural pieces of relationships around which specific interventions, or focused pieces of support, can later be built. This way of thinking about early processes has important implications. Time must be allowed to get the scaffolding right. Too much involvement might mean that the student loses his/her agency and integrity. Too little involvement could mean that the student is left without adequate support.

### ***Strength based***

Strength approaches allow support to be seen as reciprocal rather than one-way processes and this provides a useful way of thinking about empowerment within an intervention context. Thinking about students and parents/whānau as competent and able to give as well as receive support and resources is an important orientation because it is the

relationship between the student and the parents/whānau that will sustain long-term positive change.

### ***Relationships of support***

The findings demonstrated that the intervention process occurs over multi-layered tiers of interconnected relationships. Residential workers primarily concern themselves with relationship building. Normalizing the development of support relationships is an essential characteristic of this work. Support was located on a relational basis, giving as well as receiving. The findings emphasise the recursive nature of effective relationships: they are relationships that allow individuals involved to have agency, to exercise some control over the nature and course of this relationship and critically, they allow all parties to contribute their expertise and wisdom.

### **Parents/whānau experiences perceptions**

Parents and whānau expressed the change apparent over the course of the two year intervention period. They perceived the girls had left home as children with special living and learning needs and progressively developed into young women who had increased maturity, independence, self-esteem, self-control and who demonstrated positive social and emotional learning outcomes. These changes were highlighted as being the most significant aspects of their placement and were apparent to their immediate and wider whānau, present and former school staff.

Parents and family expressed their gratitude for the unique educational opportunity, which combined, the caring and commitment of professionals dedicated to delivering quality service. With regular support via newsletters, IEPs, phone calls, emails, letters, and staff daily notes parents, and whānau were able to feel included in the girls' educational milestones and self-care journey, relieving the tension often felt due to demographic proximity. The regular updates and documented learning strategies and management ensured the parents and whānau were confident in transferring these principles to the home setting.

This finding was evidenced in the recent Special Education review. Nineteen per cent of the respondents commented about what was working well in special education. Special units, special schools, and residential schools were given as examples and were associated

to the expertise, resources, and quality service. It was also noted that the respondents either had a direct negative experience within regular school settings or had envisioned they would not have a positive experience (Ministry of Education, Special Education Review, 2010).

## Section B

### **5.5 The Concept of Inclusive Education**

Internationally the move towards inclusion continues to gain momentum. In response to this international drive, governments, local authorities, and schools are continually developing more inclusive policies and practices in order to include more diversity within mainstream settings. This leaves some aspects of special education provision and residential education in a very uncertain position. However, the behaviour of students termed EBD continues to disrupt, disturb, and in some cases promote inequitable practices in the mainstream setting. Shearman (2003) discusses the stress placed on teachers to include this group of children and the idealized state of inclusive education, the denigrated state of special education and the difficulties of including EBD children as being largely denied or ignored.

Inclusion, exclusion, and participation are critical and complex issues in current debates about the efficacy of special education and student long term well-being. Mitchell (2010) in his review of special education cites Lipsky and Gartner (1996, 1999) in his perspective of a succinct definition of inclusive education who “describe it as students with disabilities having full membership in age appropriate classes in their neighbourhood schools, with appropriate supplementary aids and support services” (Mitchell, 2010, p. 121). Recently, the forty-eighth session (2008) UNESCO International Conference on Education was held in Geneva, and it was acknowledged that:

‘inclusive education is an on-going process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination’ (UNESCO, 2009, p. 126).

This acknowledgement reflects a broadened conceptualization of the definition of inclusive education and it can be seen to incorporate a more globalised account of this phenomena.



While the ideology of inclusion is ideal, there continues to be significant gaps between policy rhetoric and practice realities as evidenced in this research study. The evidence from this study demonstrated that society may not have moved to an inclusive paradigm. The student participants reported being marginalised in their mainstream schools, bullied, isolated, and in some cases alienated.

Munford and Sanders (2007) describe exclusion as a ‘reciprocal process, involving being both shut out and the decision to remove oneself’ (Munford & Sanders, 2007, p. 186) further adding that there are both positive and negative aspects involved in this process. They then suggest that marginalization is a product of exclusion as far as it restricts the individual opportunities to participate (Munford & Sanders, 2007).

Understanding both negative and positive dimensions of being at a special school or being on the margins as it is termed in literature surrounding the political nature of segregated settings, is critical to educational policy if interventions created around reducing the negative effects of marginalization are to remain effective. This research demonstrated that the girls’ experience of being at RL provided an environment which in essence was inclusive as the girls could participate fully in school. This included all curriculum areas, social and emotional as well as extra curricula activities. RL from the perspective of the stakeholders embodied an inclusive environment, as the girls could participate fully in school. Mitchell (2010) discusses the notion of inclusive education moving beyond education and instead includes areas such as employment, health, recreation, and general livelihood conditions. Therefore, the inclusion the girls experience being at a special residential school in essence is more inclusive than being in their local communities, participating from the margins. To be truly inclusive, requires nothing less than the transformation across all government, agencies, and schools at all levels of society.

## **5.6 Competing Paradigms**

### ***The dynamics of relationships, disaffection, and the contexts in which they are embedded***

The special residential school is one of the few ‘places’ where working across the structural, community and individual levels is embedded into one faculty providing a unique human service. However, practice across these multiple levels is not without challenges. In the current individual problem, oriented approach to intervention, RL meets

the needs of some of the most marginalised people. Rather than closing residential special schools in response to negative community perception, when it appears that it is meeting the needs of the parents/whānau and in particular the girls, perhaps the situation is actually in reverse and it is the community that needs to change.

In general, NZ communities appear to be not inclusive of those with special educational needs. A recent example of the negative stereotype associated with residential special education was seen in an Auckland suburbs community response to the new development of Thurston Place College. Residents have embraced the fear associated with students who have EBD and are actively working against the development of this provision. The public response is based on claims of safety for the local primary school, crime in the community and even extend this as far as saying it is ‘not fair’ on the students to be put together in a residential situation that is clearly out-dated. This is a topical example of the level of inclusion currently upheld by NZ communities

[http://www.stopthurstonplacecollege.com/public\\_meeting.html](http://www.stopthurstonplacecollege.com/public_meeting.html)).

Furthermore, Hornby and Witte (2008) concluded in their NZ residential study, that ex-residential students’ experiences of returning to mainstream schools were negative. In addition, their research investigating the long-term outcomes on key livelihood factors revealed:

*“Despite the work that the residential school had done to attempt to get these students back on successful academic and behavioural trajectories, their return to mainstream schools had eventuated in 27 of them leaving school early with no qualifications whatsoever, which resulted in the majority of them having poor employment prospects” (Hornby & Witte, 2008, p. 90).*

Munford and Sanders (2007) also report in their research based on social work practices with marginalised young women, aged 13-16 years old, that: ‘the problems could not be extracted from the wider contextual matters, they arise from and were embedded in wider social circumstances’ (Munford & Sanders, 2007, p. 194). This raises the question of what will happen for these girls once they leave the school and are immersed in their home communities. Munford & Sanders in their article, go on to reference Ungar (2001, p. 140) and (Pavis et al., 1998, p. 1409) who state that the present structural conditions and wider social forces ‘constrain the possibilities for subjective experience, channelling young

people into certain sorts of life possibility' (Munford & Sanders, 2007, p. 194). This directly supports the evidence Hornby & Witte, (2008) found in their study.

The intervention provision of RL, on the other hand, embodies the 24/7 inclusive wrap around approach to student learning. Rather than specifically taking bits out, as many of the specialist services the girls access in the mainstream are piecemeal programmes, Robert comments '*we take them out, give them a lot of training and a lot of comparison, that we can do it differently, that you do have choice, we show them another way*', another way of living in the world. As well as showing the girls another 'way' of living in the world, they also support the girls to learn new strategies and skills under the premise that these skills will enable them to create new ways of living in their home communities.

However, as it is evidenced in the literature once the students of residential special education return to their home communities the percentage rates of successfully integrating the two sets of skills are devastatingly low, resulting in outcome measures which support the findings from the literature on residential special education long-term outcome measures (Hornby & Witte, 2008; Polat & Farrell, 2002). Polat and Farrell, (2002) suggested ex-residential students will require both structural support when leaving the residential school but also emotional support as a consequence of being at a special residential school and the communities projection of this. As cited in Hornby & Witte, Tankersley and Kauffman (2003) have stated, 'Recognizing that these students will probably need support throughout their school careers is an uncomfortable but necessary step' (Hornby & Witte, 2008, p. 90).

From the literature it is clear that a larger focus on reintegration work needs to take place in order that the students' transition and benefits gained while attending residential schools are not lost and that they can become fully included into the communities and the ultimately the larger society.

## **5.7 Boundaries and Behaviour**

Despite the positive elements of being at a residential school, the girls in this study raised their concerns in relation to some of the behavioural interventions such as the use of the thinking room, with Ally stating, "*The thinking room is torture.*" This was a significant

finding and it must be acknowledged that aversive techniques such as isolation, particularly being described as ‘torture’ really needs to be examined, this is a very old school approach to behaviour. Wearmouth et al., (2005) discusses punitive incarcerations, associated with locking students ‘away’ for periods of time when the principles of time out are misattributed or misunderstood.

John Cornwall (2004) discusses the complexities and confusion surrounding the rights of protection to self and others and using restraint, in this case isolation, as coercion. Cornwall further discusses both the ethical implications and practical realities associated with using physical restraint when dealing with violence and extreme behaviour in schools. Cornwall comments: “Using physical control whilst at the same time motivating and socialising troubled children does not seem compatible” (Cornwall, 2004, p. 389). He notes the reluctance of researchers to engage in discourse concerning the impact of physically controlling and restraining young people and further proposes that the rationale behind the use of these management procedures is one that advances the notion of individual ‘derangement’ stemming from deficit theorising, requiring a control and restraint ethic. Cornwall further elaborates on what he considers the ethical problems attached to using restraint to maintain order and discipline especially when a place like RL encourages the girls to learn self-discipline and self-restraint (Cornwall, 2004).

While Rose Livingston’s policy rhetoric clearly articulates an eclectic approach to behaviour management, with the use of Glasser, ABA, and the problem-solving framework none of these behaviour management theories support isolation or ‘time out’ scenario. Cornwall (2004) notes: “In all areas of education provision, there are still issues of power and control that remain unexplored and still confusion between disciplinary and therapeutic responses in schools” (Cornwall, 2004, p. 385) and further links this to a lack of ethics, particularly concerning the human rights of young people to express their individuality and autonomy. Wearmouth et al., (2005) further considers the use of restraint in relation to the violation of culture, especially Māori worldviews which celebrate collective retribution. Therefore, there appears to be some disconnection between espoused theory and practice in the institution and would suggest some practices need reviewing.

## **5.8 Summary**

For those who endorse inclusive education, special residential education may be viewed as a negative placement option on the educational spectrum. However, it was evident from the findings in this study that the decision to move away from the mainstream setting towards what would be called the margins or segregated provision brought many benefits and contributed to feelings of wellbeing. The girls perceived that they belonged to a group where they were valued members. The girls expressed the emotional support they now had as a result of key friendships and friendship groups as well as having trusted and reliable staff. They acknowledged the sense of safety they felt by being in a group setting. Ironically, the girls felt that they had made significant gains in their independence and autonomy while at the same time being in the boundaries of residential rules and regulations. The group dynamics enabled rather than disabled their sense of self. The girls were given an opportunity to live and belong in a setting where they were encouraged to grow into self-governing young women.

However, there are issues about the long-term wellbeing of the girls, studies such as Hornby & Witte (2008) and Polat & Farrell, (2002) indicate that inclusion in society may be difficult after leaving school. The girls reported a stigma associated with attending the school and it is likely that employment in the region where the school is in particular would be difficult as the girls are labelled by association.

## **5.9 Implications**

The significance of this study is situated in the context of the paucity of research conducted with current students of residential special schools for students with EBD. The main contributions of the current study is in the fact that it is the first NZ study investigating the perceptions and experiences of multiple stakeholders and more specifically of girls in special residential education. A possibility of future studies would be a longitudinal study investigating reintegration back into regular school settings or transition successfully into employment.

### **5.10 Limitations**

Due to the small sample size, caution must be exercised in making generalisations about this study. There is no way of knowing whether the 12 participants from this study were representative of the four groups interviewed. This is also the case in terms of the management of this school. However, in light of these considerations, the findings are relevant to the debate about special education provision for students, and in particular, girls with EBD. It was also a snapshot in time, therefore the long term outcomes of the school was not able to be measured. The findings do, however, highlight some key issues to consider in future policy and practice.

When interpreting the findings of the study reported here, it is important to remember that the interview data are subjective, and the researcher had no way of validating the information from the participants in terms of accuracy. All three students interviewed were preparing to exit the school at the end of the school term; however, they were all pleased to be given the opportunity to discuss their experiences of being at RL. As far as the researcher could judge, they spoke openly and honestly about their experiences.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

Special residential education is a complex and historically situated site of contention. Special schools, both day and residential, for learners with special learning needs have existed for over 100 years in NZ. However, with the current move in government policy towards inclusion, many students who in the past would have been in special schools are attending local mainstream schools. The question “how far inclusion policy can extend itself to meet the needs of a very specific minority group” (Mitchell, 2010) is concerned with more than practical trajectories. This has become a question of moral, social, and values driven ideology.

In this thesis it is clear that the challenges of educating girls with EBD requires a multi-disciplinary approach concerning the collaboration of individual, structural and management levels. From the point of view of the stakeholders in this case study, the teachers, residential staff, students and parents/whānau, have highlighted some of the difficulties experienced in the mainstream. Although, NZ schools have been, and continue to work towards, including more students with special education needs, the level of the care and combined professional and pedagogical intervention evident in this research would be difficult to replicate in the mainstream. This is further implicated by the economic situation, funding conditions and general outcome based climate currently promoted alongside mainstream inclusion ideology. Although the ideological principles underscoring the inclusion movement embody impressive tenants of universal learning, the reality between policy rhetoric and the current state of practice is far from complimentary.

This research began with the central question:

What is the place of a residential special school for girls with EBD in New Zealand?

The subsequent research questions guiding this study were:

1. What are the girls’ perspectives of their experiences attending a residential special school setting?
2. What perspective do the girls have of the school, the program, their home context, and the base school?

3. What are the teachers' support staff, parents', and whānau; experiences and perspectives on residential experiences for girls identified with EBD?
4. How do these perspectives fit with the development of Special Education provision in New Zealand?

To answer these questions a qualitative research design within a constructivist paradigm was used. As this study endeavoured to understand the perspectives and experiences of the major stakeholders at one residential special school, case study was the most appropriate methodology. Data was gathered from 12 interview participants who agreed to be interviewed, spanning the duration of 10 weeks. Interviews consisted of both face-to-face and telephone due to demographic proximity. The data was analysed through content analysis whereby inductive coding and sorting was used in order that the themes and conclusions were grounded in the data.

The data from this study suggested that the concept of inclusive education when it is situated within a broader global context includes moving beyond the 'physical placement' of girls with EBD and instead promotes learning communities. This setting, the participants believed, was more inclusive for the girls as they did not experience the marginalization of the mainstream. The participants were generally favourable towards attending or having a child attend a residential school, although there were various aspects of concern for each participant group within the overall analysis that require further inquiry. Of particular importance to this study was the stigma attached to the school, which appears to be a barrier to the school operating in a more inclusive way. Inclusive education is located beyond the placement of students with special learning needs and asks that learning communities are built on cultures, structures, and practices that accommodate diversity. The community response to the development of the residential EBD provision, Thurston Place College illustrates what Ungar (2001) describes as the politics of location (2001, p. 140) and demonstrates that further work is needed to support NZ communities in becoming more inclusive to learners with diverse learning needs.

The existence and provision of special residential schools do not deny some of the more negative behaviours associated with EBD youth. However, it argues for an equal projection and recognition of the positive dimensions of the lived experiences of being at a residential school and the overall positive effect this has on student well-being.



The findings from this study indicate that there appears to be some deficit theorising from the teachers about the students' home and community settings, and in particular the invisibility of culture. This was addressed in detail in the discussion. The research further demonstrated how theoretical conceptualisations directly influence how a person perceives another individual's behaviour. As different theoretical assumptions are evident within the school programmes and individual practitioners discourse, each individual perceives student behaviour from their particular platform of reality. Consequently, the perceptual orientation one aligns and attunes to, affects all interactions, communication, and experience. Practitioner belief systems often operate within conscious and unconscious states however these 'states' may serve to penetrate the interactional dynamics affecting human behaviour.

As illustrated in this thesis, deficit theorising severely limits the potential transformational quality of an intervention programme, for both the students and teachers. It can potentially limit the flexibility and openness of practitioner thinking necessary for positive change processes to be effective. However, it requires schools endeavour to approximate the gap between cultural rhetoric and actual practice.

The qualitative evidence from this research demonstrates that the participants believe residential special education successfully supports the academic and social progress for students with special learning needs. Inclusion must be understood beyond the borders of education, and requires nothing less than the transformation of social and cultural values and beliefs across all levels of society.

Moving past dichotomy will allow the social realities embedded in the consciousness of the community to embrace a critical and sensitised understanding of residential special education and embrace universal diversity.

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## APPENDIX 1: Information Sheets and Consent Form

### Information Sheet for Parents/Whanau Participants

To participate in a research study called

### *“Being at a residential school: perspectives from students, staff and whanau”*

Dear Parents and Caregivers of students attending RL School

My name is Porsha London and I am currently completing my Masters of Education. As a requirement to completing my Masters degree I am undertaking research through the Faculty of Education at Victoria University focusing on the place of a residential special school for girls in New Zealand.

I would be grateful if you would consider participating in my research. It will involve being part of a 20 - 60 minute telephone interview depending on how much information you would like to give. The research has the full support of the School Trust Board, executive principal, and concerning teachers.

The proposed research will be undertaken by Porsha London under the supervision of Dr. Catherine Savage and has been assessed and approved by Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics committee.

#### **The aim of the research is to:**

To explore perspectives on the experience of attending (or having your daughter attend) a residential special school;

Investigate the views of teachers and support staff on their perspective and the role of residential schooling for girls in New Zealand.

#### **The research questions guiding this study are:**

- What are the experiences of attending a residential special school setting?
- What perspective does the student have of the school, the program, their home context and base school?
- What are the teachers, parents, whanau; experiences and perspectives on residential experiences for students identified with EBD?

Students with special social, emotional, behavioural or learning needs currently experience a variety of educational support within the New Zealand education system. The support students receive can vary from teacher aides, specialist school workers to residential education such as this one. There is very little research in New Zealand and internationally that investigates the place of residential schools for girls. This study will provide data from a student, teacher, and parent/caregiver viewpoint about the experiences of being at a residential school and the value the participants place on residential schooling experiences.

It is hoped that the findings in this research will provide direction for further research into the issue of residential schools in special education and lead to an increased understanding of how best to provide for students with special education needs.

#### **What will it involve?**

Participation will involve a one on one phone interview with the researcher. The interview is based on your (the parents/caregivers) experiences and your perceptions of the residential school. All information provided will be confidential. If you were to provide any information that could



identify either your daughter or yourself in any way, this information would not be used in any part of this study. You will be able to choose to answer questions and be able to stop the phone call at anytime without explanation if you do not want to continue. You will also be sent and asked to verify or amend transcribed interview content. This will ensure you have the opportunity to remove or add any information taken from our interviews before data analysis.

### **How will students be selected?**

The students have been invited to participate if they have attended the school prior to 2010, and are in the age range 13-17 years. Participating in the research interviews is entirely voluntary. There will be a total of three student participants in the study as well as their parents/caregivers and teachers.

### **What will happen?**

You must firstly give consent for your child to participate, and then volunteer to give consent for your own participation. All interview material will be identified through self selected or researcher given pseudonyms (changing of name). The phone interview will last approximately 20-60 minutes in length. Please see the interview schedule at the end of this letter.

The interviews will be conducted between September and October 2010. I will phone and organise a time that suits you, and ring you back at the agreed time, you will not have to pay for any calls.

### **Procedures for handling information and material produced in the course of the research**

All data, including tapes will be confidential to the researcher and will be kept locked in a filing cabinet during the data collection phase. This cabinet is not utilized by other individuals. Upon completion of the study, all data will be destroyed. Student and parent interviews will be given a different family name. Tapes of interviews will be identified by this name only. Tapes will be transcribed by the researcher. Once the tapes are transcribed they will be wiped clean. Transcripts will be retained for only as long as required for the research after which time they will be destroyed. It is possible that the school may be identified by readers because it is one of few specialist schools for girls in New Zealand. The school is aware of this potential identification.

### **Ethical approval statement**

The research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Faculty of Education Ethics Committee, If you have any ethical concerns or questions about the research you can contact Dr Allison Kirkman, Chair of the Human Ethics Committee at Victoria University of Wellington (Allison.Kirkman@vuw.ac.nz).

I would very much appreciate hearing your views about the school. However, clearly your consent and participation are completely voluntary. If you agree to participate and then change your mind, you're free to withdraw your consent at any time prior to data analysis without needing to provide an explanation.

If you are prepared to participate please let me know by filling in the consent form and returning it to me, in the enclosed post-paid envelope. All information you provide is confidential to me.

Thank you very much for your time and help in making this study possible. If you have any questions or wish to know more please phone or write to me at:

Porsha London  
Phone: 0211 42 00 42

Email: [londonpors@myvuw.ac.nz](mailto:londonpors@myvuw.ac.nz)

Alternatively my supervisor Dr Catherine Savage at:

Dr. Catherine Savage, School of Education

Phone: (04) 4639634

Email: [catherine.savage@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:catherine.savage@vuw.ac.nz)

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS/WHANAU

### *“Being at a residential school: perspectives from students, staff and whanau”*

(Please read each statement carefully and tick those that apply)

- I agree that the information collected on my child can be used to meet the requirements for this research as explained to me.
- I have had the project explained to me and I have read the ethics statements which I keep for my records.
- I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:
- Be interviewed by the researcher
  - Verify transcribed interview data
  - Allow my child to be interviewed
  - Allow my child to be part of the case study research report.
- I agree to be phone interviewed by the researcher and will provide an estimate of the approximate time I wish to be phoned below.
- I understand that any information that is collected on my child or I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party. All participants will have pseudonyms.
- I understand that it is possible the school may be identified by readers because it is one of few specialist schools for girls in New Zealand.
- I also understand that my participation is voluntary; that I can chose not to participate in the project and that I can withdraw from the study prior to data analysis without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way.
- The information I provide cannot be used except for this project, in academic publications or research seminars and the dissemination of the project results.
- I would like a copy of the research report sent to me at the completion of this project.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate time I would like the researcher to call me between is \_\_\_\_\_

## **Information Sheet for Teachers/Support & Residential staff Participants**

To participate in a research study called

### ***“Being at a residential school: perspectives from students, staff and whanau”***

Teachers/support & residential staff Information

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

My name is Porsha London and I am currently completing my Masters of Education. As a requirement to completing my Masters degree I am undertaking research through the College of Education at Victoria University. The focus of my research looks at the place of residential schooling in the current education system through the perceptions and experiences of the major stakeholders attending a residential school for girls during the period of 2009-2010.

I would be grateful if you would consider participating in my research. The research has the full support of the School Trust Board, Executive principal, and Victoria University.

The proposed research will be undertaken by Porsha London under the supervision of Dr. Catherine Savage and has been assessed and approved by Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics committee.

This research is the thesis component of a Masters in Education degree.

#### **The aim of the research is to:**

To explore perspectives on the experience of attending (or having your daughter attend) a residential special school;

Investigate the views of teachers and support staff on their perspective and the role of residential schooling for girls in New Zealand.

#### **The research questions guiding this study are:**

- What are the experiences of attending a residential special school setting?
- What perspective does the student have of the school, the program, their home context and base school?
- What are the teachers, parents, whanau; experiences and perspectives on residential experiences for students identified with EBD?

**Why?**

Students with special social, emotional, behavioural or learning needs currently experience a variety of educational provision within New Zealand's special education system. A continuum of educational learning experiences is advocated for these students while they are attending the New Zealand primary and secondary school institutions. The residential school for girls program is one provision utilized by some specialist support workers. There is little research in New Zealand and internationally that investigates multiple stakeholder perspective as an inquiry into the place of withdrawal programs, and this study will provide data from a student, teacher and parent/whanau viewpoint about an established nationally out of school provision.

It is hoped that the findings in this research will provide direction for further research into the issue of withdrawal programs in special education and lead to an increased understanding of how best to provide effective educational opportunities for all students.

### **What will it involve?**

Participation will involve a series of (1-3) one on one, in person interviews with the researcher. The interview is based on your experiences and perceptions of working at a residential special school as well as your perceptions of the experiences for the students while attending this school. All information provided will be confidential. If you were to provide any information that could identify either the school or yourself in any way, this information would not be used in any part of this study. However, it is possible that the school may be identified by readers because it is one of few specialist schools for girls in New Zealand. The school is aware of this potential identification.

### **How will students be selected?**

Selection criteria for participation will consist of the following:

The student must have attended the school prior to 2010, be in the age range 13-17 years as well as volunteer to participate in the research interviews. There will be a total of three student participants in the study as well as their parents/caregivers and teachers.

### **What will happen?**

You must firstly volunteer to give consent for your own participation. All interview material will be identified through self selected or researcher given pseudonyms. The in-person interview(s) will last approximately 30-60 minutes in length. The interview schedule is attached so you are able to see the questions I will ask you, if you agree. You will also be asked to verify or amend transcribed interview content. This will ensure you have the opportunity to remove or add any information taken from our interviews before data analysis.

The research will be conducted between August and September 2010.

## **Procedures for handling information and material produced in the course of the research?**

All data, including tapes will be confidential to the researcher and will be kept locked in a filing cabinet during the data collection phase. This cabinet is not utilized by other individuals. Upon completion of the study, all data will be destroyed. Student, parent and teacher interviews will be given a different family name. Tapes of interviews will be identified by this name only. Tapes will be transcribed by the researcher. Once the tapes are transcribed they will be wiped clean. Transcripts will be retained for only as long as required for the research after which time they will be destroyed. It is possible that the school may be identified by readers because it is one of few specialist schools for girls in New Zealand.

## **Ethical approval statement**

The research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Faculty of Education Ethics Committee, If you have any ethical concerns or questions about the research you can contact Dr Allison Kirkman, Chair of the Human Ethics Committee at Victoria University of Wellington ([Allison.Kirkman@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Allison.Kirkman@vuw.ac.nz)).

I would very much appreciate your assistance in this way. However, clearly your consent and participation are completely voluntary. If you agree to participate and subsequently change your mind, you are free to withdraw your consent at any time without needing to provide any explanation.

If you are prepared to participate please let me know by filling in the consent form and returning it to me. All information you provide is confidential to me.

Thank you very much for your time and help in making this study possible. If you have any questions or wish to know more please phone or write to either myself or my supervisor at:

Porsha London

Phone: 0211 42 00 42

Email: [londonpors@myvuw.ac.nz](mailto:londonpors@myvuw.ac.nz).

Or alternatively my supervisor Catherine Savage at:

Dr. Catherine Savage, School of Education

Phone: (04) 4639634

Email: [catherine.savage@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:catherine.savage@vuw.ac.nz)

Yours Sincerely

Porsha London

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM TEACHERS/SUPPORT STAFF

To participate in a research study called

*“Being at a residential school: perspectives from students, staff and whanau”*

(Please read each statement carefully and tick those that apply)

- I agree that the information collected in my classroom and during formal interviews can be used to meet the requirements for this research as explained to me.
- I have had the project explained to me and I have read the ethics statements which I keep for my records.
- I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:
- Be interviewed by the researcher
  - Verify interview transcript content
  - Provide supporting school documents relevant to this study.
- I understand that any information that is collected or I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual or the school will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party. All participants will have pseudonyms.
- I understand that it is possible the school may be identified by readers because it is one of few specialist schools for girls in New Zealand.
- I also understand that my participation is voluntary; that I can chose not to participate in the project and that I can withdraw at any stage of the study before data analysis, without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way.
- The information I provide cannot be used except for this project, research publications and/or seminar presentations and the dissemination of the project results.
- I would like a copy of the research summary report sent to me, when the project is complete.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Information Sheet for School Trust Board

To participate in a research study called

*“Being at a residential school: perspectives from students, staff and whanau”*

24 June 2010

Dear Chairperson and RL School Trust Board,

Re: Master Thesis Research

Perceptions from current students enrolled as well as there teachers, parents/whanau.

I am writing to seek approval from the ‘Rose Livingston’ School trust board to undertake research on current EBD students, teachers, residential workers and parents. This research has been assessed and approved by Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics Committee.

I am presently undertaking the thesis component of a Master of Education with the School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, Victoria University. The main objective of my research is to investigate the place of a residential special school for girls with EBD in a New Zealand setting. The participants view is sought to understand the value placed on the school by those who use and provide the services. This research aims to gauge the impact the school has on the lives of the students, how this contributes toward their achieving their long term goals, and the place in which the participants see this residential school in providing services for girls with emotional and behavioural disorders.

My interest in this topic has arisen from previous field research undertaken at Rose Livingston school in 2009, as well as the current special education 2000 policy review. I believe this study will be of particular significance to EBD students, teachers, and their families and to the schools management and staff as they reflect on the place of residential special education within the current inclusive education climate advocated in New Zealand.



It will also be of interest to the schools seeking to provide alternative intervention for EBD students, and to the larger special education review including the Ministry of Education. It is also anticipated that this data will be of interest nationally and internationally as few studies of this kind have been conducted.

The research proposed will be undertaken using two formats; one to one in person and phone interviews and review of the policy documents. My supervisor is Dr Catherine Savage senior lecturer, School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy Victoria University, Wellington.

The data gathering period of research would endeavour to commence in Term 3, week 5 and run for a duration of one term in which the researcher will negotiate suitable contact hours with the participant students/teachers/residential workers in order to carry out, document analysis and interview schedules.

The data from these multiple sources will be used to ascertain answers to the following research aims and questions:

**The aim of the research is to:**

To explore perspectives on the experience of attending (or having your daughter attend) a residential special school;

Investigate the views of teachers and support staff on their perspective and the role of residential schooling for girls in New Zealand.

**The research questions guiding this study are:**

- What are the experiences of attending a residential special school setting?
- What perspective does the student have of the school, the program, their home context and base school?
- What are the teachers, parents, whanau; experiences and perspectives on residential experiences for students identified with EBD?

During consultation with staff, they will be asked to nominate on the basis of the sample criteria suitable candidates that would be able and willing to participate in an extended relationship with the research and researcher. Their informed consent will be paramount in establishing voluntary participation in this study.

This will be obtained through an informal meeting held between the selected potential candidate(s), and the researcher where the careful explanation and discussion of the study purpose, focus and commitment required of participants will be clearly communicated to the student using oral and written language in the form of a take home information sheet including an overview of the study.

A written invitation, and request for consent to student parents will be the first contact this group will have with the researcher. I will provide school administration with stamped envelopes each time a mail out is needed.

The correspondence will include an information sheet which includes an overview of the study and an invitation to participate in phone interviews. The interviews will be run by the researcher who is familiar with the school program and with conducting interviews with parents and diverse learners, these will be held on the school premises, with interview dialogue taped and the confidentiality of both the school and the participant identity is assured. Participants will also be sent and asked to verify or amend transcribed interview content. This will ensure all participants have the opportunity to remove or add any information taken from each interview before data analysis.

All participants in this study will have their rights explained and at any stage be able to:

- Decline to participate
- Decline to answer a particular question
- Withdraw from the interview
- Ask questions about the study
- Provide information on the understanding of confidentiality
- Be given access to a summary of the project findings during analysis and on completion

I have attached a copy of the interview schedule, though semi-structured and open ended in approach, prompts, idea sparks and narrative direction will be offered via the interview schedule if and when required by the participants. I have also attached copies of the information letters to students, parents and teachers and the corresponding consent forms.

All data, including tapes will be confidential to the researcher and will be kept locked in a filing cabinet during the data collection phase. This cabinet is not utilized by other individuals. Upon completion of the study, all data will be destroyed. Student, parent and teacher interviews will be given a different family name. Tapes of interviews will be identified by this name only. Tapes will be transcribed by the researcher. Once the tapes are transcribed they will be wiped clean. Transcripts will be retained for only as long as required for the research after which time they will be destroyed. The data collected will only be used for the purpose of this research, scholar publication and/or seminar presentation. It is possible that the school may be identified by readers because it is one of few specialist schools for girls in New Zealand.

The research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Faculty of Education Ethics Committee, if you have any ethical concerns or questions about the research you can contact Dr Allison Kirkman, Chair of the Human Ethics Committee at Victoria University of Wellington ([Allison.Kirkman@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Allison.Kirkman@vuw.ac.nz)).

Should you wish to discuss this request in further detail, please do not hesitate to contact me on telephone 0211 42 00 42 or email [londonpors@myvuw.ac.nz](mailto:londonpors@myvuw.ac.nz), alternatively my supervisor Dr Catherine Savage, Senior Lecturer, School of Psychology and Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, Victoria University Wellington can be contacted on (04) 463 9634, email: [catherine.savage@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:catherine.savage@vuw.ac.nz)

Thank you for considering this request and I look forward to receiving your response,

Yours Sincerely

Porsha London

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM CHAIRMAN OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES

To participate in a research study called

*“Being at a residential school: perspectives from students, staff and whanau”*

- I agree that the information collected in this school and during formal interviews can be used to meet the requirements for this research as explained to me.
- I have had the project explained to me and I have read the ethics statements which I keep for my records.
- I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:
- Be interviewed by the researcher
  - Provide supporting school documents relevant to this study.
- I understand that any information that is collected in this school or I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual or the school will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party. All participants will have pseudonyms.
- I understand that it is possible the school may be identified by readers because it is one of few specialist schools for girls in New Zealand.
- I also understand that participation is voluntary; that the school can chose not to participate in the project and that I we can withdraw at any stage of the project before data analysis without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way.
- The information I provide cannot be used except for this project, research publications and/or seminar presentations and the dissemination of the project results.
- I would like a copy of the research summary report sent to me, when the project is complete.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Information Sheet for School Principal**

To participate in a research study called

*“Being at a residential school: perspectives from students, staff and whanau”*

### Principal Information Sheet

#### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

My name is Porsha London and I am currently completing my Masters of Education. As a requirement to completing my Masters degree I am undertaking research through the College of Education at Victoria University. The focus of my research looks at the place of residential schooling in the current education system through the perceptions and experiences of the major stakeholders attending a residential school for girls during the period of 2009-2010.

I would be grateful if you would consider giving your consent to this research being carried out in this school.

The proposed research will be undertaken by Porsha London under the supervision of Dr. Catherine Savage and has been assessed and approved by Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics committee.

This research is the thesis component of a Masters in Education degree.

#### **The aim of the research is to:**

To explore perspectives on the experience of attending (or having your daughter attend) a residential special school;

Investigate the views of teachers and support staff on their perspective and the role of residential schooling for girls in New Zealand.

#### **The research questions guiding this study are:**

- What are the experiences of attending a residential special school setting?
- What perspective does the student have of the school, the program, their home context and base school?
- What are the teachers, parents, whanau; experiences and perspectives on residential experiences for students identified with EBD?

#### **Why?**

Students with special social, emotional, behavioural or learning needs currently experience a variety of educational provision within New Zealand’s special education system. A continuum of educational learning experiences is advocated for these students while they are attending the New Zealand primary and secondary school institutions. The residential school for girls program is one provision utilized by some specialist support workers. There is little research in New Zealand and internationally that investigates multiple stakeholder perspective as an inquiry into the place of withdrawal programs, and this study will provide data from a student, teacher and parent/whanau viewpoint about an established nationally out of school provision.

It is hoped that the findings in this research will provide direction for further research into the issue of withdrawal programs in special education and lead to an increased understanding of how best to provide effective educational opportunities for all students.

### **What will it involve?**

Participation will involve student and teacher participants in a series of (1-3) one on one, in person interviews with the researcher. The interview is based on their experiences and perceptions of working at a residential special school as well as their perceptions of the experiences of the students while attending this school. All information provided will be confidential. If the staff or students were to provide any information that could identify either the school or yourself in any way, this information would not be used in any part of this study. Participants will also be sent and asked to verify or amend transcribed interview content. This will ensure all participants have the opportunity to remove or add any information taken from the interviews before data analysis.

### **How will students be selected?**

Selection criteria for participation will consist of the following:

1) The student must have attended the school prior to 2010, be in the age range 13-17 years as well as volunteer to participate in the research interviews. There will be a total of three student participants in the study as well as their parents/caregivers and teachers.

### **What will happen?**

You must firstly volunteer to give consent for this study to proceed. All interview material will be identified through self selected or researcher given pseudonyms. The in-person interview(s) will last approximately 30-60 minutes in length and will take place at a pre negotiated out-of-school time. The interview schedule is attached so you are able to see the interview schedule I will be following with the participants, if you agree.

The research will be conducted between August and November 2010.

### **Procedures for handling information and material produced in the course of the research?**

All data, including tapes will be confidential to the researcher and will be kept locked in a filing cabinet during the data collection phase. This cabinet is not utilized by other individuals. Upon completion of the study, all data will be destroyed. Student, parent and teacher interviews will be given pseudonyms. Tapes of interviews will be identified by this name only. Tapes will be transcribed by the researcher. Once the tapes are transcribed they will be wiped clean. Transcripts will be retained for only as long as required for the research after which time they will be destroyed. However, it is possible that the school may be identified by readers because it is one of few specialist schools for girls in New Zealand.

### **Ethical approval statement**

The research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Faculty of Education Ethics Committee; if you have any ethical concerns or questions about the research you can contact Dr Allison Kirkman, Chair of the Human Ethics Committee at Victoria University of Wellington ([Allison.Kirkman@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Allison.Kirkman@vuw.ac.nz)).

I would very much appreciate your assistance in this way. However, clearly your consent is completely voluntary. If you are prepared to participate please let me know by filling in the consent form and returning it to me. All information collected is confidential to me.

Thank you very much for your time and help in making this study possible. If you have any questions or wish to know more please phone or write to either myself or my supervisor at:

Porsha London  
Phone: 0211 42 00 42  
Email: [londonpors@myvuw.ac.nz](mailto:londonpors@myvuw.ac.nz).

Or, alternatively my supervisor Catherine Savage at:  
Dr. Catherine Savage, School of Education  
Phone: (04) 4639634  
Email: [catherine.savage@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:catherine.savage@vuw.ac.nz)

Yours Sincerely

Porsha London

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM PRINCIPAL

To participate in a research study called

*“Being at a residential school: perspectives from students, staff and whanau”*

- I agree that the information collected in this school and during formal interviews can be used to meet the requirements for this research as explained to me.
- I have had the project explained to me and I have read the ethics statements which I keep for my records.
- I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:
- Be interviewed by the researcher
  - Provide supporting school documents relevant to this study.
- I understand that any information that is collected in this school or I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual or the school will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party. All participants will have pseudonyms.
- I understand that it is possible the school may be identified by readers because it is one of few specialist schools for girls in New Zealand.
- I also understand that my participation is voluntary; that I can chose not to participate in the project and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project before data analysis, without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way.
- The information I provide cannot be used except for this project, research publications and/or seminar presentations and the dissemination of the project results.
- I would like a copy of the research summary report sent to me, when the project is complete.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Consent Form for Student Participants

To participate in a research study called

### *“Being at a residential school: perspectives from students, staff and whanau”*

(please read each statement carefully and tick those that apply)

- I am being asked to help Porsha London in her research project. It has been explained to me, I have been allowed to ask questions about it and I understand what it is about.
- I understand that the interview will be tape-recorded and typed. That I will be given an opportunity to hear the tape and make changes to what I have said.
- I understand that the information I provide will be kept confidential and reported in a way that does not identify me.
- I understand that I do not have to talk to Porsha if I do not want to and no one will treat me badly. I can stop part way through if I want to and skip questions I don't want to answer.
- I understand that the data collected will be used for the research project and may also be presented at a conference or for publication.
- I understand that talking about my school experiences might be uncomfortable for me. If I need some help, I know I can tell Porsha and I can talk to my teacher, case worker or a support person about it.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the research project at any stage and that any information I had already provided would then be destroyed.
- I have read this form, understand the project, and agree to participate.

Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

For the Legal Guardian of Participants under 16 years of Age:

I consent to \_\_\_\_\_, who is under my legal guardianship to participate in this study.

Name of Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Designation: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Expression of interest form for all teacher/support and residential staff interested in participating in a research study called:**

***“Being at a residential school: perspectives from students, staff and whanau”***

Teachers/ support & residential staff Information

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

My name is Porsha London and I am currently completing my Masters of Education. As a requirement to completing my Masters degree I am undertaking research through the College of Education at Victoria University. The focus of my research looks at the place of residential schooling in the current education system through the perceptions and experiences of the major stakeholders attending a residential school for girls during the period of 2009-2010.

I would be grateful if you would consider participating in my research. The research has the full support of the School Trust Board, Executive principal, and has been approved by the Victoria University Faculty of Education Human Ethics Committee.

*Please tick the appropriate box and place expression of interest form in the confidential box located next to the white board in the school staff room by 4pm on the corresponding day.*

I am interested in participating in this study and would like to meet with the researcher to discuss my suitability further.

I am not interested in participating in this study and do not wish to engage in further dialogue with the researcher about this matter.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

I can be contacted via: (Please circle, and provide contact information where necessary)

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Home phone: \_\_\_\_\_

School phone: \_\_\_\_\_ In person: \_\_\_\_\_

## Information Sheet for Student Participants

To participate in a research study called

### *“Being at a residential school: perspectives from students, staff and whanau”*

Who is involved?

- *I would like to invite you to take part in this study if you are between 14-17 years old and are currently attending Salisbury Girls Residential School.*

About the Researcher

- *My name is Porsha London. I am doing a Master of Education at Victoria University of Wellington.*
- *My supervisor is Dr Catherine Savage who is a lecturer at Victoria University.*
- *The research has the full support of the School Trust Board and this research has been assessed and approved by Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics Committee.*

During and at the end of the study:

*All information gathered for this research will be stored in a locked document file during collection and write up and will be destroyed when the project is finished. After each interview I will type up what we have talked about and then ask you to read this. You will then be given the opportunity to change/add/delete any parts of our talk without any questions being asked.*

*If you would like to read about the research, I will send you a copy of the study when it is complete.*

What Happens Next?

- ❖ *Take some time to think about being involved in the study.*
- ❖ *If you want to be in the study, tell your teacher.*
- ❖ *You will be asked to sign a consent form.*
- ❖ *If you are under 16, your legal guardian is legally responsible for you and they will also sign your consent form.*
- ❖ *This may be your residential case worker, parents or caregiver.*
- ❖ *We will arrange a time to meet and for the study to begin.*

Why is th

### *Why is this study being done?*

To give young people who are attending the residential school an opportunity to talk about what school is like for them!

### *What would you have to do?*

You will meet with me and I would ask you some questions about the things you do at school and how you feel at school.

- I will bring a sheet of paper with questions on it you do not have to answer all the questions.
- I will bring a tape recorder. Then what we say on the tape will be typed up later, if you would like to you can read the notes and check that what is written is what you want to say.
- I will ask you if we can meet again to answer some more questions and so that you can check that you are happy with the answers you gave.

### *What do you get out of it?*

- You will have something to eat and drink after we have talked.
- You have a chance to share your experiences about what school was and is like for you.
- What you say will be used to write a report and this will add to the knowledge of what residential school experiences are like for girls.

### *Will others know it is you?*

- It is possible that the school may be identified by readers because it is one of few specialist schools for girls in New Zealand.
- Only my university supervisor and I will listen to the tapes and read the typed interviews. She will not know who you are.
- I might repeat some of what you said when I write the report and in the talks I give about the study, but I will not say your name or that you said this.

- I will use a made up name for you, called a pseudonym, so that no one will know it is you.
- I will not give out any information that might identify you to others.

### *Confidentiality:*

Everything you tell me will not be repeated to any of your teachers, residential workers, or other students. This means that it is confidential. We will discuss this further at the interview.

### *For your safety:*

- ❖ You might find talking about your school experiences hard or it may make you feel sad.
- ❖ There may be some things you don't want to talk about, that's okay, you don't have to.
- ❖ You can have a support person of your choice in the room with us, if you would like.
- ❖ You can pull out of the study at any time, without giving a reason, and I won't ask why.
- ❖ After the interview, your teacher, support person or I will talk to you and make sure you feel okay.

### *Contact Details:*

Researcher: Porsha London, / Email [londonpors@myvuw.ac.nz](mailto:londonpors@myvuw.ac.nz)  
Supervisor: Dr. Catherine Savage, Faculty of Education.

## APPENDIX 2: Interview Guide Questions

| Research Questions  | Students  | Parents/Whānau   | Teachers  |
|---|---|--|-----------|
| <p><b>AIM</b><br/>What is the place of a residential special school for girls with EBD in New Zealand?</p>    |   |  |           |
| <p>What are the girls' perspectives of their experiences attending a residential special school setting?</p>  | <p>Can you describe what it has been like to be at this school?<br/>What are the things that you like about it?<br/>What has been challenging about being here?<br/>Can you tell me about a normal day at this school?</p>  | <p>NA</p>  | <p>NA</p> |
| <p>What perspective do the girls have of the school, the program, their home context and the base school?</p> | <p>Can you tell me about the school you were at before you came to **?<br/>How is this school different/the same?<br/>What things have you done here that you might not have done at your old school?<br/><b><u>Education at school</u></b><br/>Can you tell me about your classes/lessons at **? How are they different to your last school? If you had a choice where would you prefer to go to school? What is your long term goal for yourself and how do you see school preparing or contributing to that goal?<br/><b><u>Leaving the school</u></b> How do you feel about leaving **? <b><u>Changes while been at **?</u></b> Do you think that being at **? has made a difference to/helped you in any ways? Have you ever found it difficult to be here?<br/>Why/why not? Is there anything that you would change about **? If you could?</p> | <p>Could you tell me about your daughter – and the time leading up to her coming to this school? Did you participate in the decision for (name) to come to this school? What factors did you consider important in choosing this school?<br/>What is your long term goal for your daughter's education and how do you see **? School preparing or contributing to that goal?</p> |           |

|   |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
|   | <p><b><u>Relationships with staff and other students</u></b><br/>Can you describe what helped or not when you first arrived at the school, how did you settle into **?? What was it like leaving your last school and coming to this school? Can you tell me about someone you click with?</p> <p><b><u>Impact of **? School on improving challenging behaviours and emotional difficulties</u></b> How do you find the behaviour programmes at **? Can you tell me about new ways that you have learnt to deal with challenging situations – have you been able to calm down, or control anger while being at **? <b><u>Negative labels associated with attending a special school?</u></b> What is it like to go home for the holidays? And then return to school? How do you feel about being at this school?</p> |  |  |
| <p>What are the teacher's, support staff, parents' and whānau; experiences and perspectives on residential experiences for girls identified with EBD?</p> | <p>NA</p>  | <p><b><u>First contact with residential school</u></b> Do you remember when you first heard about **? School? What did you think?</p> <p><b><u>Residential Care at School</u></b><br/>Is there anything that you found particularly good/difficult about X being at the school? Is there anything that you would like to change about the school? In what ways do you think (Your daughter) coming to this school has helped yourself/whānau/family?</p> <p><b><u>Education at the school Relationships with other pupils</u></b> In what ways has being at this school either helped or not – your daughter – make positive relationships with adults and students</p> <p><b><u>Leaving the school?</u></b></p> | <p><b><u>School Structure</u></b><br/>Describe how provision for special educational needs is organised in i) the school ii) your classroom/cottage/department?<br/>How effective do you think the schools provision for special educational needs is? How would you like to see the students provision for special educational needs developed?</p> <p><b><u>Personal Perspectives</u></b><br/>Why do you work here?<br/>What is it that you enjoy about the school? What is it that you find challenging?</p> <p><b><u>Residential care at the school</u></b><br/>In what ways do you think being resident on site helps the girls? How do you think this school is different from other residential</p> |

|  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
|  |   | <p>How do you feel about your daughter leaving the school and returning to home context and base school?</p> <p><b><u>How **? has/has not helped</u></b> In what ways do you think coming to this school has either helped/or not your daughter?</p>   | <p>boarding schools?</p> <p><b><u>Education at the school</u></b><br/> What forms of adaption for students does the school embody? Knowing about SE 2000 and the philosophy of inclusion what part do you think this school plays in current Special Education policy? In what ways does residential school cater for girls that home or base schools cannot? What do the girls miss out on by being here?</p>  |
| <p>How do these perspectives fit with the development of Special Education provision in New Zealand?</p> | <p>In what ways do you think coming here has been helpful, or not?<br/> Can you tell me what you want to do when you leave school? Do you think this school is helping you to meet these goals?<br/> Would you recommend this school to other girls and families – why/why not? What would your advice be to girls coming to this school?</p> | <p>In what ways do you think X coming here has been helpful, or not? For parents/whānau with girls who are having difficulty at their home school is choosing to send your daughter to this school a good idea? What opportunities have you had as whānau to participate in your daughters' education? What has the communication been like with the school? Do you think the school has helped in guiding your daughters' education focus beyond the placement?</p> | <p>In what ways do you think special residential provision supports/challenges the larger education goals for all students? What do you think would happen if the girls had to stay at their old schools? In what ways does placement at the school benefit the whānau/child over the period of two years? Do you have any idea of the long term effects of residential intervention on quality of life? Do you think the school supports in guiding girls' education focus beyond their placement?</p> |