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The Social Acceptance and Interaction  
of Integrated Visually Impaired Children

by

P. Ann MacCuspie

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at

Dalhousie University

Halifax, Nova Scotia

November, 1990

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**DEDICATION**

To Jillian



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## Abstract

As the placement of handicapped children in the regular classroom has become an established practice in elementary schools, the complexities inherent to their social integration are becoming evident. The focus of this research has been integrated visually impaired students and their interaction with and acceptance by classmates. The nature of the social context (i.e. the elementary school) and those aspects, both within and beyond it, which contributed to and detracted from the social integration of these students, have been examined.

This research was guided by the dual theoretical frameworks of symbolic interactionism and the concept of organizational culture. It was a multi-site case study employing participant observation, interviews and the analysis of relevant documents as the sources of data.

It was the conclusion of this study that the basic assumptions of school culture are challenged by and frequently incompatible with the process of social integration of visually impaired students. This sometimes results in a hostile social environment for these students, one where the visually impaired child is "on the fringe" of routine peer interaction. Several aspects of school culture which appeared to pose barriers to the social acceptance of visually impaired students are also detrimental to the social acceptance of many other students (e.g. unpopular children). Therefore, programs initiated to enhance the social integration of visually impaired students (e.g. cooperative learning experiences) are anticipated to provide a more positive social environment for all students.

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Gratitude is extended to the teachers, principals, and parents of the five visually impaired students. They permitted access to the social world of the visually impaired children and shared their perceptions of the acceptance and interaction of these pupils. The contributions of the itinerant teachers for the visually impaired were essential to this research. Their assistance is gratefully acknowledged. I am especially indebted to the five visually impaired students and their classmates who shared their beliefs about friendship and their perceptions on the world of children.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Nature of the Study

#### Introduction

This chapter introduces the concept of integration and its implications for the educational practices associated with visually impaired children. The purpose of the study, its theoretical framework, premises, limitations, delimitations, definition of key terms and significance are then discussed. The chapter concludes with an overview of the thesis.

#### The Concept of Integration

Philosophies and practices associated with the education of handicapped children in Canada have undergone considerable change during the last two decades (Dahl, 1986). Children who were once believed to be uneducable and deprived of any formal educational experience are now considered to have a right to appropriate educational opportunities (MacKay, 1986). Visually impaired pupils who were once segregated in private schools for the duration of their school years may now attend their local public schools. In many cases they are enrolled in the regular classroom with their normally sighted peers (Winzer, Rogow, & David, 1987).

The concept of mainstreaming has been a guiding force in this change in educational placement of the visually impaired. However, this concept has also been a source of much confusion as it has evolved during the last two decades (Biklen, 1985; Chaffin, 1974; Gaylord-Ross,

1989). It originated from the philosophical belief called normalization, which contends that regardless of the severity or type of handicap the individual should live and be educated in as normal an environment as possible (Winzer et al, 1987). First implemented in the Scandinavian countries, the normalization movement focused on deinstitutionalization for the mentally handicapped, promoting their goal of normal family and community life for all handicapped people (Wolfensberger, 1972). Opposed to life-long institutionalization, the concept of normalization offers "the handicapped the chance of a normal life routine, normal developmental experiences, independent choices, and the right to live, work, and play in normal surroundings" (Winzer et al, 1987, p. 13). In the United States, the extension of the principles of normalization to the educational setting in the 1970s became known as mainstreaming (Reynolds, 1976). Given an appropriate educational placement in a regular classroom, a handicapped pupil is expected to benefit from exposure to "normal" role models, opportunities to socialize with nonhandicapped peers, and learning experiences considered essential for all children (Gottlieb, 1981; Quintal, 1986; Semmel, Gottlieb, & Robinson, 1979).

As educators have experienced integration of the handicapped and as researchers have documented results, it has become increasingly evident that the physical proximity of handicapped and nonhandicapped children does not ensure social integration (Gresham, 1982). Handicapped children are frequently reported to be ignored or rejected by their nonhandicapped peers (Gresham, 1982; Hoben, 1980; Quintal, 1986). During the 1980s, a focus of both education and research related

to mainstreaming has been on the acceptance of handicapped children by their nonhandicapped peers, teachers, and administrators (Gaylord-Ross, 1989; Winzer et al, 1987). As programs are now being designed to specifically promote the acceptance and active participation of handicapped pupils in both the social and the academic life of schools, the goal of social integration, initially implicit in the philosophy of mainstreaming, has become explicit.

Integration or mainstreaming, used interchangeably in this text, must be considered as an effort to realize the "positive acceptance of difference" if it is to succeed. The origin and evolution of the concept of normalization, as extended to and developed in the public school system, has progressed, at least at the theoretical level, to include regular spontaneous interaction with peers in both school and community activities (Gall, 1987; Quintal, 1986). Although an acceptable level of academic success has been achieved by integrated visually impaired pupils, there is a consensus among teachers, parents and others involved that these children experience difficulties in social functioning (Sacks & Reardon, 1989; Van Hasselt, 1983). There is a need to gain a greater understanding of the process of interaction experienced by integrated visually impaired students within the school culture and the implications inherent for pupils who are different, who receives limited nonverbal cues, who cannot locate friends on the playground or who have difficulty producing the same quantity and quality of work as many of their classmates.

Research (Roff, Sell, & Golden, 1972) has frequently documented an existing relationship between the level of social competence in

childhood and the long-term emotional adjustment of individuals. Mental illness in adult life is often correlated with social isolation in childhood (Cowen, Pederson, Babigian, Izzo, & Trost, 1973). Despite the realization that lack of positive social integration is a critical problem for visually impaired children mainstreamed in public schools, little has been done to address the issues surrounding their social acceptance. There is an urgent need to identify the specific socialization process experienced by the visually impaired and the types and level of interaction in their everyday lives which perpetuate or contribute to the problem.

The majority of solutions generated to address the social interaction deficits believed to be characteristic of visually impaired children have emphasized remedial instruction of specific social skills intended to overcome or accommodate the undesirable behaviour (Hoben, 1976; Raver, 1986; Sacks & Reardon, 1989; Van Hasselt, Simon & Mastantuono, 1982). In general, however, the complexities of social interaction, the interactive nature of interpersonal relationships, the social environment of the regular classroom, and the impact of society's treatment of the blind as an inferior minority have only been implicit in this body of research. The emphasis has been on product rather than process. Therefore, the focus of this study has been upon the process of interaction experienced by integrated visually impaired students, the variety of factors contributing to this process (e.g. mannerisms of the visually impaired student, friendships of sighted children, student access to visual information), the structuring influences of the social environment prevalent in the regular classroom, and other issues within



and beyond elementary schools (e.g. negotiated rules of pupil culture, the implementation of integration, the stigma of blindness).

### Purpose of the Study

The practice of mainstreaming involves much more than the physical location of handicapped children in the regular classroom (Gall, 1987; Quintal, 1986). As with any change, its implementation and success depend upon the acceptance and co-operation of many involved both directly and indirectly--regular classroom teachers, visually impaired students and their peers, principals, Special Education teachers, superintendents, parents, and the public in general. Integration is viewed as a complex process requiring major behavioural and attitudinal change by both the visually impaired and those with whom they interact during their years of schooling (Fullan, 1982). The practice of mainstreaming, if properly implemented, offers handicapped children the opportunity to develop and learn among their sighted peers--those same children with whom they will one day be expected to identify and associate in an active community life.

As members of a regular public school classroom, visually impaired children are immersed in a culture which is exclusive to children, that is, pupil culture. This is the culture to which they must be socialized if acceptance by peers and associated benefits (e.g. friendships) are to accrue. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore this social environment of the elementary school and the process of social interaction and acceptance between integrated visually impaired children and their sighted peers. It was an initial exploration of some of the

perspectives of those participants intimately involved in the social world of children--visually impaired pupils and their classmates. As well, the perspectives of those less directly involved, teachers, principals and parents of the visually impaired students, were examined. Finally, it was a rudimentary investigation of the social world which confronts a visually impaired student integrated into an environment which has developed around the assumption that participants are normally sighted.

To guide the study in addressing this purpose, five areas of inquiry or subpurposes were identified. The research attempted to determine:

1. the opportunities available for and limitations upon interactions between visually impaired children and their sighted peers in the context of elementary schools;
2. the perceptions visually impaired children have of their interactions with and acceptance by their sighted peers;
3. the perceptions sighted children have of their interactions with and acceptance of a visually impaired classmate;
4. the perceptions teachers, principals, and parents of visually impaired pupils have of the social interaction and acceptance between visually impaired children and their nonhandicapped peers; and
5. the nature of the social environment or situational context relevant to the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students and its compatibility with the process of integration.

### Theoretical Framework

Inherent in the concept of normalization is the belief that the handicapped will have an opportunity for meaningful participation in the everyday world of the culture in which they reside. For school age children who are handicapped, integration into the normal surroundings of public school placements necessitates integration into the social world of their nonhandicapped peers. During the past several decades, researchers (Davies, 1982; Glassner, 1976; Hammersley & Woods, 1984) who have focused on the culture of school age children contend that "children (and adolescents) maintain a social system relatively autonomous from adults" (Fine, 1981, p. 29). This social world, known as pupil culture, is the one which the integrated visually impaired child must enter.

The purpose of this research was to develop an understanding of the process of social interaction between visually impaired pupils and their nonhandicapped classmates, in particular, to gain insight into how the visually impaired, through interactions with their sighted peers, become socialized into the peer culture. Therefore, two conceptual frameworks were used to guide this exploration. One was symbolic interactionism, "founded on the belief that people act on the basis of meanings and understandings which they develop through interaction with others" (Pollard, 1985, p. x). The second was the concept of organizational culture. This concept provides a framework for examining how cultural assumptions underpin people's perceptions and actions. Both of these frameworks are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

### Premises of the Study

Given the dual conceptual frameworks guiding this research, there were several inherent premises. First, it was assumed that the integration of handicapped pupils into the regular classroom is a complex educational change in the public school system (Fullan, 1982). Integration of the visually impaired imposes new situations upon educators, children, and parents. If it is to be successful, integration requires educators to be aware of the philosophical and practical implications involved, as well as their interrelationship. It also requires them to make a commitment to incorporate the various techniques, strategies, materials, and resources appropriate to the education of the visually impaired (Hatlen & Curry, 1987). For visually impaired children, integration into regular classrooms exposes them to different educational and social environments than those in the traditional schools designed specifically for the blind (Curry & Hatlen, 1988; Scholl, 1986). The social development of a visually impaired child among visually impaired peers in a segregated school for the blind is a dramatically different experience than that of a visually impaired child in an integrated setting where he/she may never know another child who is visually impaired (Smith & Smith, 1983). The quality of the educational experience encountered by the visually impaired pupil integrated with sighted peers, may set the stage for her/his lifelong interactions with society (Tuttle, 1984). For the classmates of the visually impaired pupil, it may well be the experience which will shape their future attitudes toward the visually impaired (Lowenfeld, 1975). For parents, integration of their visually impaired child into regular

classrooms requires frequent, direct and open communication with educators, as well as commitment to an advocacy role to ensure the educational and social needs of their child are being met (Corn, 1987; Mangold, 1980).

Integration of the visually impaired into regular classrooms must be viewed in relation to the wider context of society as a whole. This was a second premise of this study. "Primary schools exist within a society which exhibits considerable differences in wealth, status, power and life chances" (Pollard, 1985, p. 96) and these are reflected in its schools. Blindness has a long, firmly established association with reduced status and negative attitudes from society (Lowenfeld, 1975; Monbeck, 1975) which influence the perspectives educators and students may have toward the education of the visually impaired. Visually impaired students challenge the traditional practices and negotiated rules of elementary school culture. Thus, society's basic cultural assumptions relevant to the visually impaired (e.g. equality of opportunity, the positive acceptance of difference) will influence the acceptance of integrated visually impaired students.

A third premise of this study was that schools are social organizations which function as a primary socializing agent for pupils during their formative years. Upon entering school, children must learn a new set of rules relevant to the roles and role relationships in a given classroom (Hargreaves, 1975). From a social-psychological perspective, schools provide children the opportunity to learn and practice new roles, ones which slowly evolve into those adult roles they will assume in society. More importantly, schools select and direct

students toward different adult roles, hence have a significant influence upon the eventual social status of students (Woods, 1979). Schools, as socializing institutions of society, have a culture which reflects how members interrelate to accomplish their goals and those of the group. Underlying basic assumptions specific to the culture influence how its members interpret, reflect upon, and experience matters within the cultural context (Hargreaves, 1975; Schein, 1985). Therefore, the culture of the integrated classroom will play a critical role in the future social integration of visually impaired students into society as a whole.

A fourth premise of this study was that pupil culture is the primary social context into which visually impaired students must be integrated if social integration is to become a reality. Just as the school is a subsystem of the wider society, each classroom within the school functions as a subsystem within the school (Davies, 1982; Pollard, 1985). Here, just as in the school as a whole, the formal goals of acquiring academic knowledge have a complement in the "hidden curriculum"--the values and behaviours which are taught implicitly through the daily social interactions among peers and their teachers (Hamilton, 1983; Pollard, 1985). Hence, as children strive to cope with the conflicting demands of the school environment, a pupil culture develops around the need to balance the interacting purposes of learning, peer group affiliation, and self interests (Pollard, 1985). This pupil culture possesses characteristic attributes of cultures such as negotiated rules to facilitate routine daily interactions, criteria for high and low status individuals, and strategies to cope with both

internal and external threats to its existence. Similarly, other characteristics of social groups such as purpose, membership, and leadership, will be apparent in the classroom but even more evident on the playground (Davies, 1982).

A fifth premise of the research was that the social environment or context intrinsic to elementary schools has a significant effect upon the practices which occur in each classroom (Pollard, 1985). Neither educators nor students can be detached from the social processes and traditions in which they are immersed. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, this social context, present in a given school:

is the product of the creative activity and negotiation of people within a school, bearing in mind not only their degree of power, influence and interpersonal skills but also the effect of various external constraints and pressures which bear on them. (Pollard, 1985, p. 116)

Another premise of this study, the sixth, was that the social environment is of fundamental importance in the development of the sense of self. The position that a pupil occupies in the classroom and the status associated with this position influences developing self-concept (Tuttle, 1984). The peer group has a significant role to play in the socialization process of each member of a class (Davies, 1982; Pollard, 1985; Sieber, 1979a). Appropriate behaviour for developing and maintaining friendships is inherent to the group (Davies, 1984). The desire to belong is a basic and powerful attribute and the development of a sense of self is a dynamic learning process. One's self-concept is derived, in part, from one's perception of how others view her/him (Mead, 1934) and this will influence, in turn, one's behaviour toward others (Tuttle, 1984). As well, the negative impact of rejection by the

peer group on the developing self-concept is compounded by the resulting reduction in opportunities to practice social interaction skills (Lowenfeld, 1980; Tuttle, 1984)).

A seventh premise was that the social interaction of the visually impaired with the sighted has to be understood in its social and cultural context. Visual impairment has a significant impact upon the type and quantity of information a child accesses from the environment but, this in itself, need not exclude the child from positive social experiences. For the purpose of this study, social interaction was considered to be a function of the complex interrelationships among the visually impaired child, the peer group, and the school/classroom environment created by teachers and administrators.

Finally, in an attempt to bridge the gap between basic and applied research, this study was undertaken on the premise that individuals have the potential to change themselves and their immediate environment, as well as become change agents.

The notion of cause in social analysis has little purchase unless it is linked with social action. What we need for an assault on injustices that exist in, and work through, the education system, is knowledge about how a given pattern of social relationships has come into being, how the people in the situation relate to it, and what are its tensions and contradictions. It is simply not helpful to think about it as an array of causal factors that can be manipulated to produce a cure. Rather, we need to think in terms of the potentials that a given situation has for the people in it, and the constraints on what they can do with it. (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler & Dowsett, 1982, p. 193)

It is hoped that given the knowledge, understanding and empathy required, classroom teachers and administrators can learn to promote social integration of the visually impaired and their sighted peers. Through research which acknowledges the complexities of social



interaction and interpersonal relations, insight may be acquired into the process of social interaction between the visually impaired and the sighted. Based on this knowledge, policies and procedures can be designed to promote greater opportunity for the visually impaired to benefit from both the instructional and "hidden curricula" in our public schools.

#### Limitations of the Study

Pupil or childhood culture is a complex concept, one which sometimes proves particularly difficult for adults to understand. When researchers have attempted to gather the perspectives of children in relation to their social world, they have discovered that children interpret their world differently than adults (Davies, 1982; Pollard, 1985). An independent childhood culture, where the children view the world in their own terms, creates unique features and rules which are different from those perceived by the adult world. As this research explored the level of social acceptance and integration of visually impaired children by their sighted peers, an attempt was made to understand "the private and autonomous social world of childhood in order to come to grips with the forms and practices of this world" (Ball, 1985, 48). Yet, some perceptions were difficult to clarify, particularly those which appeared to be a source of guilt or shame for the student. For situations in which there was an apparent difference between the reported and actual behaviour of the student, explanations were sometimes contradictory or inundated with exceptions.

A second limitation of this study is also associated with access to the pupil culture in schools. The extent to which the researcher can establish a "we-relationship" with the children will determine the access granted to this "private and autonomous world" (Ball, 1985). Researchers have noted that there are limits to the scope and type of topics children are willing to share with adults (Davies, 1982; Pollard, 1985). Children's perspectives and disclosures related to acceptance or rejection of classmates were sometimes too sensitive for some children to discuss or share, particularly for those students who were less than empathetic toward the visually impaired student. Thus, there were problems in analyzing and interpreting the world of children and how they perceived and constructed social reality.

A third potential limitation is associated with the assumption that the researcher would be able to discern the visually impaired student's perceptions and/or ways of making meaning in the social environment of the classroom. With a researcher who had not experienced the effects of vision loss on all aspects of development and with visually impaired students who could not conceptualize the visual world of the researcher, there was sometimes a sense of inaccessibility between the two. Therefore, in addressing each of these limitations it was necessary to view research as:

a search for meaning, and ambiguities of language and of interviewing, discrepancies between attitude and behaviour, even problems of non-response, [as providing] an important part of data, rather than being ignored or simply regarded as obstacles to efficient research. (Schuman, 1982, p. 23)

### Delimitations of the Study

The five visually impaired students in this study were elementary school children who were classified as legally blind (i.e. having a visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye after correction), were without additional handicaps, were achieving at grade level or within one year of grade level, and did not demonstrate behavioral problems. The effect of multiple handicaps upon development was considered to be not only a combination of the various handicaps but a complex compounding of factors which are difficult to assess or anticipate (Lowenfeld, 1980; Scholl, 1986; Warren, 1984). Therefore, the exclusion of multihandicapped pupils from this study was deemed necessary if the intended focus of this study on the social interaction of integrated visually impaired pupils was to be enhanced and the influencing variables possibly associated with multiple handicaps were to be reduced.

As is characteristic of qualitative research, the vast amount of "rich" data collected during the research process was overwhelming. This created many potential research directions and additional relevant themes which had to be kept for future consideration to allow the researcher to focus upon the stated purpose of this study.

### Definition of Key Terms

In this study the following definitions were adopted for certain key terms:

Acceptance: refers to a relationship between a child and her/his peer group which is characterized by active and spontaneous interaction,

perception by the group that this child is an acceptable playmate or workmate, routine inclusion in classroom and playground activities, and infrequent discouragement from joining activities.

Integration: synonymous with mainstreaming, refers to the process of educating handicapped children with their non-handicapped peers in a public school setting which encompasses:

the actualization of three interdependent elements--temporal integration (time spent in the regular classroom), instructional integration (sharing in the instructional environment), and social integration (acceptance by classmates). (Gall, 1987, p. 377)

Itinerant Teacher for the Visually Impaired: is a teacher specializing in the field of education for the visually impaired and assigned a caseload of visually impaired students within a specific geographic area, thereby, requiring travel from school to school. The role of the itinerant teacher includes both direct instruction of the visually impaired student in compensatory skills and assistance to educators in adapting programs or teaching strategies to enhance the access of visually impaired students to necessary information.

Legally Blind: having a visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye after optical correction or having a visual field of 20 degrees or less.

Social Interaction: is the complex interrelationships among the visually impaired child, her/his peer group, and the school/classroom environment created by teachers and administrators.

Visually Impaired: refers to any structural or functional defect of the eye which results in a loss of visual acuity or field, ranging from slight loss to total blindness. Since all visually impaired students in this study were classified as legally blind, the use of the

term "visually impaired" in relation to these five students, and in the implications, conclusions and recommendations of the study assumes a severe vision loss.

### Significance of the Study

The social acceptance of visually impaired pupils by their sighted peers and their interaction in an integrated public school setting has not been a frequently researched topic. Classroom interaction studies involving visually impaired children are limited both in number and scope. What is needed, therefore, is research focusing on the process of social interaction and acceptance between visually impaired and sighted children and the challenges public school environments, established for sighted participants, create for visually impaired learners. Research located within a symbolic science framework can focus on contextual aspects of the social environment, on how the visually impaired construct social reality and negotiate shared meanings, as well as on the perspectives of both the sighted and the visually impaired as they relate to classroom interaction. By identifying the cultural assumptions underpinning the acceptance and interaction of visually impaired students, greater insight into the complexity of the social environment of the elementary school and the process needed for change can be generated. These issues require investigation. Unlike the variety and diversity of research characterizing classroom interaction of normally sighted children, this area of investigation remains essentially unexplored in relation to the visually impaired.

Despite the realization that social acceptance by sighted peers is a critical problem for visually impaired pupils integrated into public schools, little progress has been made in ameliorating this obstacle to social integration. There is an urgent need to identify the specific social integration processes experienced by the integrated visually impaired pupil. It is essential to understand the type and level of interaction of the visually impaired child and aspects of the immediate environment which perpetuate or contribute to the problem before appropriate actions can be considered to accommodate the specific social developmental needs of the visually impaired. As Johnson and Johnson (1980) contend:

Experience with a broad range of peers is not a superficial luxury to be enjoyed by some students and not by others, but rather an absolute necessity for maximal achievement and healthy cognitive and social development. Social interactions with peers may be the primary relationships within which development and socialization take place. (p. 90)

#### Overview of the Study

This study is presented in 11 chapters. Chapter 1 has introduced the nature of the problem to be considered, including the purpose of the study; the theoretical frameworks; assumptions, limitations and delimitations of the study; definition of key terms and the significance of the research. A review of related research is discussed in Chapter 2. Methodology employed to complete the thesis is described in Chapter 3; the subjects and their selection, access and ethical issues, and procedures for data collection and analysis are presented. Chapter 4 provides a description of the five research sites and the visually impaired students. The five subpurposes of the study are addressed in

Chapters 5 through 9. Chapter 5 considers pupil culture, the context of the study, and cultural assumptions relevant to friendship, peer interaction, and the acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 outline, respectively, the perceptions of visually impaired students, their classmates and their teachers and parents as they relate to the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired children. In Chapter 9, the social environment and relevant contextual factors and processes, both external to and within the elementary school setting, are discussed. The contradictions, dilemmas and implications associated with the integration of visually impaired students into the regular classroom are presented in Chapter 10. The thesis is concluded in Chapter 11 with a summary of the entire work, the conclusions and recommendations of the study, and directions for future research.

## CHAPTER 2

### Review of the Literature

#### Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the literature relevant to the social interaction and acceptance of integrated visually impaired students. The review includes discussion of the complexities inherent within the concept of integration and its application to the educational setting; the concept of culture and its applicability to the school as well as to one subgroup, the pupils; the friendship relationship among preadolescents; the social acceptance and integration of handicapped children; the social acceptance and integration of visually impaired children; issues related to the research, definition, and social adjustment of visually impaired children; and, finally the theoretical perspectives employed for research on pupil interaction.

#### Integration

Just as the implementation of "child-centered instruction" or the introduction of "open education" may be viewed as a progressive development within the education system, the integration of handicapped children into public schools should be perceived as a milestone in the evolution of special education (Biklen, 1985; Gall, 1987; Reynolds, 1976). It is a movement which has gained in prominence in North America, Great Britain, and most European countries during the last few decades (O'Donnel & Bradfield, 1976). Gall (1987) contends that:

Special education cannot be examined apart from the unique perspective which any nation's citizenry brings to its view of



mankind [sic] and the value ascribed within that socio-psychological context to human uniqueness. (p.359)

Integration of the handicapped into public schools, although an ideal not fully realized, is however a basic principle of contemporary special education (Biklen, 1985; Gall, 1987; Winzer et al, 1987).

During the 1960s and 1970s, special education in the United States was confronted with a number of critical problems. Parents of handicapped children were resisting the automatic placement of their children in segregated educational settings; research seemed unable to support the efficacy of special class placement for the education of the handicapped; educators were beginning to recognize the detrimental effects inherent in labeling a child as handicapped; questions were being raised about the accuracy of diagnostic tests used to identify handicapped children, particularly the existence of cultural bias; civil rights activist were creating greater public awareness of the injustice inherent in the life-long placement of thousands of handicapped individuals in large, impersonal, and sometimes abusive institutions; and the law courts were more frequently becoming involved in litigation concerning the placement of handicapped children (Biklen, 1985; Chaffin, 1974). Endorsed by the efforts of special educators, parents, advocates and educational researchers, the extension of the principles of normalization to the educational setting became known as mainstreaming (Reynolds, 1976; Winzer et al, 1987). Since schools are believed to reflect, and consequently teach, the social mores of the dominant society in which they are located (Cohen & Manion, 1981), schools might logically be viewed as potential agents of social change in remediating the past injustices experienced by the handicapped (Gall, 1987).

Although there has been passage of legislation such as Bill 82 in Ontario, Bill 85 in New Brunswick, and Public Law 94-142 in the United States, there has not been conformity of ideas. Integration continues to be interpreted and implemented in a variety and diversity of ways (Biklen, 1985; McKay, 1986; New Brunswick Legislative Assembly, 1989). For some, mainstreaming became a philosophical issue concerned with ethical and conceptual aspects guiding the development of programs for the handicapped; for others, it was a service delivery model focusing on associated administrative issues; and, still for others, it was the process adopted to move handicapped pupils from segregated classes or schools and to integrate them with "normal" children (Dybwad, 1980; Sapon-Shevin, 1978).

Some researchers and educators have considered integration and mainstreaming as synonymous, viewing them as complex concepts involving ethical, legal, and educational issues.

Integration, or mainstreaming as it is called in an educational setting, has arisen as a result of the conviction that all individuals have human rights: specifically, a right to engage in culturally normative behaviors within environments which are as culturally normative as possible. (Watkinson & Titus, 1985, p. 48)

Others outlined distinct differences between the two terms.

Integration is not mainstreaming. Handicapped children who are integrated spend the majority of each school day in a special education classroom, although they join nonhandicapped peers for certain nonacademic activities. (Hanline & Murray, 1984, p. 273)

Some educators interpreted mainstreaming as one placement alternative for disabled students who could meet admission criteria for enrollment in regular classrooms.

Mainstreaming, if it is to be carried out the way it was designed, should be placing students into regular classrooms when they have

demonstrated the academic and social skills to profit from regular class placement. (Goldman, 1980, p. 263)

Even a nationalist explanation for the conceptual differences has been proposed:

Mainstreaming is proposed to be an American social construction, embedded in the assimilative cultural tradition of that country. The characterization of Canadian society as a mosaic rather than melting pot and consequent deemphasis of mainstreaming-minority dynamics both imply integration may be more heuristically useful, relevant, and meaningful in Canadian special education. . . . An objective of special education in Canada might be expressed as the integration of exceptional children through the positive acceptance of differences; in the United States it might be better stated as the merging of exceptional children into the mainstream through the elimination or reduction of differences. (Boyd, 1987, p. 77)

As might be expected, the implementation of mainstreaming or integration programs reflects the variety and diversity apparent in these definitions (Biklen, 1985; Chaffin, 1974). For example, some handicapped students are enrolled full-time in the regular class, others may spend all or a certain percentage of their time in special classes within the public school; some pupils receive individual instruction within the regular class while others are removed for special instruction; and some pupils attend their neighborhood school while others must travel to a district school designated for special programs. More important than the diversity of administrative arrangements as it relates to service delivery models, is the emphasis programs place on acceptance and active participation of handicapped students. Unfortunately, this appears to be as varied and diverse as the service delivery models (Biklen, 1985; Gresham, 1982; Quintal, 1986).

In Canada, the integration of handicapped children in the public school system has been influenced by the American model.

Mainstreaming--another one of those American educational experiments, which crosses the 49th parallel, almost by osmosis, and a mere decade later becomes part of Canadian reality . . . has filtered down to the classroom level with surprising speed. (Zey, 1981, p.11)

Canada has frequently been criticized, from both within and without, for its lack of national policy on the education of the handicapped (Gall, 1987). Supporters of a national policy have cited the emergence of special education in Canada as:

the exigencies of provincial political, social, and economic pressures resulting in an "intricate patchwork" of regional disparities, inequality of opportunity to education, and discrimination against the development of appropriate services for certain categories of handicapping conditions. (Csapo, 1980, p. 227)

In Nova Scotia, "school boards are responsible for the identification, assessment, placement, educational programs and monitoring of progress of children with special needs" (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 1988, p. 1). In New Brunswick, the passage of Bill 85 instructs School Boards:

to place exceptional pupils in regular classrooms with non-exceptional pupils unless such placement proves detrimental to the needs of the child or other children. (New Brunswick Department of Education, 1988, p. 3)

Although most provinces now, individually, have legislation regarding the education of the handicapped, the new Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms may act as the national legislation guiding the development of more equitable services for all disabled Canadians (Kysela, French, & Johnston, 1985; MacKay, 1986).

Regardless of legislation, special educators on both sides of the 49th parallel have concluded that integration must address the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of both the nonhandicapped and the

handicapped (Johnson & Johnson, 1981; Jones, 1984; Tuttle, 1984).

Integration must be considered as an effort to realize the "positive acceptance of differences" if it is to succeed in either country. The origin and evolution of the concept of normalization, as extended to and developed in the public school system, has progressed, at least at the theoretical level, to include regular spontaneous interaction with peers in both school and community activities (Quintal, 1986). In contemporary education the distinction between the use of the terms mainstreaming and integration appears to be more one of semantics than practice. They have come to be used interchangeably.

Mainstreaming and integration are two sides of one coin. The philosophy of mainstreaming is manifested in the process of integration. However, the two terms are often used synonymously . . . (Winzer et al, 1987, p. 14)

Full integration, synonymous with mainstreaming:

encompasses the actualization of three interdependent elements--temporal integration (time spent in the regular classroom), instructional integration (sharing in the instructional environment), and social integration (acceptance by classmates). (Gall, 1987, p. 377)

The individual needs of each child must be carefully considered as educational opportunities are created. For the majority of handicapped children full integration in the public school system should be the norm. For the minority of handicapped pupils, placement outside the regular classroom for some portion of the school day may be warranted for specific instructional activities (e.g. orientation and mobility training). For a very few handicapped children, a short-term segregated placement outside the public school system may be justified, if explicit to the goal of such placement is the return of the pupil to the public school setting.

The essence of this definition is similar to the concept of "unconditional mainstreaming" described by Biklen (1985). From this perspective, integration is an ongoing process in each classroom. As with any educational innovation, the necessary personnel, resources, and training must accompany development, implementation, and evaluation (Fullan, 1982). Teachers and administrators, often assisted by the parents of handicapped children, work closely together to plan programs meeting the identified needs of the children. A "problem-solving attitude" is a significant feature of this model. The provision of adequate resources, flexible programming options, interdisciplinary approaches to problem-solving, and prominent administrative, moral, and practical support characterize this model (Biklen, 1985).

Inherent in this concept of unconditional mainstreaming is the restructuring of the existing educational system to better meet the needs of all students, not just those who can be categorized into a variety of existing classifications for handicapped children (Quintal, 1986; Sapon-Shevin, 1978). This notion of educational reform is currently the principle guiding the controversial recommendation for a merger of special and regular education (Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987). Such a merger:

involves the joining of demonstrably effective practices from special, compensatory, and general education to establish a general education system that is more inclusive and that better serves all students, particularly those who require greater-than-usual educational support. (Reynolds et al, 1987, p. 394)

It seems apparent that special educators have finally realized that integration cannot be imposed upon the general education system and expected to be successfully implemented without significant

restructuring of the entire system. Those aspects of the regular education system which have posed the most serious barriers to full integration appear to be the same features responsible for the less than satisfactory performance of many nonhandicapped children (Sapon-Shevin, 1978; Stainback, Stainback, Courtneage, & Jaben, 1985). For example, competition, a fundamental component of the present educational system, ensures that some children must fail (Sapon-Shevin, 1978).

Sociologists have frequently denounced both the manifest and latent functions of schools in maintaining inequality of opportunity (Mifflin & Mifflin, 1982). Both explicitly through many classroom procedures, and implicitly through the "hidden curriculum," schools sort the achievers from the nonachievers (Biklen, 1985). Therein, lies the contradiction of implementing mainstreaming without significant restructuring of general education. "It seems incongruous for schools to sort and select while purporting to redesign themselves to meet the needs of all children" (Sapon-Shevin, 1978, p. 120).

### School Culture

As institutional organizations, schools may be perceived as cultures, similar to the manner in which anthropologists or sociologists investigate the patterns of development in a given society (Morgan, 1986; Schein, 1985). Organizations are viewed as independent units of society sharing unique goals, rituals, and norms. Based on a consensus of norms and customs, the culture of an organization develops through the social interaction of its members (Morgan, 1986).

Culture can be defined in many ways. Deal and Kennedy (1983) describe culture as the "core set of assumptions, understandings, and implicit rules that govern day-to-day behaviour in the work place" (p. 501). Organizational culture according to Kilman (1984) is "the shared philosophies, ideologies, values, assumptions, beliefs, expectations, attitudes, and norms that knit a community together" (p. 5). Taking a similar focus on the function of culture, Smircich (1983) defines culture as:

the distinctive character--expressed in patterns of belief (ideology), activity (norms and rituals), language and other symbolic forms through which organizational members both create and sustain their view of the world and the image of themselves in the world. (p. 56)

Although the concept of culture as it relates to technical organizations has received considerable attention from researchers, in relation to institutional organizations such as schools, culture is not as well understood (Meyer, Scott & Deal, 1983). However, during the past decade the "effective schools movement" has placed considerable emphasis on school culture (Druian, 1987). Purkey and Smith (1982) define the school's culture as "a structure, process, and climate of values and norms that channel staff and students in the direction of successful teaching and learning" (p. 64). According to Firestone and Wilson (1984):

the system of publicly and collectively accepted meanings, beliefs, values, and assumptions that a staff uses to guide its actions and interpret its surroundings [i.e. its culture] can contribute greatly to the school's effectiveness. (p. 1)

School culture, the "unseen supervisor" is viewed as:

something that helps keep teachers on target, that teaches them how to behave, establishes standards, values, and sanctions, and



which provides guidance and validation for one's work. (Alfonso, 1986, p. 5)

Therefore, school culture affects both the behaviour of its members and in doing so, its perception by the public (Deal, 1985).

Regardless of whether an organization is considered technical or institutional, Schein (1985) defines culture as:

a pattern of basic assumptions--invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration--that has worked well enough to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 9)

Schein (1985) differentiates among three levels of culture. At the first level are artifacts. These include such things as physical arrangements of the organization, language, social atmosphere and conspicuous actions of its members. Values are at the second level. They serve the moral function of the organization's members and distinguish between "what is" and "what ought to be." Artifacts and values are merely manifestations of the culture. At the third level, "the essence of culture," are the basic assumptions of the organization. Schein (1985) believes that:

the term culture should be reserved for the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic taken-for-granted fashion an organization's view of itself and its environment. These assumptions and beliefs are learned responses to a group's problems of internal integration. They come to be taken-for-granted because they solve these problems repeatedly and reliably. This deeper level of assumptions is to be distinguished from the 'artifacts' and 'values' that are the manifestations or surface levels of the culture, but not the essence of the culture. (p. 6-7)

Thus, Schein (1985) develops the concept of culture beyond the superficial level of climate, ethos, or values. As well, his concept of culture emphasizes the examination of social units within the host

culture such as teacher culture or pupil culture. This concept presents a dynamic evolutionary model of culture.

### Pupil Culture

Within an organization, groups may form:

on the basis of physical proximity, shared fate, common occupation, common work experience, similar ethnic background, or similar rank level . . . . Once a group acquires a history, it also acquires a culture. (Schein, 1985, p. 39)

Schooling literature would suggest that pupil culture, most evident on the playground, develops as a defensive resource for pupils against teachers and other adults (Davies, 1982; Pollard, 1985; Woods, 1979). The pupil culture addresses problems of internal integration such as group boundaries. Insiders in a group get special treatment and a sense of identity, while outsiders are "more likely to be stereotyped and treated with indifference or hostility" (Schein, 1985, p. 71). Davies (1982) contends that the culture of childhood is a reflection of the distinct manner in which children interpret the world, not an immature adult version, but one which is embedded in the different ways children perceive their environment. Intrinsically associated with adult culture, the culture of childhood is a distinct and separate culture in its own right (Speier, 1976). Although lacking power and frequently recognition in relation to the adult world:

children develop the capacity to see clearly from their own position within the social structure, and do not worry unduly about what it looks like to the adults. . . . But even without the rights enjoyed by adults, and despite the expectations placed on them as members of the institution of childhood, children busily get on with the business of constructing their own reality with each other, as well as making sense of and developing strategies to cope with the adult world as and when it impinges on their world. This

reality and its related strategies I refer to as the culture of childhood. (Davies, 1982, p. 32-33)

Woods (1983) has outlined three frequently occurring themes inherent to pupil or childhood culture--competence, relationships, and status. Competence refers to the child's ability to place herself/himself in relation to peers and act according to their expectations, that is, to "refine one's social identity and to acquire the skills necessary for the successful positioning of the self in multiple social worlds" (Fine, 1981, p. 33). Sieber (1979a) describes many of the school situations which necessitate a student learning a "flexible repertoire of role behaviors" (p. 212). These include such things as the discretion and secrecy to be used when classroom interaction is not permitted by the teacher, the procedure to follow when joining existing groups of interacting students, and the behaviours to use to initiate play or joke with a classmate. To interact successfully in the pupil culture, students need to know the status items of the pupil culture (Corn & Bishop, 1984; Pollard, 1985). Thus, social competence within the pupil culture requires the child to learn the negotiated rules of conduct for behaviour within the group.

Friendships, according to Woods (1983), "form the structural bases of the child's extra-curricular life from a very early stage" (p. 96). The importance of friendships have frequently been noted by researchers (Davies, 1982; Fine, 1981; Pollard, 1985; Woods, 1983). The basis for friendship formation is seen to be different for children of different ages. Rubin (1980) and Davies (1982) compare the friendships of preadolescent children based on physical accessibility with those of

teenagers which focus on psychological compatibility. Regardless of the basis of friendships:

Friendship has generally been conceptualized as an affective bond, a relationship charged with positive feeling, in some cases approaching "love." Other features should be emphasized as well. Friendship is also a staging area for interaction, a cultural institution for the transmission of knowledge and performance techniques, and a crucible for the shaping of selves. Each of these aspects of the friendship relationship has implications for interaction within and outside of the friendship bond. (Fine, 1981, p. 41)

Schofield (1981), in reviewing the literature on friendship, concluded that although friendship has been "defined in a wide variety of ways, most of these definitions stress closeness, mutuality, and attention to the specific personal characteristics of the individuals involved" (p.59). Levinger and Snoek (1972) characterize human relationships on three fundamental levels: awareness, surface contact, and mutuality. As described by Schofield (1981):

At the first level, that of unilateral awareness, an individual is aware of another but has not yet interacted with him or her. At the second level, surface contact, individuals interact in a rather superficial way. Their lives touch, but no deep relationship exists and behavior is heavily determined by the roles the individuals have in the contact situation. Finally, mutuality may emerge when individuals increasingly disclose themselves to each other and build up a store of shared experience. These levels of relatedness may not constitute invariant stages in the development of mutual relationship such as friendship. One can reasonably argue, however, that mutuality must be preceded by surface contact and that surface contact is often preceded by unilateral or bilateral awareness. (p.59)

Pollard (1985) contends that the particular identity which is created by and associated with each child results in her/his status within the group and may be seen as the social outcome of friendship relations and social competence. Hargreaves (1975) suggests three

dimensions creating a status hierarchy or system of valuing individuals within the group. First, sociometric status is concerned with the degree to which individuals are liked by or popular with other group members. Second, social power or influence is concerned with the capacity of one individual to control the behaviour of another. The third dimension of status is prestige and is related to specific positions within the formal group, such as class president or captain of the ball team. Within the culture of childhood, members develop a pecking order or status which tends to be relatively stable over time (Davies, 1982; Fine, 1981).

Informal pupil organization or pupil culture develops as a response to both the structural elements of the classroom and the freedom from adult supervision characteristic of the playground.

According to Pollard (1985):

In child culture, then, we have a social phenomenon which orients itself in two directions at once. Looking externally, it develops within the adult-directed structures of the school and community, and it offers children a source of support, security and positive esteem which is to a great extent insulated from the often threatening experience of teacher-dominated classroom processes or of parental strictures. It is developed largely from the children's territory of the playground while the grown-ups drink their coffee. It also offers a means of defining and reinterpreting the meaning and relevance of the contradictions, dilemmas and expectations which impinge on children because of their structural position. Thus within children's friendship groups commonsense knowledge, shared values and collective strategies will be developed to cope with the world of adults. On the other hand, if we look internally, child culture acts rather differently to provide norms, constraints and expectations which bear on its members. Thus although it is enabling in one respect, it is constraining in another, and we have seen that the social system of children is itself structured and represents a context in which children seek to establish their competence and a positive identity. (p. 49-50)

### Social Acceptance/Integration of Handicapped Children

Integration of the handicapped into public schools, although an ideal not fully realized, is a basic principle of contemporary special education (Biklen, 1985; Gall, 1987; Winzer et al, 1987). The number of disabled children enrolled in public schools during the last two decades has dramatically increased (Gall, 1987; Winzer et al, 1987). However, as they have had the opportunity to both attend public schools and participate in regular classes, it has become increasingly evident that the physical proximity of handicapped and nonhandicapped children does not necessarily result in spontaneous social interaction, increased social acceptance of handicapped children, or modeling and imitating of appropriate behaviour by handicapped children (Gresham, 1982; MacMillan & Morrison, 1984; Sabornie, 1985).

The majority of studies examining the social acceptance and status of handicapped children in integrated settings report that disabled students interact less frequently and more negatively with their nonhandicapped peers and tend to be ignored or rejected by them (Gresham, 1982; Hoben, 1980; Quintal, 1986). However, the complexities of the process of social acceptance and the inconsistencies within the research must be considered when examining the literature. Sociometric techniques typically used in these studies provide descriptive data but do not explain why a pupil is accepted, rejected or ignored (MacMillan & Morrison, 1984). The heterogeneity within specific disability categories, social competence, IQ, age, amount of time spent in the integrated setting, etc. vary from study to study. Variations are also evident within the peer group assessing the acceptability of the

handicapped child as well as within environmental structures (e.g. open or traditional classrooms, competitive or co-operative learning groups).

Three major reviews of the research literature examining the social acceptance and/or status of the handicapped in integrated settings (Gresham, 1982; MacMillan & Morrison, 1984; Meyers, MacMillan, & Yoshida, 1980) have reported several findings in common. First, the majority of studies focus on mentally handicapped, learning disabled, and behaviorally handicapped students--those groups of children believed to experience greater difficulties with social development and emotional adjustment (Quintal, 1986). Second, acceptance and rejection seem to be associated more with the personal-behavioural traits of the student than the particular handicap. Finally,

variability across studies in terms of age, IQ, instruments, sociometric criterion (when specified), and characteristics of the regular class make comparisons impossible and any generalizations very tentative. Nevertheless, a consistent trend is apparent: handicapped learners in regular classrooms enjoy lower sociometric status than do their nonhandicapped peers, . . . (MacMillan & Morrison, 1984, p. 98)

As the focus of both education and research related to integration of the handicapped has been on the acceptance of handicapped children by their nonhandicapped peers, teachers, and administrators (Gall, 1987; Gresham, 1983), programs are being designed specifically to promote the acceptance and active participation of handicapped pupils in both the social and the academic life of the school. The restructuring of the regular education setting to promote the social acceptance of handicapped pupils, as well as to improve the quality of educational experiences for nonhandicapped students, suggests educators are looking

beyond the child as the source of problems in contemporary education (Hallinan & Smith, 1987; Johnson & Johnson, 1984).

In considering the integration of visually impaired pupils into the regular classroom, it is necessary to examine integration from a variety of perspectives--ethical, technical, educational, administrative, psychological, and sociological. Educational, ethical, sociocultural, and legal justifications have frequently been espoused to support integration (Gottlieb, 1981; MacKay, 1986; Quintal, 1986; Semmel, Gottlieb, & Robinson, 1979). Although the broader issue of integration is the same for the visually impaired as it is for all handicapped children, at another level (e.g. psychological, sociological, and administrative), the nature of visual impairment dictates different solutions to some of the problems involved. Intrinsic to vision loss are developmental variations associated with such things as conceptualizing the visual world by interpreting predominantly auditory information and feedback (Hatlen & Curry, 1987). These are very different issues than those inherent in, for example, a hearing impairment, in which cognitive development is affected by the absence or modification of language (Sanders, 1980). As well, sociological structures such as stigma, may have different consequences for a visually impaired person than for someone with another type of disability (Monbeck, 1975). Simultaneously, the relation to some psychological or sociological structures may be similar for all groups with handicaps which, for example, restrict mobility, but not for those handicaps in which this restriction is not a consideration. Administrative issues associated with the integration of a low incidence



handicap, such as visual impairment, will be different than those inherent to a high incidence handicap, such as learning disabilities (Burrello & Sage, 1979). In summary, the goal of integration to accept and encourage the active participation of disabled students in the life of the school is pertinent to all. Realizing this goal may require a variety of strategies designed to accommodate problems unique to specific handicaps.

### Social Acceptance/Integration of Visually Impaired Children

#### The History of Integration of the Visually Impaired

In North America the practice of integrating visually impaired children in regular schools and classrooms has a longer history than mainstreaming children with other disabilities (Martin & Hoben, 1977). Samuel Gridley Howe, the first director of what is now Perkins School for the Blind in Boston, was an early advocate of integration for the blind.

It is much easier to have children who are partially blind, and even those totally blind, received and taught in common schools than it was formerly, because the existence of Institutions for the Blind during the third of a century has familiarized people with the fact that sight is not essential for instruction in the common branches. A great many persons have become acquainted with the methods used in the Institutions, and with the use of books in raised letters. I am constantly applied to by teachers to know how to proceed with a blind child; and I always encourage them to keep it at home, and let it go to the common school as long as possible. (Howe, 1866, p. 185)

Although Howe's advice was rarely heeded and residential education for the blind remained the standard practice for nearly a century, there were some placement options available to visually impaired students

residing in large cities. In 1905 public school braille classes were established in Chicago (Lowenfeld, 1973). Based on this positive experience many urban areas throughout the United States continued to establish special classes, such as "sight saving classes" for the partially sighted, and even programs within regular classrooms. Yet, residential school remained the main educational placement for the visually impaired until the 1950s and 1960s. At this time there was a significant increase in the number of visually impaired children due to retrolental fibroplasia, a cause of visual impairment associated with the use of excessive oxygen following the premature birth of infants (Lowenfeld, 1973). The increasing reluctance of parents to send their young children to residential settings and the inability of existing schools for the blind to cope with the decisive increase in population is believed to have contributed to the establishment of the principle and practice of mainstreaming for visually impaired children as well as those with other disabilities (Lowenfeld, 1973; Martin & Hoben, 1977).

In Canada, residential placement of visually impaired children was the main educational approach until the late 1960s. Prior to the establishment of the Atlantic Provinces Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired in 1977, severely visually impaired children throughout Atlantic Canada were educated at the Halifax School for the Blind (MacCuspie & McAlpine, 1988). The majority of these children were residential students returning home only during Christmas and Easter holidays and two months during the summer. As a consequence of the recommendations of the Nova Scotia government's 1973 Kendall Report, the four Atlantic Provinces agreed to combine resources to expand the

educational opportunities available to the visually impaired to include community-based services. Thus, integration of the visually impaired in the regular classroom soon became the standard educational placement for these children.

#### Defining Visual Impairment

Official definitions of visual impairment were originally designed to assist in medical classification and/or eligibility for various forms of social assistance (Faye, 1984). Using tests of visual acuity which measure clarity of vision, a person is declared legally blind if visual acuity is 20/200 or less. One with a visual acuity of 20/200 can identify a specific symbol at 20 feet while one with normal vision, (i.e. 20/20), is able to identify this same symbol at 200 feet. Legal blindness may also be declared if the field of vision is restricted to less than 20 degrees (Faye, 1984).

Such definitions provide limited information about the way a person sees or the effect of vision loss on development and performance (Barraga, 1976). For example, a visual impairment involving a significant field loss will have a profound effect upon the ease with which one can move throughout the environment but may not seriously detract from the ability to read regular size print. Intelligence, motivation, emotional support, and age of onset of visual impairment are but a few of the variables which appear to contribute to the efficiency with which one learns to accommodate a vision loss (Barraga 1976; Faye, 1984; Scholl, 1986).

The majority of the visually impaired have some useful remaining vision. Only one in 10,000, or approximately 10 percent of the visually

impaired childhood population are totally blind (Faye, 1984). The prevalence of visual impairment in the school age population is 0.06, in comparison to 1.75 for the mentally handicapped, 0.31 for those with multiple handicaps, 1.22 for the speech impaired, or 4.41 for the learning disabled (Winzer et al, 1987). Visual impairment has the lowest prevalence when compared with that of other handicapping conditions.

Another consideration when discussing the visually impaired as a group is the wide range of abilities intrinsic to this population. These range from the gifted to the profoundly multiply handicapped (Scholl, 1986). As medical technology has improved, the number of multiply handicapped children who survive the early critical years has increased dramatically. Since visual impairment is frequently one of the several disabilities experienced by this group, this has changed the composition of the visually impaired population (Winzer et al, 1987). Thus, visual impairment is a low incidence condition marked by extreme heterogeneity.

#### Issues Related to Research on the Visually Impaired

Findings of much of the research on the visually impaired tend to be vague, inconclusive, and contradictory (Fraiberg, 1977; Lowenfeld, 1980; Warren, 1984). Two major factors are generally believed to be related to this problem. First, the majority of research on visual impairment has been undertaken within a positivistic theoretical framework, hence based on the scientific method associated with statistical analysis, strict sampling procedures, and an emphasis on objectivity (Warren, 1978). The nature of visual impairment creates

major difficulties from this perspective. For example, the prevalence of visual impairment is only .06 of the school age population (Winzer et al, 1987), making access to random samples or matching on specific variables truly difficult. As well, a precise definition of visual impairment is problematic (Freeman, Goetz, Richards, Groenveld, Blockberger, Jan, & Sykanda, 1988). Legal blindness includes a range from total vision loss to varying degrees of functional or partial vision. Other factors such as the degree and location of visual field defects, visual efficiency, motivation, and light and contrast sensitivity affect the degree and quality of visual information accessible (Faye, 1984). Second, and interrelated with the first, is the extreme heterogeneity of the visually impaired, school age population. The severity of loss, total or partial; the age of onset, congenital or adventitious; the nature of onset, gradual or sudden; intelligence and social adjustment; and the presence of associated physical or sensory handicaps, all contribute to the extreme heterogeneity of this population (Freeman et al, 1988).

Furthermore, when considering the psychological development of the visually impaired, a variety of theoretical perspectives and corresponding functional implications are feasible (Freeman et al, 1988). For example, the importance of intervention to lessen the negative effect of vision loss on development through adaptive strategies during "critical periods" is the focus of some researchers (Fraiberg, 1977; Swallow & Poulsen, 1983). Other researchers recognize an inherent difference in the psychological development of the visually impaired while focusing upon adaptive processes to enhance more normal

development (Lowenfeld, 1980; Warren, 1984). Still others believe that "blind men are made" or that blindness is a social construction created in response to society's socialization and categorization of the visually impaired (Scott, 1969b). Thus, the variety and diversity of psychological perspectives, in combination with problematic research methods and an extremely heterogeneous population, have contributed to inconclusive research findings in many areas.

#### Social Status, Interaction, and Relationships of the Visually Impaired

Despite a comparatively long history of integration of visually impaired pupils with their sighted peers, there is a remarkably meagre amount of research examining their interaction. One of the earliest studies using sociometrics with blind children was completed by Jones, Lavine and Shell (1972). Twenty braille students, integrated in grades 4-6, and their sighted classmates were the subjects of this study. The children were asked to nominate three peers in response to each of ten questions (e.g. "I would like to eat my lunch with \_\_\_\_."). Items indicative of both acceptance and rejection were incorporated. Although some visually impaired pupils were found to be well accepted, as a group they fell below the median on the majority of the ten items. The sighted students nominating blind children represented a cross-section of popular, rejected and isolated raters.

Eaglestein (1975) conducted a sociometric study of nine blind high school students integrated in regular classes in Israel where this practice has been common since the 1950s. The 155 classmates of the nine braille students were asked to rate each of their peers on two

items: whether they would like to work with her/him to obtain a shared subject grade and the extent to which they liked each classmate. As well, they were asked how long they had known each classmate, to list five students with whom they would least prefer to work, and to indicate their five best friends. Although all nine of the blind students had average grades, seven of the nine were above the class median for rejection as workmates. While scoring within an average range on the liking scale, six of the nine students fell below their class medians for the frequency of being chosen as best friends. Correlations were made between the length of time a student was known by classmates and scores on the scales determining degree of liking and willingness to work with a peer. Results indicated that the longer the blind pupil was known by classmates the less likely they were to like or be willing to work with the blind student.

A similar correlation between sociometric status and length of acquaintance was reported in a more recent study by Goupil and Comeau (1983). Three groups of visually impaired pupils, integrated in Quebec schools, and their classmates were requested to list the students they would choose to work with on a French assignment, to work with on a mathematics assignment, and to participate with in a social activity such as a birthday party. The 28 visually impaired subjects (11 totally integrated secondary students, 8 partially integrated secondary students, and 9 totally integrated elementary students) were chosen less frequently than their sighted peers on each of the three questions.

The weakness inherent in sociometric studies discussed earlier in this review are evident in the three studies available on the status of

integrated visually impaired children. They provide descriptive data but do not explain why a visually impaired child is chosen less frequently; nor do they report characteristics of the visually impaired population, the sighted subjects or aspects of the educational setting.

In their study of the interaction between a sample of 22 integrated visually impaired students and their peers, Hoben and Lindstrom (1980) conducted systematic observations in each classroom and polled teachers about their observations of the interaction between visually impaired and sighted students. The visually impaired sample was determined by drawing every fifth student from a total population of 116 students. The 22 visually impaired students represented an equal distribution by gender, age, and grade levels 1 through 12. Although all subjects had been mainstreamed throughout their school careers, only 41 percent were legally blind, that is, had a visual acuity of 20/200 or less.

In examining the quantity of interactions, visually impaired students were found to interact less frequently than their sighted peers. During the observations periods 45 percent of the visually impaired students had fewer than 10 interactions compared with only 9 percent of the sighted population having this number. As well, visually impaired students initiated and responded to interaction less frequently than their classmates. Eight of the visually impaired pupils but none of the sighted students were observed to make no initiation to interact with classmates during the observation period. Although the frequency of interaction with the teacher was not significantly different for the two populations, visually impaired students tended to initiate



interaction with the teacher more frequently than their classmates, particularly at the elementary school level. The teacher's reports of interaction for the visually impaired concurred with the data obtained on the Interaction Observation Schedule, the instrument used in this study. Sixty-one percent of the teachers reported the visually impaired students to interact less frequently with peers than did other classmates. Forty-one percent of the teachers reported visually impaired students spent most of their unstructured time alone.

As with other studies cited, Hoben's research is characterized by methodological difficulties (e.g. ineffective instruments, sample errors) and absence of firm conclusions. From a practitioner's viewpoint, it confirms the feeling that social interaction is less than satisfactory for integrated visually impaired students but does little to clarify or explain why this situation exists. Given the findings of the research on social interaction of visually impaired students in a residential school for the visually impaired conducted by Smith and Smith (1983), Hoben's findings are even more perplexing. Analysis of data collected through participant observation and interviews revealed that visually impaired students in residential settings exhibited social interaction and behaviour patterns typical of those found among sighted children in public schools:

Observations took place at several locations, depending on the scheduled activities for the day. These locations included classrooms, hallways, student union, snack bar, and dining hall. . . . Social behaviors observed included talking, horseplay, excitement over important events, close friendships, courtship, and interaction among students and teachers. . . . Some of the students . . . were obviously "best friends" as they would be seen everyday sitting together and talking. There were no instances during the observation in the student union of one student being isolated, either by preference or ostracism, from others in the

room. All those in this setting appeared to take an active role in some form of social behavior. (Smith & Smith, 1983, p. 32-33)

This study would appear to support the need for research employing qualitative methods of data collection and analysis to explore social interaction and acceptance of integrated visually impaired pupils. Kekelis and Sacks (1988), in a qualitative study examining the social interaction between five to seven year old visually impaired students and their peers, noted that the visually impaired students tended to be more self-centered and unresponsive to their peers than did their fully sighted peers. As well, their restricted imaginative play behaviour and adult-like language appeared to detract from routine interaction with sighted playmates. Unfortunately, this study did not expand its focus to examine the social environment in which the interaction occurred.

#### Social Adjustment in Visually Impaired Children

Although sociometric measures provide tentative information about how well visually impaired children are liked or accepted by their peers, they offer insufficient insight regarding social competencies, skills, or interpersonal attractiveness related to social acceptance (Asher & Taylor, 1981). The vast number of social skills and their priority of importance in relation to social interaction is difficult to ascertain. Just as complex is the role vision plays in development and the subsequent consequences of impaired vision on psychological development and social interaction. Perception, "the process of sorting, coding, and organizing sensory data and concepts to make all the characteristics and operational functions fit together is a complex mental task" (Barraga, 1976, p. 41). It is an undertaking which each child learns to do in a unique way called a "cognitive style of

learning" (Piaget, 1973). Vision plays an important role in helping a child coordinate and integrate the auditory and tactile stimuli from the environment, to imitate appropriate behaviour, and to learn concepts (Barraga, 1976; Scholl, 1986). Visually impaired children must rely increasingly upon senses other than vision as the degree of vision loss increases:

Totally blind individuals must rely on their other senses to obtain all the information about the world that they need, and partially sighted individuals need to make greater use of nonvisual information than sighted people. The role of perception in other areas of behavior is vast. This involvement is perhaps most obvious in locomotion, where the functions that nonvisual information must serve are reasonably clear. Perception is also critical in learning, and in cognitive and language development. Perception is important for socialization and personality development--a child must be able to perceive information about the wishes of other people in order to become socialized. (Warren, 1984, p. 49)

For example, Scott (1969a) outlines the process of role learning in childhood and how visual impairment interferes with this process. First are the aspects of social roles the child is expected to learn during childhood, such as social and physical differentiations associated with gender. Visually impaired children, particularly if totally blind, have significant difficulty learning about the physiological differences between their bodies and those of the opposite sex (Scholl, 1986). This problem is compounded by the added restrictions vision loss places upon the ability to perceive and learn basic role traits and mannerisms associated with femininity and masculinity.

Another dimension of role learning is that associated with the basic knowledge required to act in a socially appropriate manner when

interacting with others. The limitations visual impairment places upon imitation of appropriate behaviour are critical (Van Hasselt, 1983).

On the one hand, the child learns at least the basic rudiments of verbal behavior required by his [sic] role; on the other hand his physical conduct is inappropriate. This jarring discrepancy serves to heighten the perceived "differentness" between blind and sighted persons, thereby further isolating the blind youngster in his social contacts with others. (Scott, 1969a, p. 1043)

Ammerman, Van Hasselt and Hersen (1986), following extensive studies of the social adjustment of visually impaired children, have suggested a number of factors possibly contributing to the difficulty visually impaired children experience in developing appropriate social behaviours. First, limited access to learning and using visual cues important in interpersonal communication is a serious consequence of visual impairment. The tendency of the visually impaired not to make eye contact and the significant reduction in the frequency and variety of their facial expressions is frequently disconcerting to sighted individuals accustomed to the integral part these behaviours play in their communication (Monbeck, 1975; Raver, 1986). Hurt, Scott and McCroskey (1978) stress the importance of such nonverbal communication to social interaction:

The use of eye movement is perceived as being one of the most meaningful cues in nonverbal communication, for it signals a willingness to interact and communicate. Direct eye contact with another in our culture normally communicates interest and attention. Conversely, lack of eye contact communicates lack of interest and attention. (p. 107)

As well, lack of eye contact during interaction frequently creates a sense of uneasiness for participants. While involved in social interaction with the visually impaired, the nonhandicapped have been found to report feelings of discomfort, to discontinue interaction as

quickly as possible, to ignore atypical behaviour, and in general, to experience "interaction stress" (Rickelman & Blaylock, 1983). Such reactions interfere with positive interactions between the visually impaired and their peers.

Mehan (1978) emphasizes the importance of synchronizing speech and gestures for effective communication:

[Face to face] interactions are rhythmic, cooperative activities, involving the complex coordination of speech and gesture. . . studies consistently find that successful interaction occurs when participants synchronize the rhythm of speech and gesture, while breakdowns occur in the absence of synchrony. (p. 48)

Such synchronization for the visually impaired is restricted and for the totally blind, perhaps even impossible, given the effect of vision loss on access to visual cues, that is, gestures and the feedback inherent in these cues.

A second essential component in learning interpersonal skills is receiving feedback related to one's actions (Van Hasselt, 1983). Much of the nonverbal feedback available to sighted children is inaccessible to the visually impaired, making it difficult for them to develop or refine social interaction skills. As well, feedback may be inaccurately interpreted by the visually impaired or inappropriately provided by the nonhandicapped. Scott (1969b) discusses the confusion created within the visually impaired child when adults, in particular, are overgenerous with praise for even the most trivial accomplishment. This results in the child either considering herself/himself exceptionally talented or considering the blind to be particularly incompetent if such praise is warranted. In either case, the social consequences are apt to be undesirable.

Given the limited access by the visually impaired both to learning and using visual cues, and to the feedback necessary to develop and refine interpersonal communication skills, and given the reliance of the sighted population upon cultural norms associated with certain gestures and communication patterns, social interaction between the visually impaired and the sighted is at risk (Scott, 1969b; Tuttle, 1984; Van Hasselt, 1983). As well as being uncomfortable, interaction may also result in misinterpretations of the messages being sent by both parties (Lowenfeld, 1975). Hence, there are often barriers to the establishment of "shared meanings" in the interaction between visually impaired children and their sighted peers (Santin & Simmons, 1977).

A third factor associated with the social behaviour of visually impaired children concerns the actual frequency of social experiences available to these children to practice and refine interpersonal skills (Van Hasselt, 1983). The inappropriateness of many physically active games, the continuous attention required just to travel safely in the environment, and the impatience of peers in accommodating visually impaired players in unstructured games are cited as reducing the opportunities for active participation by the visually impaired. The negative effect vision loss has on the frequency of interactions with the environment has also been emphasized (Lowenfeld, 1975). Lowenfeld reported that visual impairment imposes three general restrictions affecting development. These include restrictions on the range and variety of experiences, the ability to move within the environment, and the control of environment and self in relation to environment. The severity of the visual impairment is associated with the significance of

the impact of these restrictions; the more severe the vision loss the more likely development will be negatively influenced (Scholl, 1986; Warren, 1984).

In relation to play, frequently cited as important to the development of social knowledge (Corsaro, 1981), Parsons (1986b) reported differences in both quantitative and qualitative patterns of play behaviour of visually impaired children when compared to their sighted peers. Visually impaired children spent less time in functional play activities and more time involved in stereotypical play behaviours than their sighted peers. Acquisition of social knowledge may also be restricted by visual impairment. Corn and Bishop (1984) found the mean percentile scores of adolescent visually impaired children on tests of practical knowledge acquisition to be significantly lower than those of their normally sighted peers. The lower scores of the partially sighted visually impaired youths when compared to totally blind subjects also suggests a tendency to overlook the need for direct teaching of such information to visually impaired children with some remaining vision. They are often assumed to be able to acquire such knowledge through imitation as their fully sighted peers do. In general then, visual impairment, particularly total blindness, appears to limit the variety and frequency of social experiences from a very early age.

The negative attitude of people toward the handicapped is another explanation for reduced social interaction of the visually impaired. Van Hasselt (1983) suggests that the unattractive facial features of many visually impaired children place them "at risk" for social rejection by their peers. Scott (1969b) emphasizes the negative impact

public attitude has on the visually impaired child, suggesting the disability of blindness is, in fact, a learned social role.

In childhood attitudes, beliefs and values about stigmatized people such as the blind are learned. If one is blind these become internalized and one learns to play the role of a blind person. . . Personal interactions in encounters between seeing and blind people impress upon the latter the negative and devaluing assumptions about blindness and they are internalized as a part of the blind person's self-concept. (Lowenfeld, 1975, p. 261)

The development of a positive self-concept and self-esteem are two aspects of development frequently considered at risk in the visually impaired (Tuttle, 1984; Warren, 1984). Vision plays a principal role in the conceptualization of the physical world. A conceptualization based on tactile, auditory, or deficient visual information increases the probability of an inadequate understanding of people, phenomena, objects, and self in relation to these (Tuttle, 1984; Warren, 1984). Because people perceive themselves in part, through the information received from others, self-concept is a reflection of one's interpretations of these external messages (Tuttle, 1984). Vision loss increases both the opportunity for misinterpretation and the dependency upon other people's perception of the environment (Cook-Clampert, 1981). As suggested by Tuttle (1984):

The young, dependent, or immature VI [visually impaired], not trusting his [sic] own judgments about himself, tends to adopt the SO's [significant other's] judgments in preference to his own. The more dependent VI is, the more likely he is to accept without question SO's opinions regarding his attributes. (p. 69)

The considerable difficulty visually impaired children experience in acquiring an adequate repertoire of interpersonal skills (Van Hasselt, 1983) is viewed by Tuttle (1984) as an extension of the problems encountered in developing a positive self-concept. The



limitations on quality, quantity, and accuracy of information, and opportunities for imitation of the behaviour of others, interfere with normal social development (Van Hasselt, 1983; Warren, 1984). Thus, for the visually impaired student, peer interaction and the development of friendships pose some unique problems (Warren, 1984).

The response of the nonhandicapped population to the visually impaired is multifarious. Stereotype and stigma are attitudes which appear to have a pervasive effect on the integration of the handicapped into society in general (Lowenfeld, 1975; Monbeck, 1975; Scott, 1969b). Integration is a dynamic process, one that will reflect the effect of a vast number of interrelated variables (Sapon-Shevin, 1978) and one that will be laden with cultural beliefs, assumptions, and values (Schein, 1985). Despite the great heterogeneity inherent within the population of the visually impaired, they are considered as a group by society (Kim, 1970; Lowenfeld, 1975; Monbeck, 1975). Unlike members of many other minorities (e.g. ethnic groups or religious affiliations), the blind individual does not have the benefit of close association with family members experiencing the day-to-day effects of their minority status (Monbeck, 1975). Although traditionally the visually impaired were segregated for much of their lives (e.g. in segregated schools, sheltered workshops), today it is usually through choice that an individual may affiliate with what society terms "his [or her] own kind" (Scott, 1969b). Nevertheless, society still considers the "blind" as a group and its stereotype for visual impairment is prevalent today (Monbeck, 1975; Vickers, 1987).

Although the treatment of the visually impaired in society has changed dramatically, beliefs about visual impairment and those so afflicted have not (Monbeck, 1975; Vickers, 1987). Monbeck (1975) describes three major beliefs about blindness which affect the stereotype characterizing society's present ideas about the visually impaired. First, blindness is associated with punishment for some past, grave sin. The relationship between venereal disease and blindness serves to maintain the second belief--blindness as a punishment for "sexual transgressions." The third belief is that the visually impaired individual conveys a social stigma which is a symbol of physical, social, emotional, and economic inferiority (Monbeck, 1975). The negative disposition of the beliefs which have created today's stereotype of the blind ensure an adverse effect on the status of the visually impaired (Kim, 1970). They are usually viewed as powerless and dependent upon the benevolence of society for their survival.

#### Theoretical Frameworks for the Study of Pupil Interaction

The topic of classroom interaction includes a broad range of educational research interests. Questions concerning the principles of discipline, the most effective teaching strategies, and the nature of teaching and learning are inextricably linked with the notion of classroom interaction. During the past two decades, researchers have focused on the intricacies of teacher-pupil interaction (Delamont, 1984) and to a lesser extent, interaction among pupils themselves (Davies, 1982; Pollard, 1985). Diverse theoretical and empirical developments

have emerged as the study of classroom interaction has evolved from its original situation within educational research to the challenge for greater insight it has presented to the sociology of education (Hammersley & Woods, 1984).

Psychological, social psychological, and sociological dimensions have been used to study various aspects of classroom interaction. Studies from within these different disciplines have focused on particular aspects of classroom interaction and typically based their research within different frameworks. Psychology, maintaining its close link with the natural sciences, studies classroom interaction from a predominately empirical-analytic framework. American social psychological studies in classroom interaction have provided the model for research in this area during the past half century (Delamont, 1976). This research, also known as interaction analysis, is, as well, located within the empirical-analytic framework. However, classroom interaction examined from the field of sociology of education has evolved from its roots in the empirical-analytic tradition to a predominate use of the symbolic and critical sciences to inform research (Popkewitz, 1984).

There are many diversified schools within the symbolic interactionist framework. Blumer (1969) has derived a distinctive approach to the study of social behaviour based on the works of George H. Mead, Charles Cooley, John Dewey, and William James. The epistemology of symbolic interactionism is grounded in human interaction (Popkewitz, 1984). Knowledge is viewed as personal, subjective, and unique. Emphasis is placed on the subjective meanings of the

individuals--how they interpret one another, negotiate shared meanings, and construct their social reality.

Woods (1979) outlines three basic assumptions underlying the symbolic interactionist approach as articulated by Blumer. First, individuals "act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them" (p. 15). Thus, the world is not comprised of objects or happenings having fixed meanings, but of symbols which must be interpreted by the individual. Living in a symbolic environment where all social objects, including the self, are interpreted by the individual, the researcher must attend to these interpreted meanings as well as to the overt behaviour being observed. Visually impaired pupils have to interpret the actions of their peers and teachers (often on the basis of limited or inaccurate visual information) and sighted individuals must give meaning to the actions of the visually impaired individual with whom they are interacting. Thus, meanings are social products, "creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact" (Blumer, 1969, p. 5). Meaning is extrinsic, behavioral, and created through the process of social interaction (Johnson, 1982).

A second assumption of symbolic interactionism is the ongoing process of meaning attribution during social interaction (Woods, 1979). Humans are not viewed as passive beings driven by biological or environmental forces but are actively involved in constructing their actions based upon interpretation of their environment. Culture and social structures are continuously evolving through human activity. "The life of any human society consists of an ongoing process of fitting

together the activities of its members" (Blumer, 1969, p. 7). However, many symbolic interactionists acknowledge the existence of some degree of "biological and social constraints on behaviour" (Fine, 1981, p. 31). Such constraints associated with vision loss and the label of blindness need to be considered when exploring the interaction of integrated visually impaired children.

The third assumption of symbolic interactionism identified by Woods (1979) contends that the continuous process of meaning attribution occurs in a social context. Mead (1934) believed an individual's self-concept evolves through social interaction. Self-concept emerges as individuals internalize the responses others give to their actions:

The individual develops a self concurrently with his [sic] use of role-taking. . . . By taking the role of others, the individual begins to see himself as an object. This enables the individual to get outside of oneself and analyze and define the situation in terms of others (Johnson, 1982, p. 11).

As a social process within the individual, the self negotiates two roles, the "I" and the "Me". "I" describes the part of the self that acts while "Me" is the part of the self that responds to the action. Thus, through socialization the individual develops the capacity to be a self-reflective being:

To reflect upon yourself, you have to go outside yourself. This is done by putting the "me," the reflective self, into the role of others. You therefore see yourself as others see you. You can imaginatively take the role of one person or a whole group of persons toward yourself. The former process Mead calls taking the role of the "significant other" and the latter taking the role of the "generalized other." Thus a blind person can try to assume the role of his [sic] sighted roommate toward himself, or he may try to assume the role of all sighted persons toward him. As an object of his own activity, he can not only perceive himself, have an image of himself, and act toward himself, but he can also communicate with himself . . . . According to Mead, man not only can make indications to himself, but he must make these

indications if he is to act. Making indications to oneself is a necessary prerequisite to action. (Winton, 1970, p. 18).

Therefore, within a social context, individuals interpret the meanings of others and construct their response based upon that interpretation.

Lowenfeld (1981) contends that blindness imposes three basic limitations upon a person:

1. In the range and variety of experiences.
2. In the ability to get about.
3. In the control of the environment and the self in relation to it. (p. 68)

These three restrictions interfere with three critical aspects inherent to the symbolic interactionist perspectives on development. These issues are:

the development of the self through the perception of others, the importance of communication and the use of symbols, and the development of the ability to behave appropriately as a function of the expectations of others. (Fine, 1981, p.31)

An understanding of the interaction and consequent acceptance or rejection of integrated visually impaired children within the social context of pupil culture must address the individual perspectives of those involved in an attempt to understand the way they interpret their social environment and the interactions characteristic of it.

The structural and organizational features of an elementary classroom, in conjunction with processes (e.g. education regulations and laws) outside the immediate social environment, both enable and constrain the interaction of students (Hallinan & Smith, 1987) and, therefore, both the academic and social functioning of integrated visually impaired students. Pollard (1985) contends that from a symbolic interactionist perspective, an "institutional bias" influences the behaviour of participants within the school.

An institutional bias is a type of generally shared knowledge, a diffuse and often tacit set of social understandings or cultural assumptions about a school and about practices in it. These conventions are developed over time and frequently reflect the perspectives of those with most power and influence in the school. In the long term they often become routine and taken for granted. They may thus be experienced by new teachers, pupils, parents or others almost as social facts about a school and thus as features to which they must adapt. (p. 116)

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Schein (1985) considers these "taken for granted convictions" to be basic assumptions or the "essence of culture", hence underpinning people's perceptions and actions. Therefore, it is critical to understand the significant features of the school to which an integrated visually impaired student must adapt and the aspects of the social environment which are incompatible with or particularly challenging for the visually impaired student and other participants.

Relevant to the visually impaired, the few studies exploring their interaction have been conducted from the disciplines of educational and social psychology and located within the empirical-analytic paradigm. For example, Hoben (1976), in her study of visually impaired students mainstreamed in the regular classroom, compared the frequency and type (positive or negative) of interaction between visually impaired and normally sighted pupils. Social adjustment and social acceptance, as measured by standardized tests, have also been studied in relation to mainstreamed visually impaired pupils (e.g. Crandell & Streeter, 1977; Eaglestein, 1975). Here, maladjustment of the visually impaired is generally attributed to the fundamental disposition of the individual. Researchers attempt to identify correlations between the degree of adjustment and variables such as degree of blindness, age of onset,

intelligence, and grade level. Researchers in this tradition are operative within the positive model of natural sciences.

Accepting the methods and assumptions of the natural sciences has a significant influence on, and presents significant problems for, not only the manner in which researchers study classroom interaction, but also the nature of their conclusion and the explanations that can be provided (Cohen & Manion, 1981; Popkewitz, 1984). An initial difficulty encountered in studying interaction within such a theoretical framework is the standardization of a definition for interaction which might accurately encompass all aspects of the concept. Interaction is a process and is not easily reduced to a fixed entity. While the researcher may be able to measure some aspects of interaction (e.g. frequency, correlations) it is difficult to examine the dynamic nature of the process using methods designed to measure a product. In addition, a standard definition assumes the consensus of goals for all actors in the classroom, as well as the validity of the researcher's definitions to the exclusion of others.

A further problem is that within the empirical-analytic framework, the researcher establishes the hypothesis--that is, decides what to measure and how this will be done--prior to the investigation. This serves to focus attention on specific behaviours while neglecting others. Hence, the researcher may miss significant aspects inherent in the problem under study. Relationships which are difficult to quantify may be either ignored or considered "not quite real" (Karabel & Halsey, 1977). Through this sort of research process, the context of interaction is isolated from the situation. Aspects of time and space,



and the actor's reasons, feelings, and motives are viewed as irrelevant, denying the consciousness of pupils and teachers. In contrast, inherent within the symbolic interactionist perspective is the recognition of the unique ability of individuals to interpret their experiences, to represent them to themselves, and more importantly, to act in relation to these interpretations (Cohen & Manion, 1981 p. 16).

A theoretical framework which defines "social life as patterns of conduct" (Popkewitz, 1984, p. 40) has much to offer the study of classroom interaction. Rather than adapted from a theory designed for the physical sciences, as is the case of the empirical-analytic framework, the epistemology of the symbolic framework is grounded in human interaction. Knowledge is viewed as personal, subjective, and unique. Emphasis is placed on the subjective meanings of the individuals--how they interpret one another, negotiate shared meanings, and construct their social reality. These aspects of social exchange, essential to understanding elementary school interactions, were examined in this study.

At one level, the symbolic science framework focuses directly on the internal operations of a social unit, that is, it functions predominantly at a micro level of analysis (Popkewitz, 1984). Studied in its social context, the symbols and meanings inherent in the situation, time, and space are inseparable. Classroom interaction requires such a perspective to interpret the complexities within the situation and its many actors (Delamont, 1976). The emergent research design characteristic of this framework remains open to all factors

within a given context and both overt and covert aspects of behaviour may be studied.

At another level, the symbolic interactionist perspective does not preclude attention to the social constraints on interaction of processes and/or structures external to the setting (Hammersley, 1980). External political or social processes as well as the personal biographies of the pupils and teachers may restrict what can be negotiated. The researcher, while focusing on the construction of reality and shared meanings of the participants, is open to all factors within the given context. The influence of external factors may be revealed as "taken-for-granted" assumptions and identified. As an initial exploration of some of the perspectives of those intimately involved in a school where a visually impaired student has been integrated, this study attempts to link external processes to the micro level of analysis of the classroom.

Despite the depth and breadth of research on classroom interaction, some populations, such as the visually impaired, have been overlooked by researchers. The current emphasis on integration of visually impaired children in public school classrooms should provide the opportunity necessary to rectify this present situation. In addition, examining the interactions of a disabled group may provide a fresh perspective leading to new insights.

### Conclusion

Integration is a broad, complex concept which must encompass the social, instructional and temporal integration of visually impaired students into the regular classroom setting. Within this setting, a

culture of both the school as a whole and the classroom as a subgroup is evident. Pupil culture is the context in which the integrated visually impaired student must negotiate interaction, friendship and acceptance. In an integrated setting, if peer relationships are to be a constructive influence, "they must promote feelings of belonging, acceptance, support, and caring, as opposed to feelings of rejection, abandonment, and alienation" (Johnson & Johnson, 1984, p. 91). The next chapter presents the methodology used to explore these relationships between integrated visually impaired students and their classmates.

## CHAPTER 3

### Research Methodology

#### Introduction

This chapter begins with a discussion of the multi-site approach utilized in this research. Following the presentation of the researcher's background, various aspects of the research act are outlined. These include the sequence of the research design, the selection of research participants, access to the research sites, inherent ethical issues, and data collection and analysis. Both the procedures and issues inherent within these components of research are discussed.

#### The Study

As discussed fully in Chapter 2, the dual theoretical frameworks of symbolic interactionism and the concept of organizational culture were used to guide this research. Working within a symbolic framework, the researcher strives to understand the perspectives of the participants in school interaction. Intersubjectivity, motives and reason are central concepts. Considering the concept of organizational culture, the researcher attempts to reveal those cultural assumptions which underpin people's perceptions and actions. Together they provide a broad but powerful perspective from which to explore the social integration of visually impaired students.

A multi-site case study approach (using four different classrooms located throughout the province of Nova Scotia and one in New Brunswick)

was used to examine the process of social interaction between the visually impaired pupil and participants in an integrated educational setting at the elementary school level. There are several reasons for choosing a multi-site as opposed to a single case study. First, the extreme heterogeneity of the visually impaired population and their geographical location throughout each province creates a situation in which generally only one visually impaired pupil is enrolled in a given elementary school. Thus, an infinite number of situations will exist in relation to the visually impaired pupil, the sighted classmates and educators, and the educational system itself. For example, a visually impaired pupil may be distinguished by degree and type of visual loss, age of onset, presence of additional impairments, physical abnormalities (e.g. presence of nystagmus or involuntary eye movements) as well as those factors associated with the usual school population--gender, race, socioeconomic level, etc. The educational setting may be an open or traditional classroom, using an individualized or co-operative instructional approach, in a rural or an urban setting, a large amalgamated complex or a small school with several grades in a single classroom, and directed by a school board with or without standardized procedures and policies related to the integration of handicapped students.

Although a single site study may be able to provide sufficient insight into the perspectives of nonhandicapped classmates, there is generally only a single visually impaired pupil in any given class. During the process of data analysis, as themes or categories are identified, the researcher must continually test and refine the data

within a given category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Thus, to ensure sufficient data is available for the saturation of identified themes or categories, as well as to provide an opportunity to compare and contrast different situations experienced by integrated visually impaired pupils, several sites were used in this study.

Second, this research was intended to be an initial exploration of the process of social interaction and acceptance of the visually impaired in an integrated setting. At this stage of research, it is important to attend to as much of the total situation as possible. This helps to reduce the possibility of overlooking important aspects or categories as well as adopting too narrow a focus for the study (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). According to Glaser and Strauss (1967) the choice of cases should be devised to produce as many categories and properties of categories as possible, as well as to interrelate categories. A multi-case approach increases the opportunity and/or probability of discovering categories which may have been less prominent, therefore undetected, in an initial site.

A third advantage of using a multi-site sample is that it "allows one to look simultaneously at several settings and to get enough variability to increase the explanatory power of the study as a whole" (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p.41). Thus, the nature of the research topic, questions of concern, and the unique features of the population and existing educational arrangements supported the use of a multi-site research approach.

### The Researcher

A feature of qualitative research, declared by its proponents, is the insertion of "the subjective perception and biases of both participants and researcher into the research frame" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 95). Within this theoretical framework, the researcher is an inherent part of the research process, particularly during the collection and analysis of data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Burgess, 1985b). By providing autobiographical information in the research report, researchers lose their anonymity and acquire a "voice" or "image" (Davies, 1982). This provides the research reader with information to broaden their insights into both the basis of the data interpretation and its validity. To serve this purpose, the following autobiographical information is presented.

Being the third child and eldest daughter in a family of seven siblings, I have had a life-long involvement with and interest in children. This prompted me to become involved as a volunteer in a swimming program for students at the Halifax School for the Blind while myself a student at Dalhousie University in 1969. From this opportunity a deep interest in and concern for visually impaired children developed.

In 1971, just as integration of the handicapped was being promoted in the United States, I went to live for a year at Perkins School for the Blind while pursuing my Masters in Education for the Visually Impaired at Boston College. Living in a residential "cottage" with 29 visually impaired boys, ranging in age from nine to 13 years, provided me with experiences and insights frequently dissimilar from those

encountered during prescribed classes at the university or during practice teaching placements.

Upon returning to Nova Scotia, my formal career as an educator of the visually impaired began. Following one year as an itinerant teacher for the visually impaired in Halifax (a one-year trial project), I accepted a grade four classroom teaching position at the Halifax School for the Blind. Five years later, I became involved in both a consultative and administrative position implementing the initial, official integration programs for visually impaired students in Atlantic Canada. From this trial project grew a network of personnel and resources designed to support the integration of visually impaired children. At present, I supervise this network of services and programs known as "Off Campus Services."

Given the above information, I acknowledge my subjective involvement with the present study and its potential advantages (e.g. familiarity with and knowledge of the field) and disadvantages (e.g. inherent biases and preconceived expectations, that is, the loss of objectivity). Specific strategies suggested in the literature on qualitative research methods were used to address these issues (e.g. continuously examining data in relation to the roles people held). Yet, the interpretive understanding of the social world "must always take into account the fact that meaning is socially and historically bounded, both for the investigator and the investigated" (Smith, 1983, p. 12). The possible effect of adult participants' knowledge of my professional association with the visually impaired is acknowledged. For example, it is probable that access to research sites was affected because of my



position. Itinerant teachers were working in programs under my supervision both prior to and following this study. That this relationship had an effect upon both the itinerant teachers and me is inevitable. As is necessary in interpretive research, I attempted to remain conscious of this relationship and its relevance to the process of data collection and analysis.

My recognition of the manner in which I have personally contributed to the less than adequate social integration of visually impaired children helps to assure me the advantages of this type of research in unraveling the belief patterns present within the social context under study and reaching an in-depth understanding of visually impaired children in an integrated setting, far outweigh the potential disadvantages. This research has provided me "first hand knowledge" of the complexities to be addressed as we strive to improve the social integration of visually impaired students.

#### Sequence of the Research

This study took place in five sites, centred on five visually impaired children integrated into five different classrooms in four elementary schools. Each site was visited for approximately four weeks, where data were collected through participant observation in classrooms and on playgrounds; through interviews with the visually impaired child, a selection of her/his classmates, the classroom teacher, other subject specialists, the itinerant teacher for the visually impaired, the principal and the parents of the visually impaired child; and through the analysis of relevant documents. Overall, the site visits for data

collection transpired over a period of 10 months. Before providing details about sample selection and data collection procedures, the following section provides an overview of the sequence of events.

1. After obtaining permission from the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority, the board overseeing services to visually impaired children and youth in Atlantic Canada, itinerant teachers for the visually impaired were contacted by letter and requested to identify students from their caseloads who met the criteria for inclusion in this study (e.g. categorized as legally blind, integrated in an elementary school classroom).
2. Upon receipt of the names of 44 eligible students, letters requesting permission to complete research within the school districts in which the visually impaired students were enrolled were sent to each superintendent. (Initially five school boards were involved.) In the meantime, the research proposal was submitted for approval to the Ethics Committee for Graduate Studies at Dalhousie University. Approval was granted.
3. After permission had been received from the school board superintendents, five visually impaired students were randomly chosen, four from a list of partially sighted students and one from a list of totally blind students.
4. The researcher met with the itinerant teachers for the selected students to discuss the proposed research and request their permission to participate in and assist with the research. Upon their agreement, they were requested to ascertain whether the principal, classroom teacher and parents of the visually impaired

student would be willing to participate in the study and, if so, meet with the researcher to discuss the research in greater detail. Access was denied by classroom teachers at two locations. Two additional visually impaired students were randomly selected from the original sample and access granted to these sites following the process outlined above.

5. Access meetings were scheduled with principals and teachers at each site. The purpose and procedures of the research were outlined and permission for their participation requested. A meeting was held with a parent of each visually impaired student to discuss the research, potential risks to the visually impaired student and to obtain their permission to allow the research to proceed.
6. Dates for the research to begin at each site were scheduled in conjunction with the principal and teachers. Three to four school weeks were spent at each of Sites I, II, III, IV and V. A total of 31 school days were spent at the fourth school in which two visually impaired students were enrolled in two different classes.
7. On the first day of observation at each site, the researcher was introduced to the students as a researcher and given an opportunity to explain the researcher's interest in the school life and interaction of elementary school students. During the next two weeks the researcher spent the entire school day with the students, in both the classrooms and on the playground. In consultation with the classroom teacher, five to eight classmates of each visually impaired student were selected to be interviewed.

The visually impaired student and the identified classmates were approached privately by the researcher and asked to participate in an interview. They were given parental consent forms to be signed by their parents prior to participating in the interview. Dates for interviews with the parents, principal, teachers (i.e. classroom, physical education, French and music) and itinerant teacher for the visually impaired were also scheduled.

8. During the next one to two weeks observation was interspersed with student interviews which were conducted during school hours. Two to three sessions were required with the visually impaired students since their interviews entailed additional questions. Interviews with educators were, for the most part, conducted after school hours. Parent interviews were completed in the home at a time when the visually impaired student was scheduled to be away.
9. Observation notes were taken during the day and formally written up each evening. Interviews were taped and transcribed as soon as possible following the actual event. Both were coded and sorted into identified themes, patterns, etc., and filed.
10. After observation at Site V ended, the transcription of the remaining tapes and coding and sorting of data were completed. The process of analysis continued and the formal writing of the thesis began.

#### Selection of Research Participants

The initial five visually impaired participants in this study were chosen from an identified population of approximately 44 pupils in the

provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. These were visually impaired elementary school children who were classified as legally blind (i.e. have a visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye after correction), were without additional handicaps, were achieving at grade level or within one year of grade level, and did not demonstrate behavioral problems. Initial arrangements for access to the selected research sites were made through the itinerant teachers for the visually impaired. These teachers are assigned to assist regular classroom teachers in accommodating the learning needs of the integrated visually impaired student as well as providing direct instruction to visually impaired students throughout a specified geographic area. They received an outline of the purpose and anticipated procedures for the research and then discussed any concerns with the researcher. The itinerant teachers were asked to identify the visually impaired pupils on their caseloads who met the criteria for participation in the research and to speak with the principal, teachers, and parents of the selected visually impaired student to determine if they would be willing to consider participation in the study.

From the initial population of 35 children, four partially sighted students were randomly selected by the researcher. From a population of nine totally blind students in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, one student was selected. Both totally blind and legally blind children were included in this study for several reasons. First, the visually impaired as a group include a broad range of both visual abilities and visual conditions. Totally blind children comprise approximately ten percent of the legally blind school age population (Winzer et al, 1987)

while the remaining ninety percent have varying degrees of residual vision. Secondly, visual acuity and visual efficiency, or the ability to use vision to effectively interpret one's environment, are not highly correlated (Barraga, 1976; Faye, 1984). Previous research has not demonstrated a significant difference between the social acceptance or interaction of totally blind children compared to those who are partially sighted (Goupil & Comeau, 1983; Hoben, 1979). Hence, in an exploratory study, it is necessary to include children with varying degrees of vision loss to observe the complexities involved.

After the visually impaired students had been randomly selected, the itinerant teachers for the visually impaired in each of the five areas were asked to approach the classroom teachers involved to ascertain whether they would be willing to discuss the possibility of participating in the research with the researcher. Since two teachers, reluctant to have an observer in their classroom for a month, were adamantly opposed to participating in the research, it was necessary to move to the sixth and seventh randomly selected visually impaired students, one of whom was enrolled in the same school as one of the original five students selected. Because of the low incidence of visual impairment within the school age population, it was most unusual for two visually impaired students to be located in one school. In Atlantic Canada this situation usually occurs only when several members from one family with an inherited visual impairment attend the same school. (The two visually impaired students in this study who attended the same school were not from the same family. However, their school served a large urban area.)

However, this situation provided an opportunity to examine the perspectives of teachers and some children, as well as aspects of a social environment common to two visually impaired students. Also, there were additional considerations which supported this rather fortunate opportunity to observe two visually impaired children integrated in the same school. First, by combining two sites the researcher was able to extend the usual three to four week observation period to six weeks. This provided an opportunity to experience the benefits of additional time in the setting, such as an increase in the richness of data and an improvement in the chance to establish rapport with staff and students (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). A second factor supporting this combined placement was existence of long term relationships between the itinerant teacher for the visually impaired and both of these students. Both had been assigned to the itinerant teacher's caseload for over five years. Finally, this combined site provided an excellent opportunity to compare and contrast the perspectives of those involved as well as the social context in which these two students were immersed.

The other participants in the study were the classroom teachers, principal, itinerant teacher of the visually impaired, classmates, and parents of the visually impaired pupil at each site. At least five classmates of each visually impaired student were selected to be interviewed. This selection was based on the following criteria as observed by the researcher and the classroom teacher: pupils observed to initiate interaction with the visually impaired student, pupils observed to avoid or reject the visually impaired student, pupils

identified by the visually impaired student as friends and non-friends, pupils identified by teachers as friends and non-friends of the visually impaired pupil. Following at least two weeks of observation at the site, the classmates to be interviewed were identified after consultation with the classroom teacher.

The number of classroom teachers available to be interviewed varied at each site. Some schools had separate teachers for music, French, physical education, etc., while in other schools the regular classroom teacher was required to instruct her/his students in these specific areas or had made arrangements for another teacher in the school to do a particular subject with her class. Therefore, all teachers who taught the visually impaired students were interviewed. Only three principals were available to be interviewed. At one site the principal resigned during the second week of observation and a new principal was not designated. At another location, two visually impaired students were enrolled at the same school, thus they had the same principal.

#### Access and Ethical Issues

As mentioned earlier, initial arrangements for access to the selected research sites were made through the itinerant teachers for the visually impaired. A formal written request for permission to conduct the study within a given school district was forwarded to the superintendent of each school board after the 44 potential sites had been identified. When the school board permission was granted, the itinerant teacher made the initial contacts to discuss the research



proposal with the principal, the classroom teacher and the parents of the visually impaired student. Next the researcher held a meeting with the parents of the visually impaired participant to further outline the research proposal, discuss possible risks for the visually impaired pupil, and to obtain their permission to have their child participate in this research (a copy of the consent form, "Form II," is presented in Appendix A). Having obtained the parents' permission, the principal and teachers in each selected school were contacted, an access meeting at the school was scheduled, more elaborate details of the research were outlined, and an opportunity to reconsider participation was made available. Following identification of the potential sites, the itinerant teacher for the visually impaired pupil was contacted to confirm her/his intention to participate in the study.

After at least two weeks of observation at the site, the visually impaired pupil and five to eight of her/his peers were individually asked to participate in an interview with the researcher. If they agreed, they were given a "Parental Permission Form" (see Appendix A) to be signed by their parents prior to being interviewed. All 31 classmates and five visually impaired students were enthusiastic about participating but the parents of two classmates declined permission and so two other students had to be recruited. Parents were requested not to discuss the topic of the research with their children.

All participants in the study were informed that the researcher was interested in how children at their specific grade level interacted with one another during school hours. Only the parents of the visually impaired child had received specific information about the research

focus on the social interaction of an integrated visually impaired student. It was felt that the parents of the other children would probably encourage their child to be atypically responsive or interested in their visually impaired classmate should this information be released. As well, if the visually impaired child was identified to her/his classmates as the focal point of the study, this student might receive unusual and, hence, unanticipated reactions from peers. Thus, although the classmates of the visually impaired student and their parents were unaware of one aspect of the research, they were informed of the researcher's general focus on pupil interaction. The intent of the researcher was to create as little disruption within the natural setting and to the lives of the research participants as possible.

There are, by the very nature of interviewing children, some ethical issues raised. The inequality in the power relationship between the adult researcher and the child is one of the more prominent aspects of research using interviews as data collection instruments (Parker, 1984; Spradley, 1979). Prior to all interviews, children were ensured that information was confidential and their names, school names, or other identifying information would be disguised in the research report. Permission was requested to tape interviews but respondents were advised of their right to have the tape recorder turned off at any time during the interview. Although none requested this be done, it was noted that adults were more intimidated by the use of the tape recorder than were the children in this study. In fact, several children requested an opportunity to listen to parts of the tape following the interview.

Respondents were also advised they need not answer any question they found to be too personal or sensitive.

The researcher was consciously alert to possible detrimental effects the research might be having on the visually impaired student, particularly as interviews with classmates were completed. Prior to conducting the research it had been decided to discontinue research at any given site should a particularly fragile social environment, that is, one in which the visually impaired student was being negatively affected by the research, be identified. Classroom teachers, itinerant teachers, and parents of the visually impaired were asked to watch for signs of possible discord related to the research and to report these to the researcher. Fortunately, no such situations developed. However, contingency plans were devised to deal with such an issue should it have arisen.

In social science research there is, by its very nature, an inevitable and constant dilemma between the effects research has upon the lives of participants and the researcher's attempt to better understand that very world upon which he/she is focused. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) contend that researchers, rather than struggling to avoid "research effects," need to recognize them as problematic and attempt to understand them. In this study, participants were asked about their reaction to being observed and interviewed, as well as their perceptions of the reactions of others. An attempt was made to understand situations which were particularly traumatic for participants as well as those which were least threatening. As Burgess (1985a) asserts:

As field researchers we need to make public the ethical and political problems that we encounter in our research if we are to understand how compromise is to be achieved and how knowledge can be advanced alongside the protection of our informants. (p. 158)

### Data Collection

Given the dual frameworks (i.e. symbolic interactionism and the concept of organizational culture) guiding this study, qualitative research methods were utilized for the collection and analysis of data. One major source of data was interviews with visually impaired pupils and their teachers, classmates, principals and parents. Itinerant teachers for the visually impaired were key informants in this research because of their established relationship with all participants. The second major source of data was participant observation of interaction among visually impaired children, their peers and teachers in the classrooms and on the playgrounds of the five chosen sites. As well, an examination of various school documents (e.g. report cards, policy statements, etc.) and artifacts (e.g. classroom displays, curriculum adaptations) provided additional data.

In this study observation and interviews were used to both complement and corroborate the types of data generated by each. Participant observation provided the opportunity to observe first hand the interactions of members of the class, to note patterns or themes which seemed to be emerging and to check their validity through further observation. Informal interviews were possible during participant observation. Both children and teachers seemed willing to provide their perspectives and explanations on a variety of issues. Formal interviews, conducted toward the end of a three or four week period at

the site provided perspectives on specific questions as well as an opportunity to clarify or expand the researcher's perceptions and/or understandings of the interviewee's perspectives on specific issues and other aspects of the social context. The third source of data, documents, added to the researcher's perception of the contextual circumstances surrounding participants.

In this way, the combination of participant observation and interviewing, plus the examination of relevant documents, provided an added dimension to the simultaneous process of data collection and analysis. Hatch (1985) promotes such a union of methods:

It should be pointed out that there is a close relationship among participant observation, analysis, and interviewing procedures. The same questions that emerge from analysis of field data and guide further observations are questions which should be put to participant informants in interview settings (Spradley, 1980). McDermott (1982) in his review of Frake (1980) discusses the importance of bringing "context sensitivity" to ethnographic questioning. Cicourel (1974) contends that interviewers cannot interpret respondents talk beyond the most superficial level unless the questioners have access to the meanings and nuances which are particular to the interviewee's background and experiences, the "ethnographic context" of the interview. Interviewing is also connected to the participant observation in that information gathered from both sources is used for cross checking on the existence and/or extent of social patterns or relationships discovered in the social scene, a process Denzin (1978) calls "methodological triangulation." (p.16)

Numerous measures of a concept or multiple observations of a phenomenon would appear to result in fuller, more accurate views of these aspects of social reality than would the use of a single source of data.

#### Interviews

There were several reasons for the choice of interviews as a major source of data. First, "the fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which respondents can

express their own understandings in their own terms" (Patton, 1980, p. 205). In this study there were six distinct groups being interviewed: visually impaired students, their classmates, parents, teachers, itinerant teachers and principals. Perceptions from members of each of these groups were important in understanding the social interaction and acceptance of visually impaired students in an integrated setting.

Second, and related to the first, since vision plays a principal role in the conceptualization of the physical world, some researchers believe that a conceptualization based on tactile, auditory, or deficient visual information increases the probability of an inadequate understanding of people, phenomena, objects, and self in relation to these (Tuttle, 1984; Warren, 1984). Thus, the interview becomes a critical source of information about how the visually impaired perceive their environment and act upon these perceptions. The interview provided an opportunity to clarify taken-for-granted assumptions related to the actions, both verbal and nonverbal, of the visually impaired.

The third reason for using interviews as the predominant source of research data was related to the difficulties inherent in active participant observation with children at the elementary level. Ball (1985) outlines several issues of concern in this situation:

In practice participant observation with pupils presents a range of difficulties for the adult researcher both as regards data collection and the analysis of data (and gender, social class, regional and personality factors serve to compound the generational problems). Entry into the lives of pupils is constrained by a whole range of practical and ethical problems (and neither of these areas has received due attention in the literature on participant observation). . . adult researchers are identified, whether they like it or not, with the adult 'team'. The adult-pupil relationship is a political one, set within a considerable inequality of power. In many respects the interactions between adults and pupils are marked by attempts at

coercion and resistance. Set against this is the fact that all the researchers quoted here found that a genuine interest in pupils' lives, within certain limits, was received by most pupils with enthusiasm and cooperation. However, it is equally clear that a number of pupils were unwilling or unable to act as 'good' respondents. The researcher in this area is reliant for the most part on outgoing and articulate pupils to provide 'good' data. (p. 50)

Although interviews were complemented by observation, it is important to recognize the problems associated with understanding the perspectives of children as reported by them. "The relationship between the words spoken and the experience described or analyzed is an extraordinarily complex one" (Davies, 1982, p. 189). This may be particularly evident in the reports of visually impaired pupils and in the interpretation by a sighted adult who has never experienced the world from the same perspective as these children have. Furthermore, children face a formidable obstacle when they attempt to relate what they do, because what they actually do is much more complex than what they are able to communicate (Gottman & Parker, 1986).

Another difficulty associated with interviewing is the degree to which a rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee can be established.

In this relationship lie not only the promise but the problems of the interview. That a relationship of some sort will exist between the interviewer and respondent is given; its configuration and its effect on the gathering of data, however, will vary with the skill of the interviewer and the developmental stage of the child. The central challenge before the researcher who uses the interview is the management of the relationship so that it facilitates but does not contaminate the collection of subjective data. Therefore, the interview is an especially sharp, double-edged sword in social science research; the same features that bless it with its sensitivity and special access to subjective data curse it with the threat of excessive measurement error. (Parker, 1984, p. 19)

Concerns about the establishment of good interviewer-interviewee relationships are, of course, not exclusive to interviews with children. In this study, creating a rapport conducive to developing an understanding of participants' perceptions, particularly with those participants who had not had the opportunity to become familiar with the researcher (i.e. parents and specialist teachers), proved to be a challenging aspect of the research.

Six different interview guides were developed for this research, one designed for each group of participants--parents, principals, teachers, itinerant teachers of the visually impaired, visually impaired students and their classmates. They were standardized, open-ended interviews with slight variations. Although the exact wording of the majority of questions were determined in advance and interview guidelines written (see Appendix B), additional questions were added based on observations made during participant observation. Because the study focused upon the interaction of integrated visually impaired students, parents and principals who had less direct contact with the visually impaired student in the school setting, tended to be asked fewer questions specifically related to observations than did those with more direct contact with the student, such as classroom teachers and classmates. During the course of the interview itself, probes or questions inspired by the exchange were incorporated. As outlined by Patton (1980), the strengths of this type of interview are that:

Respondents answer the same questions, thus increasing comparability of responses; data are complete for each person on the topics addressed in the interview.... [and it] facilitates organization and analysis of data. (p. 206)



However, Patton (1980) also alerts the researcher to the potential drawbacks associated with using a research guide. He contends there is:

little flexibility in relating the interview to particular individuals and circumstances; [and] standardized wording of questions may constrain and limit naturalness and relevance of questions and answers. (p. 206)

To some degree the weaknesses outlined by Patton were addressed by allowing flexibility to pursue discussions arising from information shared by the interviewee and by memorizing the standard questions so as to avoid the actual reading of the questions during the interview.

Interviews with the visually impaired students and their classmates focused on friendships, the interaction of students, choice of playmates, popularity of children, and their perceptions of those who were visually impaired. In the interviews with the classmates of the visually impaired student, the researcher did not introduce the topic of the visually impaired student. During the interview there were several potential opportunities for the classmate to mention the visually impaired student's disability. It was decided prior to conducting the research, that the visually impaired child would be discussed only if a peer spontaneously commented on the student's visual impairment. All classmates interviewed spontaneously reported the visually impaired child to have a visual problem.

During the pupil interviews a class list and individual name cards for each student were used to respond to some questions. Early in the interview, each interviewee was asked to go through the class list and tell the interviewer something about each student. Later in the interview the name cards were used by the students to sort their classmates into groups such as "best friends," "okay friends," popular

and unpopular. This procedure proved to be valuable in two ways. First, the interviewee did not have to be continually reflecting upon which children were in her/his classroom and, secondly, much spontaneous discussion occurred as the student sorted and commented upon individual students. Such spontaneous discussion frequently led to the exploration of a perception or opinion held by the student.

Because researchers have noted the actions of children vary from situation to situation (Davies, 1982; Pollard, 1985; Woods, 1979), parents were interviewed in an attempt to understand the social interaction of visually impaired children beyond school hours or in what Ball (1985) calls a cultural study as compared to an institutional one. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the student's social life beyond "school itself." Parent interviews addressed such issues as parenting a visually impaired child, the child's social interaction outside school hours, and the parent's perceptions of their child's acceptance, both by other children and society, in general. Although three of the five parents interviewed seemed open and willing to discuss what were sometimes very personal issues associated with their role as a parent of a visually impaired child (e.g. the circumstances under which they learned their child was handicapped, the perceived effect of having a visually impaired child upon their marriage), two were obviously less at ease with the interview situation and less open with regard to the extent of information they appeared willing to share. After the tape recorder had been turned off and the interview officially ended, these two parents were significantly more spontaneous in their discussions with the interviewer.

The interviews with teachers addressed such issues as their perceptions of the visually impaired student's acceptance by and interaction with classmates, the role of the teacher in relation to social interaction, and their experiences and concerns related to the integration of the visually impaired student in their classroom. Classroom teachers, having considerable opportunity to interact with the researcher, seemed more at ease during interviews than did the specialist teachers, some of whom were observed with the students only twice each week. However, principals, perhaps because of their position of authority in the school, appeared at ease during interviews, despite their limited contact with the researcher. As well, their interviews focused less directly on the visually impaired student since they, in most cases, had limited daily contact with this student.

The itinerant teachers for the visually impaired were key informants in this study.

Key informants are individuals who possess special knowledge, status, or communicative skills and who are willing to share that knowledge and skill with the researcher . . . chosen because they have access--in time, space, or perspective--to observations denied the ethnographer. (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 119)

Each of the four itinerant teachers for the visually impaired had known the visually impaired child and her/his parents for many years. Frequently, an itinerant teacher would have worked with the parents and preschool visually impaired child in the home prior to the visually impaired child enrolling in school. In the role of itinerant teacher, services involve a close working relationship with the child's classroom teacher as well as one to ten hours of direct, weekly instruction with the visually impaired pupil. Therefore, interviews with the itinerant

teachers involved clarification and corroboration of the researcher's perspectives as well as such topics as challenges experienced in the social, temporal, and instructional integration of the visually impaired, the role and perspectives of the itinerant teacher, and the existing barriers to social acceptance of visually impaired pupils.

A total of 66 formal interviews were conducted during the research: five with visually impaired students, five with their parents, thirty-one with their classmates, three with principals, five with grade level teachers, four with physical education teachers, four with music teachers, three with French teachers, one with a resource teacher, one with a social studies teacher, and four with itinerant teachers for the visually impaired.

#### Participant Observation

A second source of data was collected from observation in classrooms and during unstructured playtime such as recess and noon hour. During the three to four weeks spent observing at each site, the children were followed throughout their school day. Morning recess varied from 15 to 20 minutes, noon recess from 20 to 90 minutes. Playground observations were conducted throughout the entire period at each site. At each site the students had physical education and music twice each week; hence eight of these classes were observed at each site. The number of French classes varied. At Site II, the children did not take French, at Sites III and V they had French each day for 30 minutes. At Sites I and IV, they had French daily for 20 minutes. During the last week at each site, observation and interviews were interspersed.

On site observation in the social setting under investigation was essential to this study as the researcher analyzed the process of social interaction among its participants. Participant observation enables:

the research worker to secure his [sic] data within the mediums, symbols, and experiential worlds which have meaning to his respondents. Its intent is to prevent imposing alien meanings upon the actions of the subjects. (Vidich, 1969, p. 79)

While numerous definitions of participant observation exist within the research literature, they tend to be categorized along a continuum in relation to the degree of researcher participation in the lives of the observed (Burgess, 1985b). Participant observation in this study tended toward the end of the continuum reflecting observation as opposed to active participation. The definition outlined by Becker, Geer and Hughes (1968) embodies the approach to observation used by the researcher:

The participant observer follows those he [sic] studies through their daily round of life, seeing what they do, when, with whom, under what circumstances, and querying them about the meaning of their actions. (p. 13)

Attempts were made to overcome or minimize a variety of difficulties associated with participant observation. Firstly, the degree of acceptance accorded the researcher can be problematic. Davies (1978) in her study of the deviant behaviour of school girls suggests the adult researcher cannot be part of a teenage group but found she was accepted and trusted as an interested researcher who did not judge or interfere with their behaviour. Working with 13 year old students, Measor and Woods (1984) experienced resistance from their subjects when they attempted to 'pass' as participants but relationships of trust were established when non-traditional adult roles were assumed (i.e. the

interested researcher) and dress, manner of speaking, and approach were acceptable to the children.

Children seem to have a sense of whether a researcher looks like a good bet as a friend and will spot those who attempt to be something other than what they are. (Fine & Glassner, 1979, p. 167)

During the first day at each site, the researcher spoke with the class about the role of the researcher and the focus of the study on the interactions of school children, what they did in school, and their perceptions in relation to school. All were advised the researcher did not have adult authority but was merely there to "see what goes on in elementary schools." The researcher attempted to maintain a sense of neutrality between students and teachers by helping with both groups.

"The mere presence of the observer means that movements are made and orientations are developed toward him [sic] which would not otherwise have occurred" (Schwartz & Schwartz, 1969, p. 94). To lessen the inevitable effect of the observer, care was taken to intrude as little as possible on the routine activities of participants, especially on the playground. In some situations this proved stressful, for example, when an older child was physically hurting a smaller student. However, students, even those not intimately involved with the research, seemed to accept the role of the observer within a few days. Unfortunately, teachers tended to be less versatile and took longer to appear at ease with another adult in the classroom.

Observation time at each of the five sites varied. At the first two sites the researcher spent 21 days or just over four school weeks. Being a novice, additional time was needed to become comfortable with the various circumstances associated with field work, for example,

observer effect, building rapport with participants, and specific participant observation skills. Three and a half weeks were spent at the next site, three and a half weeks at the third site, and six weeks at the combined site where two visually impaired students were enrolled. Since different environments may enhance or detract from the quality and/or quantity of peer interactions (Fine & Glassner, 1979), observation of the full school day was completed--interaction in the classroom, at lunch time, at recess, and in various classes such as physical education and music. Each situation provided opportunities for a variety of interactions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). As well, at two of the sites, classrooms overlooking the playground provided opportunities to observe the children as an unknown observer. During four occasions this approach did not reveal behaviours seemingly different from those observed when actually present on the playground. However, one problem was routinely experienced during observations on the playground. As children moved from place to place it was difficult to hear much of their conversation. At times, it was impossible to stay within hearing distance of the visually impaired child's conversations without being obvious about the focus of the researcher's interest on this particular student. As well, three of the five visually impaired students tended to seek out adult interaction on the playground; thus, care had to be taken to avoid such interaction on a regular basis.

Field notes were used to record specific conversations or incidents as well as the circumstances surrounding interaction among the visually impaired pupil, peers, and classmates. During outside activities conversations among participants were often difficult to

hear. Therefore, clarifying questions were devised to incorporate during interviews or when the children were more accessible, for example, later that day in the classroom. Thus, in addition to clarifying the perceptions of the research participants, the formal and informal interview process provided a source of data concerning feelings, intentions, and interactions or events which took place during observations (Patton, 1980).

#### Documents

Three categories of documents were used in this research. Firstly, documents describing the visually impaired student (e.g. eye reports, report cards, individualized educational plans) were examined. Secondly, documents providing information about the school, its administrative policies, guidelines for integration of handicapped students, curriculum, and communication with parents were analyzed. Finally, the Education Acts and other documents relevant to issues addressed in this study (i.e. provincial programs of study, curriculum guidelines, relevant newspaper articles, etc.) were examined.

As suggested by Dorothy Smith (1975), knowledge of an institution and its participants may be expanded by analyzing the documents produced. An institution's documents reflect what is relevant to it and give some insight into its way of knowing others. Researchers must not treat information from such documents at face value but attend to its meaning as a social product (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983):

To treat them as a resource and not a topic is to trade on the interpretive and interactional work that went into their production, to treat as a reflection or document of the world phenomena that are actually produced by it. (p. 137)



In this study an analysis of the visually impaired pupil's individualized educational plans and school report cards revealed the attention which had formally been given to social integration. Similarly, a school's written policy on integration of the handicapped reflects the formal intentions of this educational process and was compared with the perceived level of implementation within the school.

### Data Analysis

The collection and analysis of data through interviews, participant observation, and documents requires researchers to acknowledge the reflexive nature of social research; to realize that they are inextricably associated with the social environment they attempt to study. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) state:

This is not a matter of methodological commitment, it is an existential fact. There is no way in which we can escape the social world in order to study it; nor, fortunately, is that necessary. We cannot avoid relying on 'common-sense' knowledge nor, often, can we avoid having an effect on the social phenomena we study. There is, though, as little justification for rejecting all common-sense knowledge out of hand as there is for treating it as all 'valid in its own terms': we have no external, absolutely conclusive standard by which to judge it. Rather, we must work with what knowledge we have, while recognizing that it may be erroneous and subjecting it to systematic inquiry where doubt seems justified. Similarly, instead of treating reactivity merely as a source of bias, we can exploit it. How people respond to the presence of the researcher may be as informative as how they react to other situations. (p. 15)

In qualitative research, data analysis is not a distinct stage of the research project but an ongoing process throughout the study (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). The conceptual framework identified, the methods used to collect data, and even the selection of sites and interviewees are integral phases of the process of analysis. Alterations are made to

accommodate new information or insights. Given this dynamic nature of analysis in qualitative research, the intensity of analytic activities increases as the data are collected and organized and the formal documentation of interpretations begins (Lofland, 1971).

In this study analysis was an ongoing process. The emergent design and flexibility intrinsic to qualitative research allowed the researcher to focus on patterns and themes as they were identified, to probe further into some issues and to redirect the focus of concern as initial data analysis indicated.

Data from the first two sites were collected during the months of May and June, 1989. There was little opportunity in the two day interval between completing interviews at the first site and beginning the initial participant observation at the second site to focus on any but preliminary analysis. The closure of schools for July and August provided an opportunity for the researcher to "cycle back and forth between thinking about the existing data and generating strategies for collecting new--often better quality--data" (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p. 49). As interviews were transcribed and participant observation notes reviewed, categories and themes relative to the original research questions began to emerge. Codes were created for emerging themes, insights and information related to specific research questions, key concepts, and patterns common both within and across sites (see Appendix C).

When September arrived and work at the third site began, codes were expanded and developed as fieldwork continued. To prepare the coded information for further analysis at a later date, multiple copies

of each page of coded material were made and filed according to the relevant headings. This created files of data specific to a given category or theme for use in future analysis. Although an attempt was made to complete this procedure using a computer and programmed analytic indexes, this proved to be too time consuming and, more importantly, removed the coded excerpt from its context in the original document or interview.

A second analytic strategy used during the coding process was memoing. Memos are speculation or theorizing by the researcher about specific coded segments and their relationships with other codes or emerging themes (Miles & Huberman, 1984). They provide an opportunity to record initial responses to a theme or domain and conceptualize their relationship to the research questions at hand.

Fieldwork proceeded in this manner throughout the five sites until early December, 1989. Following the transcription of the thirty-six interviews conducted over the previous three months and coding of both these and the participant observation notes, intense analysis of data began.

Within-site analysis required an organization of responses to specific interview questions, such as those related to the perception peers had of their visually impaired classmate. Responses to common questions were recorded on a spreadsheet under the question number to provide the researcher with easy access to the responses of all participants at a given site to a specific question. As well, the frequency of some occurrences, such as the number of times a visually impaired child was chosen as a "best friend," were tabulated. In

conjunction with data from participant observation reports, phenomena were identified which represented sub-categories of broader categories. Thus, typologies such as "types of friendships of visually impaired students" within pupil culture at the elementary school level were developed. As these typologies were developed they were constantly compared and linked to the data collected through participant observation, interviews, and to a limited extent, documents gathered from various sites (e.g. newsletters, individualized education programs).

By comparing and contrasting concepts from one site to another, links between these concepts were specified and refined. Patterns and interrelationships emerged; therefore, discovering the types of relationships, if any, among patterns became a basic analytic tactic used at this stage of the research. Two basic methods of analysis were employed in the final stage of analysis. First was:

"enumerative induction" in which you collect a number and variety of instances all going in the same direction. The second is called "eliminative induction" in which you test your hypothesis against alternatives and look carefully for qualifications that bound the generality of the case being made. (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 228)

This process of analytic induction was used to verify relationships and patterns. The cultural inferences initially constructed by the researcher during the process of data collection and initial interpretation and analysis were repeatedly tested to ascertain whether they represented the perspectives and ways of making meaning of the participants, that is, whether the cultural assumptions had been accurately translated. They were tested through the process of triangulation.

Just as a surveyor locates points on a map by triangulating on several sights, so an ethnographer pinpoints the accuracy of conclusions drawn by triangulating with several sources of data. Triangulation prevents the investigator from accepting too readily the validity of initial impressions; it enhances the scope, density, and clarity of constructs developed during the course of the investigation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). It also assists in correcting biases that occur when the ethnographer is the only observer of the phenomenon under investigation. (Goetz & Compte, 1984, p. 11)

In addition to triangulation, during both formal (i.e. interviews) and informal discussions with participants, identified themes and patterns were introduced and explored. Thus, as themes emerged they could be checked with participants at the present and future sites.

### Conclusions

The study of social interaction is a complex task. The methods used and described in this chapter were, as Parker (1984) contends, "double-edged swords." Those aspects which appeared to contribute to their greatest potential to gather valuable data were simultaneously the very entity which made them most vulnerable. However, given the aim of this study, to explore the process of acceptance and interaction between integrated visually impaired students and their classmates, the methodological approach was, to some extent, dictated. Given the context of the research interest and intent, the adopted methodology seemed appropriate.

## CHAPTER 4

### The Study Sites

#### Introduction

In this chapter a description of each of the five sites is given. Information concerning the class, the playground, the school day, the learning environment, and the visually impaired student enrolled in the class, is presented. All participants (i.e. the visually impaired students, classmates, educators and parents) have been assigned pseudonyms. The sites have been designated in numerical order one through five.

#### The Sites and The Visually Impaired Students

Schools, in several respects, are very similar (Hamilton, 1983). Children of specific ages are assigned to teachers who have specific expectations concerning tasks to be completed. External constraints over which teachers have little control, such as school schedules, curriculum outlines, and evaluation procedures, affect how teachers realize their personal and professional goals (Jackson, 1968; Lortie, 1975; Woods, 1980b). Yet, there is much research to support the existence of substantial differences among schools, even in areas where children and teachers belong to similar socio-economic and ethnic groups (Hamilton, 1983). The "effective schools movement" of the 1980s was, in many ways, an attempt to determine and understand the complexities inherent in the development of a desirable school environment (Druian, 1987).

The five sites observed for this study proved to have many things in common as well as both subtle and obvious differences. These elementary schools, located in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, were situated in rural and in urban areas. Different grade levels, administrative arrangements, teaching strategies, and approaches to learning and discipline were observed. In examining the context associated with the perspectives of those within a given situation, many events were recorded and observed--at one site the principal resigned, at another there were troubled relations with the local school board, in one class a friend of the visually impaired pupil moved away. Such diversity from site to site emphasizes the importance of situational context on the lives of participants and the dynamic nature of this context (Popkewitz, 1984).

Common to each of the five sites was the enrollment of a visually impaired pupil in a regular classroom with nonhandicapped peers. An itinerant teacher for the visually impaired provided instructional assistance to the visually impaired pupil and programming consultation to the classroom teachers several times each week. In all sites, classroom teachers were responsible for the visually impaired student for more than eighty per cent of the school day, excluding the noon hour recess.

#### Site I

Observation began at the first site in late April and continued until the last week in May. Site I, a school located in a small town, enrolled students from the town as well as those bused in from about a 10 mile radius. The school population of approximately 280 pupils was

served by full and part time teachers including one or two classroom teachers at each grade level, depending upon the number of students at the particular grade level; a teaching vice-principal; a part-time physical education teacher; a part-time music teacher; a French teacher; and a resource teacher who worked with individual or small groups of children who were experiencing learning difficulties in the regular class. The principal for this school was also assigned to the nearby high school.

The school was several decades old but had modern facilities (e.g. large gymnasium, library, music room) and appeared clean and well maintained. It was on two levels with several classrooms, offices, and the gymnasium being on the lower level. The classrooms were spacious with large windows comprising the major part of the outside wall. More than half of two of the other walls were taken up with chalkboards, while the fourth wall had built in cupboards and book cases.

The Site I Class. The class at this site was a small group of 16 pupils, ten boys and six girls in grade four. They sat at individual desks in rows facing the front of the room with their backs to the teacher's desk which was located behind them. Two tables, located along one side of the classroom were frequently used by pupils during group activities. Also along this side was a table with a closed-circuit television system used regularly by the visually impaired pupil enrolled in this class. The wall space which was not comprised of windows and chalkboards had samples of the student's work, projects, posters made for the recent language arts theme on birds and throughout much of the



classroom, pictures of horses. Mr. Coates, the classroom teacher was an avid horseman.

The children, having been together for the major part of an academic year, had developed distinct play groups or cliques. Those who were not a regular member of a group had varying degrees of interaction with individuals from the groups. These encounters tended to be brief, usually involving structured activities in the classroom or associated with conversations arising from chance meetings on the playground. This type of interaction was distinct from that in which a pupil purposefully sought out another child or group of children with the preconceived purpose of playing or interacting with them. Figure 1 outlines the major friendship and play groups observed.

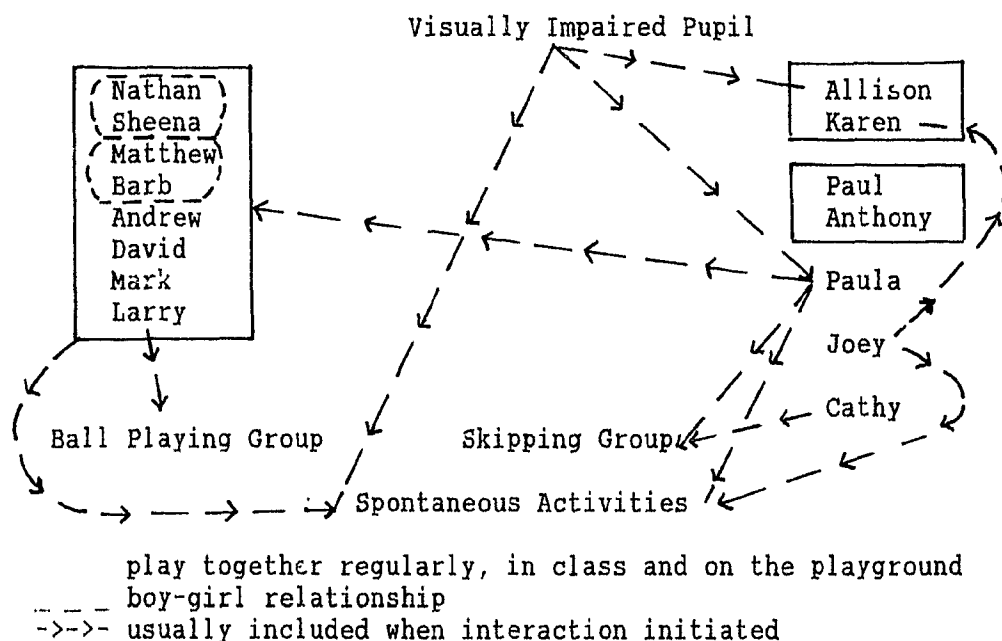


Figure 1: Friendship and Play Groups<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The play group patterns in this study were determined through observation. Midpoint through each morning recess and twice during the noontime recess each child was located on the playground and the

The Playground. Located on a rather small parcel of land the school had a somewhat congested playground area. Children from primary to grade two were assigned to an area in front of and along one side of the school. Those in grades three to five occupied the area along the back of the school. Playground equipment (e.g. monkey bars, swings, and teeter-totters) was located in both areas. As well, on assigned days specific grades were permitted to play with balls, bats, soccer and basketballs. Boys were the main participants in these activities. Boys batting large softballs from one side of the playground toward and often into the area where children were gathered about the monkey bars was a common sight. There were no designated areas for swinging the bats and children were responsible for avoiding the batter in the area he chose to use the bat. A low lying area behind the school was used as a ball field when it was dry enough. During these rare times, the playground was less congested.

In addition to the activities associated with the playground equipment and balls, children in this class regularly participated in games of chase, tag, walking around in pairs or small groups, playing cards on the doorstep, talking in pairs or small groups, and play fighting. Some children ran from activity to activity or group to group stopping only briefly from time to time when a particular activity

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children with whom he/she was playing were recorded. The activities in which they were participating were also recorded. During the interviews with the students, they were asked to identify their "best friends," those with whom they usually played and the activities in which they were generally involved. These were compared with observation notes to determine the consistency between observations and the students' perceptions. Only one discrepancy was noted throughout the five sites.

attracted them. There was usually one group, varying in size, of girls skipping on a concrete covered area near one of the school exits. Fights involving physical contact primarily involved the boys but occasionally two sisters who appeared to be children rejected by the majority of the other children, would be seen exchanging punches and kicks with a group of boys who regularly participated in physically aggressive encounters with them.

Children in this class played primarily with their classmates, not students from the other grade 4 class or from other grade levels. For the most part, boys played with boys and girls with girls. However, there were several boy-girl relationships evident on the playground and in this class. These pairs frequently played together and would gather on the monkey bars or swings and talk as they climbed or swung. Often they shared a swing or teeter-totter. From time to time the girls would gather to discuss "the boy situation" and at these times other girls, that is those without apparent boyfriends, would be included.

The School Day. Interaction among children varied at different times and in different situations (e.g. in the class with the teacher present, in the class with the teacher absent, on the playground, in the gym). At 8:30 a.m. the children were permitted to enter the school and go to their classrooms. Bus students generally did not arrive until after 8:30 , and therefore, several children were usually in the class by the time they entered the school. In the class under study, the girls, the boy-girl pairs, and the visually impaired pupil, generally entered the school as soon as permitted. Several of the boys chose to remain on the playground until the 8:50 bell sounded. All teachers and

pupils were to be in their classrooms at this time for the announcements and singing of O Canada.

At 9:00 a.m. the "work" officially began. During the week there were compulsory, scheduled, 30 minute periods in some subject areas: two of physical education, five of French, two of music, two of social studies, and one of library. The remaining subjects, that is, language arts, mathematics, science, art and health, and activities such as U.S.S.R. (uninterrupted sustained silent reading) and D.P.A. (daily physical activity) were scheduled but frequently rearranged by the teacher depending upon time available or the occurrence of events which were not in the general routine, such as school visitors or the showing of films. Official work and play routines were divided by a 15 minute recess at 10:30 a.m. and a lunch and noon hour break from 11:50 to 12:40 p.m. Prior to recess and noon hour and once half way through the afternoon session, the children lined up to go out to the bathroom and the water fountain. Classes for the grades four and five pupils were dismissed at 2:50 p.m. Bus students were dismissed first, followed by "walkers" who were permitted to leave once the school buses had pulled away from the school grounds. A small number of students were required to remain until 3:30 when a second bus run was made.

The Learning Environment. The learning environment in this class was predominately a competitive one. All children followed the same program at the designated grade level in all curricular areas (i.e. language arts, mathematics, social studies, etc.). Remediation or necessary individualized instruction was not provided during the routine presentation of lessons; however, when children experienced difficulty

completing a task they raised their hands to have the teacher assist them with a specific question. Regardless of test results, all pupils proceeded with the next lesson. One student left the room several times each week to work with the resource teacher. As well, the visually impaired student received special instruction outside the classroom. This was provided by the itinerant teacher for the visually impaired who worked with the student three times per week: one day assisting in class during language arts, one day at noon hour, and one day after school was dismissed.

Children with the best grades had their marks announced when tests were passed back by the teacher. Those who had not scored above a certain mark received their papers without having their marks made public. Three boys in this class had repeated or were repeating an additional year in a specific grade. One girl was identified by the classroom teacher as being recommended for retention at the end of this school year.

Although predominately a competitive learning environment, the children did participate in some group activities and individual or non-competitive tasks during each day. Group activities included such things as writing a poem in groups of two to four pupils or choosing a partner to work with on a specific activity such as a page in a workbook. Individual activities were those such as writing in one's journal. Children were free to choose their topic and could share their writing if they wished.

Peter, the Visually Impaired Student. Peter was the visually impaired student at Site I. He was the eldest of three children and

lived with his parents on a farm in a rural area. His five year old brother had been adopted the year Peter began school. Julie, his two year old sister, was his biological sibling. Both Peter's parents were employed outside the home and ran a small farm as well.

Peter's diagnosis was optic nerve hypoplasia which is a congenital underdevelopment of the optic nerve resulting in various degrees of vision loss (Faye, 1984). In his left eye he had only light perception but in the right eye he had a visual acuity of 20/400 with some restriction in his peripheral field. Thus, Peter was severely visually impaired. Initially Peter's parents were advised by doctors that Peter was totally blind but as he developed it became evident to his parents that he did have some functional vision. Several months before his second birthday, a preschool itinerant teacher for the visually impaired began working with Peter and his parents, providing teaching and programming suggestions. Peter's progress was monitored annually by physicians and he was reported to be developing normally.

At age five and a half Peter was enrolled in the primary class at his local public school. His teachers received some assistance from staff at the Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired. A tutor was hired to provide additional instruction and assistance in keeping Peter working at the same level as his classmates. When Peter was in grade 2 an itinerant teacher for the visually impaired was assigned to his area. He received three to five hours of instruction per week from this itinerant teacher. Peter was completing his fifth year in this school at the time of the study.

As a student, Peter was described by his teachers as being well behaved, diligent and hard working. He held printed material one to two inches from his face and used large print textbooks and a closed-circuit T.V. system to access regular print materials. Because of this close working distance and significantly reduced visual acuity, Peter required additional time to complete most reading and writing activities. Since work which could not be completed during the assigned time in school was to be completed for homework, he routinely had more homework than his peers. Peter rarely socialized with other students during formal "working" times in the classroom. During such times his interaction was primarily with the teacher and his attention concentrated on the task at hand. Even between activities when many of his classmates roamed from their seats to speak with other children or play about, Peter remained seated quietly at his desk. Material written on the board or held up by the teacher was viewed with a telescopic aid while seated at his desk. Peter worked diligently to please the teacher and, in general, seemed to take school very seriously.

In appearance Peter was an attractive, overweight boy of average stature with dark brown hair and eyes. His eyes were in constant motion unless he was concentrating his focus on a distant object. When speaking with others he had a slight head tilt and horizontal nystagmus (i.e. rapid involuntary eye movement from side to side). Physically Peter's movements were slow. He walked with a wide gait, plodding in a manner similar to that of an older person. Peter displayed several mannerisms. When excited he flapped his arms and hands and when pleased with a particular event did a skipping-like-walk with his head thrown

back. Peter had a deep, loud voice marked by immature almost babyish-sounding intonation. When he related stories or made statements he generally raised his voice at the end of each sentence as if asking a question.

In behaviour, as mentioned, Peter was viewed by teachers as a model student. In his interactions with both teachers and peers he was pleasant, friendly and very talkative. When called upon in class he had a tendency to elaborate on what should have been a short response to a simple question or to make statements about the proper way to behave--statements which often resulted in classmates rolling their eyes or exchanging glances of annoyance or humour. Peter routinely sought out interaction with the teacher as opposed to his peers. His topics of discussion were generally things he had done or related to events centered around himself. On the playground he spent the greater part of his time on or around the swings. He responded pleasantly to the children who spoke to him but rarely joined a group or initiated the action necessary to participate in the activity. Peter was not rejected by his peers but children did not seek him out. When he made a concerted effort to join an activity on the playground he was willingly accepted into most games by the children. Several of his classmates and teachers, Peter's mother, and Peter himself, reported he was rarely the object of teasing or derogatory remarks. No such incidence were observed during the month of observation at this site.

## Site II

Observation at the second site ran four weeks from late May through much of June, 1989. The Site II school, situated in a village,



served children from the community and near by rural areas. Children whose parents were employed by a major industry in the area comprised approximately one-third of the school's 200 pupils. The frequent transfer of employees within this organization resulted in a rather unstable student population where classes would lose four or five students every year and have several new students every September. There were eight full time teachers, one of whom was the principal. Itinerant music and physical education teachers taught at the school two days per week. As well, a resource teacher was available several days each week to assist with children who were identified as having learning difficulties.

The school had been expanded in recent years so had sections which appeared modern and clean as well as older more used-looking areas. With the remodeling had come new furniture for the modern facilities while the original sections of the school retained the furniture characteristic of the era in which it was constructed. There were three levels in the building with the various grades randomly scattered throughout. The layout, size and shape of the classrooms varied depending upon its location.

The Site II Class. The Site II class was a large grade one group comprised of 28 children, 14 girls and 14 boys. The classroom was arranged with the teacher's desk on an angle in the front left corner of the room and the students' desks in five rows. Because three of the five rows had six desks, compared to the five in the other two rows, children were seldom located directly across from another student. A counter with cupboards below and shelves above ran along two-thirds of

the back wall. A collection of books was kept standing or propped up along the entire length of this counter and children regularly went to this area to choose a book to read. A circular table near the door and the pencil sharpener was piled with papers and books, some of which were the large print editions for use by the visually impaired student enrolled in this class. The walls were decorated with alphabet and number cards, a progress chart showing the number of books each child had read, and an area comprised of this month's art display--28 spring birds with tissue paper bodies. At the front of the room hanging over part of the chalkboard was a whiteboard intended for use by Lisa, the visually impaired student, when board work was to be copied.

The Playground. The playground at this site was large and spread out over several acres. The front of the school was off limits except for entering and exiting the building before and after school. On one side of the school was a playground equipment area which was new and well equipped. A row of teeter-totters, a round-about and two sets of swings were located to the rear of the playground equipment area. On the other side of the building the area was paved with hopscotch outlines painted on the pavement. To the rear of the school was a large open field bordered by trees. On one side of the field an official sized baseball field with back-stop was located while the other three-quarters of the area was open space.

Although the majority of the children in this class had been together for two years, there did not appear to be well established friendship groups or pairs. Andrew and Michael were the one exception. They played together every recess and noon hour. The others seemed to

have preferences for certain children but did not hesitate to leave a group should another group be participating in an activity which was more appealing. Choice of playmates appeared to be more related to the activity in which one was involved than to who was participating. However, boys usually played with boys and girls with girls. As well, there were several children who did not seem to be particularly popular and who appeared to change playmates and/or activities several times during a given play period or were obviously excluded from some activities.

There were three main activities observed during outside play time at this school. One was play involving the use of the playground equipment which covered an area of approximately 600 square feet and included platforms at various levels, two slides, several sets of monkey and parallel bars, and a tire swing. Girls from this class were the main participants in playground equipment centered activities. They did not limit play to one or two other children but tended to move from one piece of equipment to another in small groups of two or three children.

The second activity routinely observed was a game of ball in which boys from various grades would make up teams and throw the ball back and forth from one team to the other. Points were scored if the opposing team did not make the catch when the ball was thrown to them. Five boys from the class under study regularly participated in this game.

The third activity centered around an area bordered by woods at the far end of the school property, about three hundred feet from the back of the school. Seven boys from the class under study were frequently involved in imaginary adventure games or in a game of capture

which involved girls from their class. Girls would be captured and taken to an area designated as "the dungeon." Here they would be tied in imaginary ropes and unable to escape unless another girl released them by untying the ropes. There were two boys in this class who frequently assisted the girls in escaping from the other "all boy" team. The children referred to groups playing in this area as teams and had long term membership on a specific team. Away from this area the children sometimes traveled with their team but strict adherence was not regularly observed. Children, for the most part, played with children from their class but there were a number of children from other classes who would join these play groups from time to time. Figure 2 outlines the three main play activities and associated friendship groups.

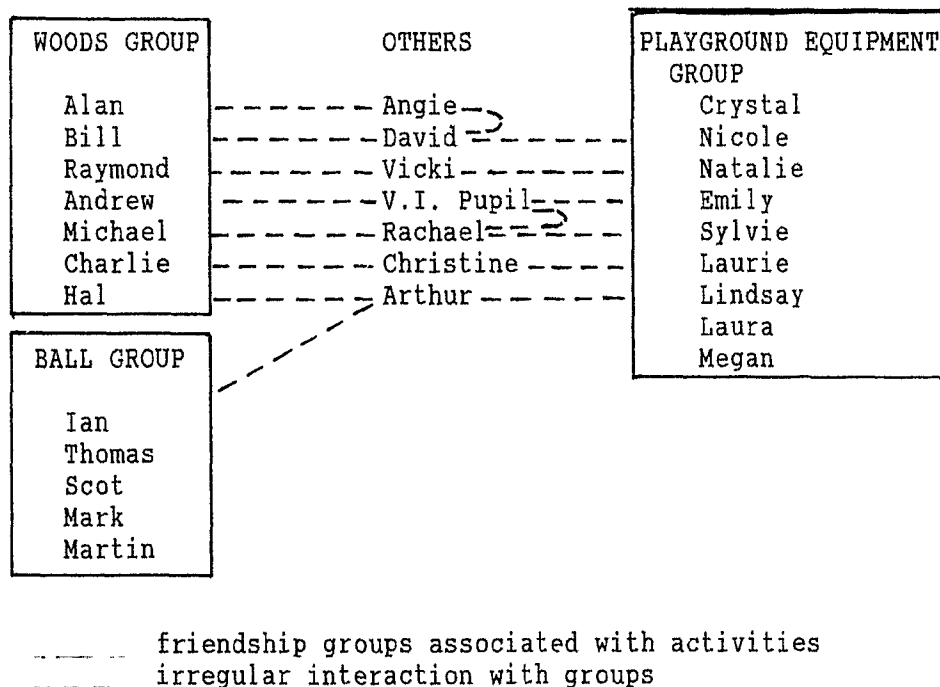


Figure 2: Play Activities and Friendship Groups

In addition to these three main activities, children regularly participated in games of chase, tag, running around in pairs or in small groups, playing with toys brought from home, skipping, and play fighting. Real fights were seldom observed on the playground but frequent occurrences were noted in the line-up while children were waiting to enter the school following recess and noon hour break.

The School Day. The formal school day began at 8:30 a.m. when the children were to be in their classes. In the class under study the next half hour or more was generally spent taking lunch orders and collecting the appropriate amount of money. The children would go by rows to the teacher's desk to place their orders while others were asked to find an activity of their choice to do until this chore was completed. As the teacher worked at her desk every few minutes she would attempt to quiet the students by making a "shhh-shhh" sound. The children spent the entire morning in their classroom with a twenty minute recess break at 10:20. Language arts activities usually occurred before recess and math lessons after recess.

An hour lunch break was scheduled from 11:50 to 12:50 p.m. for children at this level. For lunch the children went to the gym which had cafeteria facilities. Noon hour and recess were staggered for grades primary to three and four to six with approximately 20 minutes overlapping at the end of the noon hour break. Two 30 minute physical education periods and two 30 minute music periods were scheduled on separate days each week during the afternoon sessions. On the fifth afternoon the children generally watched movies. Science, health, social studies, and art activities were interspersed among these

scheduled periods. Immediately following recess and noon hour break, the children lined up to go to the bathroom and water fountain. Children were dismissed at 2:30 p.m. although some students had to remain for an extra half hour waiting for a later bus.

The Learning Environment. The learning environment in this class could be described as a very traditional one. All students followed the same program designated for the particular grade level. During lessons where textbooks or workbooks were to be used children were required to wait until all children had their books out of their desks before they were permitted to open them. When the teacher had given the necessary instructions, the children were allowed to begin but could only proceed to a certain point. When they had finished they either waited quietly for the other children to complete the activity or could amuse themselves with a quiet task which they could do independently. When children experienced difficulty completing a task they raised their hands to have the teacher assist them with a specific problem. However, all instruction was predominately presented to the class as a group lesson and all children worked at the same level and completed the same tasks.

In this class emphasis was placed on working quietly, sitting properly with feet flat on the floor, and attending only to matters which were of personal concern to the child. Children always completed tasks independently and were not permitted to assist others with their work. In fact, children were not supposed to loan crayons, pencils, erasers or other school supplies to their neighbors because often they would not be returned and disputes over ownership frequently arose. The

teacher spent a significant amount of time maintaining order and control in this classroom. Despite these efforts, children regularly interacted with classmates, particularly those sitting directly in front of and behind them.

Individualized instruction in the classroom was given to three children with learning difficulties who left the classroom for two 20 minute periods each week to work with the resource teacher. The visually impaired student also received individualized instruction outside the classroom, twice a week, from the itinerant teacher for the visually impaired. Physical education was the only area in which children worked cooperatively with a partner or in small groups. In this class a variety of activities requiring individual, partner and team efforts were routinely scheduled.

Lisa, the Visually Impaired Student. Lisa, the visually impaired student at Site II, was the elder of two children and lived with her mother and five year old brother in a small house on the outskirts of the village. Her parents had been divorced for nearly two years and her father had relocated to another area of the province. Lisa was in her second year at this Site II school where her mother was employed in the cafeteria and as a playground supervisor during the noontime recess.

Being an albino, Lisa's visual impairment was diagnosed shortly after her birth. Albinism is an hereditary loss of pigment in the iris, skin and hair usually characterized by reduced visual acuity, nystagmus and photophobia (Faye, 1984). Lisa had severe nystagmus (involuntary, rapid eye movement), an alternating esotropia (a manifest inward deviation of the eyes), slight photophobia (increased sensitivity to

light) and was severely visually impaired. Her visual acuity was 20/400. Despite her poor vision, Lisa's early development was not markedly delayed. By her first birthday she was walking and demonstrated good receptive language. She continued to be extremely active and shortly after her second birthday her mother had requested assistance in managing what she described as hyperactive behaviour. Ritalin was prescribed by the family doctor but proved to increase Lisa's activity level and was not continued. During the remainder of her preschool years Lisa was described as an out-going but active and demanding child. For her parents, the preschool itinerant teacher for the visually impaired and the staff at her preschool program, Lisa's behaviour seemed to pose more difficulties than did concerns associated with the effect of visual impairment upon learning and development.

Shortly after her fifth birthday Lisa was enrolled in the primary class in her local public school. The itinerant teacher for the visually impaired, the designated primary teacher, the mother, and the principal of the school met prior to Lisa's enrollment. Lisa's mother expressed her desire to have Lisa treated as any other student. In Lisa's second year at this school, the mother was employed working in the cafeteria and doing playground supervision.

As a student Lisa was described by her teachers as being talkative, outgoing and capable but somewhat uncooperative. She required black ink copies of most worksheets and refused to wear her glasses which did make a significant difference in the clarity of printed material for her. Lisa held her face within one to two inches of her books. Although she had large print editions of her textbooks,



she was reluctant to use them even though her reading speed was almost twice as fast when she did. Lisa had developed many coping skills and was able to obtain information she needed to complete much of her work by copying from other students, marking the answers as the teacher went over the work, or listening when other students asked the teacher for assistance. Doing crafts and art work were Lisa's favorite activities in school. Reading, writing and mathematics were tasks she appeared to dislike and avoided as much of this work as possible.

In appearance Lisa was big for her age with white hair and blue eyes which tended to look pink in certain lighting conditions. Her bangs were worn long and hung well below her eye brows concealing her eyes much of the time. Characteristic of albinos, she was very fair skinned and was often sunburned from playing outside. Although she made eye contact when speaking to someone she had notable nystagmus and her eyes were constantly in motion. Her right esotropia gave her a cross-eyed appearance. Physically Lisa was robust and active. Although rather awkward looking when running, she was well coordinated when moving within the limits of her visual abilities, that is, when she was moving slowly enough to see where she was going.

The nursery rhyme which describes the little girl by saying, "When she was good she was very, very good but when she was bad she was horrid" was surely written about Lisa. In her interactions with both teachers and peers and both in the classroom and on the playground, this statement would characterize her behaviour. In her interaction with adults she was friendly and out-going when activities were of a social nature. In the classroom she did not comply with about half of the

teacher's requests and would openly defy teacher instructions to do such things as clear her desk, stop an activity before she was finished, or use her large print texts. Yet, Lisa was extremely out-going and chatted pleasantly with children seated around her. She was quick to offer to assist either the teacher or a student and participated actively in all aspects of the school program.

On the playground Lisa was continually on the move from one activity to another. She did not appear to have a particular friend but played cooperatively with almost any child in her area. Playing on the playground equipment seemed to be her favorite pastime although she also enjoyed playing with "Barbies" or "My Little Ponies" with one or two other children. Lisa initiated interaction with other children and could be described as assertive bordering on aggressive. When playing with another child she took the leadership role and when her playmate did not agree with her, she was usually left behind. Lisa raced to be first in the line-up entering the school every day. She would physically overpower any child who was ahead of her to obtain this honour. Despite this rather aggressive behaviour, Lisa was often kind and considerate toward her playmates, sharing her recess treats and toys with those she considered her friends. She was enthusiastic, active and a willing companion in most activities, good or bad.

### Site III

At the third site observation began in late September and ran through much of October with a one week interval between the first two weeks and the last two weeks. Site III was a school serving over 700 students from the town and the surrounding areas. There were three or

four classes of students at each grade level as well as full-time French teachers, physical education teachers, resource teachers, and a music teacher assigned to this school. The principal did not have teaching responsibilities but the vice- principal had a limited number of classes.

The school itself was several decades old and had been designed to accommodate slightly more than half of the existing student population. Therefore, several mobile classrooms had been attached to one end of the building, yet, room was at a premium in this facility. Storage of supplies, duplicating machines, the photocopier, and even the "sick bed" were located out in halls or in nooks off halls. However, amongst this array of objects were displays of students' work filling nearly every available space on the walls. The classrooms themselves were spacious and adequately furnished.

The Site III Class. The Site III classroom, a grade 3 class, was arranged with four tables to a group forming six groups of four. The class size had recently decreased by one and a second student left at the end of the first week of observation leaving two groups of three students. There were now 22 students, 9 girls and 13 boys. In each group two students sat side by side and faced the two across from them. There was one group of four boys while the other five groups had both boys and girls sitting together. The length of the outer classroom wall was windows while the opposite wall was covered by chalkboards and bookcases. The visually impaired student sat at the first table next to the door and used two adjacent tables for work areas and storage of equipment, paper and books.

Perhaps because it was early in the year, well-defined class cliques had not yet developed. About half of the children had been in the same class the previous year and many still maintained friendships established the year before. In the classroom children tended to interact most frequently with those in their group while on the playground consistent membership in specific play groups was evident for only a small number of the children. Figure 3 shows the seating arrangement of this class.

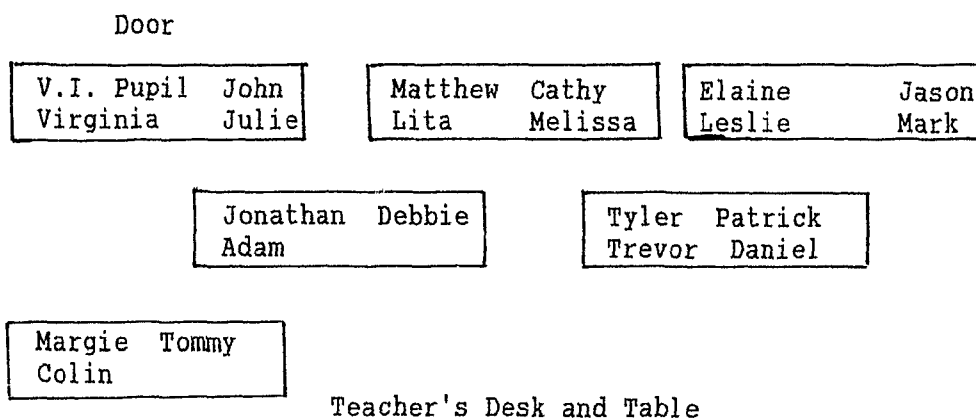


Figure 3: Classroom Groups at Site III

The Playground. There were two playground areas at this site, one for lower and one for upper elementary students. Approximately 325 children were assigned to the playground under observation. It was a rather confined space enclosed by the mobile classrooms and school buildings on two sides and a tall fence and wide, metal rail to keep cars from entering the property along the other two sides. In the middle was a new playground equipment centre which children referred to as "the playground." It was encircled by eight by eight beams and the ground beneath and within a five foot radius was covered with a deep

layer of sand. There were slides, tire swings, platforms, parallel and monkey bars, and various other climbing apparatus affixed to this centre. Because of the number of children in the yard at recess and noon hour, specific days were assigned when children from each of the three grade levels were permitted to use the equipment centre. The open space in the yard had various surfaces, pavement along the edge of the original school building, gravel bordering the mobile classrooms, and the remainder was hard packed dirt with some grass.

A variety of activities were regularly observed on this playground. The equipment centre was always a busy spot for those with the privilege of using it that day. Three doorsteps leading to entrances for the mobile classrooms were usually a gathering place for children playing "pretend games," house, or for those who had brought dolls or cartoon character figures to school. One boy, Harry, always brought his soccer ball and about a dozen boys were frequently involved in a game in which the ball was thrown or kicked back and forth between two teams. Other popular activities in the yard included tag, kissing tag in which the child caught received a kiss from the one in pursuit, marbles, skipping, playing house, pretend games of adventure, play fighting, and much racing from area to area, referred to by the children as "running around." Fighting was rarely observed on this playground.

As mentioned previously, well established friendship groups were not evident on this playground. There appeared to be some groups of children who regularly participated in certain activities but children from other classrooms at the same and different grade levels also routinely participated. Although there was a definite pattern of boys

playing with boys and girls with girls, there were several activities in which both participated actively. Since many of the town children who lived within walking distance of the school went home for lunch, opportunities for choosing different playmates varied from recess to the noon hour break. Figure 4 depicts what appeared to be emerging play groups.

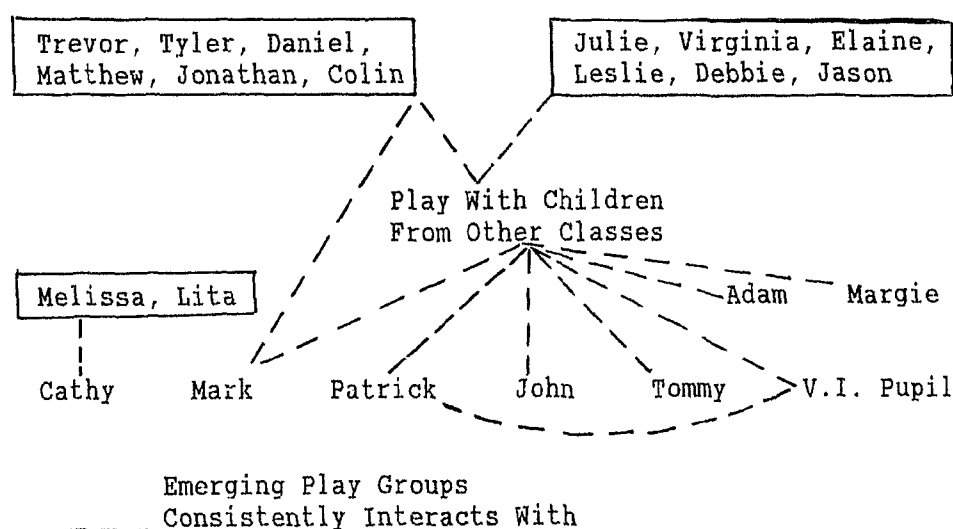


Figure 4: School Yard Playmates at Site III

The School Day. At 8:20 a.m. the students were permitted to enter the school building. At 8:25 a.m., following the singing of O Canada, the announcements were read by the physical education teacher. If the class was responsible for taking milk orders, a task they were assigned every third week, the morning's work was about fifteen minutes late in starting. The children would each be assigned a classroom to which they would go, collect money, and just before lunch time deliver the milk ordered. When they didn't "do milk orders" the first twenty minutes of the day was designated for silent reading. Following this a language

arts lesson and practice drill or a writing task were assigned. At 10:05 A.M. the children had a 20 minute recess. A 30 minute French class was scheduled each day after recess. The children, lead by the visually impaired student, filed through the maze of hallways to the French room, one of the classrooms which had been added to the school. Depending upon the particular day of the six day schedule, the students would next go to physical education, the library, or return to the classroom for a mathematics lesson.

At 11:45 the children distributed milk and went to the bathroom to wash their hands before lunch. They were permitted to go to the playground at 12:15 p.m. One noon hour a month they had "intramurals," various competitive games, in the gymnasium. Every second Friday those who belonged to the choir had practice in the music room. At 12:55 the children returned to their classrooms and the afternoon's work began. Afternoon lessons included social studies, science, art, or health. The Site III classroom teacher taught science to another class while their teacher covered the health program with the Site III class. As well, music was scheduled in the afternoons, twice in every six day cycle. Before the class was dismissed at 2:45 p.m. the homework assignments were copied from the board into "homework notebooks."

The Learning Environment. Group activities were an important aspect of learning in this classroom and working cooperatively was considered to be a meaningful experience for children. The teacher reported she liked to experiment with various seating arrangements during the year, hoping to create groups which would promote learning for children with various learning strengths and difficulties. Although

all students followed basically the same curriculum, children experiencing difficulties learning a new concept would be taken aside by the teacher for more instruction and practice. There was an obvious pattern to the presentation of lessons. First the teacher would teach a specific lesson. This was generally followed by an activity which provided an opportunity to apply and practice the skills introduced in the lessons. Based upon the pupil's performance, subsequent instruction and practice would be provided, usually the following day. Sometimes "enrichment activities" were available for the students in the class who were viewed as most capable.

Helping fellow students was a common practice and promoted during many activities. Learning centres with a choice of language arts activities provided an opportunity for children to share ideas and assign different tasks to group members, for example, one would read the necessary materials, one would record the responses, and all were expected to contribute to the discussion and solutions to the questions. Even following tasks in which children had worked independently, such as writing a story, students were encouraged to have others read their work. Often the reader was required to edit the written work but always had to tell the writer two things he/she liked about the story.

In addition to the teacher, there were three adults routinely involved in this classroom. The student attendant, a middle-aged woman assigned to the visually impaired student and two other "special needs" children in other classrooms of the school, came to the class several times a day to help with specific activities. If the visually impaired student was able to complete the task independently, the student



attendant was available to help the teacher with such things as producing multiple copies of a worksheet, collecting materials or equipment needed for an up-coming lesson, or producing tactile learning materials. The second adult was the itinerant teacher for the visually impaired who worked in the school three mornings each week. Work in the classroom with the visually impaired child and others who happened to be involved with the specific activity was alternated with sessions in which the child was removed from the class for individual instruction. Finally, the resource teacher in this school taught this class each week for 45 minutes to allow the classroom teacher time to meet with the itinerant teacher for the visually impaired. They used this time to plan necessary adaptations to accommodate the visually impaired student or to discuss areas of concern and progress. Three boys from this classroom also went to the resource teacher for a half hour each morning to receive remedial assistance in reading. The variety of tasks often occurring simultaneously in the classroom and the frequent arrival, involvement and departure of adults seem to create a sense of activity and sometimes confusion.

Tony, the Visually Impaired Student. Tony, the visually impaired student at Site III, was the third of four children. His mother had a boy and a girl from her first marriage, Tony during her second marriage, and now had a one year old daughter with her third husband. All the children lived with their mother and stepfather in a trailer about five miles from town. Both parents were employed in seasonal jobs. Tony was beginning his third year at this school having attended several preschool and kindergarten programs before relocating to this province.

Tony was born prematurely and developed retrolental fibroplasia or retinopathy of prematurity caused by extended exposure to oxygen used in lifesaving procedures for premature babies (Faye, 1984). Because of the severity of the damage done to the retina, Tony was totally blind. During his first four years of life, a preschool worker from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind visited Tony and his mother at regular intervals. She worked both directly with Tony as well as assisting his mother with strategies used to overcome or reduce the effects of total blindness on development and learning. Following his fourth birthday he was enrolled in a kindergarten program with nonhandicapped children where his progress and programs were monitored by a consultant from the Provincial school for the blind. Tony's family relocated when he was four and a half and he was enrolled in another Kindergarten class where he attended until almost six years of age.

The spring before Tony was to start school his family moved to another province. His mother met with local education authorities and the provincial consultant for the visually impaired. Regular class placement in the local school with daily support from an itinerant teacher for the visually impaired was the parents' preferred placement and in September Tony was enrolled in a regular class in the local school. Tony progressed with his sighted peers through the early elementary grades.

As a student Tony was enthusiastic, interested, and participated actively in every aspect of the school program. The textbooks used by his classmates were usually available to him in braille. When braille copies of material were not available or the task was a visual one (e.g.

colouring or drawing) one of Tony's classmates was assigned or, more frequently, volunteered to work with him. For the most part, Tony completed the same program as his peers. He was considered to be one of the brighter children in the class by both teachers and peers. Additional compensatory skills such as braille and orientation and mobility skills were taught by the itinerant teacher for the visually impaired. However, Tony experienced difficulties with daily living skills such as tying his sneakers, zippering his coat, and getting the straw in his juice pack.

In appearance Tony was an attractive boy of average stature with dark hair and eyes. There was some visible scarring of one eye and his eyes moved involuntarily when they were open. He displayed several mannerisms characteristic of many totally blind children--he rocked back and forth while seated; flapped his arms and/or hands particularly when excited; sometimes pressed one eye with the knuckle of his index finger; bounced up and down both when standing and sitting; and he frequently folded his arms on his desk and put his head down. Tony travelled independently throughout most of the school building and on the playground. When time was of the essence, he often chose to walk with another student. His movements were awkward and not as coordinated as those of his sighted classmates. In the classroom he experienced difficulty maneuvering amongst the children and furniture so was frequently taken by the hand and guided to the area of the classroom where he needed to be.

Tony's interaction with his classmates varied significantly from the classroom to the playground. In the classroom he was actively

involved in the same activities as the children with whom he sat or those in the group to which he happened to be assigned. Tony was a proficient conversationalist and enjoyed both formal and informal class discussion. In between formal learning activities there were many opportunities for interaction among the children and Tony was always involved. He appeared to be pleasant, friendly and out-going in his interaction with both adults and children.

In the schoolyard Tony usually played with girls from other classes, both at the same grade level and lower. The activity in which he seemed to participate most frequently centered around the children who gathered on the doorsteps. They played "pretend games" which had a common theme--Tony was the character to be feared or avoided (e.g. the monster, the dog, the queen bee) and the girls were the ones to be chased or frightened. Tony played a leadership role in these pretend games, outlining the roles of various people and the events to be dramatized. There was one boy in his class, Patrick, who joined Tony in these games from time to time. Now and then, Julie, or girls who had been friends from previous grades, would take Tony by the hand and lead him to another part of the playground where they would talk, walk around, or sometimes Tony would seem to be demonstrating his version of dancing for them.

Tony was seldom alone on the playground. He would reach out and grab a child passing by, initiate a conversation, and if he/she were receptive, continue along with them. Children in his class rarely sought him out on the playground. In fact, they often avoided him by running away from him or silently passing him in the corridor as the

children exited for recess or noon hour. When it was time to line up to enter the school, Tony was a lively participant in line up activities, chatting, joking, pushing and shoving. Unlike most of his classmates, Tony was known by name by every teacher and most of the 700 in this school. As the children filed to their classroom while entering the school or when going to the specialist classrooms (e.g. French, music, physical education) both adults and students regularly greeted Tony by name.

#### Sites IV and V

Two of the visually impaired students in the random sample of partially sighted children were enrolled in the same urban school but in separate classes at different grade levels. Observation time ran from late October to early December for a total of 6 weeks, three in each classroom. The school in which the site IV and V classrooms were located was a modern facility built at the time when open classrooms were being promoted. However, the open classrooms now had walls erected to divide learning areas into traditional classroom spaces. Rooms were peculiar shapes but spacious and well furnished. A return to a more traditional approach to instruction was evident in other aspects of the school. For example, the principal commented that they were changing their student seating arrangements from large group tables to individual desks in order to "create a sense of personal property."

The school, originally designed to accommodate 600 students, had a declining population with only 360 students enrolled this year. It was divided into three main areas--academic, developmental, and physical education. In the academic section, classes for grades primary to six

and two special resource classes were located. The special classes provided children with learning difficulties an opportunity for more individualized and small group instruction than was available in the regular classrooms. Some children were integrated in the regular classroom for subjects such as physical education or music. The developmental wing housed children with behavioral disorders who were bused from various schools in the area. The physical education section housed a large, well equipped gymnasium with a stage at one end. In addition to these facilities, there was a large library about the size of three classrooms, which housed several thousand titles, offices, student cubicles, and a full time librarian.

Despite the excellent facilities within the school, the playground area located on two sides of the school did not have any playground equipment nor were there specific activities for the children. The area at the back of the school, designated for use by early elementary children, was paved with a steep bank enclosing the school grounds. Along the adjacent side of the school the children played on a partially paved area bordered by a large baseball field where they were also permitted to go.

The Site IV Class. There were 21 students, 11 girls and 10 boys, enrolled in this grade 5 class. The room itself was L-shaped with several nooks and spaces created when walls were erected to divide the original open classroom space, as well as by mobile room dividers which also served as bookcases and had chalkboards on the upper half. On one side of the room the students' desks were located in various sized groups. A well worn chesterfield and chair were located at the far end

of the room. The teacher's desk was located at the corner of the two sections of the room providing a view of all areas in the classroom. Along the wall to the left of the teacher's desk were four computers. Chalkboards, counters and shelves lined sections of the walls throughout all areas of the classroom. These, as well as several tables were piled with papers, books, and learning materials, giving a somewhat cluttered appearance to the room.

On the first day of school in September there were 20 children registered in this classroom. The desks had been arranged in five groups of four desks with students on each side facing those across from them. Seating arrangements were decided upon by the children but initial groups had to be maintained only for the classroom responsibilities assigned to a group each week. Thus, they were able to leave a group at will but could not join another group without permission of those in that particular group. Only one original group, comprised of four boys, was still intact when observation began. During the three weeks at this site only one temporary change occurred. Figure 5 represents the seating arrangement observed during all but two days at this site.

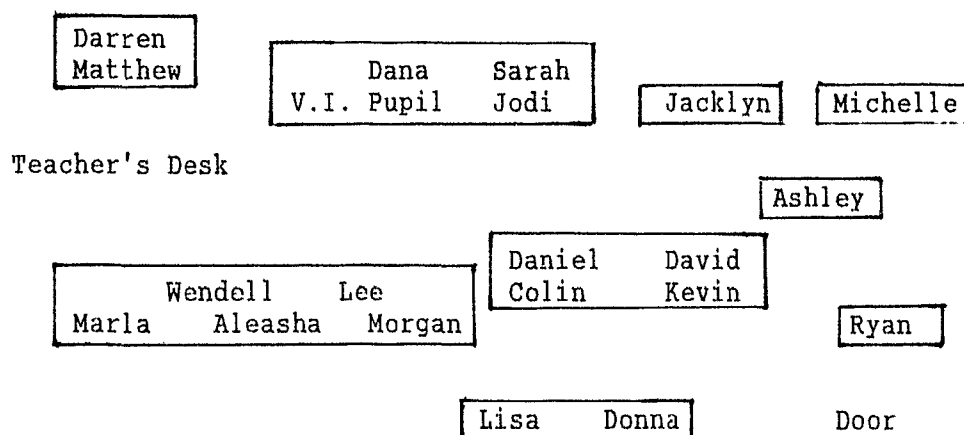


Figure 5: Classroom seating arrangement at Site VI.

Much of the interaction in this classroom centered upon discussions within the groups. About half of the formal work of the class was conducted while pupils were seated in their groups. When children worked in pairs, those sitting in the same group tended to choose their partners from this group. During the period of observation, each of the four children sitting alone made attempts to be admitted to existing groups but all members of the group would not consent so they continued to sit alone. Several of the friendships apparent within the groups in the classroom were also evident when the children were on the playground.

The Playground. Because children went home for lunch they spent only short intervals of time together on the playground - 15 minutes during the morning recess and varying amounts of time toward the end of the noon hour break before they were permitted to enter the school. The areas in which children gathered tended to be associated with the activities in which they were involved. Groups would gather in the upper field to participate in games of soccer, to slide on the ice, and



to take part in activities which tended not to be condoned by the teachers who supervised the playground (wrestling, piggy back fights, rough play, games of chase between boys and girls). On the paved area along the side of the school and the grassed bank up to the fence enclosing the field, many children gathered in small groups to talk, play tag or chase, skip, bounce tennis balls against the side of the school, kick large inflated balls in the air, push and jostle, eat, walk back and forth chatting with a friend, or just "run around." This area was generally quite congested and noisy with frequent disagreements among children.

Some students consistently associated with the same children on the playground but also regularly participated in interaction with varying children. Eight of the children, including the visually impaired pupil, did not have specific children with whom they regularly played. Two of the girls consistently played with girls from other classes, while one child, Michelle was rejected by most of her classmates as well as other children in the school. Figure 6 depicts the playground interaction patterns observed in this class.

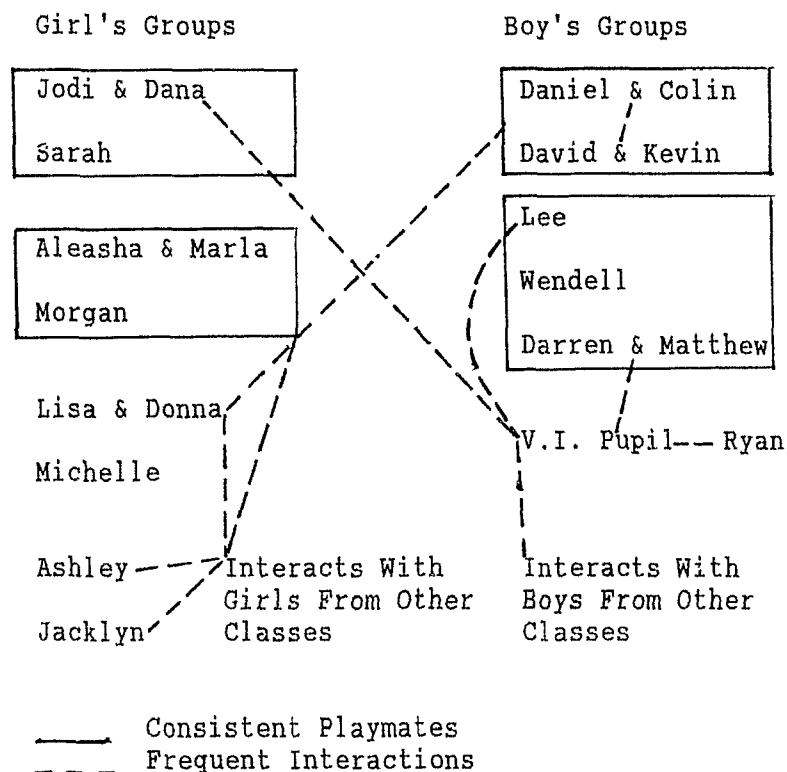


Figure 6: Playground Play Groups for Site IV Students<sup>2</sup>

An activity referred to by the students as "bugging" was a particularly common activity with members of this class. A child would make a comment which was intended to make the respondent annoyed enough to chase the person making the comment. This game was most frequently the basis for interaction between boys and girls. Statements intended to tease a child about her boyfriend or his girlfriend were common.

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<sup>2</sup>Because the students at Sites IV and V returned home for lunch they did not have an extended noontime recess as did those students at the other sites. To determine the play group patterns at these two final sites, observations and recordings of play groups and activities were made once during the morning recess and once five minutes before the noon time recess ended. As at the other sites, these observations were compared to the information given by the students during their interviews.

"Bugging" could be a good-natured game enjoyed among friends with much laughter and playfulness as well as one centered upon children who were mocked or tormented by the majority of children on the playground. There was considerable interest in boy-girl relationships among members of this class.

The School Day. Although the official school day began at 9:00 a.m., children were permitted to enter the school at 8:45. Following the singing of O Canada, announcements were made. On Friday there were two additional components to these opening exercises--the children sang the school song and, with an introduction of the Olympic theme song, the principal announced the children from each class who were nominated as "student of the week" and selected the winner from the nominees. A student of the week was one who had been particularly kind or helpful to her/his teachers and classmates during the week. Every teacher nominated one student and the principal drew a name from those presented.

In the Site IV classroom the weekly schedule was written on bristol board and displayed below the front chalkboard. Language arts, science and mathematics were usually held in the morning while social studies and health were in the afternoon. The children had two classes of music, two classes of physical education, and five 20 minute classes of French each week. As well, one morning each week they went to one of the primary classes to participate in reading activities with the younger pupils. This activity was known as "shared reading" and each student was assigned a partner for the year.

Scheduled during the afternoons were two gym classes, one library class, and a double period of art each week. The classroom schedule acted only as a guide and activities often varied or were changed from the posted format. The children had a 15 minute mid-morning recess and were dismissed at 12:00 p.m. to return home for lunch. The playground was supervised from 1:15 until the children were permitted to enter the school at 1:30. Afternoon classes were held until 3:30 p.m.

The Learning Environment. A variety of instructional methods were employed in this classroom--lecture, self-directed discovery, teacher-student conferencing, and full class and small group discussions. There were four computers used daily by some of the students for writing assignments, experimentation with graphics, and/or game playing. All children followed the same program and remedial or individualized instruction were uncommon, although certain children were not expected to perform at grade level. The children frequently worked in pairs or in groups at their tables but tasks were most often to be completed by each individual. However, there was a class rule that a student must first seek the assistance of a classmate before requesting help from the teacher. Consistent adherence to this rule was not observed and it was a particularly difficult situation for children who were not sitting with a group.

There was a relative amount of freedom for students in this classroom. They could chew gum if they did it "without chomping." If they wished to go to the washroom they asked a peer and took a tag marked either "boy" or "girl" from the bulletin board to ensure there was never more than one boy or girl from this class in the washroom.

Weekly responsibilities such as taking canteen orders, cleaning and feeding the guinea pigs, and ensuring student notebooks for each subject were in their appropriate piles on the counter, rotated among the groups originally established in September. There was an air of constant activity in this class. Children were expected to be respectful and cooperative with both their peers and the teacher; to listen when others were speaking, especially the teacher; and to "be responsible for themselves." A class "inconsiderate chart" posted behind the teacher's desk, was sometimes used to record incidents when the children did not comply.

Jamie, the Visually Impaired Student. Jamie, the visually impaired student at Site IV, was the youngest of three children. His mother had a son during her first marriage but he now lived with her second husband from whom she was divorced. She and her second ex-husband had two children, Jamie and his sister Claire, who was two years older. Jamie, his sister and their mother lived together in a townhouse in the suburbs. His mother worked full-time. Jamie frequently spent weekends with his father, a professional who lived in another part of the city. Jamie was beginning his third year at this school after completing his first three years of schooling at a different school.

Although Jamie's mother noticed a left exophoria or turning in of the eye when Jamie was only a few weeks old, ophthalmologists assured her this was a pseudostrabismus due to epicanthic folds and found nothing abnormal during eye examinations. Again at eighteen months, he was seen by another ophthalmologist because his mother was concerned by the frequency with which he collided with objects in his environment.

Finally, at three and a half years of age Jamie was taken to the children's hospital for routine hearing and vision screening. A visual impairment was noted and when checked by the staff ophthalmologist revealed bilateral optic atrophy. This is a condition in which there is degeneration of optic nerve tissue carrying messages from the retina to the brain having varying effects, such as reduced visual acuity, defective colour vision, and difficulty with night vision (Winzer, et al., 1987). At the request of his parents, Jamie was seen by several other local ophthalmologists and taken to Toronto for additional testing. The diagnosis of optic atrophy was confirmed by all and Jamie's visual acuity reported to be in the 20/200 range, that is, he was considered "legally blind."

Jamie's mother became actively involved with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind parent group. Staff from the Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired assisted her with programming suggestions to accommodate Jamie's impairment. Although his developmental milestones had always been slightly delayed in comparison to those of his older brother and sister, Jamie's development was always within ranges expected for sighted children. At age five he entered the primary program at his neighborhood school. During the first few years of schooling he experienced difficulty with reading. Weekly instruction by the itinerant teacher for the visually impaired and the school resource teacher were initiated. After several years at this school, Jamie's mother relocated and he was enrolled at the Site IV school.

Physically, Jamie did not appear to be visually impaired. In fact, one of the specialist teachers in the school taught him for

several years before she inadvertently learned he was visually impaired. The specialist teachers were not involved in the annual planning meeting for the visually impaired students in their school; hence, she had never been informed of Jamie's impairment. In appearance he was a slim, dark-haired boy with deep blue eyes. When he focused on distant objects his eyes took on a "trance-like" appearance. He made eye contact during discussions although his gaze was slightly off target and the tendency of his left eye to turn out was apparent. Although he did not display mannerisms typically associated with the visually impaired, he exhibited some inappropriate behaviours. In class Jamie regularly had his fingers in or around his mouth and less frequently in his nose.

As a student, Jamie was enthusiastic, attentive, and participated actively in all aspects of the school program. He made effective use of low vision aids and large print materials whenever he was unable to access the information in the format used by his classmates. Although he held printed materials within four to six inches of his face, he was able to complete most assignments as quickly as the majority of children in his class. To obtain information from the board he would walk back and forth between the board and his desk, writing down as much information as he could remember each time. His handwriting was large and often illegible so he often typed his homework or used one of the computers located in the classroom to complete written assignments. Teachers described Jamie as cooperative, capable and friendly.

Jamie routinely initiated interaction with both his teachers and peers. Although he was the only boy in his classroom group, he interacted freely with the girls and worked closely on many assignments

with them, especially Jodi. Members of this group relied heavily on help from one another. On the playground he was able to participate in all the activities with a level of success comparable to that of many of his peers. He did not appear to have a friend he consistently played with but frequently sought out the company of a particular boy from a lower grade. Jamie would walk or run about the playground stopping to chat with or listen to other children and the teachers on duty. Although an assertive boy, Jamie was usually pleasant and cooperative. He responded good-naturedly to teasing but was quick to defend himself when children overstepped their boundaries. Jamie also tended to be somewhat critical of less popular children in the class such as Michelle and Darren. However, unlike many of the more popular children in the class, he did not avoid interaction, either positive or negative, with less popular children.

Although categorized as "legally blind," Jamie had developed excellent visual efficiency. The unknowing observer would usually be unable to detect Jamie as a disabled participant. He played recreational hockey both in his neighborhood and for a community league. An avid sports enthusiast, he participated in many other athletic activities including swimming and orienteering. Jamie did not seem to expect special consideration because he was visually impaired but he did assertively inform people about his visual impairment or when he was uncomfortable or unable to participate in a specific activity because he could not see well enough. He referred to himself as "three-quarters blind."



## Site V

The information relevant to this school site was discussed previously under the heading "Sites IV and V. Site V was a grade 6 class.

The Site V Class. Although the shape of the site V classroom was almost the same as that of site IV, the arrangement of furniture was quite different. In the area nearest the corridor the students' desks were arranged in rows facing the front of the room where the teacher used a student's table designed for two as her desk. Three rows of students sitting side by side were created by having the children place their desks together in pairs. Eight of the 22 children did not sit beside a classmate--the visually impaired pupil who had a double sized student's table at the front of the classroom, a student who spent a major part of the school day in a special class, two students with whom others were reluctant to sit, two students who frequently talked or misbehaved so were too distracting to their original partners and had been separated, and the two who had lost their original disruptive partners.

At the other end of this L-shaped room were several areas where children could work in small groups. There were two student carrels, a small round table, four double student's tables pushed together to accommodate a larger group, a listening station arranged at a circular table between two room dividers, and a computer area, with one computer, on the other side of this. The teacher's main desk, file cabinet, and shelving were enclosed on three sides by walls and a room divider located to the rear of the area where the children were seated.

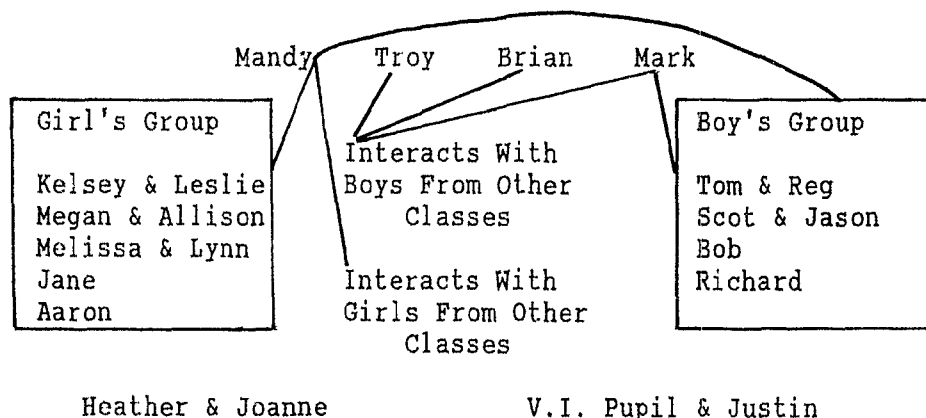
Learning materials and books were arranged in an orderly fashion throughout the room.

There were 22 students, 11 girls and 11 boys, in the site V class. Both on the playground and in the classroom girls generally played with girls and boys with boys. In classes in which the children were permitted to choose where they sat, all the girls sat in one area and the boys in another. Interaction between the two genders was characterized by derogatory remarks or sarcastic comments. The boys in particular, were critical of the girls and could frequently be heard making belittling remarks about their dress or things the girls contributed to class discussions. In fact, there were several boys in this class who routinely ridiculed both girls and less popular boys in the class. Six of the girls would respond to such ridicule by returning similar comments while the others tended to ignore or retreat from these verbal assaults. Several of these six girls were, to a lesser degree, critical of less popular girls in the class. During the period of observation the visually impaired student was never the recipient of such comments, yet had behaviours which would have typically been the target of ridicule for other boys and girls in this class.

For the most part, students were seated in compatible pairs, that is, with a classmate with whom they appeared to get along. If a pair were able to work without excessive talking or indulging in other disruptive behaviour, they continued to sit together. Charles, the visually impaired student, sat alone at the front of the far left row of seats. He had a double-sized desk to provide space for the over-sized large print books which he required. Interaction was much more frequent

for those in pairs than for those who were sitting alone since talking was discouraged during many parts of the school day and attempts to communicate with a classmate were more obvious if she/he were not in proximity. When the children had an opportunity to work in small groups of their choice, less popular children were excluded and were most often seen in an area by themselves. When children were required to work in groups the visually impaired student seemed to welcome the opportunity to work with any of the three less popular children of the same gender, in fact, considered one of the less popular children as a "best friend."

**The Playground.** Although most of the children in this class interacted with a variety of students on the playground, friendships or consistent play groups were evident. Many of the students played with the child they sat with in class and two or three children from the other class at this grade level. Those who did not sit with another student in the class tended to interact with children from other classes when on the playground. Figure 7 depicts the playground interaction patterns observed among members of this class.



Some Interaction With

Figure 7: Playground Interaction Patterns at Site V

The Learning Environment. Although the majority of children sat in pairs, most work in this classroom was to be completed by the individual, without assistance or collaboration from others. Designated curricula for this grade level were followed by all students but some individualized or remedial assistance was provided as part of the follow-up to lessons, particularly in mathematics. As well, one student went to the resource room for the mornings and three others went once each week for a half an hour. For mathematics the children were divided into three groups with two in the top group and approximately equal numbers in the middle and bottom groups. Emphasis in this classroom was on academic performance and children who demonstrated superior and inferior levels of performance were publicly identified through praise and reprimand.

Lecture and other teacher directed activities were the main instructional methods used in this classroom. Group discussions were primarily associated with language arts or health activities and tended to be dominated by the teacher. The children were frequently permitted to work in areas other than at their desks but their behaviour was monitored closely. This was a relatively structured classroom environment where the teacher was in charge. The students were escorted in single file to and from other classes (e.g. physical education, music) and when entering and leaving the school at recess, noon, and at the end of the day. Talking in the line-up was not permitted but was a frequent occurrence.

Charles, the Visually Impaired Student. Charles, the visually impaired student at Site V, was the elder of two children having a

sister who was two years younger than he. He lived with his parents in a suburban area about one mile from the school. Charles' father was employed as a semi-professional while his mother was a full-time homemaker. She volunteered two mornings a week at the Site V school. This was Charles' sixth year at this school.

Charles was born prematurely and developed retrolental fibroplasia or retinopathy of prematurity caused by extended exposure to oxygen used in lifesaving procedures for premature babies (Faye, 1984). The retina in the left eye was damaged extensively causing total blindness in that eye. The retina in the right eye was not as severely damaged and Charles, although diagnosed as severely visually impaired, developed excellent visually efficiency using the vision in that eye. At four, when he was able to respond to formal visual acuity assessments, his visual acuity was reported to be approximately 20/400.

At age three, Charles was enrolled in a nursery school program several mornings a week. He was described as shy, somewhat withdrawn, and developmentally delayed in several areas (i.e. speech, motor development and social maturity). Although his mother reported some difficulties managing his behaviour in the home, this did not present a problem at the nursery school. Charles received speech therapy and some individualized instruction at the preschool during the next two years. As well, a consultant from the Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired provided his mother with assistance in teaching a visually impaired preschooler. Following formal assessment at age five, Charles was reported to be functioning at the three to four year old level in most

areas of development. Much of this delay was reported to be related to his parent's tendency to be over-protective.

The staff at the nursery school recommended Charles remain in their program an additional year. However, his mother was anxious to have him enrolled in the primary class at The School for the Blind. After two years here he was integrated into a grade one class at his local public school. Daily individualized instruction from the itinerant teacher for the visually impaired was provided as well as consultative services for his classroom teacher. Here, Charles progressed with his sighted peers through his elementary school years.

Being about a year older than the majority of his classmates, Charles was taller than the other boys in his class. In appearance he was noticeably different. He walked with a wide based stance and awkward gait described by his peers as "walking like a duck." When he ran he tended to be up on his toes and moved in jerky movements as he accommodated his limited visual range. His left eye was clouded and turned in while he had noticeable nystagmus in the right eye. Charles did not usually make eye contact when he was speaking but tended to hold his head to the left side and downward. When he sat at his desk he tended to slump and hang his head or rest his head on his desk. Two mannerisms associated with visually impaired children were noted. Charles flicked his fingers and would bring his hand within a few inches of his face and stare as he flicked his fingers or manipulated them in various ways. Despite his distinctive appearance and somewhat unusual behaviors, Charles did not appear to be teased or tormented by his

peers. Given the harassment routinely experienced by classmates such as Troy and Brian, this seemed atypical.

Because Charles was driven to and from school, unsupervised interaction with other children was generally limited to the 15 minute morning recess. He spent his time on the playground almost exclusively with his "best friend" Justin. When Justin was not present, which was about 50 percent of the time, Charles would walk from one group of students to another or would pace back and forth along the curb which ran the width of one side of the school. Although he would stand on the fringe of a group of his classmates, he would rarely initiate conversation and would move on after listening for a few minutes. In class Charles was generally a quiet student. Justin was assigned to another class during the mornings so Charles tended to be ignored by the other students unless he initiated interaction with them. For activities requiring a partner, Charles would ask Brian, a boy rejected by most of the other children, to work with him. However, he tended to be critical of Brian's work habits or hygiene and would comment on these when he was certain the teacher was within hearing range.

When Charles was working in proximity to his classmates, for example, when his math group gathered around the large table, he would often sit away from the main group of children. From time to time he would make a comment, usually witty in nature, about the topic of their discussion. The boys would occasionally ask him a question but, in general, Charles seemed somewhat apart from the rather boisterous, playful antics of his classmates. When Justin was in the classroom Charles was more animated in his interaction with peers. Justin had a

knack for conversation, and would initiate discussion with Charles or two of the more popular girls who sat adjacent to Charles, whenever the opportunity presented itself.

As a student Charles was well behaved and capable in most subject areas but tended to be dependent on the teacher. He routinely sought out the teacher for assistance or, when experiencing difficulty, would sit patiently waiting for the teacher to come to him. When he became frustrated or could not follow the lesson because he did not have access to the information on the board, Charles would put his head down and appear very morose. He did not use other available strategies, such as using his magnifier or walking up to the board to access information. When working on reading or writing assignments Charles held his face within one to two inches of his desk. As well, he required almost twice as much time as his peers to complete such activities; hence, he always had these tasks to finish at home in addition to any work assigned specifically for homework. In general, he did not participate actively in group activities but sat quietly, appearing to be listening to the discussion. When he did contribute, he spoke with immature intonation and in speech which his teacher referred to as "mumbling." Despite this, Charles appeared to have a good sense of humour and his witty remarks were sometimes beyond the comprehension of his classmates.

#### Conclusions

At each site organizational aspects of the context could be seen to influence the interaction of children. For example, at Site II, all children stayed at school for the entire noontime recess, while at Site



IV-V all the children were dismissed at noon to return home for lunch. They would gather back on the school grounds at various times prior to the reopening of the school for the afternoon classes. Hence, children at this site spent much less time together on the playground than did those at the other three sites. Even in the same school, there was a difference in the social environment and, hence, opportunities for interaction of various types.

The period of the school year in which the observations were being completed also appeared to be significant. Those sites observed in May and June, after students had been in the same class for nearly a full school year, appeared to have more exclusive groups than those observed in the early fall when students had been together for only a few months.

The interaction of the visually impaired students, as might be expected, was also influenced by the specific structure of their context. For example, Charles, who was driven to and from school had fewer opportunities to interact with his peers than did Jamie who attended the same school but walked independently to and from school twice each day. Even in the same school, the social environment created by teachers in their assigned classrooms could be seen to influence both the opportunity and quality of interaction among students. In the next chapter the focus will be on the quality and quantity of interaction experienced by visually impaired students in the context of the pupil culture.

## CHAPTER 5

### Pupil Culture and the Interaction and Acceptance of Integrated Visually Impaired Students

#### Introduction

This chapter examines the opportunities available for and limitations upon interaction between visually impaired children and their sighted peers in the context of the pupil culture in elementary schools (subpurpose 1, page 6). The chapter first considers some basic assumptions of pupil culture related to friendship and peer interaction with respect to the interaction and acceptance of integrated visually impaired students. Next there is a general description of the context of pupil interaction, the role of time and some examples of common types of interactions. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the association between the meanings constructed around the basic assumptions of pupil culture and the opportunities for and limitations on interaction of the visually impaired students.

This chapter serves to set the stage for examining the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students. Pupil culture, the context into which visually impaired students are integrated, can be seen to structure and shape both the quality and quantity of social interaction experienced by integrated visually impaired students. Within elementary schools, interaction is influenced by the nature of the context. School culture in general, and pupil culture specifically, appear to affect this process of interaction. The integration of visually impaired students creates new situations within

the school culture and different ways of interacting for both educators and students. In conjunction with other contextual factors, the integration of visually impaired students is not always compatible with traditional practices and procedures. Therefore, the importance of developing an understanding of both the explicit and implicit aspects of pupil culture are evident as the limitations visual impairment imposes upon interaction within this context become apparent.

As mentioned previously, all participants in this study were assigned pseudonyms. When excerpts from interviews are presented, "I:" indicates a question or response of the interviewer while "R:" is one by the respondent or interviewee. The use of two or three periods, typed without spaces between them and located within the conversational excerpts from interviews, indicates a respondent's pause of two to five seconds. When a longer pause occurred, the word "pause," enclosed in brackets, is included in the passage.

#### Pupil Culture and Peer Interaction

In this study interaction is considered to be a function of the complex interrelationships among the visually impaired child, her/his peer group, and the school and classroom environments created by teachers and administrators (see chapters 1 and 3). How students interpret one another, negotiate shared meanings and construct their social reality are inextricably linked to the process of interaction.

Time, as a "fundamental organizing principle of the everyday life world of schooling," is contended to be frequently overlooked as a phenomenal aspect of school (Ball et al, 1984, p.57). These researchers

noted the critical role time played in the type and range of curriculum covered in a given classroom. In the five classrooms in this study, time tended to condition and pattern the types of interaction in which children participated or eschewed. In conjunction with other structuring factors such as the proximity of the teacher, the negotiated rules of the specific class being attended, or the schedule for a particular day, time created opportunities for and limitations upon pupil interaction. At one site the 30 minutes required at the beginning of each day to collect milk and lunch money provided an opportunity for interaction among children sitting in proximity to one another. At another site the 15-minute morning recess was the only time the entire school population was gathered simultaneously on the playground. This dimension of time intersected with restrictions of "biological time" such as attention spans or the slow reading and writing rates of the visually impaired students. Three of these students required approximately twice as much time to complete assigned tasks as did their classmates. One child was able to finish academic tasks in a similar or shorter time frame than his peers. The fifth visually impaired pupil routinely did not complete assignments regardless of the time available to do so.

The vast amount of time available to children to interact with their peers is remarkable. Opportunities for social exchange exist when children gather in the school yard waiting to be admitted to the school; as they enter and remove outside clothing; as they await the singing of O Canada and the morning announcements; as the teacher attends to "housekeeping tasks" such as collecting milk or lunch money; as they get

out and put away books and other learning materials before and after each lesson; as part of class discussions; as they work on an assigned task in small groups; as they file in line-ups to and from the bathroom, the water fountain or other classrooms; at morning and noon hour recesses; as they eat their lunch; as they gather their things at the end of the day; and as they leave the school to walk or travel by bus to their homes. Although the total time available for interaction is determined to some extent by the rules regulating when interaction is permitted, as well as the degree to which these rules are enforced in specific classrooms and schools, it appears that the major part of the school day is conducive to social exchange among children. Even during those times when interaction is prohibited, for example, when students are instructed to work independently or when the teacher is talking, non-verbal exchanges occur.

Time also shaped the relationships and hence the interactions of children in two crucial respects. Firstly, the stage in the school year seemed to have some relevance to the composition of play groups. In the two schools observed during the final months of the academic year, most children played exclusively with classmates, that is, those from their classroom. Less established play group or friendship patterns were evident in the sites observed during the first third of the school year. Secondly, time was relevant to the types of activities in which children participated, as well as the types of relationships created. Peer interaction at the grade one level differed from that at the grade six level in relation to the duration of friendships, boy-girl relationships, and the types of activities in which they participated.

Children participated in a variety of types of interactions with their peers. Classroom interactions were characterized by quiet talk or use of "inside voices" and limited movement from place to place. On the playground interactions more often involved some form of physical contact such as jostling, pushing, holding hands, or huddling in small exclusive groups. Children "on the run" from one area to another appeared to be a hallmark of playground behaviour. Two of the five visually impaired students, Jamie and Lisa, were able to move confidently at a comparable pace to their peers on the playground. Following is an excerpt from participant observation notes recording a ten minute playground scene involving Jamie, one of the visually impaired students in the study:

Mrs. Jeans [the classroom teacher] dismisses the children and heads for the office. Jamie returns his science equipment to the table and is one of the last ones leaving. Ryan [a classmate] is in the hall eating chips and Jamie asks if they are ketchup flavored. Ryan confirms this and Jamie asks, "Give me a couple, please?" Ryan says, "No!" and heads for the door. Jamie, who is putting on his coat, calls, "Oh, Ryanie, Ryanie, please," in a half teasing half serious voice, but Ryan is gone. As Jamie passes me he says, "Come on," and runs on a little ahead talking to me until he reaches the upper playground area. He watches a boy who is bouncing a ball against the wall. Lee [a classmate], who isn't feeling well today, goes to stand by Jamie and three other boys on the flat rock. Jamie talks to him a minute then leaves and paces near another group. As he walks, a boy from one of the special classes who is bigger than most students on the playground and who has routinely been observed initiating aggressive actions toward other children, attacks Jamie from behind and puts a headlock on him. Jamie wiggles out of it and the bully continues on his way pushing Morgan's apple in her face, chasing and kicking her several times. Morgan fights back and then is saved by the teacher on duty who finally notices what the bully is up to and warns him to keep "your hands and feet to yourself." Jamie goes to sit by Lee for a minute then sees Jodi, Dana, and Sarah and runs to join them. He just seems to tease from a two foot distance and circles them as they move about. He and Dana strike up a playful karate kick contest and good-naturedly swing at one another rarely making physical contact. Jodi and Sarah head for the upper field and Jamie starts to follow

them but the bell rings. As he heads back to the school he meets two girls from another class and, as he passes, tells them they are ugly and makes other comments about their appearance using a teasing voice. The girls tend to ignore him and exchange looks of disgust. As Jamie continues on his way his attention is taken by Jacob's [a good friend from a lower grade] ball which is rolling near his feet and he rescues it for him. They go to the line together bumping shoulders and chatting as they enter the school. [Site IV, observation notes]

On the playground interactions varied in relation to the activity in which the child was involved. When participating in pretend play, actors took on the role and personalities of their favorite characters, e.g. Ghost Busters and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, or the mother, father or "kid," if playing house.

Lisa [visually impaired student] gets off the round-about and chases Arthur who seems to have something she wants. Then she joins Vicki and her cousin under an apple tree to play with "My Little Ponies." They play pretend rescue and adventure games typical of the T.V. series using the same names and themes, flying about to escape bad characters and rescuing others. Suddenly Lisa leaves and goes off by herself to the hopscotch game painted on the paved area and practices throwing a rock to the different numbers. She stays here by herself for about five minutes and then returns to the other two girls. She stands near them and then joins them. She is asked to guard the ponies while the other two apparently go in search of a third girl. On two occasions Lisa is assigned the task of guarding the ponies while the others leave for a short time. While the three girls leave the apple tree area in search of the "diamond of light," Lisa remains behind with one of the ponies and moves it about in pretend play talking to herself as she stays near the tree. Then the four girls head along the treed edge of the playground behind the school. As they run along, an older boy, about grade 4, pushes Vicki and then Lisa. Both ignore this action and continue on their way out of sight momentarily among the trees. They stay in this area for the next five minutes until the bell rings and they race to line up to enter the school. [Site II, observation notes]

Within the school as well, activities tended to influence the nature of interaction among children.

When the children return to class they line up for the washroom and the fountain. I stand near the fountain to hear the conversations among the children. Lisa [whose assigned job this week is to keep the water in the fountain continuously running]

offers to help some of the girls hold their hair back so it won't get wet. "Here, I'll hold your hair back," she says to Nicole and then comments, "You look cute like that," holding her face down by the water spout about one inch from Nicole's. Nicole smiles, finishes her drink and heads for the classroom. When David starts his drink, she turns off the fountain and he says, "Come on Lisa, I'll tell." As Lisa is finishing her drink, two older girls come along and one says, "Give me a drink, Lisa." Lisa tells them she will when she finishes.

The first class of the day is music. As we are leaving the room Lisa says she doesn't want to go and remains at her desk. Mrs. Briggs tells her she'll enjoy it when she gets there and leaves with the class without another word. As we are almost turning the corner at the far end of the hall I notice Lisa running to catch up and join the class. Mr. Jones is late. The children are quite restless and he is not particularly pleased with their performance. He keeps telling them to look at him when they perform at the concert and in class. Lisa is sitting at the far side of the room and does not pay attention except when they are singing. At other times she talks to Thomas who sits behind her or wiggles and squirms around in her desk and explores the materials on the counter which runs parallel with the row of desks. Mr. Jones speaks to her and asks her to pay closer attention.

When we return to class the children are asked to glue their weather pictures in their science notebooks and to print the names of the kinds of weather beneath each picture. These are printed on the board at the front of the room. Mrs. Briggs helps Lisa move her desk to the front to copy the four words which Lisa does quickly. Mrs. Brigg's rhythmic "shh-shh" is heard above the noise and chatter. [Site II, observation notes]

During some activities children were permitted to move about the classroom and could more easily assemble with their "best friends" than during formal lessons in which independent work was required. The formalities of social exchanges such as turn taking, using manners and sharing were also generally monitored and commented upon by teachers within the confines of the classroom. On the playground this was rarely the case.



### Cultural Assumptions Related to Friendship and Peer Interaction

A pupil culture, most evident on the playground, is believed to develop as a defensive resource for pupils against teachers and other adults (Davies, 1982; Pollard, 1985; Woods, 1979). The pupil culture addresses problems of internal integration such as group boundaries. Insiders in a group get special treatment and a sense of identity, while outsiders are "more likely to be stereotyped and treated with indifference or hostility" (Schein, 1985, p. 71). Davies (1982) contends that the culture of childhood is a reflection of the distinct manner in which children interpret the world, not an immature adult version, but one which is embedded in the different ways children perceive their environment. Intrinsically associated with adult culture, the culture of childhood is a distinct and separate culture in its own right (Speier, 1976). This, then, is the kind of context into which visually impaired children are integrated. This is the culture into which the changes intrinsic to integration of the visually impaired have to be accommodated.

As defined by Schein (1985), the basic assumptions of an organization are the "essence" of culture. These are the underlying and unconscious beliefs which have come to be taken for granted as intrinsic to the organization and therefore, guide the behaviour of its members. Schein contends a culture evolves wherever groups exist, including schools and classrooms. What does the data gathered say to us about pupil culture and the assumptions underpinning it?

Through an analysis of data (both observations and interviews) related to friendships and peer interaction within pupil culture, 11 pupil assumptions relevant to the acceptance and interaction of children were identified. These assumptions, as with any cultural assumptions are implicit in the pupils' actions and words; they are not explicit "rules" the children state.

For integrated visually impaired students, some of these assumptions created insurmountable barriers to acceptance and interaction. Other assumptions had limited effect upon specific visually impaired students in given situations. From a general perspective, the integration of visually impaired students could be seen to challenge and/or be incompatible with assumptions of pupil culture relevant to acceptance and interaction. In the next two chapters, these challenges and incompatibilities are made more visible.

To enhance the clarity of presentation, the general assumptions are first outlined and then the relevance of these assumptions for visually impaired students are considered.

#### Pupil Assumption 1 (Associate with "Best Friends")

In school, children ought to play and associate with their "best friends."

"Best friends" are nice to one another, always play together, don't leave to join other groups, hang around together and are fun to be with. There is a definite distinction between "best" and "okay" friends. "Okay friends" only play with each other now and then, don't usually hang around together, are not as nice to one another as are "best friends," and sometimes argue with or "act snobby" toward one another.

"Okay friends" are the ones a child chooses to associate with when there's no one else with whom to play. Children who are "not friends" hurt other children, tease or are mean to others, don't hang around with one another, talk back or won't talk at all to another child and often won't give permission for other children to play with them. A second group of children classified as "not friends" are children whom others don't know very well. The following excerpts illustrate the perceptions of friends as reported by school children. They were responding to the question, "What's the difference between 'best friends' and 'okay friends'?"

[Excerpt 1]

R: Well, my best friends are a little bit better than my okay friends. Well, they are, they do nice pictures for me and Sylvie, she's gonna be an artist. She made a picture for me. And she painted it.

I: She painted it. Tell me about these kids that are just "okay friends."

R: Well, they're so-so, like best, best friends. But, they're, just kinda not the type that I really want to be best friends.

I: Now, tell me about this group that are not your friends.

R: Cuz, when they chase me they choke me and they jump on me.

I: Anything else about those "not friends" you can tell me?

R: They're too silly and funny. Alan's a little bit gross.

I: What types of things are gross for kids your age? Can you give me an example?

R: He plays with his food, like ah, sometimes, it's not very nice because, ah, yesterday he was sliding his milk right over to me and I got it on my clothes. And he, he, hit Michael's milk and got it on his clothes. [Site II, Nicole]

[Excerpt 2]

R: Um, "best friends" they play with you almost all the time. And.. "okay friends," they play with you sometimes and sometimes they don't.

I: What about "not friends"?

R: Um, they don't play with ya. [Site III, Mark]

[Excerpt 3]

R: Well, my "okay friends" I don't really play with that much, like, and some "okay friends" I do play with but they're not really my "best friends."

I: Tell me about the kids who are not your friends.

doesn't pick on me, but when he does on my brother it eats me up inside.

I: Umhmm. Okay. And Michelle?

R: Um, I don't know. She, not a lot of people like her. I don't know why. [Site IV, Lee]

Children with a "best friend" do what he/she is doing. Those without a "best friend" move about the playground in search of a group or person with whom to play or a suitable activity in which to participate. In class a "best friend" is chosen for a partner whenever possible. If a student doesn't have a "best friend" a partner must be chosen from the children who are "left over" after the "best friends" have paired off. Thus, "best friends" routinely seek each other's companionship.

The above-mentioned aspects of friendship were common across all sites. One notable difference within sites was the number of "best friends" a child might have. In the early elementary years children tended to have more playmates they considered "best friends" than did those in their late elementary school years. By the sixth grade children tended to be devoted to one best friend, although in conjunction with this best friend, participated in a variety of group activities on the playground.

Pupil Assumption 1 and Integrated Visually Impaired Students. Only one of the five visually impaired students observed had a mutual "best friend," that is, someone whom he spontaneously identified as a "best friend" and was in turn, considered by this classmate to be his "best friend." One other visually impaired child was named in an interview with a classmate as a "best friend" but interaction both on the playground and in the classroom was infrequent. In the first case,

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I: Tell me about the kids who are not your friends.

R: Well, Colin I don't know that well, so, and I never play with Colin. Patrick, he's ah, like he's ah, when he, somebody was chasing him and he came up behind me and ah, scratched me and hurt my neck so I don't really play with him anymore. And Jason, I don't know him that well.

I: Umhmm. You told me you didn't know Margie that well. How about Trevor?

R: Well, he, as I said, he was pushing in the line and everything like that. And when I was coming back from French ahead I had a sore leg and he said, "Hurry up, Lita, don't you know how to walk?" So that's why I don't like Trevor so much, because he talks back to you and he says things that he shouldn't say. [Site III, Lita]

[Excerpt 4]

R: Well, "best friends," they always hang around, maybe now and then they go off with someone else, I'm not sure, in a fight. And then you're "okay friends," they always hang around with someone else. And ah..they ah, when they call you and all that they say, "I'll play with you," the "okay friends," and they won't show up. Your best ones they'll call up and say, "I'll play with you," and they will call, we will [emphasizes "will"] be playing.

I: Can you tell me about the children in your class who are not your friends?

R: Jacklyn, she's a snot. She bugs us, follows us, and all that. She copies everything. Now, Darren and Matthew?

I: Umhmm.

R: They're, they torture us. They ah, they're a pain. They won't keep quiet when someone's doing a test. Um..Michelle and Ryan, they're just not, like each other.

I: They're just what?

R: Like each other. They don't go with each other and all that. Michelle, lies a lot. She says that she can't refuse to do it with a boy.

I: Umhmm.

R: Ryan..he's a pain in the butt. [Site IV, Jodi]

[Excerpt 5]

R: Um, I..I talk to these guys a lot more.

I: Your "very best friends" you talk to more.

R: Yes.

I: What other differences?

R: Um..ah..well, these guys I've never really got mad at but some of these people ["okay friends"] I've lost my temper with.

I: Okay, so you don't really get mad at your "best friends."

I: Tell me about this group of kids who are not your friends.

R: Darren, I got in a fight with him cuz he was calling me names and everything. And I, I've tried my hardest to be so nice to him. And he started to do that and I just lost my temper.

Matthew, he, I don't know about Matthew. And Wendell, he's changed. Like before he'd, he..he picks on my brother a lot. He

doesn't pick on me, but when he does on my brother it eats me up inside.

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Charles, the visually impaired child, and his "best friend" were both considered by their classmates to be outside the group.

I: Who are the kids in your class that the other kids do not seem to play with very often?

R: ...Troy..it's hard to say..Joanne, I'm not sure about that. Well, Charles [visually impaired pupil] and Justin just..they don't..play with anybody they just, play themselves. Play themselves and go somewhere. And ah, Brian, but he tags along everywhere. So..that's about it.

I: Okay. Tell me about them. Why don't kids seem to play with them very often?

R: ...I'm not sure about this. Oh, I don't, oh, yeah, I don't know. These two [Charles and Justin] just play, I don't know why they don't..but they just go somewhere and...

I: So Charles and Justin just go somewhere else.

R: [nods head to indicate yes] [Site V, Mark]

Although four of the five visually impaired students did not appear to have "best friends" in school they did have "okay friends" and were generally considered by their classmates as an "okay friend," that is, one with whom a child chooses to associate when "best friends" are not available. Three of the five visually impaired children could not meet one of the frequently mentioned criteria for "best friends," that is, "best friends" do the same things. Ball games, tag, and games of chase were popular activities at all sites. For Charles, Peter and Tony, levels of performance comparable to their classmates were impossible in such activities.

Fine (1981) outlines three critical ways in which friendship, or having "best friends" contributes to the socialization of the preadolescent. They are:

- [1] the friendship bond creates a setting in which impression-management skills are mastered and in which inadequate displays will typically be ignored or corrected without severe loss of face. Outside of friendship bonds, preadolescent<sup>+</sup> have a critical eye for children's behaviors that are managed inadequately.
- [2] Information transmitted through friendship ties varies in the extent of its diffusion. Some information is highly localized,



perhaps shared only by members of a dyad, while other information is widely known among preadolescents or Americans in general. These dyads and groups not only create a private culture . . . but also transmit cultural information relevant to the problems of growing up. This is of particular significance to socialization, in that it provides the child with a stock of knowledge and repertoire of behavior useful for encounters with other peers. [3] The third way in which friendship contributes to the socialization of the preadolescent is through its effects on self-image. Friendship is a crucial factor in the development of the social self . . . . The friendship relation provides the nexus in which this development of self and role flexibility can occur. The child who has best acquired the ability to take the role of the other will be most flexible in role performance . . . . this individual will be popular, perhaps because he or she is socially rewarding. (p. 41-48)

Thus, the apparent tendency of integrated visually impaired children not to have "best friends" creates a situation in which the quality and content of peer interaction is markedly reduced.

#### Pupil Assumption 2 (Do What Others Do)

To be part of a group a child ought to be able to do what the other children are doing.

There are two components involved in being able to do what the other children are doing. Firstly, a child must be able to participate actively and independently in the group activity (e.g. skipping, playing marbles, soccer or baseball). Secondly, a certain level of competence is required. Students who do not meet this criteria will be ostracized or, in unusual circumstances, patronized. Following is an excerpt from an interview with a classmate who was on the fringe of most group activity on the playground:

Oh, well, I wanna play baseball but I can't play it, because I don't know it too good and don't know how to play it and, ah, I don't usually get involved, like, with the things that other girls and boys do, like, ah, ah, ah, Frisbees, like throwing the Frisbee. Sometimes I try to catch it but, we, like it hit my back with it sometimes. And Karen [a classmate] got hit on the head when we were talking, like to each other. And, like, ah,

basketball, I don't like, don't usually get it in. Some of the boys they get carried away and start yelling at you. [Site I, Allison]

#### Pupil Assumption 2 and the Integrated Visually Impaired Students.

For the visually impaired students there were two major aspects to consider in relation to this assumption. First, they had to have sufficient visual efficiency to do the specific task. There were some activities which were inappropriate for visually impaired students (e.g. copying notes from the board, playing dodge ball if totally blind). Second, they had to have a level of skill acceptable to their playmates so as not to detract from the enjoyment of other participants, particularly if there was competition involved. In the classroom, for the most part, the five visually impaired students could do what their classmates were doing. The availability of large print and braille materials, the degree to which the teacher accommodated the child's visual limitations, the reading and writing rates of the visually impaired student, and their competence and motivation to complete the assigned task were frequently observed to affect the degree to which the visually impaired student actively participated. However, few tasks were either inordinately difficult nor technically impossible for the visually impaired student.

On the playground, however, three of the visually impaired students experienced major difficulties participating in the typical activities of their sighted classmates (e.g. tag, chase games and ball games). Each of the three responded to their particular situations in a different way. Tony routinely played with girls from other classes and lower grades who were engrossed in "pretend games" in which he could

competently participate. These games tended to be restricted to a small confined area of the playground and so did not require sophisticated mobility skills. As well, they emphasized verbal communication which was this boy's forte. Peter spent the major part of his recess and noon hour breaks on the swings. Although he interacted with those who happened to take the swing next to him, his frequency of interaction was dramatically lower than that of the majority of his sighted peers. The third visually impaired student, Charles, had a "best friend" so was able to scout the playground for suitable activities in which they might together participate. In general their activities were limited to walking and talking, sliding on the ice or snow, and watching the activities of other groups. As a pair, they interacted infrequently with other children. When his "best friend" was unavailable, Charles paced alone back and forth along the width of the school.

The level of competence was a second aspect of this assumption. Two of the visually impaired children, Jamie and Lisa, were not noticeably less competent on the playground than their peers. That is, they enjoyed and could actively participate in the majority of the activities involving their classmates because they were at a similar skill level. The other three visually impaired students were conspicuous by the mode of their physical movements on the playground. Tony was almost constantly in motion bouncing up and down while Charles had a wide gait with feet toed out. Peter plodded along with a wide gait and at a faltering pace. Their skill levels were far below those of their peers.

In the classroom there were two aspects of competence which were noticeably different among the visually impaired children. Firstly, the rate at which they read and wrote was slower than that of their peers. Three of the children required almost twice the amount of time as their peers to independently complete the tasks assigned. Secondly, the appearance of the written work of four of the children was noticeably different from that of their classmates in size, legibility, and style. In general, it had the appearance of work produced by much younger children. Tony, the braille-using student, produced work which was dissimilar from that of his peers. Therefore, sighted students tended to judge the work of their visually impaired classmate as inferior to that of other students. Furthermore, they were not perceived to be doing the same thing as their classmates; hence, they were frequently viewed as less desirable group members.

#### Pupil Assumption 3 (Gain Group Access)

To be part of a group a child ought to initiate interaction with others in the group to gain access to the group.

Students frequently gather as a group to participate in a variety of activities (e.g. skipping, marbles, play fighting). Those who are not "best friends" with a participant or part of the initial plan to form the group must gain access to the group in specific ways. They may ask the person "who started the game," ask the person "who brought the ball," or ask someone they know in the group to promote their admission to the group among the other participants. In the following excerpts, students are responding to the question, "How should I act if I wanted to join in with the kids when they're playing?"

[Excerpt 1]

R: Ah, just ask them! [Site I, Larry]

[Excerpt 2]

R: Ask them if you can play with them or if they want another girl to play or something like that?

I: Umhmm.

R: Or, but if you just stay shy and then you won't have any friends at all. [Site I, Paula]

[Excerpt 3]

R: Maybe you should just go over and ask them. Cuz one time me and Jane were playing and me and Maggie used to not be friends and then Maggie just came over and asked if she could play with us and we decided, we said yes, and then we just started being friends.

I: Who should I ask?

R: Ummhm, probably just someone that's closest to you maybe. Maybe if you know them and they talked to you before, ask them cause they could help you, and ask their friends if you could play. [Site V, Mandy]

[Excerpt 4]

R: Find out who organized the game and ask them. [Site V, Mark]

Such groups rarely seek members and children who wait to be invited to participate in playground activities are most often left out.

Pupil Assumption 3 and the Integrated Visually Impaired Students. The act of initiating interaction with peers was frequently problematic for all of the visually impaired students observed. Although three of these children seemed to possess particularly good conversational skills and were considered to be extroverts by their teachers, they often appeared awkward and visibly uncomfortable as they attempted to initiate conversation or join groups with classmates. With the exception of Charles, none of these children had a "best friend" but tended to go from group to group on the playground and participate in a specific activity as opposed to consistently interacting with a particular classmate or group of children.

For Tony, the student who was totally blind, initiating interaction presented some unique situations. For example, one day after approximately a month and a half of school, he was asked whom he wanted for a partner for a particular activity. He responded, "I don't know. I don't even know who's in this class." Quiet children, in particular, are almost unknown to the totally blind child in a class. Further investigation of this type of predicament revealed rather startling conclusions. Often on the playground, this boy was not even aware of the names of the children with whom he was playing.

I: And so this year who do you hang around with mostly?

R: Mostly everybody. Like mostly everybody on the steps.

I: Who's that? Who's on the steps?

R: There's usually, I don't know their names, I don't ask their names but there's usually...there's mostly girls on the step. But there's sometimes boys. [Site III, Tony]

Although he tended to participate in a particular activity throughout the duration of the recess or much of the noon hour, other children tended to more frequently change activities and hence, participants in his activity were not constant. When asked how he chose a playmate, Tony replied, "I don't. They choose." Therefore, in the confusion and activity involving over 350 students on a playground, this boy could not seek out desirable playmates but was restricted to those children who chose to initiate contact with him. Children with severe vision loss experienced similar difficulties.

Initiating interaction for a totally blind child involves other unknowns. During an interview, this boy described a conversation he had with a stranger on the school bus:

R: There's some people that go to \_ \_ School. [He took the same bus as some children who traveled to a different school in the area.] I like to talk with them on the bus. Like, I was talking,

I don't, I don't know who they were but, like I was talking to them?

I: Umhmm.

R: First like, I got on and I was sitting with this boy, I think it was a boy anyway, and ah, and he was, I asked him if he heard about the accident and stuff? [Site III, Tony]

This blind child did not have access to such basic information as the gender of the person with whom he was sitting and initiating interaction.

Two of the visually impaired students, Peter and Charles, less frequently initiated interaction and appeared to be constrained in a number of ways. Firstly, both had very slow reading and writing rates. Rarely did they finish an assignment in time to interact with classmates who had completed the task and were socializing between activities. Secondly, both children tended to introduce topics which were of little interest to their classmates. Thirdly, both students seemed better able to capture the attention of the teacher than that of a classmate. For the most part, even when amidst their classmates, these two visually impaired students routinely sought out the teacher to initiate and participate in conversation. Thus, both initiating interaction and gaining access to a group activity proved quite difficult for the visually impaired students in this study.

#### Pupil Assumption 4 (Boy-Girl Relationships)

Boys and girls ought not to be "best friends."

In the early years of elementary school boys and girls can often be seen playing together in groups. Despite the less exclusive groups characteristic of this age, boys and girls still have only same gender "best friends" during school hours. In the upper elementary grades, groups become increasingly exclusive both by gender and popularity.

When a boy and girl routinely associate with one another on the playground, they are considered to be romantically involved. The usual interaction between upper elementary boys and girls on the playground is "bugging," a form of teasing initiated by either a boy or girl with a member of the opposite sex. "Bugging" could be a good-natured game enjoyed among friends with much laughter and playfulness as well as one centered upon children who were mocked or tormented by the majority of children on the playground.

Pupil Assumption 4 and the Integrated Visually Impaired Students. Three of the four visually impaired boys observed routinely interacted with girls, both in the classroom and on the playground. In the one classroom where children were permitted to make their own seating arrangements, the visually impaired boy sat with three girls, although he identified boys at one of the other tables as his "best friends."

I: Tell me about the seating arrangement in your class? I find it very interesting.

R: It isn't cuz at first we had, just five groups, and that is like, there is five groups now, but there's people who's in one group, who's now changed to another group, and people that changed, changed from one group to another group, and people that are in one group that stayed in one group. Everyone just keeps jumping around.

I: Right.

R: Cuz at first I was at the counter, where the pencil sharpener was, with four other people, then I moved over by, by myself, then I moved with Darren and Matthew, then I moved by myself again for a few days, and then I moved back with, over there to Dana and them. The reason I sit there is so Jodi and them can help me sometimes, cuz I can't read some of the prints.

I: Oh, okay. And why wouldn't you sit with Daniel and David?

R: I would, I would if they'd let me.

I: Oh, they won't let you.

R: Like they, it's not that they don't like me, it's just that they have a group of four already and they wouldn't want, and they don't really want me to sit there. [Site IV, Jamie]



The awkwardness Jamie is experiencing in the above excerpt was also evident among classmates who were perplexed by his choice of groups.

I: Tell me about the seating arrangement in your class.

R: Well, we mostly do it the way, like, the people that we like. Like, my table, like, table five, like, I like Aleasha and, um, Morgan..so that...and, like Wendell and Lee are easy to get along with, so...like, it's really easy to sit in our table. Like, I don't know why Jamie sits with Jodi, Dana and Sarah and...like, David, um, Daniel and Colin and Kevin, like, they sit together because, like, Colin and Daniel are best friends and Kevin and David are best friends and, like, they all get along together.  
[Site IV, Marla]

This acceptance and inclusion of visually impaired boys by female classmates and the routine exclusion of male visually impaired students by their male classmates was noted throughout the study. When children had to choose partners, most often the visually impaired students were the last or among the last chosen. Their partners were, in most cases, girls. Both on the playground and in the classroom, Peter and Tony interacted predominately with girls. As well, girls more frequently volunteered to help or work with their visually impaired classmates. Thus, the types of relationships and activities observed for visually impaired boys and their female classmates were different than those for sighted boys. This frequently resulted in the visually impaired boy being isolated from interaction with other male classmates.

Spender (1982, p. 85) contends that girls act as a "negative reference group, against which boys' performance is enhanced." In this study it appeared male visually impaired students were devalued among their male peers, (i.e. not often viewed as acceptable workmates or playmates), but were more acceptable to girls who, in general, tend to serve as the negative reference group for boys under usual circumstances. The nurturing role to which girls are socialized in our

society may also have been reflected in their greater tendency to interact with and accept their visually impaired classmates.

As well, Scott (1969a) outlines the process of gender role learning in childhood and how visual impairment interferes with this process. Visually impaired children, particularly if totally blind, have significant difficulty learning about the physiological differences between their bodies and those of the opposite sex (Scholl, 1986). This problem is compounded by the added restrictions vision loss places upon the ability to perceive and learn basic role traits and mannerisms associated with femininity and masculinity. The observed inappropriate male role traits and mannerisms routinely evident in three of the visually impaired boys may also have contributed to the more exclusive actions of their male classmates. Regardless of the more accepting attitude of girls, the association of visually impaired boys with girls appeared to have a negative effect upon their acceptance by male classmates. "Sissies hang around with girls."

#### Pupil Assumption 5 (Unpopular with Unpopular)

Unpopular children ought to play with other unpopular children.

Unpopular children were blatantly excluded from group activities both on the playground and, where possible, in the classroom. Although most did not become "best friends" with another unpopular child, they associated with this child as an alternative to being alone on the playground or in the classroom. Rejected children, those who were not accepted by most children in the school, were most often seen in proximity to rejected children from other classes. Following is an

excerpt from an unpopular classmate which seems to typify the plight of unpopular children:

I: I want to talk to you about things kids your age do in school. What things do they do during free time, for example, recess or noon hour?

R: I like to just walk around and talk to my friends and sometimes, like, mind my own business.

I: How do you mind your own business?

R: I just walk around, and I just talk to people that talk to me first.

I: If I were to see you at recess or noon hour, what would I see you doing?

R: Sometimes chasing people. Sometimes talking. Sometimes minding my own business.

I: How do you decide which of those things you're going to do?

R: I don't know. I just...the next day when I come out to recess or after lunch I come to school, I just walk around and if I meet someone that talks to me I say, "Hi, how ya doin'?" and just be polite to them.

[Later in the interview]

I: When I have talked to kids your age about how they are treated by other kids in their class, some have told me they feel they belong to the class and some say they feel alone or left out. How do you usually feel?

R: I feel left out.

I: When do you feel left out?

R: Well during "shared reading," because everybody...someone's got to share with you...but..."Nnnooo! Don't go with her! She has rabies and AIDS!" [Site IV, Michelle]

#### Pupil Assumption 5 and the Integrated Visually Impaired Students.

Four of the five visually impaired students were routinely chosen as "okay friends" by their classmates. The fifth student, Charles was frequently mentioned by his classmates as a student who was not a part of the group. Although this student was the only visually impaired child who had a "best friend," Justin, the "best friend," was also among the least popular children in that class. None of the visually impaired children in this study were members of an identified "popular gang" or played with such children on the playground. They seemed to possess somewhat of a neutral position in relation to popularity. They were not

sought out by classmates as were popular children nor were they the brunt of teasing and tormenting as were many unpopular children. However, unpopular children sometimes sought out a visually impaired classmate for companionship and vice versa. Following is an excerpt from an interview with a geography teacher who described the predicament this created for one visually impaired boy.

I: When do children seek him [visually impaired child] out on the playground?

R: The only time I really did see it happen..there's a little girl who was being rejected and therefore sought Peter because he was sort of neutral territory, and...I think it was the only time that Peter got upset because they were saying, "Well, Peter, you be my friend and not their friend." And that upset him because it tore him. He'd never been put in that situation before and that upset him. But that's the only...yeah, that one girl, that one girl that was being rejected and needed somebody, I think she just sort of centred in on Peter. He was the only safe place to be.  
[Site I, teacher]

When classmates were asked how they chose a partner for an activity, they consistently reported selecting their "best friends." Visually impaired students did not appear to perceive the same options available to them. Whether their visual limitations made it impossible to act quickly enough to locate a partner, either physically or through non-verbal gestures, or whether other children avoided them, it was evident they were most frequently partners with less popular children. One visually impaired boy, Peter, described it as follows:

I: When you have a partner in gym you usually have Paula, Allison or Cathy.

R: Yeah.

I: You don't have David or Nathan.

R: Cuz they're always with someone else. See we're allowed to choose, they choose their own partners. I just take who's ever is left.

I: Oh, I see. Is that how you do it in the class?

R: I choose, I still, I choose in gym, but I ask around after some people have picked out partners I ask the people I still see

standing around, I ask them who their partners were. And I usually get one. [Site I, Peter]

It would seem the consideration of prime importance for the visually impaired student is just getting a partner. A classmate of Peter's, Allison, seemed to perceive this situation similarly:

I: Okay. Allison, how do you go about getting a partner when the teacher tells you to get a partner for an activity?

R: Oh, you pick one of your friends that somebody else hasn't picked. I always go for the girls that are left over and sometimes if Cathy's [girl rejected by classmates] the only one left I go with her sometimes, usually, sometimes if there's, if she's the only one left I go with Peter. [Site I, Allison]

Situations necessitating the choosing of partners by classmates seemed to place the visually impaired student at risk because they were rarely chosen until the end. This aspect of interaction is considered further under "Pupil Assumption 6."

#### Pupil Assumption 6 (Avoid Unpopular)

Children ought not associate with unpopular children.

Within pupil culture association with unpopular children, for purposes other than teasing or mistreating them, detracts from a student's popularity. Even being assigned by the teacher as a partner to an unpopular child is considered bad for one's reputation. When children are told by the teacher to get a partner for an activity and only unpopular children are available, the student usually prefers to work without a partner. Students can also harm their reputation and, thus chances for developing friendships, by associating or having a reputation of associating with "bad" or "weird" people during after school hours. During the interviews with students, they were asked to talk about why children were popular or unpopular. As well, they identified those children who were the least and most popular. The

following excerpt depicts an upper elementary boy's perspective of two classmates with whom one should not associate:

I: Who are the kids in your class that the other kids do not seem to play with very often?

R: Brian, Troy, I'd say that's about it.

I: Tell me about them.

R: Brian is called stinky and all that. I don't really like him. Everybody hates him. And it's not cool to be around them. If you're around them, you're not part of the pack. Sort of like, this is, this is the big pack [points to the group of name cards of popular children]. Like Brian, and Troy [moves their name cards out to one side]. This is all the big pack and these are the two that are left out.

I: Left out. Brian and Troy. Okay.

R: And, like all these [points to the name cards of the popular group], including myself, like we just play, play. And we just let these two alone. And they don't like each other, so, they're sorta, like alone, those two. They have no friends on the school yard. And they sorta..they're sorta, out. [Justin, Site V]

Unpopular children are also judged more harshly by their classmates than are popular children. In this study, classmates routinely underestimated the level of performance of their less popular peers in areas such as skill level in the gym, contributions to discussions, and quality of work. For example, Cathy, a girl rejected by all her classmates at Site I, was one of the most skillful volleyball players in the class. She was identified by all eight students interviewed as one of the three worst volleyball players in the class. In the following excerpts, classmates judge her harshly.

[Excerpt 1]

I: Can you tell me the names of the children in your class who are not your friends?

R: The ones that sit over there in the row, over in.. the whole row, that last one, except Larry.

I: Okay, so there's Anthony, Karen, Cathy, and Paula

R: I sort of like Paula.

I: You like Paula. So..Karen, Anthony and Cathy. Tell me about those three.

R: Oh..everybody makes up jokes about Cathy and everything, and they don't like her or her sister...and, ah, Karen..she sticks out

her tongue at everybody when she smiles and everything. And Anthony, he doesn't play with much people.

[Later in the interview]

I: Who are the children in your class who are the worst in gym?

R: I'd say Cathy...Paula, um, not Paula....Karen, um... nobody else.

I: Who are the five best volleyball players in your class?

R: Can I pick any more?

I: Five, I want you to pick five. Or you can pick six if you want. You were having a hard time deciding between Matthew and Nat, were you?

R: Yeah.

I: Now, who are the three worst volleyball players in your class?

I: Okay, let's see. Cathy...Karen..three or four?

R: Okay, four...Paul and Anthony. [Site I, Andrew]

[Excerpt 2]

I: Who are the kids in your class that other kids do not talk to very often?

R: Cathy.

I: Can you tell me about that?

R: Oh, ah, the kids don't really like her. I don't know really why. Ah, well, I don't know how it got started but they just hate her. Like, she'll, sometimes she has trouble, when Mr. Coates, sometimes he ye..tells, ah, yells at the class..made, the marks and she made the lowest, I think 28?

[Later in the interview]

I: So they're the best in gym. Who are the worst?

R: Umm, well..Nat, he usually, he doesn't yell at Sheena [popular girl] cuz he likes Sheena?

I: Umhmm.

R: And she can't really get it over the net. And Peter [visually impaired student], he can't and sometimes I can't. Well, I'm good at gym but...I can't, sometimes like, sometimes I don't think I can move up and I just stay there and I try to throw it but I can't get it over the net.

I: So who are the three worst in gym and then I'm going to ask you for the three worst in volleyball?

R: Um, well, sometimes Peter, cuz he can't, like I told you, like he's half blind and he can't do things as other children can do and, ah, well, ah, Cathy, like, all the kids yell at her if she doesn't catch the ball and ah, ah, let's see, Cathy and Sheena, like ah...

I: So Sheena, Peter and Cathy are the worst in gym?

R: Well, not the worst but like in other sport they're really good but sometimes like, Sheena, she can't get it over the net but sometimes she can.

I: Okay, let's do volleyball then. Who are the three worst in volleyball?

R: Well, Peter, I wouldn't say he was the worst, but he can't do his things as good as children, other people can do. And sometimes Sheena, she's not the worst but she's good in other

sports but sometimes she can't get it over the net. Sometimes she can. Sometimes Peter, when the little people make, they're small, like not as tall as other people and it hits the net, sometimes it goes over the net but it hits the net and it comes back over, just flies over the net and just hits the net and goes over to the other side. [Site 1, Allison]

Popular children, on the other hand, appeared to "have sufficient 'idiosyncrasy credits' to allow for a wide range of technically inappropriate actions" (Fine, 1981, p. 42). As well, their level of performance was either judged less critically by peers or they were forgiven their "weaknesses." In the above excerpt, the classmates are obviously empathic to Sheena and Peter but made no excuses for Cathy's performance. Sheena was definitely the worst player in the class. In the following excerpt, this topic was discussed with another student at the same site.

I: Larry, I've noticed something when I've been watching the kids play volleyball. I've noticed that if, let's say, Mark [unpopular student] misses the ball, a lot of kids turn to him and say, "Oh, Mark!" [disgust in voice]. They sort of give him a hard time.

R: Yeah!

I: But if Sheena misses the ball nobody says anything to her [popular student with high grades but does poorly in gym].

R: She's a girl. Most of the boys don't yell at the girls. They only yell at each other and carry on. They carry on with the girls too.

I: So you don't yell at girls but you can yell at boys.

R: Yeah, cuz boys they always yell back. Girls, they just look at ya, real weird.

I: Oh, I see, the girls won't give you any sass back?

R: Oh, they will.

I: They will.

R: We mostly say it to the boys though.

I: Yesterday when I was watching, Cathy missed and they gave her a rough time.

R: Yeah, cuz she's not likable.

I: Oh, I see. So the difference between Sheena and Cathy, even though they're both girls, Sheena is likable and Cathy is not.

R: Yeah, you finally got it! [Site 1, Larry]

Thus, for popular children, even when they were known to do less well academically or in a particular activity, they were still chosen as a



partner early in the selection process and were not harassed about their poor performance.

Pupil Assumption 6 and the Integrated Visually Impaired Students. With the exception of Charles, who had an unpopular classmate as a "best friend," the visually impaired children in this study interacted with a variety of children on the playground. The choice of partners often seemed more related to who was physically close at hand, who happened to be participating in the limited activities enjoyed by the visually impaired student, or who was willing to accommodate the visually impaired child in a particular game. However, given the exclusion of less popular children by their popular classmates, the visually impaired child's chances of interacting with an unpopular child were greater. It appeared visually impaired students who did not meet the criteria for acceptance to the "popular gang" were more acceptable to children who, themselves, did not meet these standards. In the classroom where all children were more accessible to the visually impaired students, the integrated students interacted more frequently with a range of children. However, when partners were chosen, they were left to the unpopular classmates. As indicated by Allison in a previous excerpt, unpopular children were also in need of a partner and when the choices were limited a visually impaired child was sometimes a more suitable partner than others in the class, such as rejected children.

Tony, the totally blind student, received limited information about who the unpopular children were in the class. Much of his interaction was centered on the group of three other children with whom he sat. On the playground he played primarily with girls from other

classes and grades. The difficulty he experienced accessing common knowledge about the status of his fellow pupils is evidenced in the following excerpt.

I: Who are the kids in your class that the other kids do not seem to play with very often?  
 R: I don't know, because, like, I don't hang around with them. I don't hang around much with no kids in my class.  
 I: Do you ever hear of kids in your class that other kids don't play with very often?  
 R: Not really.  
 I: Okay. So you don't know of kids that other kids don't play with very often.  
 R: No.  
 I: Did you have any in any of your other grades?  
 R: In grade 2...in our class, in grade 2, Tommy, Tommy Heighton. People didn't like him because they say he picked his nose and eat it like, and ah, they, and, they said, Marla, Marla, [girl in a higher class] but she was a good help to me that day that Donna [girl who helped him to and from the bus] wasn't here. Marla has people to play with. I don't know about Tommy cuz I don't hang around with him.  
 I: What about Adam [very unpopular boy] in your class?  
 R: Adam, what do you mean?  
 I: Does he have kids to play with?  
 R: Yeah, probably, quite a bit. [Site III, Tony]

Thus, visually impaired children may frequently be unknowingly associating with less popular children and unaware of the negative effect this may have on their status or on how they are perceived by others.

#### Pupil Assumption 7 (Same as Classmates)

To be part of the group, children ought to do the same things as their classmates, like the same things as their classmates, dress the same as their classmates, and act the same as their classmates.

In the schools observed pupils aspired to be like their classmates. To be different was to invite hostility or rejection from classmates as is evident in the following excerpt.

I: Who are the kids in your class that the other kids do not seem to play with very often?

R: Well, Darren. There's only one person that I know of who hangs around with Darren. And ah..Michelle and..Sarah, and Aleasha, and..Jamie [visually impaired student], Ryan, and, Lisa and Matthew.

I: Tell me about them.

R: Well, I don't know, cuz just, they don't like to do much of anything. You know, they just sit around at recess time, you know, they never do anything.

[Later in interview]

I: Suppose I was a new kid just starting this school and I didn't know anything about your class, what would you tell me about things I should do or shouldn't do to be liked by the other kids?

R: Well you shouldn't be a nerd. And, and, for one thing, if you want other kids to like you, then you shouldn't do all kinds of bad stuff and that, you know.

I: Okay. Can you give me an example of some of the bad stuff I shouldn't do.

R: Do crank phone calls, throw eggs at cars, or anything like that.

I: Okay. What's a nerd?

R: A nerd, someone who's, who, who just doesn't want to do anything, like you know, just a boring person.

I: A what?

R: A boring person.

I: A boring person. Are there nerds in your class?

R: Yeah.

I: Who would you describe as nerds in your class?

R: Well, Matthew, and probably Jamie, and..I don't know, and that's about it. [Site IV, Daniel]

However, there were qualifications to this "conformity" rule. For example to imitate the dress of a popular rock star was acceptable even though other children would not be similarly dressed. To dress in an equally "untraditional" manner of one's own creation was unacceptable. Therefore, dress was one important aspect of popularity, as is apparent in the following excerpts

[Excerpt 1]

I: Matthew, tell me about what makes kids popular.

R: Well. ah...what they do or...

I: What do you mean by "what they do"?

R: Like, what they say to ah, people. Um, how they look.

I: How is it popular to look?

R: Nice hair and dress. [Site I, Matthew]

[Excerpt 2]

I: What makes some kids popular?

R: Well, if you're nice and pretty ah, because, cuz, Adam is really, has ah, like or loves Nicole.

I: So if you're pretty and nice you're popular. What things make kids not popular?

R: If they're bad and wear old clothes and if you see them do something you say, "No, I don't wanta be his friend or her friend." [Site II, Megan]

[Excerpt 3]

I: Who are the kids in you class that other kids don't seem to play with very often?

R: Ah, Adam and Patrick.

I: Tell me about them.

R: Because they think that ah, they think that they, since they ah, they don't look nice that they won't play with them. [Site III, Julie]

[Excerpt 4]

R: Ah, wearing spandex, dressing cool, have their hair crimped, curls, ah, teeth, um, always wearing make-up. That's all.

I: What's spandex.

R: Well, those tight, tight pants. Like tight jeans, like say this was real tight and I couldn't breathe out, I'd be going. It's like an elastic.

I: Oh, yes. You had on spandex yesterday.

R: Yeah! Like this. [shows me the top under her sweater. [Site IV, Jodi]

[Excerpt 5]

I: Who are the kids in your class that the other kids do not seem to play with very often?

R: Justin, Charles, Brian and Troy.

I: Why don't people play with Troy very much.

R: Because he will act like right smart and stuff like that and nobody bothers hanging around with him then. Nobody likes to play with him.

I: How about Charles?

R: I don't know about Charles. Sometimes at recess and stuff I'll play a game with him and stuff but not too many other people seem to care.

I: Tell me about that. Why other people don't seem to care.

R: I don't know if some people think if like, they shouldn't hang around him that much, cuz where he's blind.

I: How about Brian?

R: Brian, it's just like the clothes and stuff he wears they think that way, they shouldn't hang around him.

I: What about Justin?

R: They make fun of him because he has a big head and stuff. I don't really care about that. [Site V, Jason]

Nonconformity, whether in dress or behaviour was openly reprimanded by classmates. "Best friends" enjoyed and participated in the same activities. At all sites children reported their favorite part of the day to be recess and noon hour. Play is the essence of pupil culture. It is within the context of play that friendships are negotiated. In school there seems to be a direct relationship between an activity's approximation to play and its popularity for children. Gym, music and French, which at the elementary level are taught through songs and games, were consistently reported by students to be their favorite activities. With the exception of two children who included math and reading in their list of favorite things to do at school, all 36 students interviewed reported recess, French, gym, music or art as their favorite things to do in school. Within this context of play, "best friends" professed to enjoy the same activities and thus perceived themselves to be like one another (Fine, 1981).

Pupil Assumption 7 and the Integrated Visually Impaired Students. The implications for visually impaired children doing the same things as their classmates were discussed under Pupil Assumption 2 (Do What Others Do). Three of the visually impaired children experienced difficulties doing the same things as their classmates on the playground. Only one of these children, however, expressed significantly different preferences for activities on the playground. The other two would have participated in the same activities but seemed to be either excluded by classmates or reluctant to initiate the necessary interaction to gain entry to the group.

For the most part, these five visually impaired children did not dress differently than their classmates. However, there was one child who, because he was unable to tie, wore sneakers with velcro tabs. As well, during inclement weather, he wore snowpants while his classmates arrived in jogging pants or waterproof, rugby-style pants. Given the upper elementary level of this class, his were rather unconventional practices.

Unlike dress or type of activity, "act the same as their classmates" is an aspect of pupil culture which cannot be easily interpreted. Actions or behaviour are not components which can be independently examined in isolation from the process of interaction. As Fine (1981) contends, actions or behaviours are subject to different levels of tolerance depending upon the nature of the relationship in which one is interacting. As discussed under Pupil Assumption 6 (Avoid Unpopular), in the presence of good friends one's actions are judged less harshly than when interacting with those who are merely acquaintances.

The perspectives of classmates and teachers relevant to the actions or behaviour of the visually impaired child in their classroom are discussed in Chapters 7 and 8. From the perspective of the researcher, there were actions and behaviours which deviated from what might be considered conventional everyday behaviours of sighted children. These differences can be categorized in two ways. Firstly, those inherent to the visually impaired such as involuntary eye movement, close working distance when reading and writing, or difficulties associated with free and independent mobility within the

school environment. Secondly, and more difficult to describe, was an awkwardness experienced in interactions between a visually impaired child and a classmate which was not evident in similar exchanges between sighted classmates. In his research on the management of strained interaction by the visibly handicapped, Davis (1961) concluded:

The threat posed by the handicap to sociability is, at minimum, fourfold: its tendency to become an exclusive focal point of the interaction, its potential for inundating expressive boundaries, its discordance with other attributes of the person and, finally, its ambiguity as a predicator of joint activity. These are not discrete entities in themselves as much as varying contextual emergents which, depending on the particular situation, serve singly or in combination to strain the framework of normative rules and assumptions in which sociability develops. (p. 122)

That four of these children exhibited behaviours which were markedly different from those of their peers, for example, arm flapping or lack of eye contact during conversation, was evident. How these behaviours affected the meanings constructed by both the visually impaired child and those in her/his environment and the dynamics of interaction are discussed in Chapter 7. However, as Fine (1981) suggests, friends of the visually impaired student seemed remarkably more tolerant of their atypical behaviour than were those who were not their friends.

#### Pupil Assumption 8 ("Best Friends" Help)

"Best friends" ought to help each other in noncompetitive situations or in competitive situations when they are on the same team.

In the classrooms observed, students relied heavily on assistance from classmates to enable them to complete their work. With class sizes as large as 28 children, it was difficult for the teacher to provide the level of assistance needed when it was needed. Children with one or

more "best friends" in the class were at a definite advantage in soliciting help from classmates. Those without friends or with only "okay friends" frequently had requests for assistance ignored or denied. "Best friends" rarely rejected requests for help unless the two friends were on opposite teams or were competing for academic standing in the class. In the following excerpt, two classmates, one popular, one unpopular, talk about receiving help in class.

[Excerpt 1]

R: [listing those who aren't her friends] Darren. And...Kevin. Jacklyn, not that much, anyway. Wende'll. Sometimes Marla isn't my friend. David sometimes. Sometimes Matthew's not my friend.

I: Why aren't they your friends, sometimes?

R: Because they be mean. Like, I ask for a question like, "Please, can you help me with this, please, 'cause the teacher told me to come ask some of you guys in the class." And they go, "No! You go ask the teacher!" [Site IV, Michelle]

[Excerpt 2]

I: What are some other things your friends do?

R: Like, most of the time..help me and everything, in some ways. Like, not a lot, but in some. And, um, I want to be able to trust them a lot...and...like, I'd be able to encourage them just as much as they encourage me. And...that's just about it. [Site IV, Marla]

Pupil Assumption 8 and the Integrated Visually Impaired Students.

In comparison to their sighted peers, two of the visually impaired children, Tony and Peter, received an inordinate amount of help from both classmates and teachers. Charles received more help than the majority of peers and Lisa and Jamie approximately the same amount as their peers. The "helping relationship" which developed between visually impaired children and their classmates will be discussed more fully in Chapter 7. What is important to note here is that the relationship between "best friends" and willingness to help was different for the visually impaired children than it was for their



classmates. For the visually impaired child, children who were not "best friends" with the visually impaired child often volunteered to help and, furthermore, did not refuse to help when assistance was requested by the visually impaired child. One teacher explained this phenomenon by saying, "I think they knew..when they were younger..some teacher must have said..scolded them and told them to be nice to him when they were younger and it just sort of stuck." [Site IV-V]

Two other aspects of the helping relationship between visually impaired children and their peers were prominent. Firstly, the opportunities for the visually impaired children to reciprocate the help they received were limited. Although all were willing to help, situational circumstances (e.g. the extended time required to finish a task) and other contextual factors (e.g. seating arrangements, capability of detecting those in need of help) resulted in infrequent reciprocation of assistance by the visually impaired children. Secondly, the visually impaired children who received the most assistance seldom verbally thanked those who helped them. From an observer's point of view, it seemed as if such help was an indistinguishable aspect of the situation, that is, taken for granted. From the visually impaired student's perspective, the necessity for assistance seemed to be inseparable from some activities and, therefore, not perceived as help but merely as a component of the activity.

#### Pupil Assumption 9 (Play with Classmates)

Children ought to play with children from their own classroom.

At the beginning of the school year there appears to be less defined play groups. Children from various classes intermingle somewhat. As the school year proceeds classroom friends become "best friends" and the class itself seems to become an exclusive group. At one site a group of children who had been together for three years were split to form two classes. By the end of their first year as two classes, students reported changes similar to the following:

I: Umhmm. When they split the grade...into A and B how did that affect your friendships?

Paula: Well, what it does is like, last year Jennifer [girl from the other class] usually played with me and Barb [friend in Paula's class] and them. And when they split us up to the other classes, ah, she started, they didn't, like, like, Grace and them started changing like, all the boys started, like, being, when they're, when we're in gym they, they have to be challenged and to some they say, don't pass it to them and they don't, like, they change your friendship. That's what it did to some of the boys there and the girls. Like Jane and Sheena, it split them up.

I: They were good friends?

R: Umhmm. Now, it split them up and they don't like each other at all. That's what that did.

I: And how about you and Jennifer?

R: Well, not, it never split us up. At school I don't hardly play with her cuz she's usually playing with Grace and Jane [girls who are now in the class with Jennifer but no longer in Michelle's class] and I don't like Jane at all. [Site I, Paula]

Another student in the same class reported, "We usually think of them [the kids in the other class] as our enemies, and ah, we fight them."

Students who play with children from classes other than their own are those who are rejected by their classmates and must seek companionship among less popular children from other classes or those who have only "okay friends" among their classmates. Even children who are "best friends" during out-of-school hours choose to play with classmates rather than their out-of-school friends during school hours. A parent who was a playground supervisor at one site talked about her

own daughter's friendships at this school and was surprised by the discovery that her daughter didn't play at school with a very close neighborhood child who wasn't in her class:

I: Does she [mother's daughter] play with Melanie [daughter's neighborhood friend] in school?

Mother: Never, very rarely do I ever see them, as a matter of fact, I don't think I ever have, ever! Which is strange because, you know, like all summer long they play together almost continuously.

I: And do you see them everyday at school, too?

R: Yeah, and they just don't play together at all! [Site II, parent]

#### Pupil Assumption 9 and the Integrated Visually Impaired Students.

In comparison to their sighted peers, visually impaired children spent much less time with their classmates on the playground. Charles, who had a "best friend" in his class had been in this relationship for several years. It had not changed even when they were in separate classes, however, both he and Justin were perceived to be unpopular children by their peers. When Justin was unavailable, Charles interacted infrequently with other children on the playground, including classmates. Two of the other visually impaired children, Lisa and Jamie, did not appear to have consistent interaction with particular children or groups of children from their class but were often involved in group activities such as climbing on the playground equipment or standing near a group talking. Both of these children frequently played with children from other classes. The fourth visually impaired child, Peter, spent the greater part of the time on the playground on the swings and interacted with those who happened by. The only peer who consistently came to the swings seemingly to interact with him was a cousin of the opposite sex. Tony, the fifth visually impaired student,

played predominantly with girls from other classrooms at the same and lower grade levels. Thus, again it appeared evident visually impaired students did not experience social interaction in the same way as their fully sighted classmates.

#### Pupil Assumption 10 (Follow the Rules)

Children ought to follow the rules negotiated within the school culture.

Although rules varied somewhat from site to site, at all sites children were reprimanded or ostracized by others when they did not follow the rules. In the classroom, rules made by the teacher, such as, "Stay in your seat while I'm doing the demonstration," or "Don't count on your fingers," when not adhered to, would bring reprimand from classmates, particularly if the offender was an unpopular child. There were also rules made by the children, such as, "You can help another student but don't let them copy your work." On the playground where children were more in control, they had rules related to play such as, "You can't join in the game without asking," or "When you say you'll play with someone you can't just walk away and leave them." Reprimands for rule infractions were not always hostile or obvious, as in the case in the following excerpt. Lisa had been playing with Vicki on some well covers. When Vicki was called away by another child Lisa returned to the covers:

Lisa goes back to the well covers where two older girls are now on them having a contest to see who can jump the farthest away from the top. Lisa joins in without an invitation and although they don't say anything to her they promptly leave. Lisa is now left standing alone by the covers. [Site II, observation notes]

#### Pupil Assumption 10 and the Integrated Visually Impaired Students.

With the exception of Lisa, the visually impaired students tended to follow the rules when they were aware of them. Some rules were more difficult for visually impaired children to ascertain than others. Patterns of conduct or limits associated with the amount of information to be shared with teachers seemed to be particularly troublesome for the visually impaired. These were the types of subtle rules negotiated between teachers and pupils during the everyday interactions in the classroom, such things as how much information to provide in response to a question or how cooperative to be with a substitute teacher. Visually impaired children were at risk on several levels in such interactions. Firstly, they had difficulty interpreting the subtle messages essential to incorporate the necessary information into appropriate behaviour. Secondly, when they did respond inappropriately, particularly in the classroom, they did not see the reactions of their classmates, such as expressions of disgust or annoyance, exchanged glances of ridicule, and/or humour, or the rolling of eyes. Thirdly, peers seemed reluctant to verbally reprimand visually impaired children when they behaved inappropriately, especially if in proximity to a teacher. In attempting to accommodate a child's vision loss, teachers sometimes inadvertently encouraged visually impaired children to disobey rules of the pupil culture. For example, teachers sometimes asked students to play with the visually impaired child at recess or noon hour. Thus, the visually impaired child gained access to a group or interfered in a "best friend" relationship in ways which ignored conventional rules of access applicable to other pupils. This also occurred in the classroom when

the teacher unconsciously or with good intentions provided assistance to the visually impaired child which was not available to classmates.

Justin, Charles' best friend, spontaneously describes such a situation during an interview when asked to tell the researcher about each of his classmates:

R: Charles.

I: Umhmm.

R: Well, me and Charles are friends. Like sometimes he can be, like when he wants to play something, I want to play something else. We just, like, I just play what he wants to play and he plays what I want to play.

I: Umm. Okay. What else can you tell me about Charles?

R: A..he's nice, but, like sometimes..kids in my class say, "Oh, he's, gets it all." Like when we have tests and we're not, the teacher can't help us?

I: Right.

R: He goes to the teacher and the teacher gives him help.

I: Oh. She gives him help.

R: I don't know. I still, some kids think that's unfair. [Site V, Justin]

Later on in the interview Justin introduces this theme once more:

R: Like on test day, she gives him a bit of help. I find that's a little upsetting. You're having a problem and he has the same problem, goes up, gets the answer. Like, she helps him out. And gets him the answer. And gives him a higher mark. Once..there should be a rule. Like every time he goes up and asks for help and the teacher gives him half of the answer, point should be taken off..for that question cuz he got that right with her help. He don't need a higher mark. Like, she's not really helping him to learn. Giving him the answer. [Site V, Justin]

Given the competitive nature of this classroom and the learning difficulties Justin experienced, this situation was particularly "upsetting" for him. For the visually impaired student, privileges of this kind, granted by the teacher, appeared to detract from the visually impaired student's level of acceptance by classmates. Thus, visually impaired students appeared to be vulnerable in two significant ways relevant to following the rules. First, they did not always receive the

necessary information and feedback to enhance socialization into the existing pupil culture. Secondly, teachers, with good intentions, frequently interfered in ways which were incompatible with negotiated rules of the pupil culture.

#### Pupil Assumption 11 (Reciprocate Playmate's Actions)

Friends ought to reciprocate the actions of their friends, whether positive or negative.

When "best friends" interact they respond often in seemingly direct imitation to one another's behaviour (Davies, 1982). If one child complimented the second on her/his art work, the child receiving the compliment would make a similarly positive comment about the art work of the friend. If a friend became suddenly uncooperative or "mouthy," this behaviour was reciprocated. This pattern of reciprocity among children was most prominent during exchanges of physical contact where children could frequently be heard to comment about the need to "pay back" a classmate for some action, predominately a negative one.

In the classroom reciprocity was all important. Classmates who were chosen as desirable partners for projects or workmates were those who would do "their fair share" or who would not "just sit and let you do all the work" as is reported in the following excerpts.

[Excerpt 1]

I: Which kids would you choose to work with on a project in class?

R: Mmmmm. Nat...Matthew...ah, Sheena or Barb...

I: Those are the ones you would choose.

R: Well, they're probably one of the smarter ones and, like, some of the people who aren't so bright, like, they try to make you do more. Like, they try to make you do the whole thing and then they can take credit for part of it. And, like, it doesn't seem like, real fair, like, if you have a person that's, like, really dense, and like they get you to, like, do, ah, ah, the whole thing. And

they get credit for it. Like, it's...like, it's not really as fun, like, if you know you both did half. [Site I, David]

[Excerpt 2]

I: Which kids would you choose to work with on a project in class?

R: [pause] Jonathan, Tony, John, Matthew, Mark, Jason, Tyler, and Daniel.

I: Can you tell me about them?

R: They would help me and all that, and I would help them. [Site III, Trevor]

When children worked in groups and one child received assistance from another, the recipient could often be seen to volunteer an answer or some form of unsolicited advice or assistance in reciprocation.

Pupil Assumption 11 and the Integrated Visually Impaired Students. The difficulties visually impaired children encountered in reciprocating assistance received from their peers was mentioned in Pupil Assumption 8 ("Best Friends" Help). As well, for peers of visually impaired students, negative reciprocation proved troublesome when it involved the visually impaired child. When posing interview questions involving a scenario where the visually impaired child struck them on purpose and the researcher inquired as to their response, classmates tended to justify the behaviour of the visually impaired child saying, "They couldn't see what they were doing." When assured this was not the case, most seemed troubled by the notion of having to strike the visually impaired child back. Those who admitted they would reciprocate assured the researcher they wouldn't "hit as hard." Responses during interviews were consistent with those observed on the playground. "Paying back" a visually impaired child created a dilemma for classmates. Both student and teacher disapproval of striking a visually impaired student,



regardless of the degree of justification, was evident in all five sites.

### Conclusion

There are structuring factors in the elementary school which affect both the quality and the quantity of interaction among children. Time, the negotiated rules of the classroom and the activities available on the playground were but a few noted in this study. In examining the interaction and acceptance of integrated visually impaired students it was necessary to focus upon some aspects of pupil culture as a conceptual framework from which to consider their interaction. Given the 11 identified assumptions, it was evident that the interaction of visually impaired children varied in both quantity and quality.

Within the context of elementary school pupil culture the opportunities available for interaction between visually impaired children and their peers were notably reduced. Without "best friends," they were less frequently involved in more intimate, long-term relationships than were peers who had such friends. Because they frequently were less competent on the playground, they were often left out of activities. The actual process of physically locating playmates on the playground routinely caused difficulties for visually impaired students. Such restrictions imposed by the visual impairment were also evident when visually impaired students took longer to complete their work, and thus were unavailable to other children who socialized between and during classroom activities.

The quality and/or type of social exchanges characterizing the interaction of visually impaired students were, in many respects, different from those of their sighted peers. Visually impaired students frequently appeared more comfortable in their interactions with adults than with peers. Because of the inappropriateness of reciprocating some negative actions toward those "who are half blind," visually impaired students were considered to be different from other classmates. Being left to interact with less popular children or those deemed undesirable by others, created a dilemma for the visually impaired student. They wanted a companion but those available were not necessarily appropriate. As well, routine association with those who were unpopular or, in the case of boys, with those of the opposite gender seemed to reinforce the need for popular children or those of the same gender to exclude them. Since visually impaired children frequently received inadequate information relevant to the negotiated rules of pupil culture and limited feedback concerning their inappropriate behaviour, they often displayed behaviours or actions which were incompatible with those considered appropriate by their peers.

When examining the context of pupil culture with respect to the integration of visually impaired students, many sources of incompatibility became apparent. Sighted students were often perplexed as to how to interact with their visually impaired classmates or how to respond to her/his atypical behaviours or mannerisms. Visually impaired students, frequently ignorant of the negotiated rules of school culture, behaved inappropriately. Teachers, usually unintentionally, reinforced the actions of visually impaired students which were unacceptable to the

children's peers. The social environment itself was often a hostile one for integrated children. Competence, verified in competitive settings or judged on inequitable criteria, routinely placed the visually impaired student at a disadvantage. Therefore, it was a complex and often confusing situation for all participants.

Acceptance is "clearly a multidimensional phenomenon" (Fine, 1981, p. 47). For the visually impaired children in this study, acceptance was also not a single construct fixed across time and social context. The same visually impaired child who was the centre of social interaction, lively discussion and boisterous laughter in the classroom, was avoided as a playmate on the playground. Some visually impaired children were accepted in varying degrees both in the classroom and on the playground. Thus, the "interplay of biography, situation, nonverbal communication, and linguistic exchange that characterizes all social interaction" (Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979, p. 8) was intrinsic to the negotiations for acceptance by visually impaired children. How integrated visually impaired students perceived their acceptance by and interactions with their classmates is discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

### Visually Impaired Pupils' Perceptions of Their Interaction with Peers

#### Introduction

In this chapter, as outlined in the second subpurpose (see page 6), integrated visually impaired pupils' perceptions of their interaction and acceptance by sighted peers are examined. Their own and others' viewpoints on their visual impairment, and their knowledge in relation to it, are presented first. Following this, is a discussion of the perceptions of visually impaired pupils concerning the 11 pupil assumptions of pupil culture identified in Chapter 5. These personal perspectives elaborate and clarify the meanings integrated visually impaired students have constructed in relation to the identified assumptions of pupil culture and the behaviour observed by the researcher.

Using interview data, the subjective meanings of the five visually impaired students integrated in regular classrooms are explored in order to determine how they interpret others in the school setting, perceive themselves, negotiate shared meanings and construct their social reality. Since knowledge is viewed as personal, subjective, and unique, it is important to understand how visually impaired students perceive themselves in relation to their classmates, that is, how they perceive their acceptance by and interaction with their peers. As well, since an individual's self-concept is believed to evolve through social interaction (Mead, 1934; Scott, 1969a&b; Tuttle, 1984), it is critical

to explore the perceptions of integrated visually impaired students relevant to their affective development. This exploration focuses upon the question, "Is an integrated setting one which enhances the development of a positive self-concept for visually impaired students?"

### Perceptions of Visual Impairment

Discussing their visual impairments was a serious undertaking for four of these children. Even though this topic was not introduced until the second time they had been interviewed and they seemed well at ease with the interviewer, having known her for several weeks, when discussing their visual impairment a sense of uneasiness and melancholy appeared to overcome each child. In the following excerpt, the visually impaired child's reaction to the discussion of his visual impairment was a dramatic change from his usual congenial conversational style.

I: The next questions I have, are about your visual impairment.

R: Yeah. [quiet voice]

I: Tell me about your visual impairment.

R: Well, I was born, I was born with it. And when [clears throat] when I was born, I was born with it and the doctors couldn't, couldn't do anything, and I wasn't able to a, walk, and let me see, I was not able to a, [pause] like, now I'm able to get things for myself but back, then I wasn't able to cuz my, thought I might hurt myself that's, but now I'm able to do that stuff.

I: Oh, yes. What caused your visual impairment?

R: I was born with it.

I: What does it mean to be visually impaired? What is it like?

R: Can't, a [clears throat and eyes are watering as if on the verge of crying], you can, [clears throat], you, like you're, you can't see some things or you can see but you can only see things, like, up close or far back, like, like my Mum. She's either near sighted or far sighted. Like without her glasses she can't see some things. My grandmother's near sighted. Cept she holds some things right up close to her if her glasses are off. Like, right up here [holds hand about 3 inches from his face]. She can't see it. So she has to have her glasses on in order to see things, right up close.

I: So how is her vision, the same or different from yours?

R: Because I'm neither of those.

I: How does your vision compare to your mother and grandmother's vision?

R: Like, I was born with it and they weren't, and they, and it started developing on them.  
 I: Ummhm. Their vision became poorer as they got older?  
 R: Yeah. My mum's got poorer in grade 9.  
 I: Is your vision as good as theirs?  
 R: [pause and clears throat, eyes fill with tears] Oh, yes and no. Well, like, like now I'm able to sit back from the TV and watching it. Like I tried it last night and I could see it okay. But, ah, but before I use to start sitting up close and, you see, they're able to sit back and now I'm starting to sit back too and getting..  
 I: So is your vision as good as your mother's?  
 R: No, no. [Site I, Peter]

At this point in the interview Peter took every opportunity to emphasize the things he could do, as well as redirect the conversation away from his visual impairment. However, even the discussion of issues related to visual impairment were obviously very stressful for him. Toward the end of that day's interview, Peter was asked about his reaction to discussing his visual impairment.

I: When I talk to kids with visual impairments some of them tell me that it's easy to talk to someone about their visual impairment and others say it is difficult. How do you feel?  
 R: [pause] I don't talk to many people, just like my parents. That's all.  
 I: About your visual impairment?  
 R: Yeah.  
 I: Tell me about that.  
 R: Because, that is a thing [voice breaking] I only like to keep open in my family.  
 I: I see. Okay.  
 R: But Mrs. Rogers [itinerant teacher] and all my teachers know about it [emphasizes word "know"] and all my friends, but I don't talk about it with them, only Mrs. Rogers and my family. [Site I, Peter]

A few days later when we were finishing the last part of our interview, Peter seemed much more relaxed when questions associated with his visual impairment were raised. His explanation is as follows:

I: When we were talking about visual impairment the other day, it seemed to upset you quite a bit. Today you seem not to be bothered by this at all. What's the difference?

R: Because, cuz today, I know you're still on the subject of visual impairment. I didn't know that..you just surprised me with that one. [means he was taken by surprise by the questions on visual impairment during our second interview] [Site I, Peter]

It appears that once Peter had time to reflect upon our initial discussion of his visual impairment, he was more comfortable and willing to share his perceptions of this personal matter.

There was also some confusion surrounding the visually impaired child's perception of being handicapped. The mother of the six-year-old visually impaired child related the following story during the parent interview:

[mother is commenting on society's attitude toward the handicapped] This is the 1980s and we are still, like, you know, so unsure of these people [handicapped people] and we kinda, we say that these people, because we tend to think of them as different, because they have a problem or you know, or a handicap, right? And, ah, the first time we went into a bathroom, a handicapped bathroom, [laughs] and Lisa went in there and she said, [in a whisper] "Am I allowed to be using this bathroom?," and I said, "Yes, dear," and she said, "But it says handicapped." Right? And I said, "Honey, as hard as this may be for you to believe," I said, "You're classed in that category." She says, "I am!" [laughs] And I said, "Yeah." But every time we go to the mall, you know, "Don't park in the handicapped zone." Right? And I said, "Never, I would never do that, Lisa." Right? And she said, "How come you can't park there if I'm considered handicapped? Why can't you park there?" Right? And I said, "Because you can walk!" Right? I said that the parking spots would mean for wheelchairs. Right? But it's hard for kids to understand what handicapped means. Cuz she said to me, "I thought handicapped meant only someone in a wheelchair." And I said, "No." I said, "You would be considered handicapped because you have a vision problem." You know. And I said, "Someone deaf would be considered handicapped." I said, "It's, it's all different." You know. And I think it really surprised her that, you know, I would..and, I figured it's better for you to know now than for someone to say to you after, you know, "She's a handicapped child." Right? For her to say, "What am I?" Right? "What is this word?" [Site II, parent]

The child's perception of this same incident was spontaneously related in relation to another question posed by the researcher during their interview a week and a half later.

I: Who are the kids in your class that the other kids do not seem to play with very often?  
 R: I don't know. Me, mostly me. [says in sad voice]  
 I: Other kids don't seem to play with you? Tell me about that.  
 R: Hard, to talk about.  
 I: It is.  
 R: Don't know. It's because I'm handicapped.  
 I: What does that mean?  
 R: Like it's my eye vision. Mum always kept it as a secret. [talking in a low, quiet voice]  
 I: Did she?  
 R: All this time [in whining voice].  
 I: Did she? Your mother kept it a secret.  
 R: 'Cept once. Sometimes [inaudible]  
 I: Nobody else knows.  
 R: Umhmm. Hardly anyone knows.  
 I: Oh, what do you mean your mother's keeping it as a secret? I don't understand.  
 R: She kept it a secret since I was a baby.  
 I: Who did she keep it a secret from?  
 R: Me!  
 I: Oh, from you. When did you find out?  
 R: She told me one night when I was in town with her.  
 I: Umhmm. Can you tell me about that.  
 R: Okay. Um, see well, I was using the bathroom for wheelchairs and then she told me. And I was happy [suddenly changes from quiet, sad voice to usual happy self].  
 I: Oh, I see. So did you know you were handicapped before that?  
 R: [nods no]  
 I: Tell me about your handicap.  
 R: I don't barely know anything about it. [Site II, Lisa]

For older children in the study this confusion surrounding the concept of being handicapped was apparent in their perceptions of the actual restrictions imposed by their disability. For example, in the following excerpt Peter is talking, in general, about friends. His visual impairment has not been introduced in the initial part of the discussion below.



I: Peter, you have told me children in your class who were your friends and those who were not your friends. Tell me how kids who are not your friend act toward you?

R: Mean, nasty...

I: Can you give me some examples?

R: They, like Mark for one, like, he's not my friend. Cuz like, he has, he keeps out, like, when I was taking names once [the teacher assigns a student to stand at the chalkboard and write down the names of those children who talk or misbehave while he is absent from the room], ah, kids would tell me that he had old sandwiches in his desk. And I didn't believe them so I went over and checked and, and there was!

I: So how was that being mean or nasty?

R: People who keep old sandwiches in their desk, they start to smell.

I: Umm, so when people are not your friend how do they act toward you?

R: Like they talk back, like Mark. Like he did some mean things to me, like, he told me to shut-up, like that. And that's what me and my brother both don't like about him.

I: How does it make you feel when Mark acts this way?

R: Depressed!

I: What are some things your friends do or say that help?

R: Well, they tell me that was a good pitch, like my, Alice, my housekeeper?

I: Ummhm.

R: I had to turn the steering wheel in my Grandpa's truck because he got it stuck and he was towing it with the tractor. And she told me very good [much pride in voice] when I came in there, I was as nervous, I was very nervous, I hadn't driven! I hadn't did that for a dog's age. I had never driven before! That was my first time. My legs were shaking [arms start flapping in excitement].

[Later in the interview]

I: Suppose I was a new kid just starting this school and I didn't know anyone. If you and I were talking before my first day of school, what would you tell me I should and should not do if I wanted the kids to like me?

R: You should let them, you should share your stuff. You should learn not to talk out during class. And try to stay within the boundaries. You don't know what that means.

I: No, tell me about that.

R: Well, stay within in the boundaries means, try and do stuff that they're doing. Like play with them. If you don't want to, like if they ask you to play with them, just say "No, I'd rather play with so-and-so."

I: And that's staying within the boundaries?

R: Yeah.

I: Tell me more things that are staying within the boundaries.

R: Like your trying to get as much work as you can done and, in the school day, so you don't have that much. That's what I, I'm

trying to stay in the boundaries. So I don't have that much homework cuz I hate homework.

[Later after discussion of visual impairment has been introduced]

I: Is there anything you want to do in school, but they don't let you do because of your visual impairment?

R: No.

I: They let you do anything you want to do?

R: [On verge of tears] They let me do anything I want to. But my mum and dad don't let me go out down those streets by myself.

I: Oh, yes.

R: Because of my vision. Yup.

I: Is there anything else either at home or at school that you're not allowed to do because you're visually impaired?

R: [pause] One thing I am allowed to do now that I found out...

I: What's that?

R: I'm allowed to turn the steering wheel in my father's truck. I thought that I was visually impaired, that ah, Grandpa wouldn't want me to...that he would wait until Dad got home to help him. Well, he came in and asked me and I found that as a shock! [very proud of this].

I: How did that make you feel?

R: [in a delighted voice] Surprised. [clears throat] Cuz I was the one that just ran out and told him that there was a woodchuck by our house. That was the same day that there was a woodchuck by our house.

I: Oh, I see.

R: That Grandpa got the truck stuck. [Site I, Peter]

Peter's comments about staying within the "boundaries" were common to all five visually impaired students as they expressed their concerns about doing what was perceived to be "the right stuff for normal people" and their negative feelings about acting different from those who were fully sighted.

Even Tony, the visually impaired student who felt most comfortable talking about his blindness was reported to experience some difficulties comprehending the restrictions of his disability. In the following excerpt his resource teacher relates one such example.

I: What do you think will happen when Tony starts to realize, maybe, some of the disadvantages of his blindness? Have you thought about that?

R: Yes! Last year the itinerant teacher use to take Tony out for dinner every Tuesday as part of his life skills program. And once he invited me to go along and we were in the restaurant, and Tony

looked at me and said, "What am I going to do when I'm 20 and I'm on my own? I'll never be able to live alone." And that really struck a chord with me, it really bothered me. And of course, Michael [itinerant teacher] said, "Yes you will, Tony. You'll learn. We're going to teach you how to do this and this and this." But he said, "How am I going to cook my supper? How am I going to do this?" And that really bothered me.

I: Umm.

R: Cuz he was thinking 12 years ahead. [Site III, teacher]

Despite the confusion surrounding the concept of "handicapped," the four partially sighted children seemed to have interpreted their visually impairment as something that was "bad" or something for which they should be ashamed. Corn (1987) and Mangold (1980) allude to the meanings visually impaired children construct from the subtle, negative messages they receive in relation to their visual impairment. Children receive negative messages about visual impairment when parents display disappointment when they cannot identify small symbols during vision tests, when well intentioned adults ask, "What's wrong with his vision?", when teachers express their frustrations because the child cannot see the page being used in a particular activity, and when they are the last ones chosen by their peers as a team member or partner for an activity. The use of the word "wrong" in the following letter, written by Jamie, the grade five visually impaired boy, is indicative of the subtle manner in which words affect the meanings constructed. He wrote this letter to demonstrate to his mother some new typewriter features which he had recently learned and spontaneously chose to write about his vision.

[the spelling errors have not been corrected] When I egzactly one years of age when they found out I was leagily blind because of the test's. Then when I was about three or four years old I had to go to toronto for more tests. I forgot to tell you when I was two I had a cat scan done to make sure there was not any more wrong. But they said there was nothing else wrong. So now my

decrease is better than what it had been. But my sight has not changed and now I am in grade five and I love using my typewriter and the computer. I hope my eyes get better. [Site IV, Jamie]

All of the visually impaired children in this study attributed their exclusion from particular activities by their peers to their visual impairment. Even the child who was routinely uncooperative with peers and teachers, reported the visual impairment to be the grounds for the rebuffs received from some peers. The potency of being visually impaired on the self-concept of these children is exemplified in the following excerpts--the first, in which visual impairment is perceived to have a positive impact upon popularity, the second, in which it is perceived to have a negative effect.

[Excerpt 1]

R: I'm pretty popular.  
 I: What makes you popular?  
 R: Cuz people like me.  
 I: Why do people like you?  
 R: I don't know, because I'm blind maybe.  
 I: Is that why they like you?  
 R: I don't know, yeah, probably. [Site III, Tony]

[Excerpt 2]

I: What do your friends know about your visual handicap?  
 R: Not much.  
 I: Can you think of anyone who knows anything about it?  
 R: Well, you know that girl I was telling you about? [a girl in grade 6] She just doesn't like it.  
 I: She doesn't like your visual handicap? [nods yes] The one in grade 6. How do you know that?  
 R: Why would she try to beat me up if I..wasn't visually handicapped. I wish I knew where she lived. I could tell her parents.  
 I: Does having a visual impairment make it easier or more difficult to make friends?  
 R: [pause] A bit difficult.  
 I: Can you tell me about this?  
 R: You see, most people hate me. Like Billy, he's in the last grade. And he's on my field day team. He hates me.  
 I: Can you tell me more about why it's more difficult to make friends if you're visually handicapped?  
 R: Well, it's easier to make friends when, you're, you have perfectly good eyesight.

I: Is it? Can you tell me about that? What makes it easier?  
 R: Cuz if someone asks you something far away when you were legally blind and you didn't tell them and they were new? [means new to the school, i.e. a new acquaintance]  
 I: Umhmm.  
 R: Then if you didn't see it they'd know and if you wanted to keep it a secret...  
 I: Do you want to keep it a secret?  
 R: [nods yes] But it just came out of my mouth.  
 I: Why do you want to keep it a secret?  
 R: Because everybody makes fun. [Site II, Lisa]

Having a visual impairment was perceived by the visually impaired child as problematic for friends as well as for her/his parents and teachers. This perception is illustrated in the following excerpt:

I: Are there other kids in your school with a visual impairment?  
 R: No.  
 I: Would you like there to be?  
 R: No.  
 I: Can you tell me about that?  
 R: Because I like friends who are sighted.  
 I: What about those that are visually impaired?  
 R: I do have one friend but he's not in this school. Well, he, well, I wish there wasn't because, people, it would be hard trying to get along with, ah, four visually impaired people, two or, that's as number as you can go, two.  
 I: Can you tell me about that?  
 R: Like it'd be too, kinda hard playing with three or four people at the same time. Like one person that is visually impaired is all you can play with at one time.  
 I: Can you tell me about that?  
 R: No! [pause] It's more difficult to play with someone who's visually impaired. [Site I, Peter]

Limited knowledge concerning their visual impairment was another commonality among the five visually impaired children in this study. The oldest child, who was nearly thirteen, provided the following information:

I: Tell me about your visual impairment.  
 R: Well, I was blind in one eye since I was born.  
 I: Umhmm.  
 R: At least I think I was since I was born, then, I think this eye turned or something.  
 I: Oh, yes.

R: I don't know. I think they had to put a laser in this one so it would, the retina would stay.  
 I: Oh, yes. That's your good eye.  
 R: Yeah.  
 [later in the interview]  
 I: What do the children in your class know about your visual impairment?  
 R: They know I'm blind in one eye.  
 I: And what do they know about the amount of vision you have in your other eye?  
 R: They know it isn't much [laughs].  
 I: What's your visual acuity?  
 R: What's, what's that mean?  
 I: Like, 20/20 is normal visual acuity and..  
 R: I'm not sure. I think it's 20 over 40, I'm not, I don't know. I'm not sure. Maybe it's five out of twenty or something, I don't know. [Site V, Charles]

None of the children in the study gave the medical name for their eye condition, for example, optic atrophy, nor were they aware of their visual acuity.

R: Jamie, you told me you have some problems with your eyesight. Tell me about that.  
 R: Like, how did it come?  
 I: Yes, just tell me about your, what do you call it?  
 R: Oh, god, I can't remember that name. Lazy eye, it's called lazy eye but there's some different title for it. I don't know what that title is any more.  
 I: Do you say you have a sight problem, you have vision handicap..  
 R: Yep.  
 I: You have a..  
 R: Yep, vision handicapped. I'm legally blind, actually.  
 I: You're legally blind. Okay. Well, tell me about that.  
 R: Like what is it or how blind I am and things?  
 I: Sure.  
 R: My blindness is 20%. I'm 20% blind, I'm three quarters blind, what am I saying, three quarters and 5% blind. I have 20% eyesight left.  
 I: You have 20% of your eyesight left. Okay. Do you know anything else about your visual impairment?  
 R: I was born that way and I had to go to Toronto for some tests on my eyesight. [Site IV, Jamie]

The four partially sighted children were anxious to assure the interviewer they were not totally blind but had some "pretty good

vision." All were aware they were "born with it" and their parents "wished they weren't that way."

### Visually Impaired Pupils' Perceptions Related to the Assumptions of Pupil Culture

Peer interaction between the visually impaired children observed and their classmates was difficult to typify. As Blumer (1969) contends, children seem to act toward things on the basis of the meaning they have for them. However, the interpretive process used by sighted children to construct their meanings and those of visually impaired children theirs, could be seen to differ in some circumstances. "The interplay of biography, situation, nonverbal communication, and linguistic exchange that characterizes all social behavior" (Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979, p. 8) posed some different situations for specific visually impaired children in particular situations. To assist in an organized presentation of this information, the perceptions of integrated visually impaired students, relevant to their interaction with and acceptance by sighted peers, are discussed in relation to the 11 pupil assumptions of pupil culture.

#### Pupil Assumption 1 (Associate with "Best Friends")

The first assumption of pupil culture concerned the requirement to play and associate with "best friends." The perceptions associated with a "best friend" were different for the visually impaired children than for their classmates. During the interviews the visually impaired children consistently emphasized two significant criteria for friends--

"they don't make fun of my eyesight and if I have problems they'll help me out."

The most frequently mentioned characteristic of friendship for sighted children was that "best friends hang around with you." During observations it was evident that children played predominately with those they had spontaneously identified as their best friends during the interviews. However, the visually impaired children did not seem to identify "best friends" on the basis of frequent or routine interaction. In fact, three of the visually impaired children appeared to struggle with the concept of "best friends." This was particularly evident when they were asked to differentiate between "best friends" and "okay friends."

I: Can you tell me the names of your best friends?

R: I like a lot of friends [snickers].

I: Who are your best friends?

R: Oh...I don't know, Mark maybe, ah, I don't know, like, I like most, my best friends are most of the friends on the playground. Cuz I get along with people.

I: Yes. Any other best friends in this school?

R: Um..well, Donna [older girl in upper grade] helps me. Donna, she, she's kind of a best friend, she helps me. All the time. She's in grade 6.

I: Can you tell me the names of your best friends in your class?

R: In my class, let's see...everyone's my best friend in my class, like...

I: You're very, very, best.

R: Probably John.

I: Okay. Anyone else?

R: Um...John, Mark, Julie, Elaine and...well, that's about it. I like everyone else though.

I: Can you tell me the names of the children in your class who are not your friends?

R: I, no, I, there is none. [Site III, Tony]

A few minutes later in the interview, this same child had grouped his friends in three piles--"best friends", "okay friends" and "not



friends." Even following this exercise, he still encountered considerable difficulty categorizing his friends.

I: You told me the names of kids who were your very "best friends" and those who were "okay friends." What's the difference between a very best and an okay friend?

R: Well, very best means pretty, like very, very good. They're good. But okay means, like, they're good too.

I: What would "okay friends" do which would be different from very, very "best friends"?

R: Um. [long pause]

I: How could you decide who's an "okay friend" and who's a "very best friend"?

R: Well, most of them should be very best but I mean, like I need some, well sometimes they're bad, like, not, not very many people like them. [Site III, Tony]

In relation to their classmates who had spontaneous and definite responses to such questions, (see Chapter 5 for examples of excerpts related to this topic) the visually impaired children were less specific and more uncertain about the nature of friendship. For example, one visually impaired child who reported all classmates to be friends, suggested a way in which one might distinguish among "best," "okay" and "not friends" but had obviously not executed the proposed plan.

I: What's the difference between "okay" and "best friends"?

R: Like, what would I class them as?

I: Umhmm.

R: In between.

I: And what makes a person a good friend?

R: [pause]

I: What makes a person a good friend, or an in between friend or not a friend?

R: Like you ask them if they can try..you give a test like kinda, this is what I think I do. I give them a secret and tell them to hang onto it until I say they can let go of it?

I: Ummhm.

R: Like that would be to decide who would be my best friend because, you know, they can hang on to a secret if I tell them one. [Site I, Peter]

Although it is beyond the confines of this study to determine the process by which different perceptions of friendship are developed by

visually impaired children, it is apparent that, whether they lacked experiences with childhood friendships or their visual limitations resulted in a different experience, their verbalized perception of friendship was different from their classmates.

Pupil Assumption 2 (Do What Others Do)

The second assumption of pupil culture centered on the need to be able to do what other children were doing if a child was to be part of the group. The two younger visually impaired children in this study did not seem particularly aware of the things they could not do, either in the classroom or on the playground. The three older children perceived themselves not only as doing different things than their peers but, in many cases, unable to do what their peers were doing.

In the following excerpt, the visually impaired pupil was responding to the interviewer's questions about things children liked to do with their friends:

I: What about with your friends at school? What do you do with them?

R: Talk and all that, like. Use the computer and all that stuff. You know not things like other kids do.

I: Not things like other kids do.

R: Like they, like they'd be playing all kinds of stuff, like, I don't know, maybe, I guess they'd be hanging around too. But, you know. [Site V, Charles]

In initial interviews, one visually impaired child rationalized his preference to stay on the swings all noon hour as related to his safety on the playground. In the third interview he elaborated upon his perceptions of "dangerous" as well as those of his ability to participate.

I: When we were talking about what you liked to do at recess and noon hour, you said you preferred the swings because some of the

other games were too dangerous. What games do you think are too dangerous for you?

R: And some I can't even do!

I: Oh, okay tell me about the ones you think are too dangerous and the ones you can't even do.

R: Like monkey bar tag, I cannot play that. It's dangerous. Cuz I can't even get up on the monkey bars and it, and if, and since I can't, I might run around the ground if I want to play. And someone could go "oomp" and kick me right in the eye and then knock my sight out forever. See that's why I hate, I don't like the monkey bars. Only the monkey bars I really prefer are the other ones.

I: That were on the other playground?

R: No. Like there's a big, big, set and then there's a little set.

I: Oh, yes, right.

R: I prefer the little set [the ones that are lower].

I: So monkey bar tag is a game that is too dangerous. Are there any others that are too dangerous?

R: Baseball, because, like maybe if I'm trying to hit that ball, the ball might come and hit me right in there [points to eyes] and I might not see it.

I: Now tell me about some of the games you can't do?

R: Tag, I'm not fast enough for it. And baseball, like if we were playing down in the field, may have a real game going, and I, was, say I was up, and I hit the ball, and say I was running, but the pitcher might be faster than me, see?

I: Ummhm.

R: And he could go boomp, and say, "You're out." See, see, I need more speed and more, better sight. [Site I, Peter]

Their perceptions of their incompetence in some activities

appeared to have a direct effect upon when and what activities they

would attempt to join. One visually impaired child described the

following process used to determine with whom to play:

I: I noticed on the playground you don't seem to have one or two kids whom you always hang around with?

R: I know.

I: It's different each day. Can you tell me about that?

R: Because like, sometimes, it depends really, cuz like, sometimes other kids are having too much fun, and on the off chance some persons aren't having fun so I just walk around with him. And on the other days, if someone, if the person I hung around with the day before, is with someone else and the other guys are not with anyone else, that's when I'll hang around with them.

I: When you say they're having too much fun, if a group is having too much fun, do you join with that group or you don't join with that group?

R: Well, it depends what they're doing, cuz if they're having too much fun playing catch or something, and they don't think I'm that good at it, then I don't, I don't bother with it. Cuz I don't like getting into arguments with other people. For no reason.

[Site IV, Jamie]

Jamie had learned that a certain level of competence was required as a prerequisite to his participation with peers and, as well, perceived his lack of skill in catching a ball sufficient reason to disqualify him from joining this game.

During the five months of observation of visually impaired children, it became evident that they have restricted access to information relevant to both their level of competence and that of their peers. For example, all four pupils who used print were known for their large, "messy" penmanship. They perceived themselves to have inferior skills in this area but none was aware of other children with similar difficulties, that is, poor penmanship. This scenario was a common one, both in the classroom and on the playground. It seemed to contribute to a belief by visually impaired children that sighted people were "super beings" and made it difficult for them to perceive their "own errors in proper perspective" (Mangold, 1980, p. 96). Therefore, visually impaired children perceived themselves, in general, to be less competent than their fully sighted peers.

#### Pupil Assumption 3 (Gain Group Access)

The importance of initiating interaction to gain access to a group was the essence of this assumption. As discussed in Chapter 5, visually impaired children perceived themselves to have difficulty locating the child or children with whom they wished to interact. This contributed

to their belief that they did not have a choice of those with whom they should interact but that "others choose." As discussed under Pupil Assumption 2 (Do What Others Do) in this chapter, the visually impaired children perceived their level of competence in a specific activity as criteria when deciding whether to initiate interaction with a group of children. They all reported being reluctant to join in activities they perceived as too difficult, too dangerous or requiring a skill level beyond their own.

#### Pupil Assumption 4 (Boy-Girl Relationships)

This assumption addressed the restrictions within the pupil culture on the interaction between boys and girls. Although all of the visually impaired children perceived those of the opposite gender to be less desirable playmates, this created dilemmas for them. For the boys in particular, interaction with girls was often the only alternative to being alone. The following excerpt illustrates the dilemma this assumption created for one visually impaired boy:

- I: What are your favorite things to do with your friends?  
 R: Ah, play catch and..what else do I like to do? Hmm, and bug some girls, I love bugging girls.  
 I: Okay. Tell me about bugging girls. How do you go about that?  
 R: Just tease them. You always miss, like you try to hit them but you always try to miss them?  
 I: Umhmm.  
 R: Like you run after them then you always miss them.  
 I: So you take a swing at them..  
 R: But you miss them on purpose.  
 I: I see. How else do you bug girls?  
 R: All kinds of different ways. I'd be here for hours explaining them all.  
 I: Well, I have hours, tell me some of them. I find this very interesting.  
 R: Well, ah, um..you just run around and bug them, trip them, well you don't want to trip them, really. You can call them little, funny names and things.  
 I: Can you give me an example of funny names you might call them?  
 R: Weirdo or bird brain. Real weird names.

I: How do girls feel about being bugged by boys?  
 R: Not much. They get all mad and everything.  
 I: Do they?  
 R: I don't care, though. [Site IV, Jamie]

This visually impaired boy's perception of the appropriate interaction with girls is typical of those of his classmates. Like the majority of the other boys in his class, he also selected only boys as "best friends." However when he described the criteria for "best friends," the girls who sat in his group with him were obviously the only ones meeting these standards.

I: What's the difference between kids who are "best friends" and kids who are "okay friends"?  
 R: Well, it depends, cuz some people help me. Other people always weren't there when I need them.  
 I: They always aren't there when you need them or they always are?  
 R: Like some, my best friends are always there when I need them, and my "okay friends" are there sometimes. And sometimes my best friends are always nice to me and my "okay friends" are nice to me sometimes. [Site IV, Jamie]

Later in the interview when he was choosing which children to work with on a project, he chose the boys he earlier identified as his "best friends," as was typical of his male classmates. However, these boys didn't consider him to be their "best friend" and he, in fact, perceived them to exclude him from their group.

I: Which kids would you choose to work with on a class project?  
 R: Lee, David, Kevin, Daniel and Colin.  
 I: Tell me about them.  
 R: They're all good at working at projects and things.  
 I: Which kids would you not choose to work with on a project in class?  
 R: Hmm. Marla, Lisa, Matthew, Ashley, Ryan, Wendell, Jacklyn..Donna, Darren, Morgan, Michelle, Jodi, or Dana, or Aleasha. [Rhymes them off.]  
 I: Tell me about them.  
 R: Well, half, half them are stupid at working on projects, and a couple of them are pretty good but I don't want to work with girls.  
 I: Oh, tell me about that.

R: About what?  
 I: Not wanting to work with girls.  
 R: Because, oh, it gives me the shivers, I hate working with girls. They bug me.  
 I: Now, I'm a little bit confused here because you, your group is all girls.  
 R: Oh, yeah. Yes, that's cuz they always, they want me to. [They want him to sit with their group.]  
 I: Oh, okay. You haven't moved your seat up beside, let's see, Lee, or..  
 R: No, I know they don't want me to, really.  
 I: Oh, I see.  
 R: They're happy in their groups.  
 I: Tell me about the seating arrangement in your class? I find it very interesting.  
 R: Cuz at first I was at the counter, where the pencil sharpener was, with four other people, then I moved over by, by myself, then I moved with Darren and Matthew [the two most unpopular boys in the class], then I moved by myself again for a few days, and then I moved back with, over there to Dana [three girls sitting in a group who allowed him to join them] and them. The reason I sit there is so Jodi and them can help me sometimes, cuz I can't read some of the prints.  
 I: Oh, okay. And why wouldn't you sit with Daniel and David [boys he earlier named as "best friends"]?  
 R: I would, I would if they'd let me.  
 I: Oh, they won't let you.  
 R: Like they, it's not that they don't like me, it's just that they have a group of four already and they wouldn't want, and they don't really want me to sit there. [Site IV, Jamie]

Whether through past experience or other interactions, Jamie perceived children of the same gender to be his appropriate play or workmates. However, he also perceived them to be inaccessible to him and chose girls who "gave him the shivers" as one alternative to being alone.

The perceptions of the visually impaired girl in this study in relation to girl-boy relationships were typical of those noted during observations of and in discussions with other girls in her class.

I: In the gym the other day, Lisa, you were the only girl in your group doing activities like rolling and somersaults on the mat. Do you remember that day? [nods yes] You didn't seem to talk very much to the boys in your group. Tell me about that.  
 R: I don't like boys that much.  
 I: You don't like them too much.

R: Except my brother. Trevor, it [means his name] wouldn't be on the list [her class list]. [Site II, Lisa]

When she sorted her classmates into friendship groups, that is, "best friends", "okay friends" and "not friends", similar to the other five girls interviewed in this class, Lisa had all girls in her "best friend" pile, a few boys and some girls in her "okay friends" pile, and predominantly boys in her "not friends" pile. She perceived male classmates to be inappropriate playmates but, as the male visually impaired students, when faced with the alternative of having no one to play with, a child of the opposite sex would do.

I: Okay. Now this group who are not your friends, can you tell me about them? What makes them not your friends?

R: Christine went like this at noon hour and it hurted. [stuck her finger into the side of her temple]

I: She pushed her finger into your head. Okay what things do these other kids that are not your friends do?

R: Shawn's always beating me up.

I: Shawn does.

R: Umhmm. But I get inside the school before he gets me.

I: So kids who beat you up are not your friends, or kids who try to beat you up. What other things make kids not your friends?

R: I don't know....Sometimes I've heard people swear. You've heard Andy swear, haven't ya?

I: Umhmm.

R: I mean Andy in grade 2. If you had his name I'd definitely put him as my worstest bad friend!

I: Umhmm. You were playing with Andy at noon today.

R: Just for a little while.

I: Umhmm. Do you play with people who aren't your friends?

R: Sometimes. If there's nobody else. [Site II, Lisa]

As mentioned earlier, girls appeared to be more empathetic and accepting of visually impaired students than did male classmates. However, if visually impaired students become increasingly isolated from their same-gender peer group as they proceed through elementary school, as seemed to be indicated in this study and that of both Eaglestein (1975) and Goupil and Comeau (1983), visually impaired girls may be at a



greater risk socially than are visually impaired boys. Visually impaired boys would conceivably still have the more accepting female group of classmates upon which to draw for companionship, even if just during classroom hours.

Pupil Assumptions 5 (Unpopular with Unpopular) and 6 (Avoid Unpopular)

These two assumptions indicated that unpopular children ought to play with other unpopular children but association with unpopular children has a negative effect on a child's reputation. As discussed in Chapter 5, the visually impaired children seemed to be in a somewhat neutral position in relation to popularity. They were not members of "the popular group" in their classes nor were they treated as many of the unpopular children, that is, teased or rejected. Table 1 presents the perceptions related to popularity of the five visually impaired children in this study.

The two younger visually impaired children, Lisa and Tony, appeared to experience some difficulties in relation to their perceptions of who was popular and unpopular. Thus, their perceptions of their popularity in relation to their classmates was affected. However, the three upper elementary boys seemed to identify the same children as unpopular as did their sighted peers and to make choices about their interaction with these peers. In the classroom where they were often expected to find a partner, they did not perceive themselves as having a choice but as being forced to "take who's ever left."

V.I. Pupil	Perceived Self as Popular	Perceived by Peers as Popular	Played with Unpopular Children	Perceived Self to Play with Unpopular Children	Worked with Unpopular Children	Perceived Self to Work with Unpopular Children
Lisa	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Tony	Yes	Yes	Yes-also girls*	No	No	No
Peter	No	No	Alone	No	Yes, unpopular girls*	Yes
Jamie	Average	Average	No	No	No, but with girls*	No
Chas.	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

\* boy interacting with girls

Table 8: Perceptions of Visually Impaired Pupils in Relation to Popularity

Charles, the fifth student in Figure 8, had an unpopular boy as his "best friend." Although he perceived this boy to be unpopular with classmates, he routinely played with this boy. They were "best friends."

I: Are there kids that most kids don't talk to very often?

R: Justin.

I: Tell me about that.

R: Well some, kids think he's, you know..think he's an egg head, sometimes. But I don't. At least I don't.

I: What's an egg head?

R: You know how he looks. You know how he looks. But that doesn't matter to me. He use to wear glasses but now he doesn't.

[Later in the interview]

I: Who are the kids in your class who have difficulty making friends?

R: A..Justin, I think, cuz, ah, Brian...Mark, he has a lot of other friends who are, you know.

I: Mark has friends. Tell me about Justin and Brian.  
 R: Brian comes in late, for one thing.  
 I: He what?  
 R: He comes in late. Well, that's it, that probably puts a bad reputation for him.  
 I: I see.  
 R: And Justin, he gets, some kids pick on him a lot.  
 I: Tell me about that.  
 R: Because they just, you know how his, a few of them think he does have an egg head, the way his head, but he doesn't. [motions to the forehead area]  
 I: Oh, because of the shape of his head.  
 R: Yeah, but, I don't think he's dumb. [Site V, Charles]

Charles perceived his "best friend" as unpopular and also seemed to be aware that he was in the same category as his friend. Yet, for the visually impaired students, being without a friend was not a viable alternative.

I: Who are the kids in your class that the other kids do not seem to play with very often?  
 R: Maybe, like they don't really play with me, Justin and Brian. Maybe a bit with Brian. Brian usually hangs out with his brother in grade 4 and all them.  
 I: Why don't they play with you and Justin that much?  
 R: Maybe cuz we just don't, maybe cuz they just don't, you know. Hang around with us, maybe they just don't notice us, or something.  
 I: Oh.  
 R: I'm not sure, though.  
 [Later in the interview]  
 I: What do you like about these friends?  
 R: They're nice. Like, you know.  
 I: What do you not like about them?  
 R: Well, um, sometimes Justin thinks I'm more smart than him.  
 I: Does he.  
 R: Yeah, and I'm like, my Mom said, "You should have took that as a compliment." It's that, that I don't like, cuz, I don't like it when, like you know..[in a sad voice] when no one's being my friend.  
 I: Oh, when no one's being your friend.  
 R: Yeah, sorta. [Site V, Charles]

It was difficult to determine if Charles was aware of the potentially negative effect his association with Justin could have on his own reputation. However, the two younger visually impaired children did not

seem to be aware of the potentially negative aspects of associating with an unpopular peer.

I: Anything else about your school friends.

R: Well, Patrick Rogers, not Patrick Smith [the Patrick in his class], Patrick Rogers?

I: Umhmm.

R: He, he is a bad boy.

I: Umhmm.

R: Um, he's not in our class but we, I, use to play trucks with him, like, like, we use to pretend me and him were trucks. And we use to run around the playground, walk around the playground.

I: Umhmm.

R: And go, "Umm, ummm."

I: You said he was bad. How was he bad?

R: Like he goes to school store [off limits to elementary students] and stuff. He's fat [laughs]. He's suppose to be anyways. That's what they say. [Site III, Tony]

Tony was aware of the unpopularity of some of his playmates but seemed oblivious to the effect of his association with them upon his own reputation.

#### Pupil Assumption 7 (Same as Classmates)

This assumption contends that to be part of the group children ought to do the same things as their classmates, like the same things as their classmates, dress the same as their classmates, and act the same way as their classmates. Under Pupil Assumption 2 (Do What Others Do), the perceptions of the visually impaired pupils in relation to doing the same things as their classmates was discussed. An extension of being able to do the same thing was perceived by some of the visually impaired children to mean they must be able to do it in the same way, as well. These children perceived the use of low vision aids or adaptive equipment as unacceptable and as "making them different than the other kids."

I: Tell me about your large print books.  
 R: [pause] Well, they have large print in them as you say, seen.  
 I: Umhmm.  
 R: And ah...  
 I: What else can you tell me about them?  
 R: Oh. Well, they don't look the same as the other books. They're black and every coloured picture they have [means the large print books don't have coloured pictures like the regular print copies]...that's makes me mad.  
 I: It makes you angry.  
 R: It's not very fun. And I don't like it.  
 I: Okay. Can you see them better?  
 R: Yes.  
 I: Tell me about your desk top. [used to support printed material closer to the child's eyes]  
 R: My desk top, I don't, it use to be wooden. As you know, and now it's, covered it with, what's that called? Bristol board. [child had marked all over it to make it too messy to be appropriate for class use]  
 I: Oh, yes.  
 R: I just remember quick, didn't I? [referring to quickly remembering the name "bristol board"]  
 I: Yes. Why did you cover it with bristol board?  
 R: It was all marked and that.  
 I: Oh. Do you like to use your desk top?  
 R: No.  
 I: Can you tell me about that?  
 R: Okay, cuz it looks all, like a lot different from the other kids. [Site II, Lisa]

This visually impaired student perceived her need to use adaptive aids as making her different from her peers and this "difference" to be a negative aspect of her being.

The visually impaired children in this study perceived their likes and dislikes, in general, to be similar to those of their peers. Their limited participation in some activities seemed to be related to their perception of incompetence in relation to their peers or actual exclusion by some peers.

All of the visually impaired children perceived themselves to be different from their peers in relation to what they could see. Their visual loss was perceived to create hardships for them within the class.

For example, they perceived themselves to take longer than their peers to complete reading and writing assignments, to travel from one area to another, or to prepare for and put away learning materials. They perceived their visual impairment to necessitate "a little more attention" and "a little more help" from both their teachers and their peers.

Having a visual impairment was also perceived to create other problems for these children. The three older visually impaired children reported, "We can't do as many things as other kids." This did not appear to be a perception of the two younger children. All but Tony perceived their visual impairment to hinder the process of making friends.

Peter was the only visually impaired child who did not perceive himself to be teased about his visual impairment. Although such teasing was never observed by the researcher on the school grounds, it was reported by four of the children as something that happened both there and with out-of-school friends. For three of the children such teasing focused on their inability to do something because they were "blind."

The albino child did perceive herself to be different in appearance as well. She complained of being teased by older children on the playground. This teasing seemed to centre more upon her appearance than her visual impairment.

[Excerpt 1]

I: What does it mean to be visually handicapped? What is it like?

R: Well, it's not that fun.

I: No.

R: Everybody makes fun of me cuz I have white hair and I'm blind.

I: Oh. What types of things do they do to make fun of you?

R: Call me names....

I: What names?

R: All sorts of names. Snow White. [Site II, Lisa]

[Excerpt 2]

I: Does Lisa complain about being teased or picked on by other children at school?

R: Every now and then but not on a continuous basis I would say..

I: What types of things does she say kids tease her about or incidents where they pick on her?

R: [pause] Ah, I would have to say that at least 70 or 80 percent of the time it would have to be her hair. That they would say something nasty about her hair or something like that, which she is very sensitive about, you know, cuz I think on one level she hears the kids all the time about, "You're old, you've got white hair," and on the other level she hears from adults, "Oh, you have such beautiful white hair. I would love to have your hair!" And maybe at times that's why she tends to like adults more. Because they're a lot more accepting of her just as she is rather than saying, "Well, if your hair is brown you'd probably be more popular." You know. So, I would have to say that would probably be the most thing that she gets teased about. [Site II, parent]

Vander Kolk and Bright (1983), in their research on albinism, concluded that the albino's "extraordinary physical features tend to have a stronger impact on others than the limited vision" (p. 49). Although it was not apparent whether Lisa perceived her appearance to be more responsible for her being different from peers than her visual impairment, she did, indeed, perceive this difference.

Perceptions of differences in relation to how children behaved were almost nonexistent among the visually impaired children. Even those with obvious mannerisms did not perceive their behaviours as different from those of their peers. One visually impaired boy who rarely faced the person to whom he was talking seemed almost amazed to hear he did this.

I: In class, sometimes I notice you sit with your back to the group. Tell me about that.

R: What do you mean sit with my back to the group?

I: Your back is facing the other kids.

R: What do you mean? When I'm sitting in the classroom?

I: Yeah.

R: Like this?  
 I: Yeah.  
 R: Well, I don't know, like, just, you mean like this when I'm sitting in the row? [He's very perplexed by this.]  
 I: Right.  
 R: Like this, because I have to look at the board.  
 I: Okay, sometimes when the teacher's reading, for instance..  
 R: Like this?  
 I: Yeah, umhmm.  
 R: You mean like this, I sit like, I don't sit the back, I don't really know when I sit with my back to them.  
 I: Oh, okay. Sometimes when the teacher is reading and she's sitting on the edge of Justin's desk?  
 R: Yeah.  
 I: I notice most of the other kids will be facing her but you have your back to her. You don't turn around and look toward her when she's reading.  
 R: Ah, I don't know! Well, maybe I just sit like this and listen. [demonstrates sitting with head down] Yeah, that's what I do.  
 I: I see. Okay. Usually with your head down and listen. [Site V. Charles]

Similar difficulties perceiving major differences in these types of behaviours were common to three of the other children. Tony in particular was unaware of the reaction of children to his constant bouncing, particularly when he was standing beside them and in physical contact with them. As is evident in the following excerpt, he was aware it annoyed them but not of how "different" others perceived him to be. He even did it purposefully to tease. However, Tony was not aware that children purposefully avoided getting near him in the lineups, exchanged glances of disgust or annoyance when he jumped about, or ran from him when he called for them as he was standing bouncing in one spot. Although he complained that "kids" in his class wouldn't play with him on the playground, he did not seem cognizant of the possible association with his atypical behaviour.

I: When you play with kids in the line up, sometimes you bounce up and down [he snickers]. What do the kids think of this?



R: Oh, I think they get kind of mad. That's why I do it though. Just to get them..mad at me. [laughs] I act like a dog.  
 I: Umhmm. Tell me about that.  
 R: It's fun. How do you know all about me?  
 I: I've been watching you on the playground.  
 R: How come you never talk to me when I'm doing?  
 I: Well, I'm watching, I'm not talking. I've been watching lots of different kids. That's why I'm asking all these questions so I can understand better what's going on.  
 R: Too bad you're not, too bad you don't ask ah, anybody else in any other grade, like, any other classes.  
 I: Yes. Tell me more about bouncing up and down.  
 R: It's fun. And, kids don't like it. That's why I do it though.  
 I: Is it.  
 R: Yeah. [Site III, Tony]

In some respects, this situation is similar to the restrictions on information these children receive in relation to comparing their competence to that of their peers. They must rely on those in their environment to give them accurate messages about how their behaviour is perceived by others since their access to such information is limited. Without feedback relevant to their inappropriate behaviours, they could not conform to the criteria for acceptance inherent to many aspects of pupil culture.

#### Pupil Assumption 8 ("Best Friends" Help)

The main contention of this assumption is that "best friends" ought to help each other. Perceptions related to this criteria for friendship varied among the five visually impaired children in this study. The one child who had a "best friend" did not perceive this friend as being able to help him in class because his friend was learning disabled and attended a special class for half the day. For this visually impaired boy, the teacher was perceived to be the main source of assistance both in the classroom and on the playground.

The totally blind child in this study perceived a need for help with many more things than did the partially sighted children. Even those things he was capable of doing independently, he perceived as situations in which peers could continue to assist him.

I: You told me the kids in your class who were your friends and those who were not such good friends. Tell me what a good friend should be like, how he or she should act?

R: Nice! And they play with you and they can help you.

I: Umhmm. Tell me more about it.

R: They can take you to choir practice or intramurals and stuff. They can help you to French...[These three things he could do independently.] [Site III, Tony]

However, Tony did not perceive a connection between "best friend" relationships and helping. Most peers were expected to help. There was also a sense that his perception of helping was more like the concept of companionship than helping. In the following excerpts, Tony describes situations in which he receives help with activities he could possibly do independently.

I: If you were talking to a class who were going to have a blind student in their class for the first time, what sorts of things would you tell them?

R: Well, they usually ask me questions so I always answer their questions so..it depends what they ask.

I: What things do you think would be important for them to know about a blind student who was going to be in their class?

R: Well, people like, most of them, would have to know, sometimes to help me, get my cane and stuff. [Site III, Tony].

Tony's cane was kept in the corner directly opposite his desk and he could easily retrieve it when necessary. His perception of the help he received from the student attendant also seemed to indicate a different perception of helping.

I: This year Mrs. Matheson goes with you to gym. Last year she didn't. Tell me about this.

R: [pause] I don't know, well, she's pretty nice, to take, take, help me in gym. But the only thing is she's not allowed to help me when in, intramurals because Jeffrey [physically handicapped

boy who is in a wheelchair] can't go because like, he has a certain day.

I: So last year she didn't help you and this year she does. Can you tell me why it's different this year?

R: I don't know. You'd have to ask her. I don't know. I never asked her.

I: What do you think?

R: Ah, I don't know, like, I think she likes helping me. [Site III, Tony]

There seemed to be a sense that others enjoyed helping him and he, in turn, both appreciated the help which made the completion of many tasks less cumbersome and, as well, delighted in their company.

Peter perceived friends as those who would help him but he did not see this help restricted to "best friends." Those who helped him most often were girls in his class and he reported a preference for working with girls. He did not have a "best friend" nor did he perceive himself to require an extraordinary amount of help from his peers.

Jamie did perceive a definite relationship between those whom he considered his "best friends" and those who were willing to help him. However, he did not routinely interact in class or on the playground with the children he identified as his best friends. He perceived his "okay friends," the girls with whom he sat, as his main source of help in the classroom. In return, he readily volunteered his assistance whenever the opportunity presented itself.

Finally, the fifth visually impaired child, Lisa, perceived "best friends" primarily as playmates. On the playground she did not require their assistance. In the classroom conspicuous peer assistance was most often prohibited. However, during the observation period Lisa was frequently observed copying answers from classmates' workbooks or worksheets after they had finished the task and sat waiting for the next

activity to begin. Therefore, in general, these visually impaired students perceived help differently than did their peers and to be inherent in disparate situations.

Pupil Assumption 9 (Play with Classmates)

This assumption contends that children should play with classmates. The perceptions of visually impaired pupils in relation to this assumption seemed indistinct. They perceived themselves to have limited choices with respect to with whom they played. Although during the interviews they spontaneously chose classmates as desirable playmates, they perceived themselves as having difficulties arranging to play with the children they preferred.

I: When I asked you earlier about what kids [classmates] do on the playground, you said you didn't know what the kids did?

R: Yeah. They probably, they play soccer. Some of them.

I: Umhmm. Know anything else that they do out there?

R: Play tag...like most of the people, I ask to play with them, "Oh, no, I'm playing with someone else." So, like, I don't usually play with them, I just, like I have to walk around by myself. It's hard.

[Later in the interview]

I: Who are the kids in your class that the other kids do not seem to play with very often?

R: I don't know, because, like, I don't hang around with them. I don't hang around much with no kids in my class. [Site III, Tony]

During interviews it was difficult to ascertain whether the visually impaired pupil was not cognizant of the conventions associated with choice of playmates or was just preoccupied with simply getting any playmate. In the following excerpt, "mood" is perceived to be a important factor in choosing a playmate.

I: Who do kids usually play with at recess and noon hour?

R: The other kids in their grade or sometimes one grade lower [He routinely played with children "one grade lower."].

I: How do you decide whether you're going to play with kids in your grade or one grade lower?

R: Easy, whoever asks you first. Most of the time.

I: Whoever asks you first, okay. Who do you usually play with at recess or noon hour?

R: Well, sometimes I walk around with my old team mate.

I: Who's that?

R: Andrew Jacobs, in grade 4. He's the best of friends last year.

I: Was he?

R: So, if I'm not walking around with him, I go around with Daniel, Lee, and David. Or, I just walk around by myself.

I: How do you decide whether you're going to go around with Daniel, David, Andrew, or just go around by yourself?

R: Depends what kind of mood I'm in.

I: Can you tell me more about that?

R: No, not really. Sometimes if I'm in a bad mood I wanta go with myself and if I'm in a good mood I want to go with Daniel and everybody and if I wanta see, little boys in grade 4 or something, I just go around with Andrew and them. [Site IV, Jamie]

During observation this boy did not appear to seek out specific playmates but moved about the playground in presumably random fashion. All of the visually impaired children expressed a yearning to play with those classmates they perceived as popular although none routinely interacted with these popular classmates on the playground. They perceived themselves to have limited control and little choice with respect to whom they could play.

#### Pupil Assumption 10 (Follow the Rules)

Children ought to follow the rules--that is the essence of this assumption. Although three of the visually impaired children perceived themselves to generally follow rules, both those of the pupil culture and their teachers, there was a sense of having a degree of immunity because they were visually impaired. They perceived themselves "special" in relation to their classmates and as receiving special treatment from teachers.

I: Does being blind make it easier or more difficult to have friends?

R: Easier!

I: Tell me about that.

R: Well, in line today, well, you know Trevor White?  
 I: Umhmm.  
 R: Like I wanted in front of him. And he told me no but some people wanted me in front of him. So I had, I tried to get in front of him. And he pushed me and then they let me in front.  
 I: Okay. So who let you in front?  
 R: Jonathan and them.  
 I: What did Trevor do?  
 R: Got mad.  
 [Later in the interview]  
 I: What do the kids in your class think about you always being at the front of the line to go to French?  
 R: I don't know, I don't know. I think they think it's pretty..bad, like, I think, I think they feel kinda left out. I don't know why..why they would.  
 I: Why do you think they might?  
 R: Maybe they think that they're, well, I know there are some people that don't think I'm very special. I know I'm not, but I mean...but the teacher treats me like I'm special.  
 I: Umhmm. Which teachers?  
 R: Most all, mostly all of them. [Site III, Tony]

Tony knew he was not supposed to be "special" and made concerted efforts throughout the interview to qualify his very evident perception that he was "special."

The visually impaired children seemed to perceive "special privileges" in school as inherent to being visually impaired. Lisa, one of the children who experienced difficulty following rules frequently justified such actions as "fair" because of the unequal situation caused by the visual impairment.

I: How do you feel when Mrs. Briggs tells you to do something because your row is counting on you?  
 R: A bit mad.  
 I: Can you tell me about that?  
 R: Well, I don't feel that happy and comfortable.  
 I: One thing I noticed when they were doing the rows, [teacher was giving points to the row which was most cooperative] was that when Mrs. Briggs says, "Everybody clear up and put your things away so the row can get a point," I notice that you keep working.  
 R: I don't like to put it away.  
 I: And what about your row counting on you?  
 R: They don't like to put them away either.  
 I: Do they put things away?  
 R: Yes, but they have to.

I: Do you have to?  
 R: Yes, but I just don't like to.  
 I: So you don't?  
 R: Yes.  
 I: Oh, how do you feel about that?  
 R: Mad.  
 I: Tell me about that.  
 R: You see, I get, hardly ever get to finish my pictures.  
 [referring to being able to finish coloring the entire picture at  
 one time] I only got to finish my tractor today. [Site II, Lisa]

This child's working speed was significantly reduced by the close working distance required to accommodate her reduced visual acuity. Hence, her perception seemed to be that classmates were more obligated to adhere to the rules than was she.

As mentioned earlier, for the most part, the visually impaired children followed the rules associated with pupil culture when they were aware of them. However, they also perceived themselves to have a "special" immunity because of their visual impairment. On the playground special privileges were perceived to be much more limited than in the classroom. As well, rejection by peers was usually the consequence of non-conformity on the playground.

#### Pupil Assumption 11 (Reciprocate Playmate's Actions)

This assumption contends that friends ought to reciprocate the actions of their peers, whether negative or positive. The perceptions of visually impaired children appeared to differ from those of their peers in three aspects. First, in relation to negative encounters with peers, visually impaired children perceived having a visual impairment as responsible for peers not being as harsh in their treatment of them as they would be with other children. As one visually impaired boy asserted, "You don't get picked on that much if you're half blind." This reaction from peers was also perceived to occur during positive

encounters when peers would do such things as run more slowly for the visually impaired child during a game of tag, throw the ball more easily so the visually impaired child could catch it, etc. In the following excerpt, the visually impaired child is just coming to realize this different degree of reciprocation evident between him and his peers.

I: Who did you play with when you went out today?  
R: Nobody.  
I: Oh, what did you do?  
R: Well, I played with, like I was fighting with Ginelle.  
I: Oh, tell me about Ginelle, who's she?  
R: Ginelle, she was in my class last year. Yeah.  
I: And you fight with her.  
R: Well, play fight. And, and she won't do anything, she thinks like, she can hurt me, but she can't.  
I: How are you going to convince her?  
R: I don't know. I'll try tomorrow again. If I see her I'll say, "Ginelle, hurt me." [laughs] [Site III, Tony]

The second way in which reciprocation was perceived differently by visually impaired children was associated with the "helping relationship" which seemed to exist between visually impaired children and their peers, particularly in the classroom. Assistance received as a consequence of being visually impaired, such as going to the office to enlarge a handout or helping the child locate something, seemed to be perceived differently than help obtained to complete a task unrelated to the consequences of being visually impaired, such as solving a math problem. In the former situation, the visually impaired child appeared to consider the assistance as indistinguishable from the particular activity itself and did not acknowledge, reciprocate, or even thank the peer who had volunteered such assistance. In the latter case, the visually impaired child perceived the peer's contribution as "helping" and routinely thanked or acknowledged the assistance in a manner similar to other children in the class.



Finally, visually impaired children perceived themselves to have few opportunities to reciprocate assistance from peers. They perceived their visual impairment to be responsible for their slower work rate or their inability to do some activities and were, thus, restricted in the ways they could help their peers as well as the number of opportunities available to help.

### Conclusion

Through the complex interactions among elementary school participants, realities are constructed. As visually impaired children interpreted their interactions with those who were fully sighted they could be seen to be somewhat vulnerable in terms of their access to the same quantity and quality of information others received. They were obviously aware of their "special" yet undesirable status as visually impaired persons. In this study there were some common perceptions shared by all students. There were others, such as those associated with the criteria for friendship and the appropriateness of certain behaviors, which seemed to be structured by the restrictions imposed by being visually impaired.

What was common to all visually impaired children was the sense that they were in some ways less competent than their classmates and, hence, required more assistance from both adults and peers to do what "normal kids" could do. As well, visually impaired children perceived themselves to be not particularly popular or desirable as playmates on the playground, hence, to have limited control and few choices with respect to playmates. Receiving inadequate feedback when their

behaviour was incompatible with that espoused by the pupil culture, they were often slow or even unable to conform to the accepted rules of conduct. To further complicate this situation, visually impaired students perceived themselves to have a "special" status within the elementary school, sanctioned by their visual impairment. Although this status had advantages (e.g. more attention from teachers, immunity from some rules of school culture, less abuse from classmates), it also identified them as different from their peers. The latter, visually impaired children perceived as a detriment.

Given the perceptions visually impaired children had constructed in relation to their self-concepts, it was evident they were "at risk" in the elementary school environment. Within the culture of schools, visually impaired students acquired specific knowledge relevant to the status of visually impaired individuals. Through the process of interaction with participants in this social context, visually impaired children had concluded that visual impairment was something associated with a sense of shame, inferior status and was not something other children would care to be. In the next chapter, the perceptions of the classmates of these students, relevant to the visually impaired child's social acceptance and interaction, are examined.

## CHAPTER 7

### Sighted Children's Perceptions of Visually Impaired Classmates

#### Introduction

The third subpurpose of the study was to examine the perceptions of classmates, relevant to the acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired children. These are examined in this chapter. In the first part of the chapter, the classmates' knowledge and perceptions related to visual impairment are considered. Next, visual impairment as a "label of primary potency" is discussed. In the final section of the chapter, discussions are focused upon the perceptions of sighted classmates as they concern the 11 assumptions of pupil culture identified in Chapter 5.

The classmates of integrated visually impaired students are the elementary school participants who negotiate and construct the immediate social environment for students on the playground (Davies, 1982). Although more directly under the control of adults during classroom time, classmates are still a significant component of the social organization (i.e. the school) which functions as a primary socializing agent for students (Hargreaves, 1975; Woods, 1980a). The pupil culture, developed around the need to balance the interacting purposes of learning, peer group affiliation and self interests (Pollard, 1985), is ultimately the domain within which social acceptance of the integrated student will be negotiated. Through their interaction with a visually impaired peer, classmates interpret and construct their social reality

relevant to the acceptance or exclusion of the visually impaired student. It is only by exploring the perceptions of these classmates that an understanding of the context at this level (i.e. pupil culture) can be acquired.

Perceptions of Visual Impairment  
and the Visually Impaired

Discussion of their visually impaired classmate's eye condition did not appear to be particularly difficult for the peers of integrated visually impaired children. However, one of the most startling aspects of the interviews with the five to eight classmates at each site was their lack of knowledge about both their visually impaired classmate's specific eye condition and the functional implications of her/his visual impairment. The following excerpts are representative of the responses to the question, "What do you know about [the visually impaired student's] eye condition?"

[Excerpt 1]

R: Well, he's blind and...he's, he goes around with, he's got another teacher.

I: Mmhm, Mrs. Rogers.

R: Yeah. And she takes him for walks and everything. Like, he has his cane, and he uses it. And he goes off by himself in front of Mrs. Rogers and can cross the streets now...

I: Why do children have, why are children half blind?

R: Um, because they, um, don't eat the right..proper, food, like carrots make your eyes see better. They probably don't eat as much carrots as everybody else does, and things that are bad.

I: Do you know anyone else who is half blind, who can't see very well?

R: No, not really. Well, sometimes I can't..because, like, when I'm playing, um, um, forget what it's called, but it's a game, and there's one group that gets in the middle and tries to run from the balls and there's a whole bunch of people on the outside throwing balls at you [dodge ball]. And it gets you really dizzy looking at all those balls coming at you and gets you outnumbered.

[Site I, Andrew]

[Excerpt 2]

R: Well, I know, it, probably she doesn't really like it because, she, like, likes to look at stories and, and ah, see the pictures but sometimes she can't. Unless the teacher puts the book about this close to her face [holds hand a few inches from her face].

I: Just a couple of inches away.

R: Umhmm.

I: Why are children half blind?

R: [pause] Um, cuz ah, there's just stuff. It comes from the air and it goes into your eyes and then it makes your eyes blind. Sometimes it goes right through and the air and nose bone to this one then you're blind. But Lisa is only this eye blind.

I: Just blind in her right eye.

R: Yeah.

I: Do you know anyone else who is half blind?

R: Nope. [Site II, Nicole]

[Excerpt 3]

R: That it might not get cured or stuff. Some people might get a cure for it though.

I: Why are children blind?

R: Well..well, sometimes you get really sick and get a real bad disease and stuff. And you get, turn blind and stuff like that.

I: Do you know anyone else who's blind?

R: No. [Site III, Virginia]

[Excerpt 4]

R: Well, it's pretty good. And, like, most of the time he can't, like, see most of the words, and you have to get it blown up for him so it's bigger. And, like....do you want to repeat your question again?

I: Tell me what you know about his visual impairment.

R: Well, um, it's...mostly...like, it's pretty good...like, his vision is okay, like, for playing most of the things...like hockey, it's easy because it's black and the ice is white. And like, he can play hockey. And, um, his visual impairment is...like, it's sort of hard for him to see, I'm pretty sure it is. And like, some of the time it's easy for him to see, but I don't think it's that easy for him. Like, he can read his own writing and everything, but most of the time he can't read the teacher's unless she prints.

I: Why do children have visual impairments?

R: I'm not sure. Like, probably because, like, they were born with it and they couldn't see very well when they were born...so...and, like, they just had to keep it. That's the same with me and I couldn't get glasses until I was two. So...I couldn't see very well until I was two. I can still see without my glasses on. [Site IV, Marla]

[Excerpt 5]

R: Not much of any of it.

I: Why are children blind?

R: Well, some people are just born that way. Some people play with firecrackers and stuff. They blow up in their face.

I: Do you know anyone else who is blind?

R: No. [Site V, Jason]

[Excerpt 6]

R: ..I don't know that much. I just know that he can't see. I don't know if he was born that way or if he was in an accident. I don't know.

I: Why do children have visual problems?

R: ..I don't know.

I: Do you know anyone else with a visual problem?

R: No. [Site V, Aaron]

Overall, peers of the integrated visually impaired children had limited knowledge about both their visually impaired classmate's specific eye condition and the functional implications of her/his visual impairment. There was a tendency for classmates to relate the child's visual impairment to some aspect of visual functioning they themselves experienced, as is evident in excerpts 1 and 4. None of the 31 classmates interviewed mentioned a specific name, medical or otherwise, for the visually impaired child's condition. Visually impaired students were generally described as "doesn't see as good as us" or as "not able to see too good." Most often they described functional implications of the visual impairment which they had observed on a daily basis, such as, "has to use a cane", "can't read small print", or "holds stuff real close." Two of the 31 children interviewed mentioned having asked their visually impaired classmate specific questions about what he/she could see in a given situation. These children appeared to have a more specific understanding of the visually impaired student's visual abilities and difficulties in a specific situation, but still a less than comprehensive understanding of the visually impaired child's condition. Given the difficulties most of the visually impaired

students, themselves, had discussing and describing their visual impairment, this might be expected. As well, the reluctance of teachers to draw attention to the child's visual impairment, as will be discussed in Chapter 8, may also have contributed to the limited relevant knowledge classmates appeared to have.

As is evident in the above excerpts, explanations classmates gave for children being visually impaired were frequently vague and based on conjecture. Several children during the interview commented that the child's visual impairment was "none of our business" or that students "don't talk about it." There was a sense that this was a topic discussed only in small confidential groups. The majority of children believed visual impairment to be the result of an accident or something one was "born with." Explanations became more complicated as the age of the children increased but reflected understandings based more on conjecture than accurate information. Several of the children interviewed in the upper elementary grades suggested God was responsible or the visually impaired child's mother had taken something during her pregnancy. Following are two such explanations and descriptions of the visually impaired student's visual condition:

[Excerpt 1]

I: Tell me what you know about Jamie's visual condition.

R: Well, he's quarter eye blind in each eye so..

I: He's quarter eye blind in each eye.

R: Quarter eye blind in each eye. It's like say, right over here to the pu..the middle of the pupil would be blind, he'd be blind. And the same with this eye.

I: Oh, so in the rest of the eye he can see okay?

R: Umhmm.

I: Why do children have visual problems?

R: God, maybe that's the way they were born. Or God gave it to them. So they can be special. [Site IV, Jodi]

[Excerpt 2]

I: Tell me what you know about Jamie's vision.

R: I don't know hardly nothing about it. Only that he needs to use a sth..sth..stethoscope [means telescope].

I: Why do children have visual problems?

R: Born like that. God wants them to be that way. [Site IV, Michelle]

Although peers seem to feel it was inappropriate to openly discuss the visually impaired student's condition in her/his presence, children did make some attempts to acquire more information about the child's visual impairment. All five of the visually impaired children interviewed reported situations in which peers had attempted to test their visual abilities by holding up fingers for them to count or asking them questions which they could use to compare their own visual abilities to those of their visually impaired classmate. Following is one visually impaired child's report of such a test:

I: Peter, what do you say when your friends say you can't see?

R: I say I can, part. I say I'm visually impaired. And they'd usually go, "How many fingers am I holding up?" And I'd look and then I'd tell them. Yup.

I: And you can tell?

R: [in a happy voice] Yes, but now they're starting to get tricky.

I: What are they doing?

R: Like, they're saying, like, when I tell them five fingers, they say it's wrong. See, they're, they're trying to request four fingers and one thumb.

I: Oh, I see. That is tricky. [Site I, Peter]

The element of teasing apparent in this situation was common to similar events observed during the study. However, the subtlety and brevity of such occurrences seemed to suggest curiosity rather than malicious intent on the part of peers.

There was another perception, common to all sites, related to the understanding peers had about their visually impaired classmate's vision. This was a suspicion the visually impaired child was "faking"



her/his visual impairment to get special privileges or attention. Although researchers (Corn, 1987; Mangold, 1980) have described hardships experienced by partially sighted individuals which are associated with misunderstandings arising from the inconsistent abilities inherent with being neither totally blind or fully sighted, in this study even the totally blind child was suspected to be "playing tricks" and some children queried his visual abilities. Without accurate information about the visually impaired student's disability, classmates appeared to be somewhat skeptical of the authenticity of the handicap.

Children's perceptions of their visually impaired classmate were marked by inconsistencies and contradictions. During interviews they frequently described their visually impaired classmate as "just like a normal person" yet they expressed a sense of marked difference between themselves and the visually impaired child. Visually impaired children were perceived to need more attention, receive more help, have some immunity from "being picked on," and generally believed to wish they could see as "good as the other kids."

Knowing the child was visually impaired seemed to have a potent effect upon how peers perceived all aspects of their visually impaired classmate's performance and behaviour. Allport (1958) describes such labels as "visually impaired" as those of "primary potency." In the process of making meaning, humans classify or categorize a concrete reality based upon a single feature which excludes examination of all other features. He concluded:

Some labels, such as "blind man," are exceedingly salient and powerful. They tend to prevent classification, or even cross-

classification . . . . Let us call such symbols "labels of primary potency." These symbols act like shrieking sirens, deafening us to all finer discriminations that we might otherwise perceive . . . . Each label we use, especially those of primary potency, distracts our attention from concrete reality. The living, breathing, complex individual--the ultimate unit of human nature--is lost to sight . . . . The label magnifies one attribute out of all proportion to its true significance, and masks other important attributes of the individual. (p. 175-176)

The fact that their classmate was known to be blind or to have problems with her/his vision seemed to function as a "label of primary potency." In the interviews, before any discussion of the pupil's visual impairment had occurred, classmates reported children liked or disliked the visually impaired child "because he's blind" as opposed to character traits such as friendly, generous, weird, mean, etc. Activities in which the visually impaired child did not participate were interpreted to be "too hard cuz he's blind" while other children might be excused based upon likes and dislikes for certain activities. The visually impaired student's scarcity of friends was explained by "they don't hang around him cuz he's blind" or "since he can't see he goes his separate way." The most prominent perception of classmates was in relation to the amount of help their visually impaired classmate required to complete even routine activities. To be visually impaired was to require routine help from both teachers and peers. Thus, the label "visually impaired" or "blind" seemed to dominate perceptions of classmates of visually impaired students regardless of the activity or behaviour they were describing.

This was evident even in the presence of blatant contradictions. For example, during two different interviews with the classmates of one visually impaired student, each child suggested the teacher should help

the visually impaired child when he used stairs. Yet, this visually impaired student had always managed to use the stairs independently and with ease, even while carrying a loaded lunch tray. The frustration of another classmate who had a more realistic perception of the visually impaired student's abilities were evident, as is illustrated in the following excerpt.

I: Sometimes people don't really understand what it means to have a visual impairment. They may even have silly or wrong ideas about visual impairment. What silly or wrong ideas have you heard about visual impairment from your friends?

R: Well, some people, like, they try to treat him just like a baby, like, um. And I think Peter doesn't really like that cuz he'll, like, he's not like any, like, three-year-old. He can do a lot of stuff himself. And he needs help with some stuff. So, like, you don't have to baby [emphasis on baby] him or anything. And I think it might some time bug him. Like, people, like, all these...like, try to..think he's, like, he's totally blind and, like, he can't, like, walk straight or something like that. Most people get the wrong idea. Like, think they're not as good at anything. [Site I, David]

This boy's perceptions of the visually impaired student's ability were the exception rather than the rule. Despite his apparent empathy for Peter's situation, he did not make particular efforts to include Peter on the playground nor did he ever volunteer to be his partner in class.

### Sighted Children's Perceptions of Visually Impaired

#### Classmates as Related to the Assumptions of Pupil Culture

##### Pupil Assumption 1 (Associate with "Best Friends")

This assumption of pupil culture concerned the requirement to play and associate with "best friends." With the exception of the one visually impaired child who was known to have a "best friend" in the class, the other visually impaired children were perceived to either have best friends outside the class or not to have any. For example,

when children were asked with whom their visually impaired classmate played, they were frequently unable to provide specific names of classmates, although they could accurately report the usual playmates for the majority of their other classmates.

- I: Who does he usually play with at recess and noon hour?  
 R: Nobody usually but sometimes some people like playing with him because when, people are nice.  
 I: Who usually likes to play with him?  
 R: Well, people that are nice. People that don't make fun of him and people that ah, share with him and be nice to him because, if they didn't they, he wouldn't be able to have any friends because nobody would wait for him.  
 I: Can you think of the names of any kids who usually play with him?  
 R: Ohhh...Colin sometimes plays with him. And ah..ah..Daniel. Very little times Patrick plays with him. [Site III, Lita]

The two boys mentioned, Colin and Daniel, did not play with the visually impaired child during the entire month of observation. Neither were they selected as good friends by the visually impaired child. Patrick, reported to play with the visually impaired child "very little times" was, in fact, observed to be one of the few children in this class who played with him from time to time. Patrick was considered to be unpopular by the majority of children in his class.

Classmates of the visually impaired child did not perceive her/him to have the same kind of "best friends" as they had. For example, when asked to name the visually impaired child's friends one classmate reported, "Well, there's me and Sheena, and Nat, and Paul. He doesn't really have best, best friends, but he has good friends." For elementary school children in this study the distinction between "good friends" and "best friends" was explicit. As mentioned in Chapter 5, "best friends" were those one "hung around with," who helped one another, and who were fun to be with. "Good" or "okay" friends were

more akin to an acquaintance and were the neutral ground between "best friends" and those who were not one's friends. The rather enigmatic position of the visually impaired child as perceived by classmates was described by a peer as follows:

I: Who are the kids in your class who have difficulty making friends?

R: Probably Cathy...and Peter [visually impaired child]. He'll be..he's like, quite a bit, but it's harder for him to, like, see everyone all the time, so [practical tone of voice used] he has to be updated quite a bit because, um, like, he's, as I said, he's always out there somewhere, or you'll see him walking by. [Site I, David]

In only three of the 31 interviews were visually impaired children reported to be friends by the same children they themselves identified as "best friends." In the following excerpt the boy being interviewed had been reported as a "best friend" by Jamie, the visually impaired child:

I: Who does Jamie usually play with?

R: Um, he doesn't really hang around with us. His next door neighbor. [means he plays with his neighbor]

I: Umhmm.

R: He goes to this school and, he really likes him. I guess that's his best friend. His name's Greg. [Site IV, Lee]

During nearly a month of observation on this school playground, no interaction between the visually impaired child and Greg was observed. However, the mother of the visually impaired child also reported Greg to be her son's best friend in the neighborhood, as did Lee, Jamie's classmate and neighbor. Greg was a boy who wore dark glasses with side occluders when outside because he was photophobic (an abnormal sensitivity and discomfort to light). In general, classmates of the visually impaired student perceived her/him to be an appropriate "okay

friend" but not a "best friend"--not one with whom to routinely associate.

#### Pupil Assumption 2 (Do What Others Do)

The second assumption of pupil culture centered on the need to be able to do what other children were doing if a child was to be part of the group. On the playground where play activities were predominately under the control of children and adult supervision was lenient, three visually impaired children, Charles, Peter and Tony, particularly the totally blind child, Tony, were perceived by their peers to be unable to do what others were doing. This perceived inability to participate in the same activities as other children was also reported to be justification for classmates to exclude the visually impaired child from their play. Following are several excerpts from interviews with classmates in which this topic was discussed:

[Excerpt 1]

I: Tell me how kids in your class feel about playing outside at recess or noon hour with Tony.

R: Well sometime, most of the time, we try and get away from him because he can't do much that we can do, like run, because he'll get lost and run into people and stuff. So either we walk around with him and stuff or, or he's with a teacher walking.

I: Is it easier or more difficult for him to make friends than other kids in your class?

R: Ah...it's pretty difficult for him to make friends because lots of people don't like him.

I: Tell me about that.

R: Well, because he can't do as many things as they can. Yeah, that's why cuz they wanta do this but he can't do that so they just kinda don't play with him.

[Later in the interview]

I: Tell me what you know about his visual impairment.

R: Ahhh, I've told you this plenty of times, he can't do as many things as we can. That's probably what he feels. Ah, um, he probably feels that he, he knows that people don't like him.

I: Does he?

R: He can tell.

I: How can he tell?

R: Cuz ah, like, ah, when he asks someone to play with him, he asks them to wait for him, because we don't play with him much, we, he just can't see what we do. Well, we, we run away from him. Like we don't wait for him so he won't find us. [Site III, John]

[Excerpt 2]

I: Is it easier or more difficult for Charles to make friends than other kids in your class?

R: Um, more difficult.

I: It's harder.

R: Well, mostly because he can't do the stuff that most people do, like, I don't know, play games. And most of the boys usually play soccer or football or something, and he can't play that.

[Site V, Aaron]

Since being able to do what others were doing was critical to participation, classmates' perception that the visually impaired student could not do many of the things they did was a significant deterrent to being sought out as a "best friend."

Even when the visually impaired child appeared to be participating with relative ease in most playground activities, peers perceived themselves having to make an extra effort if they were to include the visually impaired child in their play.

I: Tell me how kids in your class feel about playing outside at recess or noon hour with Lisa.

I: Well, they feel quite hard to, to play and that because when they're playing something or playing a game it's hard for her to understand and see the way your pointing or what, what you're showing is the base and that, and who's "it." [Site II, Crystal]

Peers of a visually impaired classmate perceived themselves as having to exert more effort or take more time to involve the visually impaired child than was required for other classmates. This belief appeared to strengthen with the increasing age of the children and the skill level necessary for active participation in typical playground activities. The convictions children held related to a visually impaired child's inability to do what other children were doing frequently seemed

obscured by the practical concerns associated with the extra effort entailed if the visually impaired child was to be included.

In the classroom the visually impaired child was generally perceived to be able to do what the other children were doing but to sometimes complete tasks differently from their peers. For example, Tony often required a sighted reader when braille copies of assignments were unavailable and Lisa and Charles used large print textbooks which were twice the size of those of their classmates. As well, their competence was considered by peers to be significantly below that of the majority of their classmates. The slower working rate and the large, often "messy-looking" appearance of the visually impaired child's handwork, seemed to be interpreted as evidence of incompetence or a lower level of ability. In addition, it became apparent during the interviews that although children perceived adaptive materials as necessary or helpful for their visually impaired classmate, use of such materials seemed to prejudice the perception sighted children constructed in relation to the quality of performance of the visually impaired student. The following excerpts are typical of the responses classmates made in relation to the school performance of the visually impaired student.

[Excerpt 1]

I: Tell me how kids in your class feel about having Peter in their class.

R: Well it is hard sometimes but not all the time. Like it's probably hard for him. He's trying to see what's going on, you can't see, you have to walk across the room and all that. And he, like he's really slow on his work so he always has lots of homework cuz when he's doing, writing down something, he's always on the first question and we have to wait.

I: How do the kids feel about it?



R: Well sometimes they get, at the very first when he was in there they didn't really like it cuz he always, goes, "I'm first, I'm first." Like that?

I: Tell me how kids in your class feel about working in school with Peter.

R: Well, it's fun. Like Joey [low academic student who has repeated grade] likes helping him and all that cuz they like, when they're finished they have nothing to do so they always go over to Peter's visualtek and ask him if he needs any help or could they, would he want to be helped with reading his book or something like that? [Site I, Paula]

[Excerpt 2]

I: Tell me how kids in your class feel about working in school with Lisa.

R: Not really good.

I: No. Can you tell me about that?

R: Cuz she doesn't do the proper stuff, like, em, she can't read too good, and everybody's just, and ah, so if you're her partner then ah, they would just say, "Lisa, ah, ah, we're on the first page, and, and she's only on the first page and I'm on the second page." Or stay like that until class is over cuz Lisa'll say, "What's this word?" when you read and she only reads the easy words. [Site II, Megan]

[Excerpt 3]

I: Tell me how kids in your class feel about working in school with Tony.

R: Um, they ah, they think they like helping Tony because he, he can't do as much work as we do. [Site III, Mark]

[Excerpt 4]

I: Tell me how kids in your class feel about working in school with Jamie.

R: Hard to listen to him. Hard to read his writing cuz it's so big, it's like ah, this part. Can I see your pencil and I'll show you?

I: Sure. [demonstrates the size of his writing]

R: Like that. Messy as anything!

I: Umhm.

R: And he holds things backwards as he works..Jamie [he's left handed]. Sitting beside [inaudible]

I: Oh, yes. What did you say about sitting beside him?

R: Well, he's a pain..

I: Umhmm.

R: In the neck. He would drive you right up the wall. [Site IV, Jodi]

[Excerpt 5]

I: You mentioned Charles was blind. Tell me about blind people.

R: Well, I think it would be really hard for them.

I: Umhmm.

R: And that, they don't, get their work done as fast as we do.  
[Site V, Jason]

In excerpt 2, the classmate's reference to the "proper stuff" was ascertained to be associated with the visually impaired child's use of large print as opposed to regular print texts. By using the large print text and not the ones used by other members of the class, the visually impaired child was perceived as not doing "the proper stuff." Since the level of difficulty of reading materials in elementary grades is generally directly proportional to the print size used, the larger print used by the visually impaired child was also perceived to be "easier work" than that of classmates, when in fact, the reading material was identical. This was noted at all four sites where partially sighted students were enrolled.

There was also the perception that work completed using adaptive materials or equipment was of lesser quality than that produced through regular means. In addition, at the upper elementary levels, classmates were beginning to consider the use of such equipment by their visually impaired classmate as providing an unfair advantage to the handicapped student. Following are three of the five responses received at one site to the question, "What do kids your age think about him using these special things in class?"

[Excerpt 1]

R: I think he's pretty lucky. Because it's easier to read the books and I'd get done faster if I had one of those [referring to large print texts]. [Site IV, Marla]

[Excerpt 2]

R: They think, I think that they say, "That's not fair or why does he get to use that and I don't get to do that? [referring to unlimited use of a computer to complete written assignments].  
[Site IV, Lee]

[Excerpt 3]

R: Well, some people think that it's not fair. I don't think it's fair either. [Site IV, Daniel]

The two other classmates interviewed at Site IV reported the visually impaired child's use of special materials didn't bother them or were pleased it was of help to the student. The former was a top student who consistently performed at a higher level than the visually impaired student. The latter was a child who had spent the majority of her school years in a special education class and struggled to complete much of the work in her present class. It appeared that those children more apt to be in direct competition associated with academic performance were the ones most threatened by the visually impaired child's use of adaptive aids. That is, the adaptive aids were perceived to give an unfair advantage to the visually impaired child in relation to their standing in class.

#### Pupil Assumption 3 (Gain Group Access)

According to this assumption a child ought to initiate interaction with others in the group to gain access to the group. Two of the visually impaired students in this study, Charles and Peter, were perceived by their classmates to make little effort to join in the activities of their peers. Jamie was perceived to "be boring" and not "want to do anything" the other boys were doing, although his female classmates perceived him to behave appropriately when initiating interaction. The totally blind student, Tony, and Lisa, the fifth visually impaired child, were perceived by their peers to behave inappropriately when attempting to join group activities. Both children were considered to be "bossy" and to try to take over or change the

activity they were joining. The following excerpt is an example of Tony's "entry behaviour" and the reaction of silence generated by his approach.

[Recess is being held inside because it is rainy.] Tony returns about 5 minutes late with a very pleased expression on his face and announces, "I made it by myself." He puts his cane in the corner and says to himself, "Cane up," and then jumps excitedly. He goes over to the boys playing with the blocks. Daniel, Matthew, and Colin are building a tower together while Adam and Tyler are working on individual construction. Tony says, "What are you doing? Are you allowed playing with the blocks? I want to play too." The boys ignore these questions and Tyler lets him take some blocks from his pile as he sits on the floor near the others. Tony picks up two blocks and bangs them together and then bangs one on the palm of his hand and rocks a bit. No one is paying any attention to him and he says, "You know what you should do?" No response. He continues, "Put blocks under your houses you're making." No response. "What are you making?" Daniel replies, "A tower." Tony asks, "Can I help?" Matthew replies, "Not yet, Tony, not yet." Tony sits with his head down resting on his knee and pressing his eye. Then he takes a few blocks and says, "I know what I'm going to make." Trevor who has just arrived says, "What, Tony?" Tony says, "You guys pretend there's a bridge going up to the tower. Pretend there's a draw bridge." The boys building the tower do not respond. Tony repeats his suggestion but the boys don't answer. Tony says, "I'll build a draw bridge, okay?" No answer. "You guys want a draw bridge?" Tyler replies, "We're not building a castle we're building a tower." Their tower keeps falling as they try to increase the height. They say to Trevor who comes near, "Don't make it fall down!" Tony sits and bangs on his palm with a block. Then Tony says, "You guys, I'm building a draw bridge up to the tower." The boys don't answer and Tyler and Adam who have now started individual projects, begin to argue over the blocks. Trevor goes over to Adam and accuses him of taking all the blocks. The bell rings and Tony immediately starts to help them pick up the blocks. [Site III, observation notes]

In this excerpt, Tony's classmates effectively exclude him from their activity, although he is permitted to participate in a similar activity on the fringe of the group since classroom rules would dictate such. Tony's lack of competence in making the rather elaborate constructions of his classmates may also have contributed to their actions to deny him

access to their group. However, Tony's "joining behaviour" was contrary to that generally condoned by the pupil culture.

Research suggests joining an existing group or activity may be one of the more complex social skills children have to learn (Corsaro, 1981; Gottman & Parker, 1986). Children who successfully join groups initially stand back and observe, ask permission to join, and continue to participate in the same activity as the other children. Those who experience difficulty joining groups tend to try to dominate the group, act aggressively, and attempt to change the original form of play in which the group was involved. Visually impaired children who were perceived by peers to behave inappropriately when attempting to join their groups were generally reported to behave in ways characteristic of those experiencing difficulty joining groups. That is, they "barged in" without asking, were "bossy," or wouldn't "let you do what you want to do." For example, Tony routinely grabbed a passing peer and held her/him to initiate interaction.

A second type of behaviour frequently observed in visually impaired students was a hovering type of manoeuvre. The visually impaired student would stand on the fringe of a group, apparently waiting to be included but not initiating any action to join. The following excerpt exemplifies this behaviour.

It is a windy, wet, foggy day and Mrs. Daniels patrols back and forth along the end of the school where the children have gathered since they are not permitted on the upper field when it is so wet. Charles walks by himself along the curb with one foot on it and the other on the pavement. He follows it back and forth along that end of the school and when he comes to a group of children he knows, he stands on the edge for a few minutes and then moves on. I notice he is following Mrs. Daniels as she moves back and forth and when he has the opportunity, he speaks to her. When he reaches the far end of the school for the second time, he goes to

the same group of grade 6 boys who are still in a circle talking. He stands on the edge of the group. One boy asks him if he wants "to be a turtle" and he smiles shyly making a comment I cannot hear from where I am standing. Charles starts to leave but Mrs. Daniels stops to chat with the boys and he stays near her. She draws him into the conversation but when she leaves after a minute or two he follows her walking along the curb as he goes. On her return to the other side he speaks with her momentarily once more. Charles doesn't make eye contact when he speaks with people but tends to look down. He leaves as she stops to reprimand a boy and he goes to the other side of the school. He is by himself as he moves about the playground. Once again he stands at the fringe of a group of boys, one of whom is in his class. This group moves away from Charles. The bell rings and they rush to the entrance. Charles goes at a fast walk. [Site V, observation notes]

In general, on the playground visually impaired students could best be described as "on the fringe" of interaction with their peers. From the perspective of classmates, visually impaired students had acquired a reputation as being "boring" and not wanting to do anything.

[Excerpt 1]

I: What's a nerd?

R: A nerd, someone who's, who, who just doesn't want to do anything, like you know, just a boring person.

I: A what?

R: A boring person.

I: A boring person. Are there nerds in your class?

R: Yeah.

I: Who would you describe as nerds in your class?

R: Well, Matthew, and probably Jamie, and..I don't know, and that's about it. [Site IV, Daniel]

[Excerpt 2]

I: Is it easier or more difficult for Peter to make friends than other kids in your class?

R: Um, it's easier than some and harder, it depends.

I: Who do you think it would be easier than?

R: A...for like, it's easy for Nat, me, Barb or Sheena [these are the popular students] to make friends.

I: Why is it easier for you to make friends?

R: Well...just more popular.

I: Okay. And it's more difficult for Peter because...

R: He, he doesn't really try to make friends, like he doesn't walk over, sometimes he's shy.

I: Right. If you were to give Peter some advice about how he could go about making more friends, what would you tell him?

R: Ah, like not to be so shy or...talk, well, tell him, um, what to say and that. [Site I, Matthew]

#### Pupil Assumption 4 (Boy-Girl Relationships)

According to this assumption, boys and girls ought not to be "best friends." The one female visually impaired child in this study was perceived by her peers to play with other girls, as was appropriate for children at this age. The oldest boy in the study played solely with one "best friend" who was also male. However, the three remaining visually impaired boys, Tony, Peter and Jamie, were perceived to predominately play and interact with girls.

##### [Excerpt 1]

I: What does Peter like to play?

R: Oh, not, we usually like to play house. I don't, well that's what girls sometimes like, but we don't any more, like. He use to be the father, we use to be the kids, we run around, get away from him and that. That was when we were little and now I just usually play with Amy.

I: So now, how about Peter?

R: Well, sometimes I may talk to him when I go near the swings. Mostly girls do. [Site I, Allison]

##### [Excerpt 2]

I: Who does Tony play with?

R: He usually played with me or Betsey. Because he knows us really good cuz we played with him since grade 1 and 2.

I: And you don't play with him this year as much.

R: No, because I have new friends. He plays with other girls. [Site III, Julie]

##### [Excerpt 3]

I: Who does Jamie usually hang around with at recess and noon hour?

R: Sometimes...most of the time he hangs around with Sarah and Dana and Jodi and them, like, cuz they sit down all together [means sit together in class], I don't know why. [Site IV, Marla]

The behaviour of these visually impaired boys was considered inappropriate by the majority of their male peers but not so by their female peers. As well, those male classmates who expressed opposition to the camaraderie between their male visually impaired classmate and female members of the class seemed unable to comprehend why the visually

impaired child would choose to associate with girls even when they themselves, openly reported a preference not to play or work with the visually impaired pupil.

In short, the visually impaired boys were perceived to have chosen female rather than male associates despite the less than receptive behaviour routinely exhibited toward them by their male classmates.

I: You mentioned you wouldn't want Jamie to sit at your table.

R: He likes sitting with girls. Even on the playground, cuz that's where you always see him..with girls. [Site IV, Daniel]

Obviously, the visually impaired students were in a vulnerable position with regard to boy-girl relationships. The more accepting attitude of girls as well as the visually impaired student's ability to participate in the generally more physically passive activities (e.g. swinging, talking in groups, playing house) of girls, enhanced their social interaction. From the perspective of their male classmates, boys who played with girls were "sissies" and were, therefore not desirable playmates. Thus, boy-girl relationships condoned by the pupil culture created an impasse for male visually impaired students--it was a "catch-22" situation.

#### Pupil Assumption 5 (Unpopular with Unpopular)

This assumption states that unpopular children ought to play with other unpopular children. Few of the five visually impaired children in this study were perceived by their peers to be a part of the group considered to be most popular in their class. They were generally rated toward the bottom of the popularity list and, for the most part, perceived to interact with less popular children in the class, with children of the opposite sex, or with children from other classes.



However, as mentioned in Chapter 5, visually impaired students seemed to possess a neutral position in relation to popularity. They were not sought out by classmates as were popular children, nor were they the brunt of teasing and tormenting as were many unpopular children.

The totally blind child in this study, Tony, presented a particularly enigmatic situation for peers in relation to his popularity. He was rated as one of the most popular children by those peers interviewed. Yet during observation he was avoided by the same children on the playground. In investigating the source of this child's perceived popularity it became evident that helping the visually impaired student provided many advantages for those assisting him during class hours. For example, if a student was walking with Tony, he/she could be at the head of the line or would be able to leave the classroom during class time to assist the visually impaired child in moving about the school. As well, Tony was known to all teachers and students in the school and was routinely spoken to by others. Most of his classmates did not receive such recognition. Thus, the term "popular" seemed to have a different meaning for the classmates when it pertained to this particular visually impaired child. Despite the peers' stated perception in relation to popularity, the visually impaired student did not enjoy the typical advantages of such status on the playground. He was perceived to interact predominately with girls or, from time to time, with one unpopular child.

The concept of "popular" was noted to have another interpretation by Lisa, the visually impaired girl in the study. This is evident in the following excerpt.

I: [Lisa is sorting the students into "popular" and "unpopular" groups.] Now, I have a question that I'm a little bit confused about, Lisa.

R: What?

I: When I was asking you about ah, the kids that liked you, you told me the kids didn't like you. And now when I ask you for the kids that are the most popular, which means the kids that most people like, you put your name at the very top. Now, I'm confused. How do you feel about it?

R: Happy.

I: Are you popular or don't the kids like you?

R: They like me, I'm popular.

I: Okay, because before you told me they didn't like you.

R: For beating up.

I: For beating up who?

R: Me, a lot of kids like to.

I: Oh, you're popular for beating up.

R: Yeah, they like me to beat up. [Site II, Lisa]

Despite this explanation, as early as grade 1 children had definite opinions about who was and was not popular and specific reasons to justify their perceptions. For the most part, visually impaired students were perceived not to be in the "popular gang."

#### Pupil Assumption 6 (Avoid Unpopular)

According to this assumption children ought not associate with unpopular children. In this study one of the five visually impaired children, Charles, was consistently perceived by his classmates to associate with an unpopular child. He, himself, was considered unpopular by his classmates, although, as mentioned previously, he did not receive the same reaction from his peers as did other unpopular children. Charles and Justin considered one another as "best friends." Both perceived each other as well as himself to have few friends in the class. Charles reported Justin's appearance, (i.e. "he's an egg head"), as the reason for his unpopularity. Justin expressed his belief that classmates didn't play with Charles "cuz he's blind."

It was apparent during interviews and observations that children were reluctant to associate with unpopular children and were cognizant of the detrimental effect of such association upon their own reputation. In some cases children perceived their own status to be improved by mistreating less popular children. The perceptions of classmates of visually impaired children in relation to association with these handicapped children was difficult to ascertain. Within the context of helping in the classroom, classmates, particularly girls, did not seem reluctant to interact with their visually impaired peers. Yet, given a situation in which students were to select a partner for an activity, the visually impaired child was routinely left without a partner or was one of the last chosen. When asked during the interviews how they felt about playing with the visually impaired child on the playground the majority of children reported they didn't play with the visually impaired child because he/she played with other children or was unable to participate in the activities they enjoyed. Some children reported classmates reluctant to play with a child "who's blind" but this seemed to be more related to the visually impaired child's level of competence than to an adverse effect of such association on one's reputation with fellow students. Therefore, it was difficult to ascertain whether classmates perceived their reputation would be negatively affected by routine association with the visually impaired student. For other unpopular children, classmates frequently reported adverse effects of such associations.

Pupil Assumption 7 (Same as Classmates)

This assumption stated the need for children to be like their classmates in the things they do, like, and how they dress and act if they are to be part of the group. As mentioned previously, although the visually impaired children did basically the same things as their peers in the classroom, their use of adaptive aids and materials seemed to create the impression among their peers that the work they produced was easier and, in many cases, inferior to that accomplished by other students. On the playground, three of the visually impaired students were perceived by classmates to be unable to do the majority of things other children did. The other two visually impaired children were considered capable of participation but required support or direction from a peer. For many peers, this was considered to be an impediment to their own active participation and/or enjoyment of the activity.

For the most part, classmates of visually impaired children did not perceive these children as having significantly different likes and interests than those typical of children in general. As mentioned previously, they did perceive the ability to participate and the level of competence of visually impaired children to be reduced by virtue of the child's visual impairment.

As implied by this assumption appearance seemed to be important to students at all grade levels. Although the dress of the visually impaired children in this study was not perceived by their classmates to be noticeably different, they did perceive the visually impaired students to be unattractive. The focus of this perception seemed to be upon the eyes of the visually impaired child, although three of the five

children had outstanding physical features in addition to "different eyes," such as being overweight, having white hair and having facial scarring. Even the one visually impaired child who could not readily be distinguished as visually impaired, having only a slight misalignment of gaze, was perceived as unattractive.

I: You mentioned that Jamie has problems with his vision. What does it mean to be visually impaired? What is it like?

R: Um, I can't really say. Like, ah..I don't know. But like, you can tell by looking at him. Because like, when you're looking at him, it's like, he isn't looking at you, he's looking at something else but like, he's look at you like in a trance.

I: Like he's in a trance.

R: Yeah, or something like that.

I: What's the feeling you get when that happens.

R: I don't know, it, it just seems weird because, if like, he, sometimes I say, "Yahoo, Jamie," and he goes, "Yeah, I'm looking at you," and I say, "No, you ain't, you're looking away." He goes, "No, I'm looking at you." It just seems weird sometimes cuz he, you think he's looking somewhere else and he's really looking at you. [Site IV, Lee]

This visually impaired boy was selected by four of the five classmates interviewed as being one of the five least attractive children in the class.

Classmates interviewed at every site perceived the visually impaired student to be unattractive.

[Excerpt 1]

R: His eyes are going everywhere, they seem in different directions. [Site IV, Daniel]

[Excerpt 2]

R: There's nothing really different about him except his eye and maybe people think that he is different because of that.

I: What do you think, do you think he's different because of that?

R: No.

I: How is he the same as other kids?

R: I don't know, he's just the same as them except maybe a bit slower doing copying and...umhmm, he dresses the same as most people. It's just probably his eyes that look a bit different than people. [Site V, Mandy]

[Excerpt 3]

I: Sometimes people don't really understand what it means to have a visual impairment, they may even have silly or wrong ideas about visual impairment. What silly or wrong ideas have you heard about blindness from your friends?

R: That they look stupid.

I: Umhmm.

R: And that, why do they wear sunglasses because it is not going to help them any. It just makes them look even more stupider.

[Site V, Jason]

As implied in the final excerpt, it is also plausible that "visually impaired" as a "label of primary potency" negatively influenced the perceptions classmates constructed in relation to the attractiveness of the visually impaired child.

It was difficult to ascertain the extent to which peers of the visually impaired children in this study perceived them to act differently than other children. As Fine (1981) suggests, within the boundaries of friendship there is far greater tolerance for inappropriate behaviour than when one is outside this relationship. During observation, it was not uncommon to notice the classmates of visually impaired children laugh, roll their eyes, stare or exchange glances of annoyance or disgust in response to the behaviour of their visually impaired classmate. Yet, in interviews these peers tended to emphasize the fact that the child was "blind" rather than specific idiosyncracies of her/his behaviour. Once again it appeared as if different behaviour or expectations for different behaviour were inherent to the state of being "visually impaired." Following is an excerpt from one of the few interviews with classmates in which the different behaviour of the visually impaired child was elaborated upon by the classmate. This girl was often forced to be partners in the gym with the visually impaired student because her best friend had recently

become involved with a boy in the class and now routinely paired off with him for activities requiring a partner.

I: What's it like being Peter's partner in the gym?

R: Oh, well, if we're just practicing for floor hockey, not floor hockey but ah, ah, um volleyball, something like volleyball but he can't, like ah, he can't usually get it over the net.

I: Umhmm. So what's it like being his partner?

R: Well, I 'ry to get somebody that can throw it, like. Cuz that get it's done, gets it done faster.

I: Peter gets good marks in school. What do you think about this?

R: Yeah, sometimes he gets good marks like, on his tests. But he's still not in the popular group.

I: You said he has trouble seeing. How is his behaviour different from other children?

R: Ah, oh, well, like, when he gets excited sometimes he squeals. Like he makes a noise and that means, like, he's real excited and he moves his arms [motions arm flapping]. Like when he, when he's talking he moves his arms back and forth and his eyes are all moving everywhere, when, when he's not, even if he's just doing his work his eyes sometimes go over here and over here. They don't usually stay in one place.

I: You mentioned that his eyes move around and when he's talking to you he doesn't look at you. What do you think about that?

R: Well-l-l, he doesn't, he looks at me like. But like, when we're talking, like, he looks at me and sometimes he moves his head when he's talking, like. Well, he just does that cuz he's part blind and he, he, he's different from other children.

I: What makes him different from other children?

R: Oh, because he's blind, like he's half blind and he can't do his things, like, he can't do the same things as other children can.

I: How does it make you feel when his eyes move around like that?

R: Ohh, I got use to it when, he was in my class for a coup., a lot of years, maybe three or four or so. And, he was my friend, like sometimes I liked to play with him when I had nobody else.

[Site I, Allison]

Given the fact few classmates spontaneously reported the visually impaired child to act differently than other children in the class, when asked specifically about "different behaviour" of these children, responses centered upon the mannerisms typically associated with visually impaired children. Things such as arm flapping or jumping about when excited, not making eye contact, or standing too close when

speaking with someone were commonly mentioned. Classmates of the visually impaired perceived these different behaviours to be undesirable, as is exemplified in the following excerpts:

[Excerpt 1]

I: Tell me how kids in your class feel about working in school with Lisa.  
 R: I don't, I don't know if they like her or not.  
 I: How about you? How do you feel about working in school with Lisa?  
 R: Well, so-so.  
 I: Can you tell me about so-so?  
 R: Well, I kinda like her and I kinda don't.  
 I: Okay, what do you like about her?  
 R: I like about her that, I, she's nice to talk to.  
 I: And what do you not like about her?  
 R: Umm, that's a hard one. Umm, like she nev, when you talk to her she just goes [moves head and eyes around] all around the place.  
 I: Oh, her eyes move all over the place.  
 R: And you think she's looking somewhere else instead of right at you, things like that.  
 I: Oh, yes. How does that make you feel when her eyes move all over the place?  
 R: Well, I feel like she's not listening. She just puts her face on you except she just looks all around. [Site II, Emily]

[Excerpt 2]

I: Tell me how kids in your class feel about playing outside at recess or noon hour with Tony.  
 R: Well, Tony, when I was playing with Tony and taking him out, he kept calling me garbage can and, and in line he kicked me and, ouch, but I didn't really mind it because he didn't know what he was doing because he can't see.  
 I: How is Tony different than other kids?  
 R: Well, Tony is different because he's blind and he can't see and that's sometimes, he's smart that he can get his shoes on the right feet, without putting them on the wrong feet.  
 I: How is he the same as other kids?  
 R: He can put his shoes on but he can't tie them, and the way he acts in class is the same. And when he goes out for recess, um, he ah, plays with other kids like he, he isn't blind. Sometimes he just acts like he is blind and he goes like this and everything, waves his hands and jumps up and down. But he doesn't really know what he's doing.  
 I: Doesn't he?  
 R: I don't think so. [Site III, Lita]



[Excerpt 3]

I: Is it easier or more difficult for Charles to make friends than other kids in your class?

R: More difficult. Ummhm, I don't know why it would be more difficult, cause he's just like everyone else most of the time, but sometimes he'll act different but...sometimes he won't.

I: When does he seem to act different?

R: Maybe it's a lot at recess. He'll run different than other people. He won't be as fast. People make fun of him saying that he got duck feet the way he runs.

I: When Charles talks to you, he doesn't really look at you, but often his head is turned to one side?

R: Yeah, one time that happened when the teacher was talking to him. She'd say look out at the class, he'd probably hold the paper down and read over the paper cause it would help more.

I: When he is talking to you and he looks over to the side what do you think about that?

R: I think that he might feel bad about himself that he looks a bit different from you, just his eyes and that. [Site V, Mandy]

#### Pupil Assumption 8 ("Best Friends" Help)

The main contention of this assumption is that "best friends" ought to help one another. Common to all 31 classmates interviewed in this study was the perception that their visually impaired classmates required a substantial amount of help and although they were not "best friends" with this student, they were obligated or at least expected to routinely assist the visually impaired child.

I: Is it easier or more difficult for Tony to make friends than other kids in your class?

R: Well, it'd be quite easy cuz, um, I think mostly everyone in school knows him.

I: Tell me about this.

R: Because he's quite special like, in this school. Where he needs all that care, and all that stuff.

I: When he plays with kids he has his hands on them a lot. Tell me how the kids feel about that.

R: Well, they feel okay because they know [emphasizes "know"] they have to help him. [Site III, Virginia]

Despite evidence from observation that only two of the visually impaired children actually received an inordinate amount of help from their peers, all those interviewed reported providing assistance to

their visually impaired classmate. The following excerpts are typical of the comments made by classmates concerning the visually impaired student's need for assistance.

[Excerpt 1]

I: Tell me what it's like being Peter's partner in a language arts activity.

R: Well, he would be fun because you get to help him a lot.

I: You get to help him.

R: You help him because he's half blind and, ah, really give, ah, try to help him, make him feel that he's...left in. [Site I, Andrew]

[Excerpt 2]

R: Well, we can help her and we can learn her things and she can learn to get into bigger things [means more difficult work] and learn more things, like that. [Site II, Crystal]

[Excerpt 3]

I: How do kids feel about having Tony in their class?

R: Um, they help him a lot. That's probably what they think about. [Site III, John]

[Excerpt 4]

I: Tell me how kids in your class feel about having Jamie in their class.

R: Well, doesn't, they don't really mind at all.

I: Tell me how kids in your class feel about working in school with Jamie.

R: Well, usually if you're Jamie's partner, then just to get him speeded up a bit, ah, if, the printing's too small, read some of it for him. [Site IV, Daniel]

[Excerpt 5]

I: Tell me how kids in your class feel about working in school with Charles.

R: Well, they feel, well I feel okay, it's okay with me. Like sometimes I go over to him and see if he's doing good, and help him or something. Particularly if he needs to spell a word or something. [Site V, Megan]

It appeared that most interaction with the visually impaired student, whether involving assistance or not, was perceived to entail assistance. Even when the visually impaired child was paired with a less capable student for a particular activity and completed the major part of the assignment, the classmate perceived this situation as one in

which he/she had been helping the visually impaired student. The following excerpt is an example of this perception--that the visually impaired student routinely needed help despite knowledge of his above average academic performance.

I: Tell me how kids in your class feel about working in school with Peter [visually impaired student]?

R: Well, it's fun. Like Joey [a boy who is functioning well below grade level academically] likes helping him and all that cuz they like, when they're finished they have nothing to do so they always go over to Peter and ask him if he needs any help or could they, would he want to be helped with reading his book or something like that?

I: Umhmm.

R: Or on a test you're allowed to help him with some things.

I: Are you allowed to help any other kids on a test?

R: No! Unless they're like Jacob [mentally handicapped boy who was in this class for a few months]. He always got 20 or 10 per cent on his tests but it's, usually he was at the resource room and he didn't get to study much for his test so our teacher usually said it doesn't count, we'll let you study, we're gonna, you can take a break off this test. You don't need to do this cuz it wasn't no fair for him.

I: How about for Peter?

R: Peter, he does really good on his tests. He studies almost every night and usually gets in the 90s or 80s. [Site I, Paula]

The helping of "best friends" which spontaneously occurred in the classroom and on the playground was not typically that characteristic of the assistance routinely provided integrated visually impaired students in this study. When school children were placed in pairs to complete an assignment, they viewed themselves as working together on a task. When a visually impaired child happened to be their partner, the perception was one of assisting another student rather than involving a cooperative effort. Therefore, the perceived need to help the visually impaired student, whether at the request of teachers or the visually impaired pupil, was foreign to the negotiated rules associated with helping within the pupil culture.

### Pupil Assumption 9 (Play with Classmates)

This assumption contends that children should play with classmates. However, the peers of the visually impaired children did not seem to perceive this assumption as being as important for their visually impaired classmates as for other children. For two of the three visually impaired children who routinely interacted with children from other classes, Tony and Peter, there was a sense of indifference expressed by their classmates in relation to the choice of playmates of these visually impaired children. Both visually impaired children in this situation had significant problems maneuvering about the playground and required constant assistance when participating in the rough and tumble games of the other boys. Jamie, the third visually impaired child, however, was able to independently participate in most playground activities. His regular association with a playmate from a lower grade was frowned upon by his male classmates and perceived as being a significant difference in behaviour when compared to other children.

I: You said he was different than most kids?

R: Well, he can't see good and he uses a typewriter in class, everything, so.

I: How about in the way he acts?

R: Well, in the way he acts, he only likes to play with the grade fours, no one older or his age or something.

I: Okay, so he doesn't play with kids his age. How is he the same as other kids?

R: Well, just the same except for those two things, he can't see well and he plays with younger kids. [Site IV, Daniel]

Therefore, similar to the situation which developed in relation to boy-girl relationships, when visually impaired students sought companionship outside the sanctioned boundaries for interaction, they were perceived to be undesirable playmates. It also appeared that the more capable or competent a visually impaired student was perceived to be, the more

harshly he/she was judged when her/his behaviour was discerned to be inappropriate.

#### Pupil Assumption 10 (Follow the Rules)

Children ought to follow the rules. As mentioned in Chapter 6, when visually impaired children did not follow the rules on the playground, the consequences were similar to those for most children, that is, rejection or reprimand by their peers. However, these consequences were frequently not as harsh for visually impaired students as they were for other nonconforming students. Although some children described incidents in which a visually impaired playmate might be considered to be breaking the rules, for example, voluntarily reporting a fellow student's misbehaviour to the teacher or not raising a hand before answering questions, for the most part, visually impaired students were perceived to function within the rules of the specific pupil culture. Although classmates could identify situations in which the visually impaired student did not conform, they tended to be perplexed about how to deal with such behaviour in the classroom situation. Classmates perceived it to be "risky to straighten out" visually impaired students in the presence of teachers.

As well, in relation to teachers, classmates' perceptions were markedly altered. The peers of visually impaired students perceived these children to be treated differently by their teachers. Following are excerpts from three different sites which illustrate classmates' perception that visually impaired students were granted privileges or treatment not accorded the general student body:

[Excerpt 1]

R: Like Peter, they, he [the teacher] has to give extra attention to him cuz like, when we win prizes usually nobody pays any attention but whenever he wins prizes everybody in the class even the teacher's going around saying, "You're doing good, Peter. That's excellent," and all that and he gets really excited about it cuz, like they're trying to be as nice as they can to him.  
 I: Does he get more attention than other kids?  
 R: Well, sometimes cuz he's blind and he needs more help. [Site I, Paula]

[Excerpt 2]

I: And you were telling me he doesn't see so good?  
 R: Yeah.  
 I: Tell me about people who don't see so good.  
 R: Um, well sometimes the teachers treat them a little better.  
 I: A little better?  
 R: Yeah. But I didn't find that very fair that Kevin [a classmate] got taken off the computer, just so he could do something there.  
 I: Umhmm.  
 R: It's not fair. [Site IV, Lee]

[Excerpt 3]

R: Sometimes the teacher, ah, lets him go for a drink or somewhere like that and she doesn't let the rest of the class go. Then ah, that might make the other people feel insulted because he gets special attention. [Site III, Lita]

[Excerpt 4]

R: Well, he gets more help than us. That's what we're kinda jealous about. Lots of people. [Site III, John]

Because of the perceived special treatment of the visually impaired students by their teachers, it was difficult to ascertain whether classmates faulted the visually impaired pupils for not following rules or if their perception of injustice was primarily associated with the teacher's treatment of the visually impaired child. Given the facial expressions of annoyance and exchanged glances of resentment, this perception of injustice did not appear to enhance the visually impaired child's acceptance by peers.

### Pupil Assumption 11 (Reciprocate Playmates Actions)

This assumption contends that friends ought to reciprocate the actions of their friends, whether positive or negative. As with several of the previously discussed assumptions of pupil culture, visually impaired children presented predicaments for classmates in relation to interaction. For example, when children were presented with a hypothetical case involving a decision to reciprocate a punch from a fellow student, they generally stated they would return the punch or report the behaviour to the teacher. When the same scenario was described but involved a visually impaired child who had done the punching, classmates became noticeably ill at ease. Hitting a visually impaired child, even when this child had initiated the encounter, presented a troublesome situation for classmates. For many of the children, the interviewer had to first convince the interviewee that the visually impaired child would, in fact, purposefully strike another child.

#### [Excerpt 1]

I: Suppose a kid in your class was playing with Peter, let's say Nat and Peter were playing together, and Peter tripped Nat on purpose, what should Nat do then?

R: Um, gently go to Peter and push him or something.

I: What would you do?

R: Um, I'd just...go play again.

I: You wouldn't start a..before you said with Matthew or Nat you'd start a fight with them. Would you start a fight with Peter?

R: No.

I: Tell me about that.

R: Well, because he's blind and it'd be hard to start a fight with him because he jumps around a lot and everything. Be hard to start a fight with. [Site 1, Andrew]

#### [Excerpt 2]

I: Suppose a kid in your class was playing with Lisa and she hit the kid on purpose, what would the kid do?

R: [pause] Aaaa, I'd tell the teacher but I doubt if the teacher would really blame her because she might just hit them on, by mistake because she's blind.

I: No, say she hit them on purpose.

R: Um...

I: Do you think the teacher would believe that?

R: I guess.

I: So if Lisa were playing with you and all of a sudden she hit you good and hard on purpose, what would you do?

R: [slight pause] I wouldn't want to tell but I would. [sighs]

I: Why wouldn't you want to tell?

R: Because she's nice. She's half blind and half blind people, you have to help them. [Site II, Nicole]

[Excerpt 3]

I: Suppose Tony was playing with John and he hit John on purpose. What would John do?

R: He wouldn't do something because Tony couldn't see anything and sometimes he just goes like that and..

I: But what if he did do it on purpose?

R: Well, John wouldn't do anything because he knows that Tony is nice and he wouldn't hit him because they sit beside each other.

I: What would you do if Tony hit you on purpose?

R: When he hit me I don't think he did it on purpose though.

I: If he did though, if he did kick you on purpose, what would you do?

R: Ah, I wouldn't say anything because ah, he doesn't know he's doing it, really. [Site III, Lita]

[Excerpt 4]

I: Suppose Kevin and David were playing together, and Kevin hit David on purpose. What would David probably do?

R: He'd probably hit him back...cause...like, they're best friends, though, so I'm not sure.

I: How about if Kevin and...let's see...Jamie were playing together, and Jamie hit Kevin hard on purpose. What would Kevin probably do?

R: I think Kevin would probably, like, not hit him as hard and, like, just leave because Jamie is really skinny and, like, his arms would probably...not go out of joint but...like, I know somebody whose arms look like if you pulled them really hard their arms will come out of joint, or something like that. Like, I'm not sure about Jamie but he has, like, a broken knee cap right now. That's what he says, anyways. And, like, I think that Kevin would probably hit him back but not as hard, and then, like, they'd still hang around together. [Site IV, Marla]

[Excerpt 5]

I: Suppose Charles and Brian are playing and Charles hits Brian. What would Brian probably do?

R: I don't, I don't know. I've, I've hardly never seen them together. But a...I don't know, Brian would..just..I don't know,



say, "Hey, stop it," and Charles would smile or, laugh or something, then they'd both laugh and then be..

I: What would you do?

R: I don't know. I don't know. I don't know why he would.

I: Oh, he did.

R: I don't know what. No answer to it.

I: What do you think you'd do if he hit you on purpose?

R: I don't know. Ah...I would probably..I don't know. He wouldn't punch anybody.

I: If he did?

R: I don't know. I don't think he's ever punched anybody in his whole life. [Site V, Mark]

In general, peers of the visually impaired students perceived these children not only to have immunity from "being picked on" by virtue of their visual impairment but unlikely to initiate aggressive actions on purpose.

Another aspect of reciprocation involved helping fellow students. The classmates of the visually impaired children perceived major difficulties in these children reciprocating the help they routinely provided the visually impaired child. In the classroom the visually impaired children tended to be viewed as holding printed material too close to share with others students or having such a slow working speed that they were unable to finish in time to assist others. One of the younger children in the study interpreted the situation as follows:

I: Tell me how kids in your class feel about working in school with Lisa.

R: Well, they feel good, they feel good that they're helping Lisa cuz Lisa's a nice little girl and she likes to have fun with them and help them.

I: How do they help her?

R: How do they help her, well, they help her when she can't see things, they help her spell things, and they ah, if she can't see what they're doing up on the board for math, we could tell them that Lisa could sit up closer, we could ask them if Lisa could sit up closer. And ah, probably another reason we could help her is when she gets where's she's going she's gonna trip on a rock or something, we could probably help her and move the rock or tell her to move over a little bit so she won't trip on the rock.

I: You said she helps kids, too. How does she help other kids?

R: Well, um, some other kids, um, she has friends for, that ain't really in school, that she knows that are blind. And ah, she can help them and tell them how to spell words and tell them what kind of food it is that they're feeling and stuff cuz Lisa's only half blind.

I: Oh, so she could help people who are all blind.

R: [nods head yes.] [Site II, Nicole]

It was evident this child perceived the visually impaired classmate as unable to help sighted children.

Another issue associated with the visually impaired child's failure to reciprocate actions of her/his peers was in relation to making eye contact during conversation. Classmates perceived their partially sighted classmate's failure to make eye contact as a deliberate act of disrespect.

I: Some kids have told me that when Jamie is talking to them he doesn't really look at them.

R: Yeah, I know. His eyes are going everywhere, they seem in different directions.

I: How do kids feel about that?

R: I don't know.

I: How do you feel about it?

R: Well, I think that he should look at you [using indignant voice]. [Site IV, Daniel]

This student did not perceive the visually impaired child to be unable to make eye contact nor did he understand that, in fact, the visually impaired child was aligning his gaze to allow the clearest view of the speaker's face.

Another child expressed her concern that the visually impaired child would not listen to her when they were working together. This perceived inattentiveness, presented in an excerpt earlier in the chapter, was interpreted as a result of the visually impaired child's perceived unwillingness to make eye contact during discussion. Once again, this classmate had a sense of being treated unfairly because the

visually impaired child would not reciprocate the same level of attentiveness she herself exhibited during their interaction. Thus, in general, classmates perceived the visually impaired student to be incapable of reciprocating in many classroom and playground situations.

### Conclusion

The classmates of visually impaired children had limited knowledge concerning the actual visual abilities and disabilities of these children. Conjecture was prevalent as they interpreted their associations and interactions with their visually impaired classmate. The effect of the label "visually impaired" seemed to have a significant and negative influence upon their perceptions, particularly in relation to the visually impaired child's level of competence and the number of activities in which he/she could participate. These two aspects, that is, the potency of the label "visual impairment" and the classmates' ignorance regarding the visually impaired student's condition and its functional implications, served to maintain the myths and misinformation associated with being visually impaired (e.g. helplessness, incompetence). Within the culture of the elementary school, integrated visually impaired students could not escape the perceptions of inferiority surrounding them. As the perceptions of classmates were examined, it became increasingly evident that specific long-term strategies would be required to change the intrinsically negative impression elementary school participants had constructed with regard to their visually impaired classmate.

The incompatibility between the elementary pupil culture, as it existed at the five research sites, and the integration of visually impaired students was blatant. Visually impaired children were routinely placed in situations where they faced dilemmas. For example, when they interacted with children of the opposite gender or unpopular children as an alternative to being excluded or isolated, they were perceived by their classmates to be defying the appropriate behaviour sanctioned by pupil culture. When they chose to avoid ridicule, rejection or risks to their safety by not competing in one of the many inappropriate activities valued in most elementary schools, they were perceived to be "boring," reluctant to participate or incompetent. When they, through necessity, used adaptive aids or strategies to complete the assigned learning activities presented in typical classrooms, they were perceived to be functioning at an inferior level, having an unfair advantage, or incapable of doing "the proper stuff." Intrinsic to the pupil culture into which the integrated visually impaired student was immersed, were expectations which were, without qualifications, unrealistic for these students. For example, without enlightened planning by educators, visually impaired students had few opportunities to reciprocate the help they routinely received from peers, to progress at a level comparable to their ability, or to participate in competitive activities without a significant handicap imposed by their visual impairment in an inflexible environment. Hence, the perceptions of the classmates of integrated visually impaired students were convincing indicators of the inflexibility of the existing school environment to successfully meet the needs of these children.

Given the perceptions of classmates of visually impaired students, acceptance could be seen to be a multidimensional phenomenon. The perceptions of peers were critical in exploring the acceptance of visually impaired students. Often perplexed by how to respond to their visually impaired classmate, fully sighted children constructed their meanings through their interactions and observations of these students. Without an appropriate knowledge base relevant to visual impairment and its implications, they perceived their visually impaired classmate to be incompetent and, in many situations, to behave inappropriately. Allowances needed to be made for visually impaired students with regard to basic assumptions of pupil culture, such as the relationship between "best friends" and helping, the treatment of unpopular children, group affiliation, and the appropriateness of behaviour in specific situations.

As might be expected, given the mismatch between pupil culture and the integration of visually impaired students, visually impaired children were also perceived to receive special treatment and/or privileges from teachers. From the cultural context of the playground there came an interpretation in many ways foreign to either intentions or comprehensions of the adults involved. These variations in the perceptions of children and adults as they relate to integrated visually impaired children are considered in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 8

### Teachers', Principals' and Parents' Perceptions of the Social Acceptance and Interaction of Visually Impaired Pupils

#### Introduction

As proposed in subpurpose four of the study, the perceptions of the teachers, principals and parents of integrated visually impaired pupils relevant to the social acceptance and interaction of these children, are examined in this chapter. First, consideration is given to the adult perspective of the social world of children. Next, the effect of "visually impaired" as a label of primary potency is discussed in relation to adult perspectives. Finally, as in the three previous chapters, their perceptions of the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired children are presented in relation to various cultural assumptions associated with adult culture and identified during the analysis of data.

The perceptions of adult participants were critical to understanding the meaning integration of visually impaired students had for them, the problems and issues they identified, the realities an integrated setting had for them, and, more specifically, how they viewed the social interaction and acceptance between the visually impaired student and her/his peers. Teachers, although believed to have considerable autonomy within the confines of their classrooms, must also respond to the constraints school staff, parents and community members place on them (Alfonso, 1986; Galton, Simon & Croll, 1980; Lortie, 1975). As Leacock (1969) contends:

Teachers cannot simply interact with the children in their classrooms according to their desires and personal style. Instead their behaviour often takes on characteristics beyond their immediate aims or intents. They must adapt their style, not only to the children but to the institution, to the principal's requirements, to the other teachers' attitudes, and to the standards according to which they will be evaluated. (p. 202)

Adaptation by teachers is an intrinsic aspect of the interaction process itself. How teachers adapt to integrated visually impaired children within the specific context of their classrooms and in more open areas of the school will affect their direct interaction with these pupils and, ultimately, the interaction between the visually impaired students and their sighted classmates (Jamieson, 1984; Mangold, 1980; Nezer, Nezer & Siperstein, 1985).

Principals, although having more indirect contact with students than do teachers, are instrumental in creating a social environment which promotes the acceptance of integrated students (Burrello & Sage, 1979). Given the responsibility of leadership in the school, the principal, through her/his interaction with other participants and parents can both explicitly and implicitly promote or restrain interaction; therefore, insight into their perceptions relevant to the interaction and acceptance of visually impaired students can elucidate another view of the situation.

Parents, although virtually excluded from the daily interaction of their children within the social environment of the school (Woods, 1979), provide the context in which the early social development of children occurs. Therefore, the expectations parents have and the opportunities they perceive available for their visually impaired child may be seen to structure their early interaction and thus, their

behaviour in relation to this aspect of the child's development (Corn, 1987; Mangold, 1980).

Itinerant teachers, frequently interacting in a liaison role between and among the other adult participants, as well as between the visually impaired student and adults, provides yet another perspective. Given their somewhat "outsider" status and their experience in a number of schools in the same geographic area, itinerant teachers' perspectives represent another source of insight into the social reality elementary school participants construct in relation to the social integration of visually impaired students. Thus, an adult perspective, whether of those indirectly or intimately involved with the visually impaired student, is critical to understanding both the interaction among participants and the way their social realities shape the social context within which the child is integrated.

#### An Adult Perspective

It has only been during the past few decades that social scientists have begun to acknowledge and examine the distinct world of school children referred to as "pupil culture" (Pollard, 1985). Considered as a "thriving unselfconscious culture which is as unnoticed by the sophisticated world as the culture of some dwindling aboriginal tribe" (Opie & Opie, 1959, p. 1), adults appear to have restricted access to "a world we each shared once and, strictly speaking, share no longer" (Davies, 1982, p. 19).

As this study progressed, it became evident that adults were oblivious to many of the assumptions of pupil culture which affected the



acceptance and rejection of children by their peers. Despite the best of intentions, this ignorance frequently resulted in actions which detracted from, rather than contributed to the acceptance of the visually impaired pupil by peers. For example, in the following excerpt, the itinerant teacher describes an attempt to improve the social acceptance of the visually impaired child by including a peer during their instructional sessions.

I: What types of things have you done to encourage Tony to make friends?

R: We take, well we did last year, we would go upstairs to the library if we weren't going over to our office. And we chose a kid to come with us and if the kid was all caught up in their work they could come over and last year we took a particularly difficult kid and it helped. Got him out of the teacher's hair..he was such a bright kid but, ohh! His parents had just divorced and he had all kinds of problems and anyway, we'd take a different kid to go with us and they loved learning abacus and a little bit of braille. And they would read a paragraph and Tony would read a paragraph and ah, I think socially, it really improved. Ah, they understood more what he was doing. [Site III, itinerant teacher]

While this teacher was aware of the need to have the visually impaired child's classmates more aware of how a blind child learns, he did not appear to recognize that while choosing a difficult child to accompany them during their instructional sessions was of direct assistance to the teacher, choosing an unpopular child to work with the visually impaired child may have had a negative effect upon the visually impaired child's acceptance by peers. As discussed in Chapters 5-7, "children ought not associate with unpopular children."

Although teachers tended to be hesitant to become involved in the social world of their students, at each site incidents involving the assigning of classmates to play with unpopular children were reported.

The following excerpt, described during an interview with an upper elementary girl, is typical of such incidents.

I: Who are the kids in your class who have difficulty making friends?

R: Justin, Troy, and Brian. Probably, that would be the three that have trouble.

I: Why do they have difficulty?

R: Well, one day Justin wasn't there because he had to go to a Special Ed class and he felt bad. He has trouble making friends because sometimes he'll bother people and they won't like him so then, he felt, when he had to go to Special Ed, people were going to even hate him more cause he had to go to a class with more help. But people liked him more after, sort of liked him more cuz he acted better with people. He acts nicer now.

I: Oh yes, so they like him better since he's been going to the Special Ed class?

R: Yeah, because if you asked him for maybe some help, he'll help better than what he used to, and Mrs. Daniels [classroom teacher] asked us to try to act nice to him since he has a bit of a hard time.

I: What other kids has Mrs. Daniels asked you to try and be nice to?

R: Ummhm, try to just...try to be Troy's friend. She said she knows it's hard to be Troy's friend cause he thinks that he's always the best, because in music, he had the highest points and he thought that he was the best, and he was bragging about it all the time. He'd say to some of us, "I got this much points," and then he'd go up to them and keep saying it.

I: Anyone else, that she's asked you to try and be nice to?

R: Sometimes Brian, maybe, and Charles [visually impaired pupil]. People that aren't really liked that much in our class and she knows cuz they're just a bit of a disturbance. [Site V, Mandy]

Without understanding the rules of pupil culture associated with making friends and group loyalties, adults, hoping to improve the social situation for less popular children, may often act in ways which may increase the vulnerability of these children. Strategies assumed to promote the acceptance of the less popular children may, in fact, be in direct conflict with the rules children have negotiated among themselves to guide the choice of playmates and, more importantly, those children who are to be excluded.

Although it might be argued that it is important for teachers to challenge the exclusionary rules of pupil culture, this would assume teachers were aware of the implications of such a challenge and, therefore would intervene or assist the process of inclusion. However, in this study, teachers were observed to be unmindful of the rules of group affiliation among students. Adults, in general, had a limited understanding of the complexity and importance of the social world of children or of the effect of their actions upon it.

#### Visual Impairment as a Label of Primary Potency

As discussed in Chapter 7, labels such as "visual impairment" seem to exert a powerful influence upon the way humans perceive those exhibiting the specific trait (Allport, 1958; Davis, 1961). In discussions with teachers, principals, and parents, several common perceptions associated with visual impairment were evident. First, most adults expressed their belief that although society was changing, there was still a stigma associated with being visually impaired.

[Excerpt 1]

I: What do you see as society's concept of blindness or visual impairment?

R: I still think that we're all pretty...in the dark ages. Like, it's the same with Roger [a visually impaired young man she knows]. Like, I wasn't sure if he was just blind or blind and retarded, and you're always trying to make the assumption, what is the connection, you know?

I: Umhmm.

R: Because some people are just blind, some are blind and deaf, blind retarded.

I: Umhmm.

R: And so you're always just wondering, and I think probably most people still do wonder, you know, because they can't see and they have trouble...wondering how they'll do things, you know. [Site 1, French teacher]

[Excerpt 2]

R: Society's impression? [pause] Well, I think people are generally always wary of a condition they don't understand and that is different. And ah, I would think people would just be kind of, not afraid, but ah, that they would lack the necessary motivation to, ah, sort of meet Lisa half way. [Site II, music teacher]

A second perception expressed at every site was that of a sense of "feeling sorry" for the visually impaired as well as a belief that visually impaired people were more courageous than were those who were fully sighted.

[Excerpt 1]

I: What's your impression of blind people?

R: My impression of blind people...I guess my impression of blind people like anybody else..I can't say I don't feel sorry for them cuz I look at my own two children and I think, "Oh, if they couldn't see anything!" I mean, my heart aches that he's never seen his mother's face or that he's never seen the sun or he's never seen an animal. My heart aches for them. But Tony, in Tony's case, he's such a gifted little boy and so happy. He, he's making out fine. Sometimes I think people..that, that man, Tom Sullivan?

I: Umhmm.

R: Do You See What I Hear? [book written by a blind author] Some of these people, sometimes I wonder about...ask me that question again, I'm getting off topic.

I: What's your impression of blind people?

R: [pause] Fighters. Tony's going to be a fighter. William [another blind student known to this teacher] was a fighter. I hope that Tony gets a dog because people with dogs certainly have independence. [Site III, resource teacher]

[Excerpt 2]

I: What's your impression of visually impaired people?

R: ...I don't know. Ah..my impression..

I: When you think about visually impaired people what images or thoughts do you have?

R: ..Well, I feel sorry for them cuz they can't read, I mean, I read so much, that..to lose my eyesight would just be, you know, devastating. Not that it wouldn't be to everybody, but, you know, I mean, my nose is always stuck in a book. Ah...ah, I don't know, to be blind from birth and to miss seeing..things, like, how do you know what a tree looks like, I mean, you've never seen one. Ah, that sort of thing, ah..I mean, I think they're very brave, I don't know, in any type of disability, ah..to have sort of the courage to, to carry on, to go out into, like some of those blind people go out into the traffic and, cross streets, and, you know,

I mean, I'd be petrified! Course, I suppose anybody would until they'd taken some training. But ah, I think they're courageous.  
[Site V, classroom teacher]

The tendency to make generalizations about those who are "visually impaired" is apparent in the above excerpts--blind people are "fighters," those "with dogs are independent," and they "can't read." As well, teachers tended to empathize with their visually impaired student and the challenges visual impairment was perceived to create for them.

Another perception frequently cited by both teachers and parents was that the particular student they had was an "exceptional visually impaired student" and not like most visually impaired students who would surely encounter more difficulty in coping with the regular curriculum than this particular student was experiencing.

[Excerpt 1]

I: What have you learned from your experience of having a visually impaired pupil enrolled in your class?

R: Well, Peter is an exceptional case. If he was totally blind or not so smart I don't think it could work. He isn't like most visually impaired children, really.

[Later on in the interview]

I: Is there anything you would like to add to what we have discussed?

R: Only that I think Peter is an exception to the rule as far as visually impaired children go and it probably wouldn't work so well with most visually impaired kids. [Site I, music teacher]

[Excerpt 2]

I: Is it easier or more difficult for him to make friends than it is for children without a visual impairment?

R: I don't feel, not in Jamie's case, it makes any difference. I haven't found...certainly haven't found that it's made any difference whatsoever. Now, I know I'm probably unique in saying that...or...or a little more unique than others, because I have seen other kids who have had a lot of trouble, you know...but I haven't faced that. Jamie's handicap...Jamie is not as severely handicapped as some other children, too. It's the only disability he has, so...No, I've never seen that, really. [Site IV, parent]

## [Excerpt 3]

I: Before we end the interview, is there anything you'd like to add to any of the things we've discussed?

R: I think probably because Tony is as bright as he is that it wouldn't be maybe...he's not even average. I think he's above average. That's made things a lot easier with him. That definitely has and he wouldn't be your average run of the mill kid to do a study on, he's very gifted and I think that's made it a lot easier for everybody to deal with him cause he's very pleasant, has a nice personality, and everything's great, so. No, I think he's done well, I think he'll be okay too. I think he'll be able to do whatever he likes when he grows up. [Site III, music teacher]

For teachers, there was also a sense that although the visually impaired child was obviously succeeding academically, this trait could not possibly be typical of visually impaired children in general. In short, even a direct, positive experience with an integrated visually impaired child could not transcend the assumptions and/or expectations relevant to visual impairment and intelligence. Therefore, not only did the label seemed to magnify "one attribute out of all proportion to its true significance, and mask other important attributes of the individual" (Allport, 1958, p. 176), but the stereotypic images people had learned could not be denied even in the presence of obvious contradictions to these images.

#### Perceptions of Implications of Visual Impairment

Both parents and teachers seemed to have a superficial, thus inadequate, understanding of the implications of visual impairment upon both the social and the academic performance of the visual impaired student. Although teachers appeared to have limited knowledge about the visual impairment itself, even parents who were more knowledgeable about their child's specific condition still seemed unaware of the effect

visual impairment would have upon routine functioning of their child. For the four partially sighted children in particular, adults were frequently oblivious to the unique circumstances created when visual access to the environment was limited. In the following excerpt a parent discusses her perception of the effect of visually impairment upon her son's ability to make friends.

I: Is it easier or more difficult for Peter to make friends than it is for children without a visual impairment?

R: ...I don't think that affects Peter one way or the other, if he's visually impaired at all, you know. I think if Peter was all sighted and had the same, you know, ability to talk, I think people would take to him as well, you know. The only thing I think is that older people have..sort of, will listen to Peter because of his...because he's visually impaired, maybe longer. Whereas they might, with a ten-year-old kid, "Come on, I'm busy. Get out of the way," type of thing, if he's talking too much. But other than that...

[Later in the interview]

I: Many parents of visually impaired children have concerns about their child's acceptance by other children. What do you think makes it difficult for some visually impaired children to find friends?

R: If they're shy and, you know, withdrawn, and they're not able to..especially if they're completely visually impaired and not able to get around mobility-wise, and if they're shy and withdrawn themselves, I imagine that they probably would find most times they'd be sitting in a corner type-of-thing, by themselves. Um. I haven't...you know, that doesn't affect Peter. Or we haven't found it does, number one, because of his ability to speak, and number two, he has partial sight, so he has, you know, is able to see where the other kids are and..you know. [Site I, parent]

Peter spent the majority of his time during recess and noon hour sitting on the swings because, as he reported, he couldn't find or keep up with the kids with whom he'd like to play. Even for the totally blind student, the educators and his mother were unaware of the difficulty this child encountered locating children he wished to play with on the playground.

Absence of an understanding of how the partially sighted children functioned visually, was evident, particularly among teachers. The following excerpt illustrates the confusion surrounding the visual behaviour of one of the students.

R: Which eye has he got sight in? This one, the left [It is the right].

I: His sight is in the right eye, I think. I remember watching the way he held his pencil because he's left handed. Like this. [I demonstrate.]

R: Cuz the other day when we were watching ah, the Micmac series on television, I was sort of sitting where you are, and he was sitting here and the T.V. was there, and..he seemed to be looking at me all the time [She was sitting to the right of the screen.] And I thought, well maybe it's cause he's got this eye trained on the, T.V. I thought, "I must go check that again."

I: Maybe that's where his best viewing field is, maybe he has to hold his eye in that direction to make use of his best area of vision.

R: But if this is the eye he's got sight in, he shouldn't have been looking at me, he should have been looking this way. [She doesn't understand the situation or how Charles uses his vision.] So, I must check that. [Site V, classroom teacher]

Evidence of teachers' misconceptions related to the visual abilities of their visually impaired students were routinely observed during the presentation of lessons. For example, because a visually impaired student appeared to be able to view the chalkboard using a telescopic aid, teachers assumed he was able to follow extensive written assignments presented on the chalkboard and in most cases, even expected the student to copy notes from the board using this aid. In fact, the three visually impaired children who used this aid could identify approximately six letters at a time. The visual image received might best be described as similar to the view a normally sighted person might encounter if looking at the same chalkboard through a drinking straw.

The frequently cited problems encountered by a person who is neither fully sighted nor totally blind (Allport, 1980; Corn, 1987;



Morse, 1983) were routinely observed in this study. Expectations for the visually impaired child's level of performance were sometimes inappropriate; activities themselves, could be meaningless without access to more accurate visual information; and, on several occasions, the visually impaired pupil was expected to participate in ventures which posed a significant risk to her/his safety. The need for a clearer understanding of the implications of this rather "nebulous state," that is, being neither fully sighted nor totally blind, were thus, apparent for both parents and teachers. Misunderstandings associated with inadequate knowledge of the education of the visually impaired were also evident for the totally blind child in this study. In the following excerpt, Tony's teacher is concerned about his use of the word "see" as a totally blind child.

I: How does Tony think of himself in terms of his blindness?

R: Well, as I say, I think he thinks he's special. A special boy, ah..but I think he has such an outlook..I'm not sure whether sometimes he tries to, sort of ignore that handicap, because, as I've said before, he has come up to me and said ah, after the Festival or something there, he said, "Mrs. Fraser, was your daughter at the Festival?" I said, "Yes, she was." He said, "I thought so, I saw her there." You know, he refers to seeing, now whether that's term, his own terminology, or whether he's ignoring that part and letting on that...and also ah, if we're discussing something and there was a program on, or the T.V. or something on T.V., he will say, ah, "I saw that program."

I: Umhmm.

R: Now, some of the kids have looked at him and, "Well, Tony, you can't see." "Well, I can hear!" You know, now whether, as I say, it's just, a manner of speaking to say, "I see it," or whatever, or "I saw this or saw that," I don't know.

But..he's..I've never, I think I can say, I have not heard him say once or complain about his, the blindness. [Site III, classroom teacher]

The teacher's apparent discomfort with the use of words related to vision in the presence of a blind child were, when used by the blind child himself, equally distressing. She was unaware that totally blind

children typically adopt the verbal expressions prevalent within their environments and do not develop modified vocabularies to better accommodate their more tactually oriented world (Warren, 1984).

Principals, who had minimal contact with the visually impaired pupils in their schools, were also unaware of the implications of visual impairment upon learning. Their limited exposure to direct experience with the visually impaired child seemed to preclude their developing an appreciation for the complexities involved in either the social or instructional integration of a visually impaired student. They perceived the accommodation of the visually impaired pupil as a rather straightforward task of providing the necessary materials and resource help. In fact, as reported by one principal, accommodating a visually impaired pupil was an uncomplicated task in comparison to that required to provide for children with less obvious disabilities.

I: When you talk about those standards, how do visually impaired kids fit in those standards? [We have been discussing the public's perception of the present standards of education for children in general.]

R: I have a hard time in this discussion thinking of visually impaired kids being different from anybody else. To the extent that they don't measure up, they are going to be a problem. But they've got an advantage. People understand the visually impaired. It's the dyslexic they don't understand. If I could have all my dyslexic kids declared legally blind, put dark glasses on them, give them a white cane, then everybody would give them a tape recorder, have oral examinations, they'd go through the system and they'd be fine. People have no trouble understanding the visually impaired. The accommodation required in many cases is obvious. They have the advantage. [Site I, principal]

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Cultural Assumptions Associated with Principals', Teachers'  
and Parents' Perceptions of the Social Acceptance and Interaction  
of Visually Impaired Pupils

The integration of visually impaired children into the regular classroom creates unique situations for teachers, particularly those who have never before known a visually impaired pupil (MacCuspie & McAlpine, 1988). Much more dramatic, is the situation for parents when they learn their child is visually impaired (Fraiberg, 1977; Hull 1983). However, for both these groups who must work directly with the visually impaired child on a daily basis, there are unique challenges without simple solutions. For example, how does one respond to mannerism such as hand flapping as a blind child's expression of excitement when this has a rather bizarre appearance to other people? Or, how does a teacher include a visually impaired student in an activity which requires accurate visual interpretations of fine details? Although the challenges and questions were frequently different for parents and teachers, given the distinct contexts of home and school, the complexities and resulting contradictions in some solutions were common to both situations. Both struggled with the concept of "being different" and the negative connotations that holds in our society. Both simultaneously grappled with the need to "make the child fit in" while trying to avoid treating the child differently. As the following adult assumptions associated with the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired children are presented, the complexities created and the contradictions which exist in accommodating atypical situations become evident.

Parents and itinerant teachers for the visually impaired, although intimately involved with the visually impaired student, were "outsiders" with respect to the schools. Because the identified adult assumptions emerged primarily from observation and interviews in the schools, the perceptions of these two "outside" groups sometimes differ somewhat from those more directly involved in the daily school life of the visually impaired student and her/his classmates. However, these "outsiders'" perceptions provide an insightful contrast to those of the other adult participants.

#### Adult Assumption 1 (Academics Focus of Instruction)

Teachers ought to focus instruction upon the cognitive development of integrated visually impaired pupils and not upon their social/emotional growth.

In all five sites, teachers, itinerant teachers of the visually impaired, principals, and parents perceived the academic performance of the visually impaired child to be the most important aspect of the child's educational placement. Teachers were concerned primarily with how the visually impaired child would cope with the academic work, who would provide the necessary programs and materials, how they would manage the extra work, etc. During interviews such issues were spontaneously raised and discussed. The social/emotional growth of the child was not mentioned as a major concern by any of the 18 teachers interviewed. In fact, they were visibly surprised by some of the interview questions addressing social interaction issues, as is illustrated in the following five excerpts from interviews with the classroom teachers of the visually impaired children. The question

posed was, "How have you encouraged the visually impaired student in your class to make friends?"

[Excerpt 1]

Gee, I don't know, just treat him like he was an ordinary student. Whatever we did, I just expected him to do it, and he wanted to do it, sort of thing, so I didn't...I don't know if I had to do anything about it, because it was much easier than what I thought it was going to be. Like, I thought I'd have to be helping him around and helping him dress and undress and...It's when I found out what his vision really is, it didn't frighten me, but no matter what I do, inside or out, he's always willing to do it and he's right there. Like for our ski program, he went along and had a ball and as long as he listened to my voice, he followed me all over the hill! Right to the top of that big ski run. Yup, that's when I was pleased. His first few days, he, of course, didn't want to stray too far from me, didn't like to in the lodge, and I didn't want him to. But third or fourth day, he knew where everything was...he must have a very good memory...he'd get right around, no problem at all. [Site 1, classroom teacher]

[Excerpt 2]

[pause] I haven't done a whole lot because Lisa came in with the idea, ah, in, seeming to be able to get along with people. And, at the time I felt it was just, if she were mine I would want her accepted on that grounds, that she could get along with people. And just like everybody else. But ah, like the rest, I mean, sometimes you sort of take them aside and tell her that if she treated somebody with a little more manners, this would help. Ah, we've had times we've talked about if someone gets pushed over or things like that, you say you're sorry. And those sort of things. And I find that talking to Lisa has an effect, but it's a short term effect yet. It doesn't, you know, she does it at the time but, like a lot of people at this age, the next incident she's forgotten it. But ah, so beyond just talking to her, ah some, I know once or twice, I actually, maybe was using Lisa for a shy child more than helping Lisa. But I do remember saying, "Lisa, would you like to go play with so and so?" And, I think actually at that time I was thinking of the other child being on her own. But ah, that seemed to ah, you know, Lisa did do that willingly. That's about all I think I've really done to encourage Lisa. [laughs] [Site II, classroom teacher]

[Excerpt 3]

I guess, mostly what I've done, because he's such an out-going, there's not, he's had, he's got a lot of friends on his own. [Being the only blind child in the school, Tony has many acquaintances. He has few children with whom he interacts with in a relationship characteristic of those who are "best friends."] But what I might do, is if I find that some, have not had too much association even, I've tried to make them, "Will you go and help?"

Like, today. Last couple of times I've got ah, Cathy. Very quiet little girl. And ah, she is repeating grade 3. But ah, so I figured ah, she could miss a little bit of spelling, of actual printing it down. For her to go up and read the spelling exercises to, to work with him, to have a close relationship with him..to find out that Tony has just as many ah, questions that need to be answered, or she can help him, and just to say, have conversation, communication. I guess I've worked on, that part. And if I notice, another one, I might say ah, "John would you help Tony go to the milk cooler, please?" Or whatever. [Site III, classroom teacher]

[Excerpt 4]

I don't think I've done anything, actually. The only thing I can say, ah, I accepted him readily, in the orienteering, and ah..and ah, you know, I, I made sure I had maps that were enlarged. So that he would have more success. But I don't really..ah, I don't really think I've ah, gone out of my way to ah, to make Jamie acceptable. I, I don't think I have. [Site IV, classroom teacher]

[Excerpt 5]

...Ohh, um, picking different groups, you know, numbering them different perhaps, you know, numbers to four and all the ones go together and all the twos, threes go together, so on. Ah, to try and get him with different groups. Rather than just the ones that he will pick. Ah..and he's, you know, he's worked well with the, the ones that he's ah, ah, been with. Ah, you know, I'll encourage him to maybe, pass out things, or to, you know, to do something for me, or ah, ah, like asking the kids to go ask Charles if they could borrow his micro, his magnifying glass. Just to give him some more contact.

I: Sure.

R: With the kids. [Site V, classroom teacher]

There are several significant issues which emerge in the responses teachers gave to this question. First, teachers do not seem to have reached the stage where they feel comfortable enough with their own acceptance and interaction with the visually impaired student to become a facilitator of more appropriate interaction between the visually impaired child and her/his classmates. Second, teachers do not appear to be particularly aware, either during interviews or observation, of what they could do to assist the visually impaired child to make friends.

During observations there were few classroom activities or programs which even broached social development issues. Such issues as "friendship" and "getting along with others" were incorporated in the health program at several sites. However, health was also a "low priority" subject and routinely preempted or was the subject rescheduled when time ran out. As reported by other studies examining the importance given to the social/emotional development of school children (Morse, Ardizzone, MacDonald & Pasich, 1980; Sullivan, 1989) such issues receive sporadic attention, at best, and are not considered to be an essential part of the school curriculum.

Parents, as well, did not consider the social/emotional development of their visually impaired child to be of prime importance in relation to schooling. They perceived the role of teachers in this regard primarily as one of assuring their child was not "picked on" or mistreated by other children. For parents, as for teachers, academic success was the major concern. The following excerpt from a parent interview typifies the perceptions of parents in relation to their child's social versus academic development.

I: The next question may be a little difficult to answer with certainty, but I'd like to get your thoughts on it. In thinking about Peter as he goes into junior and senior high school, how do you think he will get along socially?

R: Won't have a problem socially. I'm often wondering how much, how...like how much he's going to get bogged down with the extra work. I'm kind of concerned about that. I don't think socially...I don't think he'll have a problem. Um, as I say, Peter has the ability to talk and that'll get you a long ways in this world. [Peter is on the fringe of most group activities in the classroom and on the playground he is isolated, spending most of his time alone on the swings.] But, you know, I am concerned about the amount of work.

[Later in the interview]

I: What types of things have you done to encourage Peter to make friends?



R: When he was a little one, we...I was always, like I got into Mothers'n'Tots and I took him, you see, he was always on the go with me because he was my only child, it was easy to go. He used to visit a lot of kids at that time and, then, um, after that, I mean like, I never really pushed Peter to play with the kids. When Peter was little he always had oodles of toys and we used to find a lot of the little neighbor kids would come at that point to play, because of the toys, I know it was nothing more than toys. After...once he went to school, I mean, it was sort of up to him to make his own friends, and, as I say, I never heard that he hasn't had friends, um, you know, even like on the swing and that, I know there's kids that will hold a swing for him just to get out there where he's later getting out or something like this, so...I don't know [laugh]. [Site I, parent]

Parents of the visually impaired students did not perceive the teacher to have a prominent role in the social development of their child or more specifically to be responsible for their child developing friendships or having playmates. As illustrated in the following excerpt, the teacher's role was primarily related to the academic performance of her students.

I: What do you see as the teacher's role in the social integration of integrated visually impaired children?

R: I can't see any more than with the other kids, ah...not to continuously involve them in everything, you know, and make them feel they're being pushed into it. You know, but to mix them with a variety of kids when doing projects or work together or whatever. You know, like, ah, really I don't think they have that much socially to, other than that part cuz at this age they're still pretty well individual workers and outside the teachers are very rarely with them so they just kinda go out and play with whoever's there, you know. [Site II, parent]

Although itinerant teachers of the visually impaired perceived the social acceptance of their students to be a significant problem, they recognized and were frequently frustrated by the emphasis on academic achievement as the primarily goal within the school systems in which they worked.

I: What do you see as the teacher's role in the social integration of a visually impaired student?

R: Well, I think that the role of the classroom teacher, all the teachers, the role of the social integration of the visually impaired student is, is actually no different than it is for any other student that may have ah, various other handicapping or normal conditions. Ah, I think that, if they're, depending on the teacher and the attitude, if they're ah, conscious and compassionately aware of students socially, then they will enhance an environment that will allow participation..and promote participation of the visually impaired student. But that's very, you know, totally dependent on the teach..the individual teacher's conscious awareness. But I don't think that a teacher is going to be, or even, I suppose I shouldn't say should be, any more aware of a visually impaired student's social interaction than other, the other students' social..behaviours.

I: You mentioned "compassionately aware." You've been teaching for 18, 19 years?

R: Umhmm.

I: In your experience in the public schools, are teachers compassionately aware of the social interaction of their students?

R: I would say overall, no. They're not. They're, teachers are generally concerned with, ah, the academic skills and the responsibility of ah, instilling these academic skills so they can, ah, be accountable and qualify for the, their position. But I think the social, generally, social the socialization of students, for the majority of teachers, is at the bottom of the, their priority list. But, I'm not saying for all teachers. There are some teachers that are exceptionally aware. And, ah, more aware than I'm even, at times shocked that they're aware of the, the importance of social integration.

I: Umhmm.

R: But generally speaking, I'm talking about the average, I would say no. [Site IV-V, itinerant teacher]

Itinerant teachers seemed to feel helpless in or awkward about addressing this situation, given the importance placed on the academic performance of the children.

I: How do itinerant teachers perceive the issue of social integration of visually impaired pupils?

R: ..Um, I would have to say, ah, generally, it's low on the priority, low on the role, the responsible role, of the itinerant teacher.

I: Umhmm.

R: Not, not necessarily being..the way we want it to be but, it seems, there's so much time, ah, spent on the other, because, thinking that success is only going to be through the, academic success. You know, are they going to get the information, are they going to get good marks, pass on, and, you know. But social integration, the social, socialization has been..low on the totem pole.

I: Low on the totem pole. Ah, how do itinerant teachers address social acceptance?

R: I think with, with caution, and with almost..ah, unknowing. I think that even the itinerant teachers find it difficult to address socialization because it's..I think, we feel almost helpless, ah, when it come to terms with, ah, how to help this student. You know, what role can we play? What actual suggestions can we make to the teacher..without, harming the student, or harming the, ah, the position that the student has already ah, developed?

I: Yes.

R: Speaking personally, I feel that I'm, not really, comfortable with, with making too many definite hard core suggestions, for fear of even more rejection [for the visually impaired student].  
[Site IV-V, itinerant teacher]

Two of the three principals perceived the academic performance of students to be the primarily focus of education. They assumed the social/emotional development was being incorporated into the routine functioning of the classroom and when there were problems they "would hear about it." The third principal repeatedly returned to the theme of "the education of the whole child" and emphasized the importance of social development as an integrated component essential to schooling.

I: What do you see as the principal's role in the social integration of the handicapped student?

R: [pause] Ah...one probably in a..leadership role in the sense that, you know, even if Tony wasn't here, or, you know, there were no handicapped children, at least there's still a primary function to teach caring about others. Ah, whether it's in our own community or third world, or any, ah, I think that ah, like I don't have any problems with ah, like ah, handicapped children. And I realize that there's, you know, it's ah, the one who really makes this go is the classroom teacher, and ah, you know, our staff has a positive, it's an attitude thing for that. I mean, you could make all kinds of excuses why this shouldn't be and that shouldn't be and ah, you know, not too long ago these people, or a lot of handicapped people were simply locked up, ah, you know, and ah, prejudice die hard. And it can't be a sympathy thing, bleeding heart type of thing. It has to be a genuine concern that this person is going to be a valuable member of society and ah, ah, just as valuable as any other child, probably in many cases will make a greater contribution and ah, ah, you know, to ignore would be the same as to ignore another child, a regular child so, I just, you know, it's just the same as a Grade 1 teacher, like we, ah, she gets, well 28 children, like all those four grade 1's,

well you know, some can barely talk, some can already read, ah, you accept what you've got and you go from where you are. No matter what. [Site III, principal]

In all schools observed, the principal's direct role in relation to the social/emotional development of children was perceived to be in relation to disciplinary actions involving children who misbehaved either on the playground or in the classroom. These were the students with whom he/she primarily had direct contact. Therefore, similar to other adults in this study, the attention or instruction the integrated visually impaired student received was focused upon cognitive development and not social/emotional growth.

#### Adult Assumption 2 (Treat the Same)

As much as possible, visually impaired children ought to be treated the same as other children in the classroom.

During interviews with teachers, principals, and parents, the importance of treating the integrated visually impaired student the same as the other students was emphasized. To react to the visually impaired child differently or to confer other than those privileges perceived to be necessitated by their disability was seen to "set the child apart from the others." When parents met with teachers to discuss the integration of their child, the importance of treating her/him the same as the other children was reported by them to always be discussed. The following excerpts illustrate how strongly parents felt about this point.

#### [Excerpt 1]

I don't know, I don't think Mrs. Jones [primary teacher] was the type to ever say you know, "You guys watch Lisa on the equipment and be careful." Because I think we were quite clear to her at the beginning, you know, like at the beginning I said, "All summer long I will be bringing Lisa down here on a regular basis to this

playground to play." I said, "So by the time this summer comes she will be able to play just the same as the rest of the kids." You know, and she had said about it being different, that there was, you know, by then there'll be thirty or forty kids on the same piece of equipment, right? And I just said, "I don't want her treated any different! I don't think she'll get hurt any more often than other kids do." You know, she does on the round about, but you know. And it's very rarely on the equipment that she does get hurt, you know, she may trip over something running along or fall coming out the door but it's, you know, and... [Site II, parent]

[Excerpt 2]

What do the teachers do? Um...I know...um...I don't know the grade three teacher as well as...um, cuz I haven't met her that much, but...I'm sure that even, like, the grade one and grade two teachers, they treated him as if he was sighted, normal, here comes that word again, "normal." Um, I don't think they treated him any different, at least I don't think they do. They're not supposed to be! [laughs] [Site III, parent]

Teachers perceived a negative consequence associated with treating the visually impaired child differently than her/his classmates. The following excerpts illustrate this perception.

[Excerpt 1]

I: Describe how you relate to or interact with Charles.

R: I think, I hope, I'm just like I am with any of the other kids. I mean, I wouldn't want him to feel like I'm treating him differently. Though..no, I don't think I would like him to feel I was treating him any differently or giving him a bit of special privileges, you know, other than what has to be done for him. You know, to make it possible for him to do his work. [Site V, classroom teacher]

[Excerpt 2]

I think socially you just have to make him more like the rest of them and, and do the same things. If he's doing something wrong then he should be told it's wrong. No different than some other child and I don't think I treat him any more special than someone else and I don't, I don't think any other teacher would. If he was doing something that was wrong, I'm sure someone would come over and tell him that it was wrong. And I, I think he would take it all right. I've never seen him take criticism all that badly or anything. [Site III, physical education teacher]

[Excerpt 3]

I: Describe how you relate to or interact with Lisa.

R: Ah, I guess I find I have to be careful to try to treat her the same as the other kids. Ah, she's a very endearing child, and

ah, that's the kind of a kid that you like to stop and talk to and, you, you just sort of say hi to her she'll take over from there and, [laughs] I just ah, I guess I haven't got the time for that, ah, since I see them just for a period of time and then she's gone. So I try not to get involved in that.

I: How have you and Lisa handled her visual impairment?

R: I try to treat it as if there isn't any. A few times when we've had flash card games and things, I will go over and I will hold the card right in front of her where she can see them. And ah, so that's one way I've helped her a little bit.

I: Describe your feelings in relation to disciplining a visually impaired child like Lisa in comparison to other students.

R: Well, you have to treat them the same way. I don't see that they should be taught that they can use this impairment as a crutch or an excuse. [Site II, music teacher]

This seemingly straightforward approach to dealing with an integrated visually impaired child was not, however, as simple as it appeared. Contradictions between how teachers believed they treated the visually impaired student and their actual behaviour toward the student were frequently observed. Some teachers were able to perceive the contradictions during the process of the interview, as is illustrated in the following excerpt.

I: What are your feelings about disciplining a blind child compared to a sighted student?

R: I'm about to say it should be the same.

I: Umhmm.

R: But I can't say that I do, do it the same..as every other child. I feel sometimes I'm more lenient on him. Ah, maybe sometimes he's talking in his group.

I: Umhmm.

R: And the rest of the class can, see my facial expression to be quiet, maybe. And he can't, so he keeps on talking. And ah, I might say in a quiet manner to him, "Tony, please we're all listening now." But if someone else could see me, if I felt they were still talking I'd speak firmly. I think I do take a little bit more, just go a little bit extra lenient, say, sometimes to his actions or to his behaviour. Sometimes he does get a little bit carried away, too.

I: Umhmm.

R: Laughing and really getting quite excited about something and, I find there too, maybe..I'm trying not to, I'm trying to show or treat him the same, but his behaviour's not appropriate, but...

[Site III, classroom teacher]

The above excerpt exemplifies the dilemma often arising in an integrated classroom where rules have been developed for sighted children. By accommodating a visually impaired child's disability in a fair manner, one may be obliged to "treat this student differently."

Most often teachers perceived themselves to treat the visually impaired child the same as other children in the midst of evidence to the contrary. The following excerpts illustrate such situations.

Excerpt 1]

I: Describe how you relate to or interact with Tony.

R: Well, uhmm if I am talking to him, I make sure I say his name because he doesn't always see me or he can't see me looking at him for sure. If we're walking down the hall or something, I will touch him maybe, but I treat him like any other child. I try to anyway, maybe I don't. I try to not make a point of the fact I have to explain things. Like when I'm showing, I think the first day you were here, I was showing him a pause [a musical symbol]?

I: Oh yes.

R: And I made it of tape, (laugh) real ugly, like I will do things like that with him so that he can feel it or I'll try to explain things to him, but I know he doesn't have a lot of concepts about colours and things. You know, we try. [Site III, music teacher]

[Excerpt 2]

I: What were your feelings when you first learned you would be having a visually impaired child in your class?

R: I've had ah, other disabled children in the past. And ah..it didn't really bother me. I was concerned because I'd never experienced it before and I've only had the two now and they've both had some sight so I just made an effort ah, to treat them as much ah, the same way as I did, as I do with the other students. And ah, to give that little extra pat in the back and to be as honest as possible and it worked out very well. [Site IV-V, gym teacher]

The "little extra pat on the back" and the extra attention routinely given visually impaired children was not perceived by teachers to be "treating them differently" than the other students. As discussed in Chapter 7, it was perceived by "the other students" as very different treatment.

Principals struggled with similar contradictions as those experienced by teachers when discussing the need to treat visually impaired students "no differently than their peers." They too, were somewhat oblivious to their "different treatment" of the visually impaired child as they routinely spoke to her/him as the class filed by, or made a special effort, from time to time, to stop and chat briefly with the visually impaired student--actions which were not routinely taken with every other child in the class. Therefore, adults struggled with the contradictory situations which arose as they attempted to treat integrated visually impaired children the same as their classmates.

#### Adult Assumption 3 (Friendship Child's Responsibility)

Visually impaired students ought to be responsible for making their own friends on the playground.

Although educators gave lip service to the belief that teachers had a role to play in the social acceptance of visually impaired students in the classroom, they were candid about their lack of responsibility for a child's social interaction on the playground. With the exception of a few teachers who sometimes asked another child to play with the visually impaired child on the playground, teachers remained aloof from the playground social interaction or acceptance of children, in general. They perceived the child to be responsible for creating her/his own friendships and finding playmates on the playground. The following two excerpts illustrate this perception.

[Excerpt 1]

I: What types of things have you done to encourage Tony to make friends?

R: Encourage him to make friends. [pause] To encourage him to have friends. Like here in their French class? Outside?

I: Wherever.



R: I don't know [laughs] like, it don't sound good does it?

I: No, no that's fine. It may not be a thing that teachers would do.

R: I don't know, he's just like everyone else. I don't know how you encourage any of them to have friends. [laugh] No, they share, they all clap for one another. You know, listen, I don't know what I did. They're friends, that's on their own, really I think it is on their own. I think, I, I don't think I do anything to have friends, like I mean I think it's right that they have to listen when someone else is talking or to share, you know, pass things out, but I don't know about, like their friends. They kinda, I think they do that on their own. [Site III, French teacher]

[Excerpt 2]

I: What is your perception of the social acceptance of Peter by his classmates?

R: Ah, he's accepted by them, they don't tease him or pick on him. He, they talk to him and offer to help him whenever he needs them to. He's not really part of the gang. A lot of the kids now have cliques and Peter really isn't part of a clique but he wouldn't be rejected by them if he tried to join them. But they probably don't really ask him to join and Peter stays by himself most of the time and it's really up to him to try and join in activities on the playground. In class he is the first to offer to try something or do something for you but on the playground he's pretty much on his own. [Site I, music teacher]

Jamie was the only one of the five visually impaired children who was perceived by all his teachers to be actively involved in activities similar to those of his sighted peers on the playground. Although he was always among other children, he interacted primarily with boys from lower grades or female classmates. Despite their realization that the visually impaired child was "alone on the swings" or "playing with girls from lower grades," teachers did not perceive either a need or a responsibility to become involved in that aspect of the visually impaired child's social life.

Parents also perceived their visually impaired children to be responsible for their own social interactions and acceptance on the playground.

[Excerpt 1]

I: How about the role of the itinerant teacher in seeing that the child is socially accepted?

R: [silence] Hmmm...the itinerant teacher. She probably works probably more closely with the visually impaired child than even the class teacher in some aspects. Um..I know at least Joan has with Peter, um, you know, although she's only there once a week, she's still...when she is with Peter it's more on a one-to-one basis type of thing. I don't know, she probably could talk to the visually impaired child if they're not getting along with the other ones and maybe encourage them to take part in more activities and that. You can't really persuade the other way, you can't really persuade the other kids to come back. The visually impaired one has to be able to go out and make his own way, too. She may be able to help that way, I don't know.

I: How about the role of the visually impaired child?

R: They have to be able to get out in the world themselves and stand up themselves because, you know, it's not always going to be somebody going to look out for you.

I: What about the classmate's role?

R: Kids are kids. I mean it's nice they would come and make sure that, you know, that child is involved, but to a certain extent that child has to get himself involved, you know. They might ask the first couple of times, and then if the child says, "No I don't want to," soon they're going to leave him sitting there. But they may the first couple of times. It'd be great if they would all the time..keep coming..but kids are kids [laugh]. [Site I, parent]

[Excerpt 2]

I: What types of things have you done to encourage Tony to make friends?

R: To make friends? [long pause] I don't know. Like...I think we've taught him that he has to treat each child...um...like you can't fight them...do you know what I mean? You gotta let them...I don't want him to be a sissy, but I want him to be able to give in. I don't want him to be bold. Like, for example, Allison. If she wants to be boss that day, if you want to play with her bad enough then you'll accept that she's the boss that day...

I: What things have you noticed work well in encouraging Tony to make friends?

R: I don't know...like...really, when you play with kids you have to go...to use your own judgement. Like, I don't think we've really taught Tony...I don't know. The only things that we've really taught Tony to do is straight and set..you see...like, you know, for example with him walking. You had...you had to teach him one, two, one, two...speed...?

I: Right.

R: Okay? But to play with kids and to do whatever, he's just picked it up from the other kids, we don't really teach him...like I don't think that, ah...you can't teach that. [Site III, parent]

While teachers were aware of the "different interaction" of the visually impaired children while on the playground, parents were not. They assumed their children were well accepted and actively involved with friends during recess and noon hour. Furthermore, as mentioned in Excerpt 1, all adult participants perceived themselves to have little control over or influence upon how children interacted when they were unsupervised by adults.

Principals also perceived visually impaired students to have the major responsibility for their social interactions. As illustrated in the following excerpt, the principal perceived his direct involvement to be necessitated only when peer conflict was evident.

I: What do you see as the teacher's role in the social integration of a visually impaired student?

R: [Pause] To be overly observant, alright? Um, now we have to be careful because...with all adults, interfering with a child's development and their interactions, we have to be careful not to force. What I mean, I guess, by "over observant" is to watch for those things that may be detrimental and to step in at the appropriate time.

I: Umhmm.

R: If we step in too fast, then we then become part of the problem. Okay? A sight impaired child, or a physically handicapped child, we do not take possession of whatever problem they have. We can't take ownership of it. We can assist them through it, but we can't own it. And once we interfere, we tend to take over ownership not only of the problem it's created, but we then have the responsibility of coming up with a solution. Quite frankly, we haven't got any. Okay? Um, I think we would step in drastically if the impairment, of any nature, was causing conflict in a peer group. That would mainly be the response of the other children. But, again, I haven't seen that in either one of these...these children. [Site V, principal]

During the interview, this principal routinely used aspects of theories of child development and psychological jargon (e.g. ownership of problems, interference in problem resolution) to justify the absence of more positive and proactive approaches to the social integration of

handicapped students. As well, the suggestion in this excerpt, of not having solutions to social interaction problems, may contribute to the seeming reluctance of adults to become involved in the social integration of children who are not "fitting in." In all five sites, there was at least one child in each class who was known by teachers to be rejected by peers. Although this rejection was routinely visible to staff as peers made derogatory comments about the rejected child, tormented and even physically mistreated the child on the playground, these rejected children were not provided any apparent assistance in dealing with the daily negative interaction they experienced with peers. Adults seemed to perceive the social acceptance of these children in much the same way as they did that of the visually impaired child. They were "on their own on the playground."

#### Adult Assumption 4 (Different Criteria for Acceptance)

Visually impaired children ought to have different criteria for peer acceptance than their classmates.

All 18 teachers interviewed reported the visually impaired child in their class to be accepted by their peers. Further more, several even expressed amazement about the degree of acceptance the visually impaired child received.

I: What in your perception of the social acceptance of Peter by his classmates?

R: I would say it's above average. I think that they...it seems like they socially accept him, you know, more than what if I [emphasizes I] was a kid that I would be likely to socially accept him! But, you see, these kids have had...he's been in their class ever since grade primary, so it's just like, you know, they know that he's handicapped, but they seem to, ah...they seem to accept it and take him for the way he is. Like, you know, if...especially like if...especially if they're playing a game or something and he makes a mistake or doesn't do something right, right? Well, they don't get on his case about it, sort of thing,

and give him a hard time, they just sort of accept it. And as you notice, like, they don't, sort of, because his skill might not be as high as someone else's, they don't pick on him.

I: When you say above average, do you mean for a handicapped child or do you mean as compared to other children?

I: I'm just comparing him to everybody else, okay. I would say, like, for a handicapped child, he is average or even maybe above average, right? But, like, I just group him with everybody I've taught. [Site I, physical education teacher]

In the above excerpt, the teacher has based his perception of acceptance of the visually impaired child on his observations that the children "don't get on his case" or "don't pick on him." This was common to every teacher interviewed. The criterion they appeared to use to determine whether the visually impaired child was accepted by peers was the presence or absence of overt, negative interaction with other children. The following excerpts are typical of the responses received at every site to the question, "What is your perception of [visual impaired child's] social acceptance by peers?"

[Excerpt 1]

R: I think pretty good. When I break them up into groups, you never hear them say, you know, "Oh dear." They just treat him like another student sort of thing and I think he gets along really well socially with them. [Site I, classroom teacher]

[Excerpt 2]

R: Seems to be very good. I don't think it interferes that she can't see that well. As far as music's concerned anyhow.

I: What about by other children in the school?

R: Well, as far as I know, and it sort of surprises me, they don't seem to pick on her very much, or ah, you know, she doesn't seem to be sort of cut off because she can't participate maybe as well in some things.

I: You say it surprises you.

R: Yeah. Well kids are very quick to pick up on another kid's shortcomings, and, ah, often times this will get in the way and they'll pick at each other but it doesn't seem to happen in her case. [Site II, music teacher]

[Excerpt 3]

R: Oh, I would say they all accept him very well. I ah, they never seem to do anything mean to him, and I would say most of them, and if he needed help and they see him standing there, I

would say most of them, if not all of them, would help him. [Site III, physical education teacher]

[Excerpt 4]

R: ..I'm not sure what..the social acceptance would be in a broader scope, other than gym. And ah, within the gym setting most of the kids seem to be very accepting. And ah, he just sort of goes his own way.

I: How does he interact with the kids in the gym?

R: Ah, I guess, the best way to describe it, he just plugs away on his own, pretty well. And ah, a couple of years ago I had ah, several students work with him, but unless they're directed to do that they generally just leave him alone and I'll go over now and give him a little pat on the back and help him as much as I can.

[Site IV, physical education teacher]

[Excerpt 5]

R: ...Ah, I'd say it was pretty close to average.

I: What about by other children in the school?

R: I think it's average, I don't..

I: Can you tell me a little bit about average, as you see average?

R: Ah, I don't think the other kids, because they don't know him, unless a kid is a real out-going child, lives right in the neighborhood, has younger brothers and sisters, a lot of the kids wouldn't know the sixes. Ah...you know, there are kids in here, I'm sure, who never talk to each other, from one day to the next. Cuz they don't have anything in common, they don't live near to each other, ah, but because they don't speak to each other doesn't mean that they don't..like the other person. They just might not sit near each other and have no contact. Um..I mean, Charles is accepted if I put them in different groups. I don't always let them choose their own groups. I mean, I never hear, you know, any spoken complaints that, "Oh, he's in our group." I mean, you certainly do about some others. "Oh, I don't want him in my group," sort of thing, ah, I'd say it's pretty average. [Site V, classroom teacher]

Thus, teachers seemed to base their assessment of the visually impaired child's social acceptance on the absence or presence of overt, negative social experiences involving the visually impaired child. The teachers of three of the visually impaired children reported frequently seeing the child alone on the playground or routinely playing with children of the opposite gender, behaviour which was not typical of their classmates. However, they did not perceive such behaviour as indicative

of the child's lack of acceptance by classmates on the playground. Even for the visually impaired boy who seemed most accepted, his seating arrangement in the class with three girls was not perceived to be socially inappropriate. The other boys, and particularly those the teacher identified as his friends, sat together at another table. Thus, in the absence of overt negative interaction with peers, integrated visually impaired students were perceived by teachers to be well accepted by classmates.

Parents, as well, appeared to have different criteria for the social acceptance of their visually impaired child than they did for their normally sighted siblings. Even in the presence of atypical behaviour, they considered their child to be socially accepted.

I: What types of activities does Peter like to do with his friends?

R: They like to pretend like they're He-Man and this sort of thing. They do, like, um, transformers, play with transformers in the bedroom. They...lego, play lego. As I say, more quiet-type of play, not a lot of running and that. Even like when they're outdoors running, if Thomas [family friend near Peter's age] is outdoors with Terry [Peter's younger brother], Peter will have a tendency to come back in and play with Mary and show her how to colour and things like this rather than be outdoors running.

I: Who's Mary?

R: That's Thomas' younger sister.

I: How old would she be?

R: Oh, she's four...she turned five, she's just turned five. But he'll come back in and teach her how to colour and her numbers and things like that.

I: So he likes the more, sort-of sit-down and...

R: Yeah, quieter play.

I: When do other children seek out Peter?

R: [silence] Hm-m...I don't know [laughs]. Ummm, usu-u-ally [slowly] it's only it's...like as far as home-wise, they don't play with Peter unless they're actually coming to this place, you know; they don't make it a point to actually come. Um, at school, I'm not sure how they pick their friends or how they don't. I've really never been able to find that out.

[Later in the interview]

R: Peter really gets along well with anybody like that. I mean, you know, he has the ability to talk and I guess, if you have an

ability to talk, people will listen, you know. 4H, we find we have a variety of ages, so especially your older kids are very eager to talk to them and this sort of thing, but...I never found anybody making fun of Peter, which I, one thing I probably...at one time I thought maybe I would, but nobody has ever, ever done that.

I: What is your feeling about his acceptance by other children?

R: I think he's well accepted, yeah. [Site I, parent]

Thus, similar to teachers, parents perceived the absence of overt negative interactions with other children as evidence of the social acceptance of their visually impaired child.

All three principals in this study perceived the visually impaired child to be very well accepted. For one principal who had been in the school for only a few months, the criterion for acceptance was based upon information received from his teachers. For the other two principals, the accepting atmosphere they believed to exist for all children in their school and the fact they had not been consulted or advised in relation to a behaviour problem with the visually impaired child appeared to be the basis of their perception of acceptance of these children by their peers.

R: I don't suppose I've had an awful lot of very direct involvement [with the visually impaired students]. Again, the attitude that, ah, whatever children come from is normal..that's probably a big part of what we are, here, with every kid, whatever they come from. It's simply a norm. My involvement, unfortunately, tends to be, with most of the children in the school, when things go wrong. But, ah...I don't suppose I've had any particular interaction with either one of them [they've never been sent to the office for misbehaving]. They know me, I know them. [Site IV-V, principal]

The itinerant teachers perceived both the absence of negative interaction and the presence of positive interaction as necessary criteria when assessing the acceptance of visually impaired children. Whether they were more objective in their assessment of the visually



impaired child's acceptance or were, perhaps, more cognizant of the child's feelings in relation to acceptance, having worked with them for several years, their perceptions were comparable to those of the visually impaired children themselves, and their classmates. The following excerpts are the itinerant teachers' responses to questions about the social acceptance of the visually impaired child.

[Excerpt 1]

A year ago I could have definitely said that he wasn't. Now I'm not so sure, you know. He himself has made an effort to be interested in what others are interested in. I think he's accepted when there's something to do, when there's a task given. And I think the class sees him as somebody who has ideas, has something to offer, therefore, they accept. Outside, I'm not sure whether people actually would include Peter if he didn't include himself. I don't think they'd go looking for his company if he didn't sort of walk up and say I'm here...I don't think they say, "No, you can't," when he arrives and says he wants to do something...I've never seen anybody say, "No, you can't," or "You're not allowed to," but I haven't seen anyone, other than at the dance or at 4H, I've never seen anyone actually go and ask him to join them.

I: They don't seek him out.

R: Um...Okay, well, sitting on the swings, for one thing, he can sit there a whole recess time and have hardly anybody, except somebody in passing, say, "Hi, Peter," on the way by. And that would be about the extent of it. Um...I've never seen anybody, even if they're looking for an extra in a group, ask Peter to join. I've been in phys ed classes where they've gone through the old two-captain bits and they choose teams, and Peter is always one of the last to be chosen. Um...but I have seen him when it's been a directed activity...when people have said, "Peter, you come in our group." So this leads me to believe they think he has something to offer when it comes to academics, but that socially, on the playground, when it's not a directed activity, he tends to be ignored or left out. [Site I, itinerant teacher]

[Excerpt 2]

I think she's fairly well accepted. Anytime we go through the school it's always, "Hi! Lisa. Hi! Lisa." Ah, anytime in the classroom, there's been discussion, talk, conversation with other children, ah, I, I would say she's fairly well accepted. That's been my impression. [Site II, itinerant teacher]

[Excerpt 3]

In his classroom, I think fine, we're back to that again. I've seen kids, or I've heard of..kids in higher grades, come up and

tease Tony and say, "Blindy," or ah, or even reach out and hit him. Not hit him hard enough to hurt him, but just tag him. And ah, which is sort of almost making fun of his blind condition. And that's discouraging. It ah, really bothers me to see that. It, it has upset him a couple of times, not as much as I thought it would. Not as much as it upset me! But, with his classmates, there's probably a number that basically ignore him. And then there's those that ah, you know, do enjoy his company. And that they do, do things together. Whether it's just walking around the playground. [Site III, itinerant teacher]

[Excerpt 4]

I don't think Charles is accepted by his peers socially. Ah, I think they accept him for what he is but not as an equal, not as a peer. And, but I think that Jamie, ah, is accepted on a..greater level, with his friends, but probably not, not to the point that he would like to be. He's, he's much more conscious and aware and striving towards social acceptance. But with Charles, I don't know if it's, if it ah, it inherently means that much to him.

I: Umm.

R: He's a more of ah, a loner, and has accepted that part. Or accepted isolation. [Site IV-V, itinerant teacher]

Overall, parents, principals and teachers perceived integrated visually impaired students to be accepted by their peers. They based this perception upon the absence of overt, negative interaction between the visually impaired students and her/his classmates. The itinerant teacher perceived various degrees of acceptance to exist in specific situations involving the visually impaired student. They also based their perceptions on both overt positive and negative interaction between the visually impaired student and classmates, as well as discussions with the visually impaired pupil.

#### Adult Assumption 5 (Different Appearance Unacceptable)

Visually impaired children who are different in appearance should be expected to encounter difficulty with social acceptance.

Teachers perceived the different appearance of four of the visually impaired children to detract from their social acceptance by

classmates. In the following excerpts, teachers were candid about their perceptions of the children's appearance.

[Excerpt 1]

I: What do you think detracts from her acceptance?

R: I, I would say...her appearance, I really would. Only because, you know to me as, as an adult and a teacher, I don't mind looking her straight in the eye and I can see, for some kids, it's, it's scary. You know, if you can imagine, they look there and, you know, Lisa's eyes are moving constantly and that would scare, I know it would scare my children. It would probably scare some of the kids in here. But people that have been with her for a couple of years, I know they've grown to accept that. And they just know that her eyes are moving. That's just the way they move. But if you brought in some, a new child, and put them in with Lisa, you know, they would be constantly staring at her.

[Site II, physical education teacher]

[Excerpt 2]

I: What is your perception of his acceptance by other children in the school?

R: Fine. Again, it's either acceptance, a lot of them...a lot more of the children in the school know Peter than they would know other kids. He is noticeably special, so that they'll know his name. But, it's...again, it's neutral. But there's no one who teases, there's no taunting, there's no fear from a child who doesn't understand.

I: When you say he's "noticeably special," can you explain that a bit?

R: There are not many children in the school whose eyes will curve off to one side greatly while they're talking. He has greatly reduced his extra movements with hands and that. That used to bring attention to him.

I: The mannerisms...

R: Yeah. And he speaks a little louder at times, so that he's no-o...there are just small differences between him and the average joe who walks down the hall. And kids notice that. But they don't notice it to the point of staring or gawking or teasing or anything. They just happen to notice that he's... you know, a little bit special. [Site I, social studies teacher]

The "normal" appearance of one of the visually impaired children was also perceived to contribute to his more obvious acceptance by peers. His normal appearance was perceived as a distinct difference between him and another visually impaired child in the same school.

[Excerpt 1]

I: The next question may be difficult to answer with certainty, but I'd like to get your thoughts on it. In thinking about Charles as he gets to junior and senior high school, how do you think he will get along socially?

R: ....[Blows out air.] Well..I think there'll always be a problem. Like the other little boy in the school that has visual problems [Jamie]. He looks normal. He bounces around, I mean, I don't know what, how his sight is in comparison to Charles', but, the other little fellow, ah, he's just like all the others. I mean, I don't know how he fits in, I've just sort of seen him out and around on the playground. He seems to fit in a little better than, than my Charles does. But he, I mean, so many people don't even know he has a problem. And Charles, where he is obviously, has the problem, you know, his head is always turned so he can look at, at, out of which ever eye he can see out of, ah...you know, like the scarring on his forehead, ah, the turning of the head, his feet are very toed out, I mean I don't know what that is, that could be anybody's problem, if that's anything.

I: Many visually impaired children have that appearance.

R: It does have to do? Okay. So he is different. And..people that are different are always not accepted as much, as the ones who are, in quotations, normal. And, I mean, you know what kids are like, in the crowds you get in, in junior and, ah, high school, junior and senior high school, and, the cliques you get, and you know, if you're not perfect, you know, you're not accepted. Which is not fair, but it's how things work.

I: So you see Charles as having problems.

R: I think you'll see Charles having problems. And, you know, he'll probably have his own group of friends and they'll be on the perimeters of everything and ah..probably be looked at with, ah, I imagine people will call them weirdos, but..you know, just on the outskirts of everything. [Sites IV-V, classroom teacher]

[Excerpt 2]

I: When you think of Charles and Jamie...

R: First of all different personalities and also, ah, Jamie is not, ah, on the surface, visually impaired. Jamie looks normal whereas Charles doesn't, with his, with his ah, abnormal posture and his tilted head. Jamie has none of those characteristics so ah, he's lucky in that way. [Sites IV-V, physical education teacher]

Parents also perceived their child's appearance to detract from her/his acceptance.

I: What things do you feel might detracts from his acceptance?

R: I think, ah, I think kids stare. They see, ah, some kids are curious. I've always, told Charles to be, you know, to say exactly what, what he, you know, what's the problem and I don't know, I've never heard other kids say, "Well, what's wrong with

your eye?" They've asked, people have asked me, but not ah, like I've never heard, I've never heard Charles answer a question like that. Yeah. He never ah.. [Site V, parent]

The mother's discomfort in discussing this aspect of her son was apparent. She seemed almost to have difficulty saying the words "visually impaired." Later on in the interview, she alluded to her son's different appearance and the reactions people had to this. Her anger was evident.

I: In your experience, how do people generally react to a visually impaired child?

R: Ah, the people that know Charles, like all the teachers in the school and our friends, he's just treated, just, you know, he's treated like any other child. But, ah, I see people staring at Charles, people that don't know, you know, that don't know him, I see them staring and, but and, people just don't know, you know. They just, sometimes they just don't understand that ah, [long pause]

I: What's Angela's [his sister, we have just been discussing her relationship with Charles] reaction to the staring?

R: ..Ah, I was, we were in Eaton's the other night. And the clerk that served us, she just stared and stared at Charles. And, you know, it was almost, you know?

I: Yes.

R: It was ah..but she [Angela] was there, too, and she didn't notice, ah..she ah, she's never ah..gee I don't know if that's ever come up. But I was, I almost felt like, saying something to the clerk. You know, but it doesn't, doesn't do any good.

I: No.

R: It was ah, you know, depends on the mood you're in at the time [laughs].

I: Sure.

R: Yeah, yeah. No, but that would have just, you know, it would have just drawn Charles' attention to it. Made him feel bad. Ah, would have made me feel better, though [laughs]. [Site V, parent]

Parents seemed tormented by the different appearance of their child.

For example, Lisa's bangs were left long to conceal her nystagmus (involuntary, rapid eye movement), although this reduced her visual efficiency. Parents seemed to perceive their child's different appearance as an inescapable symbol of their child's handicap.

Neither principals nor itinerant teachers spontaneously raised the issue of appearance in relation to the acceptance of their visually impaired students.

Adult Assumption 6 (Don't Interfere with Mannerisms)

Teachers ought not to interfere with the mannerisms of visually impaired children.

Teachers seemed perplexed when confronted with some of the rather atypical behaviours of four of the visually impaired children. Mannerisms<sup>1</sup> such as arm flapping, not facing the speaker during conversation, keeping one's head on the desk, speaking in a voice which was noticeably too loud for the situation, and various hand-manipulating actions were common. Most of the teachers interviewed confirmed their awareness of these behaviours. Furthermore, they reported their responses to such actions to be primarily negative, perceiving such mannerisms to detract, at least initially, from their degree of comfort when interacting with the child. The potentially negative effect on social acceptance by peers was also frequently mentioned. Following are two excerpts illustrating teachers' reactions to such mannerisms.

[Excerpt 1]

I: What about things that might detract from his acceptance?

R: Um. I think the noise level..when he gets into a topic or doesn't understand it or whatever, his volume increases. I think

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<sup>1</sup>Mannerisms are atypical behaviours, usually repetitive in nature, characteristic of many severely visually impaired children. Various theories of causation have been proposed to explain mannerisms, such as, they function as stimulation substitutes to replace the reduced visual input; create a pleasurable sensation; are a result of defective neurological development; or, are a response to the reduced activity level of many severely visually impaired children (Olsen, 1986). Regardless of the cause, once established, these atypical behaviours are difficult, sometimes impossible to extinguish.

they find that detracting and, as I say, the hand movements..the mannerisms..have decreased, so I don't, not too much, notice them any more. [Site I, geography teacher]

[Excerpt 2]

I: When Tony speaks with others, he doesn't usually face them.

R: No.

I: How do people respond to this? And what's your feeling about it?

R: Well, even myself, I had to get use to it. Cuz you're use to making eye contact with, the person you are speaking to. And ah, it takes a little while to get use to the..as I say, the, speaking to someone in a conversation and not having, that eye contact.

A..and with the head, lots of times moving at the same time.

Ah..ah, sometimes you're wondering if he's even listening to you. Because that's how you get to know if that person understands, as ah..

I: Sure.

R: Because sometimes you're even saying, nodding your head as a response and then you realize that, that..ah..but ah, no, I'd say by their..in grade three anyway and a lot of them have already had contact with him. So it's just the odd one who has not. And I suppose it's just a matter of..even in the discussion, his head keeps turning quite a bit..and they just sort of stare at him.

I'm just thinking of a couple I know who have not had much association with him at all. And they just sort of stare at him, and they're not sure, I suppose, why is he doing that.

I: What's your reaction as a teacher, to seeing Tony with his head down on his desk?

R: Well..to, at the beginning of the year I thought it was boredom. Okay? I thought he wasn't interested in what was being done or what was being said. Ah, and I, this was before I guess I got to speak to the itinerant teacher about it too. But I was thinking that I must ask why Tony keeps putting his head down. Ah..and, at times, also you thought it was an impolite thing. You'd think you should speak right over there, and say, "Tony, please put your head up. You're not going to sleep." Which you would do, I guess, to a child who's, if one of my other children had their head down and I was teaching something, I would say, "Jacob, please pay attention here."

I: Umhmm.

R: And you're almost, I've come very close to saying that, you know, in class, "Please, Tony, you're not paying attention. Look up here, please." And ah, then I, I guess I got over that, and now I'm realizing that he is alert, he is listening. At least that's what I feel. And, that ah, sometimes I don't even notice it now. And I think I'm supposed to be noticing it, more to remind him, you know, and..[At the case conference the itinerant teacher had asked staff to insist Tony keep his head off his desk.] [Site III, classroom teacher]

[Excerpt 3]

I: How do you respond to Charles' mannerisms?

R: First they distracted me. And really, I don't even think he knew what he was doing when he did it. But it would catch my..often. And I just realized that he didn't know what he was doing.

I: How do you react now?

R: I just don't watch it. I just...keep on with teaching. [Site V, music teacher]

Even when teachers had received information about the child's mannerisms (e.g. Tony's classroom teacher had been asked to assist in extinguishing two specific mannerisms), they seemed reluctant to comply with the behaviour management techniques recommended by the itinerant teacher. Two explanations for ignoring atypical behaviour in integrated visually impaired children were common. First, teachers seemed to feel they would call attention to or emphasize the child's handicap by addressing her/his mannerisms. Second, most reported not hearing other students comment upon the visually impaired child's mannerisms and perceived this as a lack of interest or total acceptance.

R: I do like having eye contact when I'm talking to a person, and ah, as you say, with Jamie, sometimes, his eyes are just, they're not focusing on the individual at all. And ah, that, that detracts from me, but I try not to ah, I hope I try not to show the distraction.

I: What about reactions from other children?

R: Umhmm. Have you heard? You see I haven't heard anyone make any comments. Have you heard anyone? [Site IV, classroom teacher]

For all but a few teachers, ignoring the mannerisms of the visually impaired child was perceived to be the proper thing to do. This was consistent with their perception that integrated visually impaired students should be treated "the same as others."

Principals perceived the mannerisms of integrated visually impaired children as an inherent part of the child's disability. From



their perspective, such behaviours were either something they would "grow out of" or a character trait which was to be openly accepted, in the same way one might accept another child's unique gait or facial expressions. The following excerpts illustrate the degree of significance principals allotted the mannerisms of visually impaired students.

[Excerpt 1]

I: When I've been watching Tony I've noticed he has a couple of mannerism, jumping up and down, flapping. How do you react to those mannerism?

R: Ah..I didn't take it, you know, really it's obvious enough there that I would notice and I probably wouldn't notice most things like that but ah, it's probably something that will be when he gets to junior high and somebody suggests that, he, he may drop his hands or something. Like right now, I don't think he's conscious of it or the others or he hasn't reached that stage or the others haven't reached that stage either where they're going to comment on it and it's ah, you know when ah, I would say junior high school when someone would bring that up and he'd probably change it. [Site III, principal]

[Excerpt 2]

I: When I've talked to kids about Jamie and asked about his eye contact, a couple of kids mentioned he appears not to be looking at them when they talk.

R: Oh, really? [surprised]

I: What's your reaction to Jamie's visual gaze or alignment of eyes?

R: I don't have any. And maybe that's the knowledge that he is sight impaired. Because we've become very involved, particularly in the child development program [program for emotionally disturbed children] that we have, with children who are experiencing behaviour difficulties, okay? Part of that program is to establish eye contact, so we're awfully conscious of it, in that sense. And I suppose that I don't react to Jamie in the sense that...I know he's visually impaired. So, it's not important. It's important for a little kid who has total eyesight who cannot look at you and communicate.

I: Do you notice Jamie's lack of eye contact?

R: No. I notice Charles's. It's more obvious that he has a visual...

I: Charles, in many cases, doesn't turn his head to the speaker. How do you respond to that?

R: Forget it. That's where he is. I don't have any problem with that. I don't think it's something we necessarily have to work on. I don't think it's important. Okay? If it were, if there

were some importance to getting Charles to turn his head, and to look at us, fine. He's developing, he's growing, he's learning. That's the way he is. We have a gentleman who comes in and tunes our pianos. He gives the same kind of reaction. He does not turn his head to the speaker.

I: How do you react to that as an adult? Socially?

R: No problem at all. And it's not until you mentioned Charles that he occurred to me. [Laughs loudly] [Sites IV-V, principal]

In both excerpts, it is evident principals do not understand the social implications of the child's mannerisms.

Itinerant teachers, as well, did not perceive the mannerisms of visually impaired children to significantly detract from the child's social acceptance by peers. Although some behaviours, such as not facing the speaker or laying the head on the desk were reported to annoy them, they were not observed to routinely correct or even be aware of such behaviours. The following excerpt in which mannerisms are discussed, is from an interview with an itinerant teacher.

I: What detracts from his social acceptance by peers?

R: [pause] Detracts from his acceptance? [pause] Probably, probably just not being able to see, kinda obvious [laughs]. That, ah, that he can't play marbles the way they're able to play marbles and that's very popular right now, or ah, it certainly was last June. They all played marbles and he can't do that. In gym he's not, he can't play like they can, although he's rough and tumble and rough and ready and all that. But he doesn't have the skills, so that would detract from it in that they probably don't want to be on his team. Nobody's ever said that, but I'm sure if they had the choice, most of them would choose, I mean basically you want to win. If you're forming a team you want to choose kids who are going to help you win. Ah, there is some loyalties that no matter how poorly someone plays he's going to be on my team because he's my buddy. Ah, so probably not being able to do everything sighted kids do is the biggest drawback, which is totally natural.

I: Umm.

R: It's not something that Tony's doing.

I: You didn't mention his mannerism as detracting from his acceptance and I'm wondering about that.

R: [pause] I don't think it does distract them. I don't think it does detract. They're not mannerisms that are totally socially unacceptable. You know how he beats the palm of his left hand. Kids have heard me tell him not to do that. Therefore, those same

kids have come up to me and said, "Tony's using his glue bottle this morning and beating his hand." And I'll just say some little comment like, "Aw, I'll speak to him," and they think it's a big joke, so...the mannerism isn't..totally negative. As far as the kids go, it's nothing worse, so..

I: How do, I'm just thinking, how do teacher's react to his mannerisms?

R: A lot of them don't even see them. They don't even see them. He has, he use to poke his eyes somewhat, not a real eye pocker but somewhat. I don't think he's doing that any now. He lays his head down on his table way too much! And the teachers tell me he was doing much better, so when I went in a few days ago I noticed within the first 20 minutes he had done something like 5 times. That's not "way better"! She's, she's getting, it's not that he's doing better, she's not seeing them anymore. Laying your head down is not overly distracting once you get use to it. It's not noisy. So ah, yeah, they're not seen as detractions.

I: So it's not negatively affecting his social interaction with adults or children.

R: No. No, it might later on when the kids are, maybe a little more socially aware. [Site III, itinerant teacher]

On the other hand, parents perceived the mannerisms of their children to be a major problem and one they dealt with on a regular basis, as is evident in the following excerpts.

[Excerpt 1]

I: How do you respond to Tony's mannerisms?

R: Depends on what kind of mood I'm in.

I: Okay, tell me..in a good mood, and in a bad mood.

R: The mannerisms, like what do you mean? Because he's blind? Okay. Some mannerisms, like...flapping, I hate it! The only way to correct it is to keep on his back all the time. My saying is, "Well, I wish you'd hurry up and fly away!" Like, you know, "You're getting on my nerves. If you're not going to fly, then quit." That bothers me. His banging of his hand bothers me. Um, and the only way you can do that is constantly to say, "Tony, you're not to do that!" We used to say, "Your hand is going to fall off," but we don't do that anymore because he's wiser and he knows that it's attached and that it can't fall off. Um, that bothers me. [Site III, parent]

[Excerpt 2]

I: How do you respond to Jamie's mannerisms?

R: Well, with these other annoying little ticks, the clucking and the hands and so on I, I, I mean, I'm going to paint his fingers because I think he's going to chew them off to the elbow. Ah...I get...I am annoyed by those things. I really...they're just busy little habits and I just...it's like chewing fingernails. And, you know, I do get annoyed but I-I don't treat him any differently

than anybody else. I mean, if Leslie [sister] were doing it I'd say, "Get your hands out of your mouth, p l e a s e !" The same as I do with him.

I: There's a little girl who sits beside him, Jodi [in school]. She told me in an interview this morning, "He makes this noise that drives me crazy!"

R: [laughs] Well, that must be that clucking. Because he started the clucking again lately, too, I've noticed the clucking's coming back, but the fingers..but they do that. Leslie and John [older sister and brother] had never done anything like that. So...I, I don't know if that...if...and I had spoken to one of the other mothers one night at parent support [support group for parents of visually impaired children] about that, especially with the clucking, because it was driving me bananas, and...I don't know what it was her child had done but...ah, it was very similar. I-i-it was tapping, I think. Just tapped, constantly. Every...couldn't sit down, had to tap. And I don't know why, if that's characteristic of...[visually impaired kids]. All I can say is it drives me crazy! [Site IV, parent]

Similar to their discomfort with their child's different appearance, parents were troubled by the atypical behaviours of their child. The "staring public" was an intrusion all parents reported to be unpleasant for them.

#### Adult Assumption 7 (Don't Discuss Visual Impairment)

Visual impairment ought not to be openly discussed with or in the presence of visually impaired children.

None of the teachers or principals interviewed during this study had ever discussed the visually impaired child's disability with her/him. Even dialogue related to the topic during the interviews seemed to create a sense of apprehension. The following segments are typical of the response teachers had concerning this issue.

#### [Excerpt 1]

I: How does Peter think of himself in terms of his visual impairment?

R: I think just as an ordinary kid. He never goes on about being visually impaired or, beats me, he's just like...if I didn't know he was that way, I wouldn't know because he doesn't show it.

I: Has he ever mentioned it in the class?

R: No. No, I don't think ever. Yes, I did! One day, I think maybe it was Paula...he mentioned visually impaired to her. It was just like it was a shock to her, you know, to think he couldn't see as well as them...it was like they didn't even know it. And one day, the itinerant teacher was here with a walking cane or whatever you call it? And they wondered why, why was he going with that cane? Just like they didn't know he couldn't see as well as them. And they've been with him all through school. This is the first year we've had two grade 4s. And that's how well he fits in, I thought, because they didn't even seem to realize how little he can see.

I: From a teacher's perspective, how comfortable would you feel talking to Peter about his visual impairment?

R: Very. He's the type of kid you can talk. He's so mature for his age, I think. You can really talk about anything with him. Because he always has something to come back with. He's just old for his age. He's the oldest child in their family.

I: So you haven't, on a one-to-one basis, spoken to Peter about his visual impairment? [Peter has been in his class for nine months.]

R: Not really, I don't think I have.

I: I was interested in whether teachers would see that as an appropriate thing to do.

R: It probably would be, but I don't try to stress it very much. I just like to treat him like an ordinary kid. I think that's the way he wants to be treated..so let's leave it at that. [Site 1, classroom teacher]

[Excerpt 2]

I: How have you and Lisa handled her visual impairment?

R: [long pause] Well, we've just, ah, tried to work along just as anyone else in the classroom. Ah, I have tried to get her to use aids which she didn't want to use, ah...I don't think we've spent a lot of time on trying to handle her visual impairment, in as much as we've spent more time in trying to handle how is she going to learn to read, how is she going to learn to print, and that sort of thing. Ah, I, I guess I feel Lisa would need somebody with a lot stronger personality, a lot, in some way, to get her convinced that's she's going to sit down and really do these things. Because I think in the end she really could, you know. And I just don't feel I've gotten through in that way. But ah, through it all, she has learned to read some.

I: How easy or difficult would it be for a teacher to discuss a student's visual impairment with her/him?

R: [pause] I would be hesitant in the sense that I really don't feel I know enough about it, that I might be saying things that would be more harm to her than good. I, I think if she came to me, and said something or there'd been an incident where she wanted to talk about it, I would then make the attempt. I don't think I would ever make the attempt without that, unless I had someone come in and first tell me, ah, the kinds of things she should be told at this age. I feel that, I guess I sort of look

at Lisa, and if she were my daughter, you know, I would want her accepted as everybody else. And, and so I wouldn't go into that, I would hope that somewhere there are professionals who really do know about her visual impairment, that will explain it. But if she does bring it up, we'll have to make the attempt.

I: What about in the situation of finding out what she can do and can't do visually?

R: Do you mean...

I: I mean would you feel comfortable sitting down and saying, "Okay Lisa, I want you to look at this and tell me what you see here so I can understand better what you can see and what you can't see."

R: Umhmm.

I: So you're focusing in on the visual impairment. You may not be discussing genetic aspects or medical aspects but that type of experimenting back and forth between the two of you.

R: Yes, right, I thought [pause]

I: Would a teacher feel comfortable doing that?

R: Oh, I think so. I, I, I would, I find that sometimes I have, I haven't done that, to sit right down and go at it. But I know different times I've wondered what she could see in a book and asked her and at times been amazed by what she could tell me was there, the little things. You know, which I was sure she was going to miss. And ah, ah, at other times there were things that I felt for sure she could see on the blackboard and she just couldn't. And I found that out just by...but it was very informal, but, yes, you know, if, had I thought about it earlier, I would [this is the last month of school].

I: I wondered if teachers would feel comfortable experimenting with that?

R: Umhmm. Right. I think actually it would probably be a good idea, especially, on ah, you know, on, like I say, just on a small level. And you wouldn't know enough to do otherwise, but just, so you get more of a feel for it. Because I know, like I said, at times she did surprise people by the small...things she could see. [Site II, classroom teacher]

### [Excerpt 3]

I: How have you and Tony handled his blindness?

R: [pause] We don't really talk about it, except what I was telling you about this business of seeing black, and his elbow. I think the itinerant teacher has been so wonderful with him, he's just accepted it. We, we talked, at first I use to be nervous saying, "What did you see on T.V. last night?" But time has fixed that. I just use those words, "Look at this, Tony," and we don't do any different. He knows I have to make exceptions, like, on the computer I try to put the braille keys on for him. The numbers, but they fell off. I don't think we've done anything extra special, other than that.

I: How difficult or easy would it be for a teacher to discuss a student's blindness with him?

R: [pause] I guess it'd depend on how well you knew the child. If you've built up a rapport with them and established a relationship, maybe, you know, I could probably sit down with Tony and say, "How do you feel about being blind?" You know, I'm sure he would tell me about it. [Site III, resource teacher]

[Excerpt 4]

I: How does Charles think of himself in terms of his visual impairment?

R: I'd have no idea. I've never asked him. Yeah, I've, I didn't know whether he, you know, he'd want me to..to talk to him about it or..ah, I guess I've been a little hesitant to, perhaps ask him.

I: That's a question I'm really interested in. How comfortable would it be for a teacher to discuss a student's visual impairment?

R: ..Well, I wouldn't want the kid to feel that I was being really nosy. That ah..I mean, some kids are, are reluctant to talk about, you know, any problem. Other kids will tell you all about it. Um..but, yeah, I wouldn't want him to think that I was, being..nosy, just for the sake of being nosy but..and I don't know, I don't know, ah, if, if he's over sensitive about this, or if he would resent me asking..suppose I could have, you know, ask his mother how she thought he would react. [Site V, classroom teacher]

During each of the five, month-long observations, there was only one site at which blindness was openly mentioned in the classroom setting. This was in Site III where the student was totally blind and children often made comments about Tony's braille or other special equipment. One day during a class discussion about the future, the boy sitting beside Tony commented, "I hope there will be a cure for blindness in the future." Although the other children agreed enthusiastically the teacher was momentarily without words. The following excerpt from the interview with the French teacher illustrates this more open environment in terms of the discussion of visual impairment.

R: They're all quite supportive, like of Tony. I remember, not this year so much they didn't talk but last year they use to talk. I remember one time Tony had said, "Oh, at home my cousins don't want to play with me. They just think I'm stupid cuz I'm blind." And they're saying, "You're not stupid!" You know, it's really, I was sitting back there just wanting to cry and listening. Trevor

[classmate] was saying, "No, you're not stupid just cuz you can't see." He said, "You know a lot of things." You know, and Tony said, "Do you think so?" Sad, oh, it was like I had to turn around to the other side of the room. [She has tears coming to her eyes telling this story.] I really, you know, no one never says anything nasty to him. And he's very smart.

I: What is your perception of the social acceptance of Tony by his classmates?

R: I think he's just the same as they are. Well, I know they know that he can't see..you know, I'll say, "Close your eyes." And they'll say, "Tony doesn't have to close his eyes." You know? But they don't, you know, they don't push him away. They all seem to, well I shouldn't say they all, you know, it's just the same, everyone has a friend and he can be one just as well as they can. [Site III, French teacher]

Perhaps because it was impossible to ignore the accommodations required for a totally blind child as compared to those of a partially sighted child, people were less inhibited when issues related to visual impairment were raised.

At one of the four sites where partially sighted children were integrated, the visually impaired child from time to time announced he was "three quarters blind." One day during a gym class near Halloween Day, the gym teacher introduced a game involving a dramatic dimming of the lights in the gym. Jamie, usually a competent and very active participant, immediately went to the edge of the gym and sat down. When the gym teacher inquired about this, Jamie said, "It's too dangerous with everyone running. I can't see them in the dim light. I'm three quarters blind, you know." The physical education teacher appeared both shocked at the boy's frankness and annoyed. In a later interview the physical education teacher expressed his feeling that this was an inappropriate response from the student.

I: What does Jamie do when he needs help in the gym?

R: ..Ah, he was completely independent in the past and now ah, he still is in his own way. Ah, except when I try to help him now he will say, ah, cute little things, "Well, you know I'm three



quarters blind." [uses sarcastic voice]. Things like this. But as I say, that's just ah, I think that's just a passing, cuz I think, passing phase because he has too much going for him.

[Later in the interview]

I: How difficult or easy would it be for a gym teacher to discuss a student's visual impairment and abilities and disabilities with her/him?

R: I'd find it ah, difficult ah..to do. But I'd try not to show it. I just try to.."Hey, your visually impaired. Big deal. Do the best you can." Which sounds callous but it isn't, it's the way I do it. [Sites IV-V, physical education teacher]

Although some teachers stated they could discuss a child's visual impairment with her/him and others felt they could not, in this study none of the teachers had, in fact, had such a discussion. Itinerant teachers were the only educators who reported having discussed such issues with the visually impaired child.

Parents also perceived the discussion of their child's visual impairment to be a difficult topic, however, less so in the homes of the totally blind child, Tony, and the partially sighted child who was most competent, Jamie. The parents of the other three children struggled with this issue and were visibly uncomfortable when it was raised during the interview.

[Excerpt 1]

I: What does Charles know about his visual impairment?

R: He just knows everything. We've told him everything.

I: How often does his visual impairment come up in routine conversation in your home?

R: ..Um, not often, we, we, last year he developed floaters in his eye and it was quite, ah, it was, like it was constantly on his mind. It, it ah, it never, we just always, just if he has homework to do, sometimes I have to tell him that he's not going to be able to do it as fast. No, we just don't, if he has questions we answer them but..[silence]

I: So would his visual impairment or some aspect of it come up on a daily basis, a weekly basis, monthly?

R: Ah, no. Not daily, just whenever, he sits too close to the T.V. and I have to tell him to sit back. Like, that's not in reference to his sight, that's just telling him to sit back. No, I wouldn't say, probably not weekly, he ah, he gets headaches

sometimes but, ah..lately, well, when he developed the floaters it was, constantly but ah, no, he hasn't spoken about it much lately.

I: How does Charles think of himself in terms of his visual impairment?

R: ..Ah...ah, this year he's realized, I think more that he, he is, you know, with his sight and that, he does know that he is, he is different. But, you know..ah, he, this summer he said he, when he..ah, sometimes when he can't travel like, you know?

I: Umhmm.

R: He's, this year was the first time he used it. "You won't let me do that because," you know, "because of my, because," I don't know his exact words he used, because you think I'm blind or something. And ah..I told him that he was never [stresses this word] to use that with me. You know, that wasn't to be used. But this is the first year that he's ever used anything like that, he's never ah..never done it again. [Site V, parent]

[Excerpt 2]

I: What does he know about his visual impairment?

R: He knows, yeah. And so what happened and...I've talked to him different times. As I say, it upsets him if he, you know. Once you talk to him about it, he's okay. He doesn't know what can cause visual impairment, like with other people. Like cataracts and that sort of thing. He doesn't know that part of it. He knows what happened to him..as best as I do.

I: How often does visual impairment come up in routine conversation?

R: We don't, never have, hid the topic. If somebody asks about visual impairment and needs here, we've always talked about it. We don't bring it up, you know, if it's just us talking. No, it's never said. But, I mean, if somebody asks or something, um.

I: Just in sort of your routine as the days and weeks go by, would it come up?

R: No, wouldn't even...maybe, at the most once in every two weeks or so. It's not very often, actually. [Site I, parent]

While adults perceived other children to "never mention" the visually impaired child's disability or to seem disinterested, as mentioned in Chapter 7, the peers of these children perceived the child's visual impairment to be "none of our business" and were concerned discussion of this topic might hurt their feelings or "make him feel bad." The visually impaired children also considered the topic restricted to private conversations among their mother, classroom teacher and itinerant teacher. Thus, the perception that visual impairment was not

a topic for spontaneous, candid discussion appeared to contribute to a sense of shame or offensiveness intrinsic to being visually impaired.

### Conclusion

Integration of the visually impaired into public schools, as any significant educational innovation, must be guided by a sensitive awareness of the role culture plays in schools (Deal, 1985).

Integration challenges the basic assumptions related to the social acceptance and interaction of children as well as the interaction of teachers and children. Frequently contradictions are created when children who are perceived to be different are placed in situations where educators feel it inappropriate to treat them differently. Confusion is created when children are neither fully sighted nor totally blind, when neither teachers nor parents fully understand the implications of vision loss on social and academic learning, and when adults are conditioned to view acknowledgement of a child's disability as inappropriate.

Advocates have promoted the integration of handicapped children assuming a natural acceptance or tendency for nonhandicapped children to be uninhibited in their interaction with children who are different (Biklen, 1985). In this study, adults consistently demonstrated a limited understanding of the complexity and nature of pupil culture in general, and its relevance to the social integration of visually impaired students in particular. They perceived the visually impaired student to be well accepted by peers because of the absence of overt negative interaction. They did not realize how other students perceived

the visually impaired child nor were they aware of the dilemmas the integrated child created in terms of the negotiated rules of pupil culture. In short, adults had little insight into the social world of pupil culture. When they did not recognize, and therefore did not take into account pupil culture, they frequently contributed to the creation of a social environment which was a hostile one for the integrated visually impaired students. For example, in competitive learning environments, they granted visually impaired students privileges other students were denied. Therefore, without adequate knowledge, adults frequently placed visually impaired students in vulnerable situations both socially and academically. Simultaneously they exacerbated the naturally existing tension between adult and pupil culture in the schools. For example, by being more lenient toward the nonconforming behaviour of visually impaired students (e.g. allowing them to rest their heads on the desk or to speak without raising their hands), teachers challenged classmates' perceptions of fairness and the limits of teacher control in the classroom.

It was difficult for adults, particularly teachers, to model a positive acceptance of difference and, hence, ease the stress created in interaction between visually impaired students and their peers, when the adults themselves, were not at ease or did not understand the visually impaired students and their disability. Most adult participants assumed discussion of the child's visual impairment in public to be an infringement on her/his privacy or to have a detrimental effect upon the wellbeing of the visually impaired student. The dilemma partially sighted students encountered in the nebulous state of being neither

fully sighted nor totally blind remained unrecognized by adults and, therefore, unknown to classmates. Given their inadequate understanding, adults often unknowingly contributed to the maintenance of myths and misinformation relevant to the status of the visually impaired in our society. Although adults could empathize with the situations facing the visually impaired student in a "sighted world," they seemed unable to initiate proactive approaches to minimize or eliminate some of the implications they associated with being visually impaired.

Thus, the social integration of visually impaired children poses particular dilemmas for teachers, particularly those who have not previously known a visually impaired individual. It challenges the ways teachers traditionally interact with students as they realize their personal and professional goals within the school setting. For example, it is clear in the interviews that teachers considered the enhancement of the social acceptance of students to be a minor aspect of their roles as teachers. They attended to it either in their routine monitoring of discipline or when they observed overt negative interaction among students. This is essentially incompatible with the social/emotional needs of visually impaired students in an integrated setting; they need appropriate structured experiences to promote positive interaction and the development of a healthy self concept. In general, children are considered responsible for making their own friends and playgrounds are almost neutral environments for teachers. Furthermore, beyond the realm of the classroom, adults perceive themselves to have little control over students. Since much of the negotiation of friendship occurs on the playground beyond the jurisdiction of teachers, adults perceive

interference as inappropriate. Unaware of significant social integration issues intrinsic to pupil culture and faced with situations they frequently feel helpless to address, adults do not take a proactive approach to the acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students.

Nonetheless, teachers do not consciously plan or promote the development of negative social environments for integrated visually impaired children. Nor do teachers individually produce the contradictions which emerge between the existing school culture and the integration process. They are:

best understood as the unintended consequences of the teacher's attempts to cope with the realities of her [sic] situations. It is for social psychologists, in collaboration with teachers and others to attempt to find ways of avoiding these undesirable and unintended consequences. However, this will not be achieved by concentration upon the teacher alone. It has been argued above that the teacher's perceptions of her pupils develop as a way of coping with the situation in which she has to work. It follows then that to understand the perceptions one has also to develop some understanding of the nature of the teacher's situation. (Rogers, 1982, p. 86)

In the next chapter, the emphasis is upon the contextual aspects of the interaction, that is, those aspects of the school environment or situation which appear to contribute to and detract from the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired pupils.

## CHAPTER 9

### Nature of the Social Environment Relevant to the Acceptance and Interaction of Integrated Visually Impaired Pupils

#### Introduction

As proposed in subpurpose five of the study, this chapter examines some contextual aspects of the social environment, that is, the elementary school, which appear to be relevant to the social integration of visually impaired students. It begins with an examination of three processes evident in the wider context in which elementary schools are located which appear to influence the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired children and emerged during the analysis of data. These are: integration as an educational innovation implemented through the schools; affective education as an aim of education; and society's perception of the stigma associated with those who are visually impaired. Cultural assumptions associated with the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired children as they relate to these broader processes are then discussed. Finally, a variety of both overt and covert behaviours and situational variables which appeared to be relevant to the social acceptance and interaction of visually impaired children are presented.

Throughout the previous four chapters it has become evident that there are several significant incompatibilities between the cultural assumptions of elementary school participants and both the philosophical and the pragmatic issues intrinsic to the integration of visually impaired students. To understand how specific patterns of social

relationships have evolved, how participants in elementary schools relate to these, and the contradictions, dilemmas and tensions that emerge, it is necessary to examine the contextual situation or social environment in which participants interact. To understand the perceptions elementary school participants construct in relation to the integration of visually impaired students, it is critical to establish an awareness of the structuring aspects of their social environment--the contextual factors emanating from without and those evolving from within which act to shape the interaction, hence the social realities constructed by participants.

#### Processes Relevant to Schools

Prior to 1977, visually impaired children in Atlantic Canada had two educational options--placement at a residential school for the blind or enrollment in their local school without access to special material, equipment or specialist teachers in the field of visual impairment. Following the signing of an interprovincial agreement by the four Atlantic Provinces in 1975, staff at the newly formed Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired outlined long term plans to develop the human and material resources necessary to effectively educate visually impaired children in local schools (MacCuspie & Thurman, 1978). For the majority of visually impaired students, placement was in the regular classroom.

In Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, where the five sites for this study were located, enrollment of handicapped children in regular classes, in general, became a more common practice during the 1980s. In



New Brunswick, in 1988 it was mandated by law. In Atlantic Canada ninety-nine percent of visually impaired children without additional handicapping conditions were enrolled in regular classes during the 1989-1990 school term. For children with other handicapping conditions, such as those who are mentally, emotionally or multiply handicapped, placement in regular classes has not been adopted so quickly. Practices vary not only from province to province but from school board to school board and, within a particular school board, from school to school. This variation in practices related to the placement of handicapped children was evident when examining the situations which existed in each of the five sites, thereby reflecting both the potential placement options and services available to visually impaired students and the approaches individual schools had adopted in relation to integration. This information is presented in Table 2.

<u>Practices</u>	<u>Sites</u>			
	I	II	III	IV-V
Places all students in regular classes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Maintains special classes for academically handicapped students	No	No	No	Yes
Maintains special classes for students with behavioral disorders	No	No	No	Yes
Maintains a resource room program	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Assigns part-time or full-time attendants to some integrated students	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*	No
Requires written individualized program for integrated student	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Involves school based special education staff with visually impaired integrated student	No	No	Yes	No
Yes*, if student is severely mentally and/or physically handicapped				

Table 2: Placement Practices for Handicapped Children

Although Nova Scotia does not have provincial legislation mandating the placement of handicapped children in regular classrooms, the Department of Education promotes the application of the principle of normalization:

Normalization means bringing school-aged children to school at which time the school, in consultation with the parents, will provide the most appropriate education for each child in the least restrictive setting; identify the educational needs of the children; look for and create alternatives that will help general

educators serve children with learning or adjustment problems in the regular setting; and unite the skills of general education and special education so that all children may have equal educational opportunity. (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 1980, p. 6)

In New Brunswick the passage of Bill 85, An Act to Amend the Schools Act, in 1988, made the placement of handicapped children in regular classes a requirement:

School boards are instructed to place exceptional pupils in regular classrooms with non-exceptional pupils unless such placement proves detrimental to the needs of the child or other children. Whereas formerly a case had to be made to include an exceptional pupil in a regular class, this section of the legislation requires that a case must be made to remove a child from a regular class. (New Brunswick Department of Education, 1988, p. 3)

Previous to the passage of this act, many of the mentally handicapped children in the province had been enrolled in special segregated schools for the mentally handicapped located throughout the province. Following the proclamation of Bill 85, these schools were closed and their students transferred to public schools. Nova Scotia continues to maintain several institutions for mentally and emotionally disturbed children. Both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick support the Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired which has a residential component housing approximately fifty children in addition to an out-reach program supporting approximately 750 visually impaired students in their local communities.

Although Nova Scotia's commitment to integration has not been formalized through legislation, it shares with New Brunswick some tenets and assumptions in relation to integration. First, both identify the classroom teacher as having the primary responsibility for the instruction of the integrated child. Second, the classroom teacher is

to function as a team member with other teachers, specialists and parents in planning and implementing programs for the integrated child. Third, the needs of the individual child are to be identified and individualized programming designed specifically to meet these needs or regular programs adjusted to accommodate the child's particular learning deficits. Each of these statements is contained in publications of the Departments of Education for the two provinces (New Brunswick Department of Education, 1988; Nova Scotia Department of Education, 1980).

One principal difference between the Education Acts of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick lies in the designation of responsibility for the education of children. In Nova Scotia the school boards are denoted as having the responsibility for education of all children.

Each school board shall provide for all students resident in the area under the jurisdiction of the school board who are entitled to attend school and who are qualified to pursue the studies in the grades or courses for which they are enrolled. (Nova Scotia, Regulations Under the Education Act, 1987)

Thus, while the Department provides funding and guidelines for educational programs, it has limited power to monitor or evaluate the educational practices throughout the province as long as they comply with the regulations under the Education Act. In New Brunswick however, the Department of Education has greater administrative authority within the school districts and, in law, holds the primary responsibility for the education of its students. Representatives from this Department of Education have the responsibility to directly monitor the quality of programs offered throughout the province and are able to intervene in situations in which programs are considered to be unacceptable. Thus,

New Brunswick has a more centralized system of education than does Nova Scotia.

School boards, whether primarily in control of the education of students as in Nova Scotia; or delegated the responsibility, as in New Brunswick, have been given the task of providing for programming and placement of handicapped pupils, including visually impaired children, within their jurisdictions. In response to this obligation, the three Nova Scotia boards involved in this study had produced "Special Services Handbooks" outlining the philosophy, aims, services and procedures in relation to the education of "children with special needs" within their boards. The one site in New Brunswick did not have such a handbook. When considering integration, each of the handbooks for Nova Scotia sites identified a cascade model for services as the one adopted by the board. This model proposes the availability of a variety of placements for handicapped children ranging from segregated institutional settings through special classes in public schools to integration in the regular classroom with only the support of special equipment or materials. As suggested previously during the discussion of Figure 9, this allowed considerable flexibility in the focus and variety of services for handicapped children from board to board. In New Brunswick, following the passage of Bill 85, integration of the handicapped within the regular classroom was legislated. All boards were instructed to have phased out special classes by 1992, thereby dramatically reducing the future probability of an existing range of programs for handicapped children in a given district (i.e. the cascade model).

Amendments to the Education Acts in both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick recognize the support role to be played by the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (hereafter referred to as APSEA) in relation to the education of visually and hearing impaired children and youth. However, as stated in both Education Acts and in the school board handbooks, the responsibility for the education of visually impaired students lies with the local school boards. The role of APSEA is to provide the necessary resources, personnel and consultation to assist public school staff in providing educational programming for visually impaired students. At the school level APSEA staff make significant educational decisions, such as, the amount of itinerant service a student will receive, the special equipment and material which will be provided and the teaching strategies and methods most appropriate for a specific visually impaired student. Without the specialized knowledge of educators of the visually impaired, school boards rely upon APSEA services to provide community based programs for visually impaired children. Thus, from a wider context than elementary schools, integration as legislated and monitored by educational authorities beyond the elementary school was conceived, in this study, to influence the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired pupils. Decisions made external to a given school (e.g. who will be integrated, the type and quantity of service to be provided) will affect how teachers cope and, hence, the learning environment they negotiate within the classroom.

A second process affecting the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students is the status of affective

education in our present school system. Morse, Ardizzone, MacDonald and Pasick (1980) assert:

Generally speaking, affective education concerns emotional development. As such, it includes the educational efforts related to attitudes, values, and feelings. There are affective components related to the self (self concept and self esteem, for example), social components in relationship to other human beings (empathy, justice, various social values, acceptance of special children), and to objects (love of literature or nature). (p. 3)

References to affective education are evident within the Education Acts in both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and in a number of Department of Education publications. For example, the Nova Scotia Department of Education publication, Public School Programs 1988-89, 1989-90 makes the following statement:

The major goals in teaching children and young people are:  
To develop skills that can help them achieve their full potential mentally, physically and socially;  
To help them acquire knowledge and understanding needed for a full, rich life and for making a useful contribution to society;  
To encourage positive attitudes to school and learning.  
(p. 11)

Later in the same publication, the importance of "values education" is addressed under a separate heading:

Values education should be an essential part of the total educational process rather than being isolated in a separate course. Values permeate all aspects of human life and teachers inevitably express their own values to their students in a multitude of ways. Since students come from a wide variety of backgrounds, it is important that teachers become aware of the value systems held by the students, their parents, and the community from which they come. This awareness will assist teachers as they help students achieve certain basic objectives: namely, to grow in understanding of distinctive human values; to develop appreciation of and positive attitudes toward self and others; and to develop moral responsibility and judgement. (p. 15)

Such documents make a formal statement with regard to the assumed existence of educational programming structured to address both the general affective development needs of students and specific goal statements related to such needs (e.g. to develop positive attitudes toward self). In this study, affective education was not observed to be the significant aspect of overall programming suggested by the formal documents issued by the provincial Departments of Education. The absence of affective education was, however, seen to play a critical role in regard to the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired pupils. Therefore, the discrepancy between what should be (i.e. that mandated by the Department of Education) and what was (i.e. the actual presence of activities designed specially to address affective education in schools) is an important consideration in this study. If affective education for all students is perceived to be a low priority goal by teachers and parents, the implications for integrated visually impaired students are significant. The social/emotional development of severely visually impaired children has frequently been identified as an area of development at risk (Corn, 1987; Fraiberg, 1977; Freeman et al, 1988; Hull, 1983). Therefore, in this study, the manner and degree to which affective education is incorporated within the present school system was seen to influence the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired pupils.

A third process affecting the integration of visually impaired students was associated with the stigma or beliefs held by fully sighted individuals in relation to those who are visually impaired. "Visually



impaired" as a "label of primary potency" influencing the perceptions of teachers, parents and classmates of integrated visually impaired children was discussed in both Chapters 7 and 8. In this study, the stigma associated with visual impairment was evident as an encompassing process inherent within the way our society thinks about those who are visually impaired and the potential they have as students within the public school system. This stigma was seen to create a set of practices and beliefs pervasive throughout the culture of schools because of their implicit presence in society's general social process.

The limitations automatically associated with the expectations, abilities and potential of handicapped students are evident even in formal Department of Education publications, as is illustrated by the following excerpt from the New Brunswick Department of Education's Working Guidelines for Integration (1988):

We must remember that while it is important to normalize the learning environment for our exceptional pupils, we cannot change these students with their exceptional needs into "normal" students. Because of this, the goals or expectations for the regular students in the classroom will not be appropriate for the exceptional pupils. If integration of the exceptional student is to be successful, however, it is vitally important that appropriate expectations be determined for each student. (p. 12)

In this excerpt, expectations are definitely stated to be different for the handicapped students as is their status as non-normal students.

Yet, such basic expectations as reading at grade level or having "best friends" should be realistic expectations for visually impaired students integrated in a proactive, supportive school environment.

Aspects relevant to the stigma society holds toward those who are visually impaired, as well as those relevant to integration and

affective education are conceived by the researcher to be external to a specific school context but implicit in the cultural assumptions germane to the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students. There is a connection between macro sociological processes and individual biographies at the school level. These connections are clarified as the following relevant cultural assumptions are presented.

#### Cultural Assumptions Relevant to the Social Environment

The issues surrounding integration, affective education and the stigma of visual impairment can be seen to influence the process of acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students. Analyzing how participants constructed their meanings and verbalized their perceptions can reflect the social environment in which interaction occurred. As visually impaired students were integrated in regular classrooms, the ways personal, subjective and unique aspects of participants' knowledge was applied in a variety of situations was observed. Some teachers seemed more insightful than others, some principals appeared to provide more leadership than others, some parents were perceived to be more accepting of their child's disability than others, some classmates seemed more empathetic than others, and some visually impaired students responded in more assertive ways than others. However, as situational issues were addressed and negotiated in the unique context of each school, some common cultural assumptions associated with the practice of integration for visually impaired students, the status of affective education in our school system, and

the potency of the label "visually impaired" emerged as data were analyzed.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Schein (1985) outlined three levels of culture: (1) artifacts and creations (i.e. aspects of a group's physical and social environment, such as written and spoken language or overt behaviour of group members), (2) values (i.e. the distinction between what ought to be and what is), and (3) basic assumptions (i.e. beliefs which are taken for granted aspects of a culture and which have been learned as appropriate responses to problems of internal integration and external adaptation). Schein contends that the articulated values of a group may not be congruent with its basic assumptions. Furthermore, the likelihood of discrepancies between articulated values and basic assumptions is increased when changes, such as integration, are introduced within a group. The recommended procedure for distinguishing between espoused values and basic assumptions is triangulation; that is, "checking each bit of information obtained against other bits of information until a pattern finally begins to reveal itself" (Schein, 1985, p. 135).

In the following assumptions, contradictions between espoused values and observed behaviour are evident. These differences created tensions and dilemmas for school participants, both adults and children.

Education Assumption 1 (Special Training Not Required)

Teachers of integrated visually impaired children ought not to require special training to accommodate these students in their classes.

During the interviews with teachers and principals, the lack of appropriate training and/or inservicing for teachers who had handicapped

children placed in their classrooms was frequently mentioned as problematic for them. Table 3 depicts the level of training/in-service the 18 teachers had received prior to the integration of the visually impaired child in their class.

	Sites				
	I	II	III	IV	V
Special Training					
No. of teachers with courses in Special Education	1 f	0	3 r, m, p	1 p	1 p
No. of teachers who had attended an inservice on integration	0	1 p	0	0	0
No. of teachers who received 1/2 to 1 day of inservice on working with their specific visually impaired student	1 c	0	1 c	0	0
No. of teachers who at one time attended a staff meeting concerning integration of this child	1 c	0	1 c	0	1 f
No. of teachers who attended this year's Individual Service Plan meeting with itinerant teacher	1 c	1 c	2 c, r	1 c	1 c
Did principal attend this year's Individual Service Plan meeting with itinerant teacher	No*	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
c classroom teacher      m music teacher      r resource teacher f French teacher          p physical education teacher * principal assigned to this school late in year					

Table 3: Level of Training Received by Educators

It is obvious from the information presented in Table 3, teachers had minimal, if any, formal education related to either special education or integration. For most teachers, the limited contact with the itinerant teacher was their major source of assistance in integrating the visually impaired child. As can be seen in Table 3, each classroom teacher had met with the itinerant teacher and the principal to discuss the student's Individual Service Plan. This is a document written by the itinerant teacher outlining accommodations required by the student, implications of the visual impairment, instructional services to be provided by the itinerant teacher, material and equipment to be provided by the Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired, program adaptations recommended for use by the public school teachers, and any special techniques or approaches to be used when working with the child (e.g. correcting mannerisms). By design, the meeting held to discuss the visually impaired student's Individual Service Plan is intended to include all teachers who instruct the child (Atlantic Provinces Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired, 1987). The majority of the teachers in this study had never attended the case conference meeting to discuss the integration of their visually impaired student, although they may have met with the itinerant teacher on a one-to-one basis. Five of the specialist teachers in the study had never met with the itinerant teacher to discuss the accommodations required in their specific subjects--music, French and physical education. Thus, understandably, teachers frequently did not feel adequately trained or prepared to meet the challenge of having an integrated visually impaired child.

Few of the teachers interviewed reported having received the level of assistance they felt they required. Specialist teachers in areas such as music, French and physical education frequently expressed annoyance at the limited amount of inservice they received prior to the integration of a handicapped child.

[During a discussion of how teachers are prepared for integration]

R: In the severe case, we have a boy in grade one this year who is mongoloid and I was terrified getting him and the classroom teachers always get inserviced to death, but we don't, the specialists, we get nothing. [Classroom teachers definitely did not perceive this to be true.] Not a thing, which really makes me mad. And our classes are the first ones they put these kids in! [Site III, music teacher]

As mentioned, lack of preparation for integrating the visually impaired child was frequently mentioned as a major complaint by teachers. The following excerpts are typical of the responses received to the question, "What guidelines or directions have you received concerning the integration of a visually impaired child in your classroom?"

R: That's frightening...like, I had my afternoon there with the itinerant teacher and, um, Peter's mother, but...I did learn a lot there, like, of course, you would know...black and white [referring to the use of black print on a white background] and things like that. I don't know. Another thing I knew, he had this Visualtek thing [closed circuit TV system used to display enlarged image of things such as print] and I didn't know it worked..how complicated was this going to be. But the itinerant teacher was great. She found this desk and she got everything all set up and...like that.

I: What should a classroom teacher like to do, to happen before getting a student like Peter?

R: I would like to have had the chance to go somewhere and see someone teach. Maybe not...I wouldn't want..maybe not totally blind..well, that, too. I'd like to see someone teach someone at the same level of ability as Peter to see what they're doing and how they teach and how they react to the teacher and their peers. Because I thought, "What are the kids going to say to him? What's he going to do?" And..you know. I just did not know [emphasizes]. I was

walking into this blind! But I just learn day by day.  
[Site I, classroom teacher]

[Excerpt 2]

R: What guidelines? [pause] Nothing, I think I came in September, and I don't know, I can't even remember anyone telling me there was a visually...I don't know if I asked if something was, he had a problem, or..nothing.

I: So there was never a meeting called about it.

R: Not that I was involved in. [annoyed voice] [Site I, French teacher]

[Excerpt 3]

R: A..and from the itinerant teacher, he has helped me. What to expect, what are some of the habits that he shouldn't do, or, help him, ah, try to encourage him to do this or whatever. So from the itinerant teacher, I have, he's the itinerant. And ah, guidelines on helping him?

I: Guidelines or directions.

R: I guess that's..mainly it, on his ah, social behaviour, that he has ah, now it seems to be getting more into academics. He's helping me now with ah, the abacus, so that I can help Tony with it and understand, ah..

I: What about for other handicapped children that you've had?

R: None.

I: So since this district has taken on the mandate of integration ["total integration" regardless of the type or severity of the handicap], they inservice teachers or..[interrupts]

R: Ah, well, as I say, the year that ah, this child came in [Last year she was given an emotionally disturbed child.], I was just told that I was going to have him. There was not ah, oh, inservice you mean?

I: Umhmm.

R: Oh, ah, no, I can't say there has been much inservice on integration! [Site III, classroom teacher]

[Excerpt 4]

R: ..Oh, ah, the itinerant teacher came in and, you know, last year. And took away some books to, to get enlarged, and, you know, said she'd be back in the fall. She came back in the fall, and..you know, she just says, "How's Charles doing?" I say, "Fine." Well that's good..she takes him out once a week for typing lessons and that's it! [Site V, classroom teacher]

These excerpts demonstrate the incongruence between the espoused value that teachers should have special training to successfully integrate visually impaired students and the basic assumption that they "ought not

to require special training." Although all teachers expressed concern about their need for such training, none had initiated action to receive it. For example, the classroom teacher at Site IV reported she had purposefully not read the information she was given about Jamie, his visual impairment and its educational implications because she believed this knowledge would have biased her perceptions and, perhaps, would have resulted in negative consequences for this student.

During observations the effect of teachers having inadequate preparation before enrolling a visually impaired child was frequently apparent in relation to both the child's academic and social development. As discussed in Chapter 8, teachers routinely assumed the visually impaired child had access to information he/she could not see, or assumed the use of an adaptive aid provided the same quality of visual presentation to the visually impaired student as was available to students with normal vision. The following excerpt is indicative of the degree of misunderstanding which occurs when teachers were poorly prepared for the integration of a visually impaired student.

R: I've found it kind of hard because I'm only in there once in a while. The only things I really try..I just try to stay around [means stay in proximity of the visually impaired student], and I know that he doesn't do as well in French as he does in other subjects, so I just figure that, you know, if I had all these special things I could use and I knew his problem, I could do more, but I don't really know myself what else I could do besides trying to be close to him so he can see what I have and understand what I'm doing. [later in the interview]

I: What were your feelings when you first learned you would have a visually impaired child in your class?

R: I was wondering how I would do because I knew mostly my subject was visual. So I was sort of hoping that he would be able to work it out on his own. Because I also know, like, I just zoom in and out, and I don't have lots and lots of extra time for those things. So he seems to be doing all



right, but I would have to wonder if I had a totally blind...how that would work out. [Site I, French teacher]

A final indicator of the degree to which preparation of teachers for accommodating an integrated visually impaired child was neglected was epitomized when substitute teachers were assigned to a class with a visually impaired child. Substitute teachers were required in four of the five sites during the periods of observation. In three of the four cases, substitute teachers were unaware of the presence of a visually impaired child and were incidentally informed, usually by the students, during some part of the school day. At the fourth site the substitute teacher was aware of the presence of a visually impaired student but not his needs or use of specific accommodative equipment and materials. The perception of a visually impaired pupil's classmate exemplifies the consequences for the visually impaired student having both inadequately prepared teachers and substitute teachers.

I: What are some of the things you would like your teachers to do for Peter?

R: Uhh. A substitute or Mr. Coates?

I: Either.

R: Substitute not to treat him differently cuz if...I think it'd feel..pretty embarrassing for him, like if, like, when they ask him stupid questions or give him too much special attention that he knows, when he knows stuff already. Like, just stupid things, like, that makes you feel wierd and he wouldn't like that. Mr. Coates knows..like at the first of the year he didn't know too much. But now, like, he knows about Peter and what he can do and what he can't do and stuff. And he stops and listens to Peter most of the time, so Peter...so Peter..he can hear what Peter thinks about it, to make sure that he doesn't get off track and then had to do it all over cuz it takes him quite a while to do his work and he can't be expected to do it more than once! [Site I, David]

A final feature associated with the assumption that teachers of integrated visually impaired students ought not to require special

training to accommodate these children in their classes was a prevalent belief that "a good teacher" could naturally address the needs of visually impaired students. Teachers, itinerant teachers and parents alike, routinely identified the skill of the classroom teacher as being of major importance in the success of the integrated child. The following example exemplifies some of the facets of this belief.

I: What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages for the visually impaired child in the regular classroom?

R: [pause] Again, I think, um, the teacher has a lot to do with it. How much work or how much help she is able to give the child, more so on an individual basis. How far she is prepared to go with, I think, acceptance and extra work and extra help. I, really, again don't have that many problems with it. He's not..you know..they've never had to make major adaptations for Jamie, so I've really not dealt with anything really major. He's had good teachers right up. He's been fortunate. So...  
[silence]

I: I've noticed during my research that sometimes the classroom teachers are specifically chosen for visually impaired students.

R: I know, I noticed that, too. Jamie had the most wonderful year in grade three with Mr. Smith. And I thought, "How will he ever survive that year with a male teacher?" Because he hadn't had a male teacher up to that point..and I didn't know Mr. Smith from the man in the moon. And it was the best year that he had ever had. Mr. Smith was one of the most caring and wonderful teachers that I have met. A soft, gentle, gentle person and so soft and gentle with Jamie. And I feared that year would be a bad one, with a male teacher, and it turned out just the opposite. It was absolutely wonderful! And I, I really do feel that a lot of the integrated kids..it depends on the teacher. [Site IV, parent]

With such expectations, the fear of failing the visually impaired child by not meeting her/his needs, expressed by several teachers, seems to be a realistic pressure evident in their teaching environment. The teachers' limited specific training in the techniques and implications of educating a visually impaired child did little to affirm the confidence of teachers. Without having received specific training with regard to the potential implications of visual impairment on the social,

cognitive and physical development of children, teachers struggled and frequently questioned their capability of meeting the challenges a visually impaired student entails.

Education Assumption 2 (Evaluation Unnecessary)

Administrators from the Departments of Education, school boards, the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority or a given school ought not to evaluate the status of integration for the visually impaired.

Since the formal integration of visually impaired children was initiated in 1977, the program has not been evaluated in relation to either the visually impaired child's degree of social or academic success nor the extent to which public school teachers are able to accommodate the learning needs of these children. In 1986 the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority completed a study to identify the level of consumer satisfaction with programs and services provided by them. This study was comprised of a 4 to 6 question survey directed to superintendents, principals and parents of visually impaired children. The questions addressed the ease of access to APSEA services, the level of satisfaction with these services, and the areas for future development of services.

Three aspects of this study are worthy of note. First, it did not survey the opinions of public school teachers--those given the primary responsibility for the daily instruction of integrated visually impaired pupils. Second, although the majority of parents responded positively to the questions concerning their satisfaction with the programs their child was receiving, the alternative programs available to parents who

were dissatisfied was generally enrollment of their child at the residential school in Halifax. During interviews with parents for the present study, the fear of such a recommendation was mentioned by four of the five parents. Following is an excerpt which exemplifies the feelings of parents related to "having to send their child away."

I: What is your impression of the integration of handicapped children in the regular classrooms?

R: I think it's super. I really do. Um...as I say, that's one of the things I said to George [her husband] when, you know, at a very young age [when their visually impaired son was very young]...will he have to go to Halifax? And every time that the preschool consultant teacher used to come, I used to probably ask her, "What do you think? Does he have to go to Halifax?" [sullen voice] Because I didn't want to, you know, have that loss, type of thing. [eyes fill with tears] Um. No, that was probably the biggest relief off my mind was that he could go to a public school. [Site 1, parent]

The third aspect of this study which is worthy of note was one of the program needs identified by parents--teaching of socialization skills (Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority, 1986, p. 20). It would seem that as visually impaired children spent time in an integrated setting, parents were becoming more aware of the problems associated with their social integration.

In 1988 the Minister of Education for New Brunswick established an advisory committee for the implementation of school integration. Their mandate was to examine the process of integration through public hearings, school visits and review of related research. Although focused more on the integration of mentally handicapped children, these hearings provided a forum for educators and parents to present their impressions and opinions related to the newly adopted procedures associated with integration in their province. Although academic and

physical accessibility issues were routinely identified as issues of concern, social integration and peer acceptance were not examined. However, in 1989 this committee presented recommendations focusing on such issues as teacher preparation and training, interpretation and implementation of Bill 85, funding and support services required, mandatory parent involvement in integration and the provision of provincial guidelines and directives for school board administrators as they implement integration in their districts (New Brunswick Legislative Assembly Report, 1989). The only reference to the integration of visually impaired students in the committee report was a request to amend the Schools Act to include for provision for aurally and visually impaired students who were currently covered under the Education of Aurally or Visually Handicapped Persons Act. Thus, the process of integration, particularly as related to the social integration of disabled students appears to be a process which has been subjected to limited formal evaluation as it has been implemented. None of the teachers interviewed had been involved in a formal evaluation of integration for either the visually impaired student or other disabled students they had taught. Perceived as lack of interest by administration or a situation beyond their control, the absence of evaluation did little to promote integration as an important educational process. The following excerpt, typical of all sites, presents the perception teachers held in relation to this matter.

I: How effective do you think the integration program is?

R: For him [visually impaired student] specifically?

I: Umhmm. Or the whole integration process in your district.

R: Well, again, I think ah, for situations like that with Tony, fine. You know, I think that we ah, got support.

We're very fortunate here, I mean, Margaret [resource room teacher] is very supporting...helpful in anything I can need. And Chris [itinerant teacher], he'll help me whenever I have a problem. So I mean, I find Tony is well looked after. That ah, I don't know, a person who is hearing impaired, or whatever has as much resource. But I find, for Tony, that ah, he has, we have enough resources to get him through. Now ah, I don't feel there's enough on the other hand, I don't feel maybe that's there enough, ah..let's see...who's the director or coordinator of student services [doesn't know the name of the district's special education coordinator]? There ah, anyway, maybe it would be better if we had someone coming in to check up on, "Well, Susan, how do you feel? Are there any problems?"

I: Umm.

R: Yeah. "How do you feel Susan? Do you feel this is working? What is your reaction to having, so and so in the classroom?" You know, or, "Are there, or is there anything that we can help you with that you feel..." you know, I find that, for a lot of it, it's just, "Here he is." That's it! [Site III, classroom teacher]

None of the 18 teachers interviewed had ever had an administrator from the Department of Education or APSEA, their local school board office Special Education Coordinator, or the principal of the school observe the integrated visually impaired student functioning in their classroom. Furthermore, none had received any feedback, positive or negative, with respect to their professional performance or the adequacy of their learning environment for the integrated student. What is most discouraging, is that none of the teachers interviewed reported having attempted to obtain such feedback.

#### Education Assumption 3 (Visually Impaired Less Valued)

Visually impaired children ought to be less valued as students than are their fully sighted classmates.

While teachers did not voice opposition to having a visually impaired student in their classroom, neither did they express enthusiasm, a feeling of happiness to have this child, or a sense of

executing the child's rights by having her/him enrolled in the regular classroom. There was a sense that "nobody minded" having an integrated visually impaired child. This sense is exemplified in the following excerpts taken from interviews at various sites and with a variety of teachers as they responded to the question, "What do you think is the feeling of staff of this school, in general, to having a visually impaired child in their class?"

[Excerpt 1]

R: I don't think it matters much as long as there's someone there to do the extra work and provide the materials and things that Peter needs. Teachers can't be expected to do all this extra stuff, particularly in this day and age where there are so many behaviour problems and social problems. There's no way teachers can do it. So as long as there's someone hired, an aide or someone who's going to do the extra stuff that has to be done for Peter, there's really no problem. I guess I'm not telling you anything that other teachers haven't told you. I think pretty much this is how most teachers feel. [Site I, music teacher]

[Excerpt 2]

R: I don't think it's a problem for anybody. I've never heard anyone speak negatively about it. [Site II, music teacher]

[Excerpt 3]

R: Positive. I really, you know, you can ask them but ah..no, I don't, you know, there'd be a little bit, you know, this is a little bit different and that, but I don't think there's anybody who'd say, "Oh, I can't do that," or, you know, they may say, "Oh, I wish somebody else would take him." Ah, there may be a little there, but I think for the most part it would be willingly acceptance and ah..the, you know, talk to them individually and for the most part they pretty well confirm that. [Site III, principal]

[Excerpt 4]

R: At first I thought, "Oh, god, all this extra work. What am I going to do!" [Says in a loud dramatic voice.] I can't keep up with it now. But I, ah, ah, the itinerant teacher has been just super. She came in, before the end of the year and said, you know, "You're going to have Jamie," and "What books are you going to use?" And so on and so forth. And I know when I have a problem, if one came up,

that..yeah, I don't mind having Jamie. [Site IV, classroom teacher]

[Excerpt 5]

R: I don't think it bothers anybody. [Site V, classroom teacher]

Teachers frequently expressed their perception that having a visually impaired child created more work for them and that such work was beyond their "official" responsibilities. A recent article in the Nova Scotia Teachers Union monthly newsletter, *The Teacher*, in a report of the president's reaction to funding cutbacks, stated:

the Nova Scotia Teachers Union president said politicians, "who advance education as their answer to many insoluble [sic] problems, have left education high and dry when it comes to funding."

Education will have to learn to say no to future demands, Duerden said. "NO to parents who want new or reinforced programs in their schools. NO to parents of handicapped students who seek integration into regular classrooms. NO to parents seeking second language instruction for their children." (1990, p. 1)

This statement implies handicapped children do not have a right to education in the regular classroom, or perhaps any classroom, since there must be a cost for their education regardless of their physical location. Thus, the president's statement would seem to substantiate a perception of visually impaired students as less valued than their normally sighted classmates.

Another aspect contributing to the perception of an integrated visually impaired child as devalued was the unavailability of sometimes even basic textbook material in a format which was accessible to the student. The following excerpts from interviews and observation notes attest to the frequency and resulting frustrations associated with lack of provision of basic materials.



## [Excerpt 1]

When they return to class the children get out their math notebooks. Tony sits at his desk and does not get his braille writer ready. He speaks out without raising his hand and Mrs. Fraser says, "Shhh, just a minute, Tony." Mrs. Fraser tells the children she has checked their math scribbles and left messages for them ( e.g. do page 19, correct this one, etc.). She can't do this for Tony and follow-up on his work is obviously a problem. Mrs. Casey [resource teacher] does some follow-up with the material that has been printed out but they don't use the printer for math because it doesn't translate the Halifax code [a braille math code] directly. Tony speaks out again and again the teacher tells him to raise his hand. He puts his head down. He doesn't get anything ready and he doesn't have a math book in braille yet! [He is nearing the end of his second month in this grade. Later on in the day Mrs. Fraser tells me he is going to get his math book tomorrow and that will make a big difference.] Now everyone is ready and Tony is still sitting there. She asks him what he was doing while the others were making corrections and he says he was looking for his math book. [A print copy, which has no braille identification on it, is used by the teacher assistant who reads the questions aloud for Tony to enable him to complete his math.] [Site III, observation notes]

## [Excerpt 2]

[The children have gone to the library for their weekly selection of books.] Mrs. Fraser comes over to help Tony with his selection. He asks, "Are you allowed getting books from down here?" He means the bottom shelf. She replies in the affirmative. He asks Mrs. Fraser why they don't have any braille books in this library and she responds, "I guess they don't have any yet." She takes Tony to another section of the library and they reappear several minutes later with a book Tony has decided on. One of the children asks how Tony will read it because it isn't in braille and Mrs. Fraser replies his mother will read it to him. Earlier in the class Mrs. Fraser had reminded the children to choose at least one book they could read themselves. [Site III, observation notes]

## [Excerpt 3]

I: What is the most difficult aspect of having Tony in your class?

R: ..Um..off-hand, I would say, ah, it's all right if he has all the textbooks done in braille. Ah, it would be trying to find the time to ah, help him..if it's, if he doesn't have the textbook, to help him do the same thing as the other children are doing. Ah..and with as little commotion as possible. [Site III, classroom teacher]

## [Excerpt 4]

I: What specific problems and rewards has the integration of a visually impaired child had for you?

R: Reward is that it makes me more flexible as a teacher. Makes me slow down. Often Jamie will say, "Miss Redden, you're speaking too fast!" The other kids won't. I've thought, "He's more keen on what I'm saying, he's really listening." Tells me to slow down when I'm talking. It's made me more eager to make it clear for him, because he's a good student and he really wants to learn. With Charles, it's been total frustration because I don't have enough time..no books! If I had a textbook, I would spend weekends getting it all ready for him. But with no textbook, I have to make my own materials, buy my own songs...I haven't taught grade six for a long time. And everything's changed since I taught..six years ago, grade six. Not that I'm frustrated with Charles. Not with him [emphasizes "him"], but with my own not being able to really meet his needs the way I'd like to. [Site IV-V, music teacher]

As evident in the above excerpts, there is a sense of tension here, a contradiction--they "don't mind" yet they "do mind the extra bother." This sense of "nobody minds" having an integrated visually impaired student, interrelated with frustrations surrounding extra work and unavailable materials seemed to permeate to the students, as well. The following responses were typical of those received from upper elementary children, who had spent several years in the same class with the visually impaired student. Classmates were asked how they felt about working and playing with their visually impaired classmate.

## [Excerpt 1]

I: Tell me how kids in your class feel about working in school with Peter.

R: Well, they don't care because...he's really nice. They don't mind working with him.

I: Tell me how they feel about playing outside with him.

R: Well, they don't mind. Like, they'd play, if they didn't have anybody else. Like, they'd let him join in a game of tag, or swinging, like, people would give him a swing. Like, if all the swings were filled, they'd give him one. He teeters sometimes. Just...little things like that.

[Site I, Barb]

[Excerpt 2]

I: Tell me how kids in you class feel about having Jamie in their class?

R: Well, doesn't, they don't really mind at all. [Site IV, Marla]

[Excerpt 3]

I: Tell me how kids in your class feel about having Charles in their class.

R: Well..I don't know.

I: How do you feel about it?

R: I don't really care.

I: Tell me how kids in your class feel about working in school with Charles.

R: They, they don't really care about that I guess either.

I: How about you?

R: I don't really care..that he's working with us.

I: Tell me how kids feel about playing outside with Charles.

R: Not many of them do. Just Justin. [Site V, Jason]

By the upper elementary grades, classmates of the visually impaired pupil seemed to have developed a sense of indifference to their association with this child. Classmates appeared to have learned to tolerate rather than to accept.

#### Education Assumption 4 (Teacher Input Limited)

Teachers ought not to be involved in the planning or implementation of the integration of handicapped children in the regular classroom.

During interviews with teachers it became evident that they were given an opportunity for little, if any, input into the planning and implementation of integrating visually impaired students in their classrooms; nor did they demand or request such involvement. The procedure common to all sites began with the selection of a particular grade level teacher, if there was more than one class at that particular level, by the principal. At one site the resource room teacher was also involved in identifying the most appropriate teacher for the visually

impaired student. Following the selection of a teacher, he/she was advised of this child's placement and a meeting with the itinerant teacher for the visually impaired was usually scheduled. The selection of teachers was frequently made late in the school term and allowed little time for preparing them or for them to pursue relevant training. None of the teachers in this study had been given the opportunity to spend time observing the visually impaired child prior to the child's placement in her/his classroom; nor had they requested to do this. The following excerpts reveal the limited planning role played by teachers in implementing integration, as well as the level of frustration frequently resulting.

[Excerpt 1]

R: What guidelines or directions have you received concerning the integration of handicapped children in the regular classroom?

R: [pause and laughs] Haven't had any. I don't know, really.

I: Some teachers have told me integration has been imposed on them and others feel they've had direct input into the process. How do you feel?

R: Oh, I guess I can say it's been imposed cuz I've never said anything, you know, I've never said, "I think it's good. I think it's bad." It just happened.

I: You've never been called together to work on how to integrate visually impaired children.

R: No! [Site III, French teacher]

[Excerpt 2]

I: What about the principal's role in the social integration of handicapped children?

R: Interesting that you should ask that question..ah, I would, you know I would have thought that ah, at the beginning of the year, or somewhere at the beginning when the children [visually impaired students] first came to the school, that the principal would have called in all staff members together, all staff members who are going to be involved with that kid..phys. ed., French, so on and so forth, and said, "Okay, you know, this is..," and, and, you know, just sort of discussed it and everyone shared their ideas about, "No, you don't have to do those things. This is a good idea," and so on and so forth. But ah, I don't

think I've had any ah, the itinerant teacher's the one who's, who's given me the support that ah...[Site IV, classroom teacher]

[Excerpt 3]

I: Before we end the interview, is there anything you would like to add to what we have discussed?

R: No. I was relieved to know about Jamie [was not informed he was visually impaired]. I was shocked [emphasizes "shocked"] to know that I had taught a child for four years and didn't know. I mean, I felt very stupid. I felt very strange that no one had bothered to tell me, and I thought, "Well, what has he not learned because he hasn't seen it and that he wouldn't tell me?" Like, he got all red in the face when I said, "Jamie, you never told me you couldn't see." "Well, ah, ah, ah, um, um, um"! [laughs] I just felt horrible! I wish I had known. [Site IV-V, music teacher]

Despite the existence of Department of Education, Nova Scotia Teachers Union and school board guidelines outlining the teacher's role in planning for the integration of handicapped students, such procedures were not apparent at any of the five sites.

Itinerant teachers, as well, frequently expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of input and preparation teachers and they, themselves, had in meeting the needs of the visually impaired child. The following excerpt is typical of the situations itinerant teachers reported facing in their attempts to coordinate services for the integrated child.

I: What involvement have you had in the class placement of Charles and Jamie, from year to year?

R: Um..ah, for Charles..actually very little, well, ah, some, but very, very insignificant, other than trying to talk to the principal and to the teacher so, possibly who Charles may have and what their approach, or who each student may have and what their approaches are, the size of the class, etc.

I: Umhmm.

R: You know, but I found it very difficult in that school, to get an answer, or to get, actually, any concern. Any real concern, at the end of one year going into the next year, who was going to get the student. Because ah, you know, basically deal with the, maybe the class size or which

teacher would be willing to accept him or, whatever, but, it was hard, it was hard to get a consensus.

I: Umhmm.

R: For both students. Last year, on who the next year's teacher was going to be. I, and, I don't think we actually knew, until, oh, no, we knew last year, I think it was the end of last year, but it was at the bitter end.

I: Yeah.

R: You know, almost the last day of school before I had an idea. And that way it makes a problem with ordering text books, what materials are going to be used, and, but ah, you can only do so much. You go to the principal, and you ask and you're interested and you try to give your reasons, but, ah, I feel that, there's been, lack or part..lack of ah..what's the word I'm looking for? Support, or concern of the principal, on that issue. [Site IV-V, itinerant teacher]

The lack of coordination or a team approach to the integration of the visually impaired student appeared to have a detrimental effect upon their social acceptance and interaction. Itinerant teachers who were only present in the school at specific times had little opportunity to observe the social skills of the visually impaired child on the playground or during "freetime" in the classroom, and therefore, were not particularly aware of this aspect of the child's school life. When a child had mannerisms which interfered with interaction with others, teachers had not developed uniform, if any, strategies for dealing with these. When a child had mastered a skill in the classroom, other teachers, unaware of the change in performance, continued to provide support the child no longer needed. This lack of a team approach was evident at all five sites. Therefore, lack of knowledge, insight and input from educators could be seen to have a negative influence upon the social environment evolving around the integrated visually impaired student.

### Education Assumption 5 (Programs not Adapted)

Teachers ought not to adapt their programs to accommodate the integrated visually impaired student but should encourage her/him to participate in school activities as much as possible.

One of the most frequently reported fears of teachers upon learning they had been assigned a visually impaired student was that they would have to change their program. In this study teachers were not observed to change their programs or, in the majority of cases, significantly adjust their presentation of material or information to accommodate the visually impaired student. In some instances this was because the teacher was not aware of the visual abilities of the child. For example, at one site the visually impaired child would sit through films without understanding much of the content because he was not given verbal information about what was on the screen. However, in the majority of cases teachers seemed to perceive their first obligation to be to the fully sighted children in their classrooms and seemed to feel they would be denying these children should they alter or adapt the program to make it more accessible to the visually impaired child. For example, in the following excerpt the classroom teacher insisted on using the chalkboard to present lessons but did not adapt the approach to allow the blind child similar access to information as was provided sighted students.

I: What are the disadvantages for a teacher having an integrated blind student?

R: Ah..disadvantages, ah..little things, like when I put things on the board.

I: Umm.

R: Okay, when I put things on the board, say even the lessons. Okay, I'm putting it down for my children to see, to read, and I'm talking about it. Meanwhile, Tony is

asking me, "How do you spell that, Mrs. Fraser?" So do you stop to help one, or you say, "Just a minute Tony?" Which one do you put on the side? Ah, another thing might be, a..oh, yes, because of the apparatus he has, it does make a noise. Okay, when I'm doing mental math and I want things to move along, it just seems forever just to even get the, number one done. You know, and it still..ah, but they're just little things that are like other things, I mean, after a while you use to work around it..and try not to let it interfere. Like now, today, when I put the lessons down, I think he might have called out, "How do you spell the word "library"?" Well, as soon as he did that one of the kids, Virginia, came over and said, "Do you want me to take my spelling book over and help him?" [Site III, classroom teacher]

To provide access to the information for the blind student the teacher could have spelled aloud as she wrote words on the board or had the blind child tape the notes--minor adjustments but a definite change to the technique routinely used. However, more importantly, this excerpt suggests two significant considerations confirmed in many other instances during interviews and observations. First, visually impaired students were expected to "get what they could" from lessons presented to the class as a whole. Second, Tony is not considered to be "one of my students" but one who has been granted a special privilege by being enrolled in a regular classroom.

As teachers talked about having the visually impaired child in their classroom there was a sense that they felt they should "do as much as possible" to accommodate the child but it was beyond their responsibility to make major adaptations or to individualize instruction for the student. The tensions and contradictions evident in "teachers' talk" are important to note as they reflect the confusion and complexities inherent in the integration of visually impaired students.



The following excerpts are examples of situations which were routinely observed and/or reported during the study.

[Excerpt 1]

Mr. Coates presents a health lesson. The students are given a worksheet with many small pictures and instructed to find 5 things which would cause fires and 5 which could cause falls. Peter has a lot of trouble finding these because of the small pictures and struggles through asking what certain things are and if this is supposed to be such and such. He really has to work hard just to get the information to do this activity which is a simple task for the other students. I notice the children often share their colouring of their pictures with other classmates, showing how they gave this one a punk haircut or certain coloured shirt, etc. Peter has no time for socializing. He works away diligently trying to finish but, as usual, he doesn't finish and has to take it home for homework. [Site I, observation notes]

[Excerpt 2]

I: What were your feelings when you first learned you would be having a visually impaired child in your class?

R: I was a little worried, I was a little worried that I would have to change my program and do special things just for that one child because I felt that I was taking things away from other children..and having to spend special time with her. I thought that I would have to go out and buy all new equipment, the balls with the bells in them, and putting mats around the walls, and all this other..I'll use the expression foolishness. But ah, to my surprise, because of Lisa's personality, I, I've, like I mentioned to you before, I do not treat her any [emphasizes "any"] different than any other child. [Site II, physical education teacher]

[Excerpt 3]

The children run to their spots in the gym. Tony's attendant isn't there yet and he sits by the stage near Melissa. The teacher asks, "Tony, where are you suppose to be?" Tony is still by the stage after she has asked the students to go to their places. [There are no areas with tactile markings which would indicate to Tony that he was in his assigned spot.] He replies, "I don't know." His classmates tell the teacher where he is supposed to be and she walks him over to his spot. Today the teacher introduces the children to the game of dodge ball. She explains the rules and emphasizes all the things she doesn't want them to do (e.g. throw the ball overhand, bump into people, cheat, etc.). She tells them when she holds her hand "like this" it means to be quiet. Tony cannot see this. When she does this there is to be no talking, no moving, and if you have a ball you hold it still. She says,

"I don't want you running into anyone like Virginia, or Tony, or Jeffrey (boy in wheelchair in one of the other grade three classes) or Adam." Then she explains why the ball must be kept low. "Jeffrey, as you all know, is down pretty low." She continues to lecture in a yelling voice for several minutes then following an explanation of the rules and the lines which they must use for borders, two teams are chosen. Tony is not shown any of the lines and they have no tactile markings. She chooses 4 girls to go on one side and then four on the other. The boys are then placed on one of two sides. Through all this Tony has his head down resting on his arm which is resting on his knee and he is pressing on his eye. His attendant who has joined him ignores this behaviour. As they are getting ready to start, Trevor who is walking backwards trips over Tony and lands on him. The teacher tells him to look where he is going and pay attention. He looks worried and is quick to apologize to Tony. The attendant hugs Tony from behind and has her arms around him. She holds both of Tony's hands the way you might with a primary or preschool child. Tony is not told which side he is to play on so the attendant takes him to the first side they come to and they choose a spot. Each side has two balls and they bowl them at their opponents who face them on the other side of the centre line. The object of the game is to hit another student with the ball. They are then "out." The gymnasium is filled with the screams and laughter of children as the game begins. The noise level is deafening. [Site III, observation notes]

[Excerpt 4]

The children go to music next and sit in assigned seats. At first Jamie is sitting between Ashley and Kevin but the music teacher has changed the seating arrangements. She says, "Jamie, you're suppose to be back there," indicating the back row. Jamie tells her he can't see from back there and she comments this must be an outdated list because that was changed. Jamie asks, "Are you going to be able to change me?" She does and he now sits between Morgan and Michelle and says, "Oh, no! Now I have to sit between two girls." David makes a similar complaint. Jamie puts his head in his hand and seems almost tickled about this new arrangement. The teacher has them echo some beats which she claps out and then shows them some patterns written on a piece of chart paper taped to the board approximately 15 feet from where Jamie is sitting. He immediately moves up to the board and kneels on one knee to watch her demonstration. Next she says she'll show them some flashcards. Jamie tells her, "I can't see it." She holds it near him but it is a light orange shade and he tells her he can't see that colour. She tells him she is glad he told her about that and she won't use it again. When she shows

the next flashcard she walks away to another area of the room and Jamie has to tell her again, "I can't see it." Michelle also tells the teacher Jamie can't see and as the cards change asks Jamie if he can see each one. After Michelle repeats this question several times, Kevin, who is sitting beside her, tells her to shut up. Jamie seems a little frustrated and sits quietly, not participating for a few minutes. The children are told to turn to page 38 in their music books and as Jamie holds the book to his face the teacher says, "Oh, Jamie, I don't know if you can see that. I'll try to remember to make it larger. I didn't realize it was so small." Jamie doesn't comment but tries to follow along as best he can. He isn't able to read the words as they sing and must rely on his memory for the words of the song. [Site IV, observation notes]

[Excerpt 5]

I: When Charles needs help in school or on the playground, what does he do?

R: ..Ah, I usually see it or have seen it in the past and go up to him and just encourage him and ah, we've been very honest about his disability. Ah, I spent a long time with him ah, last year, believe it or not, hitting badminton shuttles back and forth.

I: Umhmm.

R: And he knows he has a problem and I know he has a problem and he just does the best he can and he accepts what little success he ah, he has. And it's worked out very well.

[Later in the interview]

I: Charles' posture and his toes pointing out, is there anything we can do about that physically?

R: I can't and in fact the phy. ed. teacher from the school for the blind came here three or four years ago and was really upset about that. And if I were to work on that then that would make Charles stand out. And the only way you could work on it, in, in the integrated situation would be to make him feel inferior or different. But that's the way he is, you know, Byron had a club foot, that's the way it is. And so, just a matter of accepting Charles for what he is and ah, I assume that his posture ah, his deviant posture is due to the fact that he's adjusting visually, so big deal. [Site IV-V, physical education teacher]

The inadequacy or absence of teachers' accommodation for the learning needs or styles of the visually impaired student had apparent negative effects upon the child's social development. As illustrated in the above excerpts, the visually impaired student who had to struggle to

see visual material did not have as much opportunity to socialize or enjoy such activities with his classmates. The level of competence was noticeably inferior for the visually impaired child when no accommodations were made to enhance her/his performance during lessons and activities. Thus, classmates perceived the visually impaired student as incompetent and dependent.

The perception by teachers that adjusting a child's program emphasized the visual impairment was discussed in Chapter 8. However, teachers also seemed reluctant to provide individualized instruction or to realize that the programs which would accommodate the visually impaired child or remediate a difficulty would be appropriate for other students. The fact that these might not be "part of the curriculum" seemed to be a major deterrent for teachers. One teacher summed it up as follows:

You just kinda take the student [the visually impaired child] as they are and do what you can with her and you have to let it go at that. I'm not a magician. [Site II, music teacher]

As discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, visually impaired children and their classmates interpreted and negotiated meanings related to competence, friendship, and social relationships for themselves and others as they interacted in the context of their school environment. The messages from teachers and students germane to providing equal access to information for visually impaired students or adapting activities so this student could actively participate were less than subtle.

#### Education Assumption 6 (Affective Education Low Priority)

Educators ought not to consider affective education as a high priority goal for their students.

Despite the formal goal statements relevant to affective education in official Department of Education publications, the implementation of such goals was vague. The same publication which contended "values education should be an essential part of the total educational process" did not offer directions as to how this goal could be realized or provide specific curricular material for use. Curricula to develop identified academic and physical skills were clearly outlined and an array of curriculum guidelines were readily available. With the exception of a newly introduced junior high program in Nova Scotia, "Personal Development and Relationships," affective education was given only minor attention in some segments of the health program.

In his study designed to determine values associated with issues surrounding multiculturalism, Sullivan (1989) concluded that personal worth and competence, although recognized in school board level documents as an important goal of education, were not promoted through either curricular or professional development activities. The same low priority status for affective education was evident in this study.

At the elementary school level facets of affective education were difficult to detect. The health program, as mentioned, introduced some relevant topics such as interpersonal communication or friendship. However, at two sites health was not taught during the month of observation and at the other three sites the weekly scheduled lesson was cancelled on two of four occasions. In short, as an identifiable

subject, affective education did not exist in these schools. More importantly, it was not visible as an integral aspect of the learning environment.

Affective education should be an integrated part of the daily programs in schools, yet evidence of this more implicit approach to learning was also limited, more clearly in some classrooms than others. Report cards provided very limited information relevant to the social development of the child despite the fact that it appeared in the official statement of educational goals. Statements such as "completes work independently" or "cooperates with others" were the only visible reference to affective education apparent in school files at three of the five sites. For the visually impaired students in this study, social acceptance by peers was never mentioned in their files, report cards or on their Individualized Service Plans.

Although affective education as a component of the curriculum was not evident in the schools in this study, teachers and principals had to deal with children who displayed discipline problems. As well, during interviews teachers were able to identify as unpopular those children perceived as such by the students in their classes.

[Excerpt 1]

R: He's [the visually impaired student] just a fringe child. He's there. He's not really "out," he's not really "in." He's sort of an entity. He's there. When they come into his territory, then they react or interreact [sic] with him. When they're out of his territory, then they just don't even realize he's there. He doesn't have a group that really looks for him. He doesn't have any group that pushes him away either. Just somebody that's there. [Site I, geography teacher]

[Excerpt 2]

I: Who are your best students?

R: Wendell..Daniel..Matthew, definitely Matthew. Um.  
 [long pause] Michelle..I used to think was not very smart  
 and I find her very intelligent, very fast, but not accepted  
 by anybody, at all! I mean, Jamie doesn't have to worry.  
 Michelle has to worry far more than Jamie does. [Site IV,  
 music teacher]

[Excerpt 3]

I: What does Charles do to contribute to his social  
 acceptance?

R: [pause] Oh, I don't know.

I: What do you think he does which detracts from his social  
 acceptance?

R: ...You mean, words, actions, that sort of thing?

I: Umm.

R: Well..he can be outspoken, but then again all kids can.  
 Like yesterday, he was working with Brian, doing the  
 mealworm observation.

I: Umhmm.

R: And he kept saying about Brian's bad breath and so on.  
 Well, you know, as an adult, you know that, you've got to  
 grin and bear it.

I: Right.

R: You don't just, you know, come right out and say, "You  
 have bad breath." And, but Brian just seemed to take that  
 in his stride. He didn't, but I mean again, Brian's picked  
 on all the time. So, but it doesn't stop him from hanging  
 around with Charles. Or saying, you know, "Let's be  
 partners." But then again, Brian isn't accepted, really,  
 very well, by the others. So really, and neither is Justin.  
 So the three of them that, do..tend to be partners and hang  
 around together, all three are different..from the others.

[Site V, classroom teacher]

Teachers were aware of children who were cruelly rejected by their  
 peers, and yet these children were provided little, if any assistance in  
 coping with this situation. In the third excerpt above, the teacher  
 took no action in response to Charles' public comments about Brian's bad  
 breath. By ignoring it, it could be argued, she condoned it. During  
 interviews with teachers it became apparent that they felt helpless to  
 address these situations as is illustrated in the following excerpt.

I: In your teaching experience, have you experienced  
 rejected children?

R: Yes, I've taught children who have been rejected. Not  
 because they had any noticeable handicap or by an adult, but

were rejected by other children. It's a really hard situation.

I: I'm wondering, can you tell me about the experience you've had with a rejected child, from the point of view of teachers.

R: Well, I'll have to think now. Well, there's one particular girl, I'll sort of think of her because she was very much rejected by the class. Ah, she was a rather dominating child, quite aggressive, said things that she couldn't think, that she didn't think ahead of how the other person she, she had no capacity to see how the other person would think. And so the children, by the time I had her in grade 5 or grade 6, just would not associate. And I think this, had, you know, had gone on for many years. But it, it was very difficult in that, you would want to be very kind to her and ah, try to protect her some. But ah, then that sort of set up a situation with the class where there she was being more special. You know, the teachers are doing this for her when they wouldn't do it for us. And the more, now I don't know with little people, but the more you corrected them, it seemed the worse the situation would get. Because then they were being scolded and it was this person's fault, sort of thing. Or they were being told, that, you know, they should do something. And it was very hard, because the child certainly had some, you know, her, her capacity to feel for other people was 't that great and she needed more help in that way. And ah, it was hard to get, to find things that she could do that the other children would really accept. And ah, I don't think we were all that successful. I don't think schools really are, because I know the child even today, in grade 9 or 10, is still very much a reject, that lonely person. You can only help, I guess, once you're out of the school system in large groups of people, that maybe, but there..you always think there should be something we could do within the system, but there doesn't seem to be, you know, when you're practical and look at it. It, it doesn't seem to work. I mean there are lots of other problems that we can think of that, you know, we really don't cure, you know, if we're honest about it. Ah, but it was ah, very difficult, ah, to have a child like that. [Site II, classroom teacher]

While most teachers did not identify affective education as a need within the school system, all of the itinerant teachers were painfully aware of the effect of its absence upon the acceptance of the visually impaired student. The following excerpt from an interview with an itinerant teacher exemplifies the concern held by this group.



I: Before we end the interview, is there anything you would like to add to what we have discussed?

R: [pause] I think we're dealing, in your research, dealing with an extremely important issue. But I think schools have to be prepared, and teachers have to be trained, to have the skills to be able to promote this. Ah, ah, promote social integration and social acceptance. Ah, I don't think it can be done with a two day inservice or one day a year or a one week workshop. I think it's an ongoing thing, that schools are going to have to decide, is this going to be our goal for this year, to develop skills through our staff meetings, inservices, or courses, to promote the acceptance of all children, whether they're handicapped or not. Because there are just as many children there without a visual handicap, that aren't accepted kids. Whether for cultural reasons, or background reasons. And whether we consciously or subconsciously discriminate, there are some children isolated that don't have a visual impairment or a hearing impairment or another difficulty. That concerns me, as well.

I: Umhmm.

R: But I think, I may be on a soap box here, but I think the school system or even individual schools must decide, is this a priority? And if it is, then let's give our teachers the skills to be able to do it. Some people who will do it incidentally. And won't need formal things, but, formal activities or skills, but. I think if you have those skills, it makes the incidental promotion of social integration, more likely. [Site II, itinerant teacher]

The perception that affective education must be an integrated goal of education, and yet, have specific objectives with a structured approach is evident in this teacher's comments. Absent within the five sites observed in this study, a hostile social environment for both the integrated visually impaired student and unpopular children frequently evolved.

#### Education Assumption 7 (Friendships Irrelevant to Placement)

Children's friendships ought not to be considered relevant in assessing and addressing a student's educational needs or placement.

The visually impaired students' friendships were not an issue spontaneously mentioned by any of the adults interviewed nor had they

been identified by either parents or teachers as cause for concern. Even for the two visually impaired students who were observed to have few, if any friends, peer relationships did not appear to be a concern. Neither parents nor teachers made a concerted effort to assess the visually impaired child's behaviour on the playground. In fact, with the exception of the mother who worked as a playground supervisor, observation of the visually impaired child on the playground was a rare occurrence.

As with affective education in general, children's friendships appeared to be of little concern to educators. When children were assigned to classes, placements were based upon creating a mixed group of children by ability or separating students perceived to be "a bad influence" upon one another. This observation concurs with findings of research addressing the issue of classroom control (Hammersley & Woods, 1976; Mehan, 1978; Woods, 1980b; Woods, 1983). Thus, class assignments appeared to address the teacher's need for control rather than to enhance the positive relationships or existing friendships of children. Following is the typical response received from principals as they discussed the procedure for making up classes.

I: How do you make those decisions [class placement]?

R: We make those decisions, ah, every spring. At that point in the year we have..the PID file ["Pupils in Difficulty," a file on students who have had reoccurring discipline problems] has almost run its course. We're in a position to evaluate then the additional things that we've done to assist the kid in learning. We tend to break up unacceptable relationships deliberately. We do that every year. That's..that's the primary thing that we do.

I: Can you give me an example of what you would consider an unacceptable relationship?

R: Oh, yeah. We've got a class of..well, let's take the two classes of twenty-four, with about fifty percent learning difficulties. And learning difficulty tends to be

exhibited in the unacceptable behaviour. Okay. And try in..when you get that higher proportion, and you're getting kids feeding off of one another.. that's what we intend to break. Okay? Simply to create a better learning environment. So that would be the kind of thing. But we examine every..we said we do not pass a class from teacher to teacher. I've been in schools where that's been done. You know. Just pass them from teacher to teacher. We don't. We spend a lot of time examining the structure of the class, how well it learns, how well it doesn't learn. And try to match those kids up with the proper kind of environment. And I guess that's the only criteria we stick to, is trying to break up unacceptable relationships, with kids feeding off of one another. [Site IV-V, principal]

Therefore, academic and behavioral criteria were the basis for class assignments--not the maintenance or promotion of student friendships or class groupings which would enhance the acceptance of children considered to be at risk socially. When visually impaired students were known by teachers to have particular friends, these relationships were not supported by placing both students in the same class. Jamie, Tony and Peter, each reported their "best friend" had been placed in a different class this year. The decision to place Justin, Charles' best friend, in a Special Education class in the morning gave no consideration to the effect on the social interaction or relationships of either boy. For the most part, students' friendships were perceived by adults to be outside the "business of education."

#### Education Assumption 8 (Different Expectations)

Expectations relevant to the social, cognitive and physical achievement of integrated visually impaired students ought to be lower than those for their classmates.

Expectations related to a variety of areas (e.g. acceptance by peers, academic performance, independent travel skills) were both intentionally and spontaneously discussed during the interviews and

observational period in this study. For the most part, both children and adults had lower expectations for the performance of integrated visually impaired children than for their classmates. Socially, as exemplified in the following excerpts, visually impaired children were expected to be somewhat isolated and teased.

[Excerpt 1]

I: What can we do in our elementary schools to increase the chances of visually impaired kids fitting in socially?

R: Well, first of all we can realize that they're always going to be more on the fringe than in the centre. That's not a bad place to be. I was on the fringe, weren't you? I survived. [Site I, principal]

[Excerpt 2]

I: What relationship do you feel his behaviour has to his visual impairment or his social interaction has to his visual impairment?

R: You mean like as far as being quiet, sort of thing, or to himself?

I: Umhmm.

R: Just...in a way, to me, when I see him in the playground, he reminds me of a little loner because he just can't participate and can't mingle with the kids they way he would want to. [Site I, classroom teacher]

[Excerpt 3]

R: I mentioned to my mom one day that I had a boy in my class with vision problems and she was asking me questions like, "Do people tease him?" and that, and I said, "Yeah." And she said that she don't think it's right cuz just cuz he's just a tiny bit different than us, it's just that he can't see. [Site V, classmate]

Expectations were also limited in relation to the visually impaired student's physical skills.

[Excerpt 1]

I: How about on the playground? What does he do there?

R: He can't play baseball. He wouldn't be able to see where the ball's coming...or skipping or hopscotch, he wouldn't be able to do that. But climbing on the monkey bars, he might be a little difficult to swing back and you might miss a bar or fall cuz he can't see where the bars are. But he can run through them and climb up them a little bit, but not swing right across. [Site I, Matthew]

[Excerpt 2]

R: I really don't find it that hard to work with him, Tony. Maybe, you know, I'm not saying I'm doing all for him that I can. I'm sure I'm not. But I feel he fits in and he, he's doing quite well and I'm not, I'm not disappointed in what he's doing or ah, and I think I have fairly high expectations for him. I don't just consider him to be somebody that can't learn. I think he, I think he can learn to a degree but he's not going to be like a lot of kids.  
[Site III, physical education teacher]

[Excerpt 3]

I: What have you learned from your experience of having a visually impaired pupil enrolled in your class?  
R: ...[sigh] Um..there's, you mean..Charles's very capable. Ah, it amazes me how he gets around. I would like someone to, to show me, to put a pair of glasses on me or something. To, to simulate the sight that he has. Just so I could understand better..what he goes through. I mean, I was saying to you the other day, "Him, jumping down those stairs!" Did he know he was going to land on the landing? Did, or..did he think he was going to land on a stair? You know? [Site V, classroom teacher]

This sense of reduced or inappropriate expectations for the integrated visually impaired student seemed almost inherent to the five sites. It was implicit in everyday activities within the school setting. Following are a variety of excerpts which are typical of the responses and observations associated with expectations of integrated visually impaired students.

[Excerpt 1]

R: Well some people say you, that, you're dumb, cuz you're blind or some things like that, like you're dumb cuz you're blind, you're really dumb, can't do nothing at all, like you're stupid and they make up little silly jokes about them like, stuff like that. It's not nice. [Site I, Paula]

[Excerpt 2]

The substitute teacher and the class discuss the story they read yesterday in their readers. Mrs. Henry has the helpers for the week passing out the workbooks and tells the children to open to page 42. As Lisa sits waiting for her workbook, Mrs. Henry asks the class, "Does Lisa have a workbook, too?" [Site II, observation notes]

[Excerpt 3]

I: What do you see Peter doing as an adult?

R: Gee, I don't know. Well, there's lots of things he can't do, like medicine, ah, gee, that's a hard question. Let me think. It's been a long day. I'm having a hard time with this one. He'll have to do something. Peter's too smart to just do nothing. [pause] Gosh, he could probably...teach maybe, oh, there are so many career choices out there now I don't even know about. I guess he's limited to a lot of things, there must be something he'll be able to do. I can't really think of anything right now. That's a hard question. [Site I, music teacher]

[Excerpt 4]

I: Describe Lisa's acceptance by other children in the school.

R: Well, as far as I know, and it sort of surprises me, they don't seem to pick on her very much, or ah, you know, she doesn't seem to be sort of cut off because she can't participate maybe as well in some things. [Site II, music teacher]

[Excerpt 5]

I: What specific problems and rewards has the integration of a visually impaired child had for you?

R: Um, I suppose I feel, uh, encouraged. Is that what you mean? That kind of thing?

I: Umm.

R: I feel encouraged by them. I think sometimes...I don't know how much they'll ever use French when they get out of school. That isn't really the point. The point is that they are learning something and they are keen and they want to learn more, and to me that's encouraging. [Site IV-V, French teacher]

As teachers, parents and classmates of integrated visually impaired children experienced the presence of this child, they developed perceptions and negotiated ways of responding to situations which were unfamiliar. Even amidst obvious displays of competent performances by visually impaired children, appropriate expectations for these children were frequently absent. Both adults and classmates appeared to hold lower expectations for the performance of integrated visually impaired students than for their classmates, in most situations. For visually impaired students, these negative messages, both explicit and implicit,

were encountered daily as they interacted in the home and school. Furthermore, as outlined in Chapter 6, visually impaired children had come to perceive themselves as less competent, more dependent and less desirable as a friend than were their classmates.

#### Contextual Variables Contributing to or Detracting From Acceptance of Integrated Visually Impaired Pupils

During the process of this study it became apparent that the acceptance of integrated visually impaired children was a multifaceted phenomenon. There were conceivably hundreds of aspects of the situation which appeared to influence, either positively or negatively, the perceptions constructed by fully sighted individuals, and the degree to which visually impaired children were accepted by their peers. Each site appeared to have contextual aspects contributing to unique circumstances within the specific site (e.g. the congestion of the playground and resulting safety factors for the visually impaired child). From a multi-site perspective there were variables which appeared to be common to all sites (e.g. the expectation that children who were different from their peers would be less acceptable to their classmates). Other times, a variable which appeared to be particularly potent at one site was sometimes, in a different contextual environment, unremarkable. The complexity of social activity at the elementary school level seemed to preclude the possibility of ever isolating a single variable to the extent that it could be examined in isolation from its specific context as a positive or negative influence. It was apparent that through the dynamic process of interaction participants

constructed their realities, interpreted one another and negotiated shared meanings. The degree and intensity of a single variable seemed to fluctuate as an inextricably integrated aspect of a context.

Nonetheless, as participants interacted, some aspects of the context appeared to contribute to or detract from the acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired children. For example, if visually impaired children were generally unable to complete tasks within the assigned time, they had fewer opportunities to participate in the social interaction which routinely occurred among students as they completed one task and prepared for the next. When the visually impaired students were routinely unavailable to participate in such "between task socializing," they seemed to have difficulty joining in on occasions when they were available. Similarly, in classrooms where children were seated in group arrangements the frequency of interaction between the visually impaired child and group members was significantly higher than in those classrooms where students were sitting in rows at individual desks. As well, the degree of disability associated with the child's visually impairment could sometimes be either emphasized or minimized by aspects of the actual learning environment. For example, in a physical education class in which all students were expected to participate in a competitive team sport such as dodge ball, the limitations of the visually impaired child were emphasized and obtrusive. In a physical education class which promoted physical fitness through a multiplicity of activities encompassing a variety of skills and group formations, the limitations of the visually impaired child were frequently far less apparent.



There were other aspects of situational contexts which had a rather surprising relation to the degree of social acceptance experienced by the visually impaired student. In Hoben's (1979) study of the interaction of integrated visually impaired students, physical aggression such as hitting or making derogatory remarks about the visually impaired child were viewed as evidence of lack of acceptance or negative interaction with the visually impaired student. In this study, the two visually impaired students who were most frequently the recipients of aggressive actions, both verbal and physical, were the same two students who were most accepted by their classmates on the playground. Since such behaviour seems characteristic of the rough and tumble pupil culture on elementary school playgrounds, some aggressive interaction was a consequence of active involvement or inclusion. The following excerpts, two from classmates of the more accepted visually impaired children and two from classmates of the less accepted visually impaired children, illustrate the different responses of peers relevant to such behaviour. The children were responding to the question, "What would you do if you were playing with [the visually impaired child] and he/she hit you on purpose?"

[Excerpt 1]

R: Well...I would, I'd try to do it like any normal one, cuz, like...someone like Peter, you know, he's not just going to do it, like, to be a bully or something. You probably did something that really made him cross [emphasizes "really made him cross"] or offended him or something, so he had a reason for doing it..to you. Besides, it doesn't seem just right to hit a person that can't see very well or something..hit him back or something like that. That's a tricky question, like, you'd probably..most people would probably leave him just, alone.  
[Site 1, David]

[Excerpt 2]

R: Suppose Troy and Charles are playing and Charles hit Troy on purpose. What would Troy probably do?

I: Well, he wouldn't hit him back because, he would just say...he'd probably tell the teacher.

I: He wouldn't hit him back.

R: Because he's afraid something might happen or something, or, cuz, they just feel that way about, around Charles.

I: Oh, I see. What would you do?

R: Well, I wouldn't hit him back. I'd just, I'd just say, "Didn't hurt," and I'd just, just walk away, I guess. [Site V, Aaron]

[Excerpt 3]

R: I'd just go tell the teacher or I'd hit her very lightly and then I would go tell the teacher. Or say, "Lisa, I hit you." [in a teasing voice] And then she'd say, "No you didn't." I'd say, "Yes I did," and then I'd get her all going, and, and, then when she starts to get really mad and then I can go and run and tell the teacher because, cuz before then she wouldn't notice if I just go and tell her.

I: So it's important for her to notice that you go and tell.

R: Yes, I would. [Site II, Megan]

[Excerpt 4]

I: Suppose ah, Jamie and Lee were playing and Jamie hit Lee. What would Lee probably do?

R: Lee would beat him up.

I: Okay. What would you do?

R: I'd beat him up. [Site IV, Daniel]

In this study, the willingness of the visually impaired child's classmates to reciprocate both positive and negative actions appeared to be one indicator of the degree of acceptance being experienced by the integrated student. Within the specific context of pupil culture on the playground, as discussed in Chapter 5, reciprocation was a negotiated rule.

There were clearly a multiplicity of contextual issues at play as integrated visually impaired students interacted with their classmates. Some of these have been discussed previously as they were germane to other identified themes. Others arose as attention was focused on the

overt and covert behaviours of participants within the social context of the elementary school. To facilitate discussion of such contextual issues, they are grouped into categories primarily relevant to the visually impaired student, classmates of the visually impaired student, teachers, classroom environments, administrative arrangements, and the structure of playgrounds.

The five visually impaired children in this study varied in age, gender, physical attractiveness, social competence, physical agility, maturity in relation to peers, personality (e.g. extrovert, assertive, sense of humour, friendliness, self-esteem), openness to discuss visual impairment, academic performance, level of independence, commitment to the peer group and in a multiplicity of other ways. These characteristics of the children, captured at this point in time, could be seen to contribute to or detract from their social acceptance and interaction with peers. For example, the extroverted child who routinely participated in group discussions was more readily included in classroom activities and sought out for a partner than was the boy who frequently sat by himself, head drooping, and infrequently contributing to class discussions. As the study progressed, it was evident that the social acceptance of integrated students was not merely a function of being visually impaired or of the child's level of social competence, but a complex process inextricably part of the interaction and meanings constructed during the ongoing process of school life.

Just as visually impaired children in this study were perceived to represent a variety of characteristics, so were their classmates. There were children of different ages, gender, ethnic backgrounds, religious

affiliations, academic abilities, physical prowess, temperaments, socio-economic levels, etc. Some children appeared more committed to the rules of pupil culture than others. Some children appeared more willing to include the visually impaired child than others. For example, children who were self-confident and excelled in a variety of areas also appeared to be less threatened by accomplishments of the visually impaired student and less resentful of the special attention the disabled child was perceived to receive. As well, as children progressed toward the upper elementary grades, the visually impaired child appeared to become increasingly isolated from play groups characteristic of children of the same age and gender. Girls were, at every site, more tolerant and inclusive toward their visually impaired classmate, regardless of the visually impaired child's gender, than were boys.

Issues relevant to the teachers of the integrated visually impaired student were also perceived to have positive and negative influence upon the degree of social acceptance and interaction. As discussed earlier in the chapter, some teachers were more committed to the process of individualized instruction or accommodating a variety of learning needs than were others. Teachers varied in the degree to which they were supportive of integration, to which they were willing to accommodate certain disabilities, to which they were able to adjust the program for the child rather than vice versa, to which they were willing to undertake the additional work associated with accommodating a visually impaired student, to which they were comfortable having other adults (e.g. teacher assistants or student aides) in their classroom,

and to which they could incorporate new teaching strategies to enhance the performance of the visually impaired pupil. Teacher empathy was, across all sites, an aspect of the context which appeared to contribute to a positive school environment for integrated visually impaired children. As Morse et al. (1980) assert:

Teacher empathy is the core skill that underlies special teaching . . . empathy goes far beyond the verbal exchange and is reflected in how the teacher manages instruction, organizes the school environment, responds to the feelings of the pupils, and is able to be calm, warm and show affection. We all went through the age processes [sic], but, frequently we have lost the capacity to reactivate the pupil's view in ourselves. (p. 20)

A fourth category of contextual variables were those associated with the organization and physical layout of the classroom, as well as the learning environment created within it. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, certain group seating arrangements increased the frequency of interaction and inclusion of the visually impaired student. As well, such factors as class size, the strictness relative to communication within the classroom, the type of arrangements developed to assist the visually impaired student (e.g. "pull-out" to the resource room, individual or small group instruction within the classroom, frequent assignment of a teacher assistant to complete the activity with the child) also appeared to contribute to the degree of acceptance extended and frequency of interaction available to the visually impaired student. When the visually impaired child was removed from the class to receive special instruction, classmates were frequently suspicious of or curious about these private tutorial lessons. Even teachers tended to renounce responsibility for the student's learning while he/she was absent from the class. As with the other categories of contextual issues, single

variables were impossible to isolate and hold responsible for any significant degree of acceptance or rejection of a student. However, each aspect of the context, inextricably linked with hundreds of others within the environment and the interaction of its participants appeared to have varying degrees of relevance as people interpreted and responded to the social acceptance and interaction of the integrated visually impaired student.

At two of the five sites, some emphasis was placed on a cooperative as opposed to a competitive learning environment. The latter characterized, to varying degrees, the other three sites. As the focus of both education and research related to integration of the handicapped has been on the acceptance of handicapped children by their nonhandicapped peers, teachers, and administrators (Gall, 1987; Gresham, 1983), programs which specifically promote the acceptance and active participation of handicapped pupils in both the social and the academic life of the school are becoming more prominent. One area of research which appears to provide some potential for effectively addressing some of the social integration difficulties experienced by the handicapped concerns the use of co-operative group learning. Extensive research suggests that co-operative as compared with individualistic and competitive learning practices result in and promote higher self-esteem for both handicapped and nonhandicapped students (Johnson & Johnson, 1984):

In a cooperative learning situation, student goal attainments are positively correlated and students coordinate their actions to achieve their mutual goals. Students can achieve a learning goal if and only if the classmates with whom they are cooperatively linked also achieve their learning goals. In a competitive learning situation, student goal attainments are negatively

correlated; students can obtain their goals only if the other students with whom they are competitively linked fail to obtain their learning goals. In an individualistic learning situation, the goal achievement of each student is unrelated to the goal attainment of others; there is no correlation among student goal attainments. Success is contingent on individual performance, irrespective of the quality of others' performances. These three types of goal interdependence create different patterns of interaction among students which, in turn, create positive attitudes toward acceptance of classmates, regardless of their handicaps, or negative attitudes toward and rejection of handicapped peers. (p. 125)

Thus, integration in a co-operative learning environment is considered as an effort to realize the "positive acceptance of differences."

In this study, classrooms which promoted more cooperative approaches to learning were also those which increased the opportunities for social interaction of the integrated visually impaired student. They provided greater opportunities to demonstrate the abilities of this student and minimized the emphasis on the disability and its restrictions which were frequently emphasized in a competitive environment. In an integrated setting, if peer relationships are to be a constructive influence:

they must promote feelings of belonging, acceptance, support, and caring, as opposed to feelings of rejection, abandonment, and alienation. (Johnson & Johnson, 1984, p. 91)

There were many issues associated with administrative aspects of the school, in general, and the administration of integration, in particular, which appeared to influence the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired children. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the absence of a team approach to integration frequently resulted in inconsistency in both programming and behaviour toward the integrated child. The implications of this were particularly evident when staff themselves were isolated within the school. In the

following excerpt the potential for having a negative learning atmosphere for the integrated child is obvious.

I: What do you think is the feeling of staff of this school, in general, to having a visually impaired child in their class?

R: I don't know. I don't communicate too much with the staff. I have no idea.

I: What do you see as the teacher's role in the social integration of a visually impaired student?

R: I just do it the same as with any other child. I put socialization before the physical education. And ah..I just ah, let it flow, let it evolve, let it happen. But if I see a child, ah, it doesn't happen now because Charles and Jamie are both so well accepted, but earlier when a child would be reluctant because of their own immaturity or understanding, I would take that child aside and lay it on the line.

I: Umhmm.

R: That they'd better ah, be nice, which is the term I use over and over again, be nice, be nice. So in that particular case, because I wouldn't do it in front of the whole class, say, "Be nice to Charles." I wouldn't say that to the whole class.

I: Umhmm.

R: But ah, on a one to one basis I would say to a particular staff, ah, to a particular child, who ah, just didn't understand that they should not reject Charles or Jamie because of ah, their problem...

I: What about the principal's role in the social integration of students?

R: ..Again I don't have much of an idea. I don't deal much with the principal. I just sort of go and do my own thing. [Site IV-V, physical education teacher]

It is clear there is a need for integration to be addressed as a school issue, as an innovation to education which required preparation of teachers, as an approach to learning which necessitated a team effort, as a process which had serious implications for the mental health and affective development of integrated children, and as a process which had the potential to enhance the learning environment for all children. Such documents as the Nova Scotia Teachers Union Policy Statement on Mainstreaming (1987), provide evidence that at some levels there exists an awareness of both the philosophical and pragmatic procedures for and implications of successful mainstreaming (see Appendix D for a copy of



this policy statement). However, many of the components associated with successful mainstreaming identified by such documents were absent from the sites in this study.

The leadership role of the principal in creating a climate conducive to the social integration of disabled students, although acknowledged by the three principals interviewed, was not visible in the day to day functioning of the school. While all of the itinerant teachers for the visually impaired expressed the importance of this role for the principal, only 3 of the 18 school based teachers suggested such a role for principals. The staff at the five sites had not been involved in the development of school level policy or plans for integration nor had the majority of them been exposed to either the philosophical or pragmatic issues inherent within the concept of integration. These were some of the administrative issues which were conceived to influence the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired children.

The final category of contextual issues influencing the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired children are those associated with the structure of the playground. As discussed in Chapter 5, there were aspects of pupil culture which had immediate consequences for the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students. For example, children had to have a certain level of competence to be included in a specific activity. Other variables observed to influence the inclusion of integrated students were such things as the safety of the playground for a visually impaired student, the type and variety of activities accessible to this student,

the time spent on the playground, and the size and layout of the playground. Common to all sites was the lack of a variety of playground activities which provided the visually impaired student an equitable opportunity for participation.

As with contextual issues in other categories, the same factor which exerted a positive influence in one situation might have a negative effect upon the inclusion of an integrated student in another. For example, at Site I the visually impaired student spent the greater part of his playground time sitting on the swings which were off to one side of the playground. At Sites IV-V, where there was no playground equipment, there were always children gathered in groups at one end of the school. This second situation would have probably enhanced the level of social interaction for the Site I child who had well developed conversational skills but poor mobility skills. On his own congested playground with several climbing apparatuses beyond his physical abilities and safety hazards imposed by the baseball game which routinely took place in the middle of the playground, opportunities for social interaction were limited to those times when children came to play on the swings. Thus, the context of the playground also held potential for both the inclusion and exclusion of the integrated visually impaired pupil.

### Conclusion

This chapter has examined broad sociological and historical processes such as integration, affective education and the stigma of visual impairment, as well as specific, situational variables such as

administrative leadership, pupil attributes and aspects of the learning environment. From this, it is evident that these social aspects could function in a variety of ways to constrain and/or enable the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students. Although variables could not be isolated from their dynamic contextual situations but were intrinsic to the ongoing process of interaction and interpretation of situations by site participants, they could be seen to structure, to various degrees, the nature of the social environment encountered by the integrated visually impaired student.

As stated in subpurpose five of the study, the focus of this chapter was upon the social environment experienced by visually impaired students in an integrated setting. Based upon analysis of data from the research, it is apparent that in many respects visually impaired students face a potentially hostile social environment when integrated in regular classrooms. In the absence of specific training or adequate preparation for the integration of visually impaired students, classroom teachers struggle to address adequately even the basic academic needs of these students. This circumstance in conjunction with the minimal responsibility educators assume for the affective development of students, in general, shape a social environment which appears to blatantly ignore the obvious social interaction difficulties integrated visually impaired students encounter. Furthermore, without a formal, organized plan for implementation, evaluation and resulting adjustments to the integration process, or even a team approach at the school level, (i.e. a commitment to successful integration) educators are not aware, hence are not challenged, to address the numerous incompatible aspects

between existing school culture and the integration process. Thus, the social environment structuring the interaction among participants is one in which tensions, contradictions and dilemmas are routinely experienced.

Therefore, for the visually impaired student, the existing school culture created a potentially hostile environment. From both teachers and classmates, there was more a sense of tolerance than positive acceptance of difference evident with respect to the visually impaired pupil. Academically, visually impaired students routinely encountered barriers in accessing information (e.g. no braille textbook, demonstrations presented beyond their visual range). Socially, they were frequently ignored or avoided by many of their classmates on the playground and in the classroom. Physically, they struggled to participate in activities which too often were designed specifically to challenge the skills and talents of children with "20/20 acuity." Obviously, these three developmental aspects could not be isolated but were integrated within the complex and hectic social life of pupil culture in the classroom and on the playground. However, for the integrated visually impaired student, the messages received from this social environment were clear--visually impaired individuals were less competent, more difficult to play and work with, could participate in fewer activities, needed more assistance, and were less desirable as "best friends" than were fully sighted children.

However, as a multifaceted phenomenon, acceptance in various degrees could be negotiated by some visually impaired children in specific situations. When the variables enhancing social acceptance and

interaction (e.g. empathetic teacher, co-operative learning groups) outweighed constraining aspects (e.g. lack of appropriate program adaptation, competitive visual activities), visually impaired students participated competently, actively and enthusiastically.

Unquestionably, the potential for a supportive social environment for the integration of visually impaired students was evident.

Unfortunately, it was too often neglected amidst the more prominent, immediate and demanding events characteristic of elementary schools.

As suggested in the previous five chapters, dilemmas and contradictions were created as participants struggled to construct their meanings and initiate actions to cope with a new situation, that is, inclusion of visually impaired students in regular classrooms. In the next chapter, some of these contradictions, dilemmas and their complexities will be discussed.

## CHAPTER 10

### Contradictions, Dilemmas and Implications

#### Introduction

The previous chapters have presented and analysed data related to each of the five subpurposes identified as the central areas of inquiry for this study (see page 6). Now it is necessary to stand back and examine the material from a broader and more interrelated perspective. Therefore, in this chapter, the intent is to bring together some of the emerging themes in the research's exploration of the social environment of the integrated school setting and the acceptance and interaction between visually impaired students and their peers. The focus is upon the complex and sometimes unanticipated ways in which people respond to new circumstances within their environment.

This chapter has three themes. First, are contradictions which seem to be created within school situations when challenged to perform in ways which were frequently new to or incompatible with its present function. The second theme focuses upon some of the dilemmas which arose in relation to the social acceptance and interaction of visually impaired children as other people (children and adults) in elementary schools constructed meanings and adopted strategies to cope with these students. Finally, the third theme considers the implications these contradictions and dilemmas may have upon the beliefs constructed by the integrated visually impaired child and the potential for her/him to develop a positive self-concept within the given setting.

### The Contradictions

Inherent within the school setting is a culture which affects the behaviour of the participants and in doing so, its perception by the public (Deal, 1985). That is, a school's culture is reflected by its artifacts, values and basic assumptions. As discussed in Chapter 2, within this school culture are subcultures which evolve as groups come together on the basis of "physical proximity, shared fate, common occupation, common work experience, similar ethnic background, or similar rank" (Schein, 1985, p.39). Although some aspects of a culture are common to the subcultures of groups within the whole, there are also beliefs, values and assumptions which may be different from, or in some cases, in conflict with one another. For example, some aspects of pupil culture evolve as a defensive resource for pupils against teachers and other adults (Davies, 1982; Pollard, 1985; Woods, 1979).

The "essence" of a culture, that is, its basic assumptions, are present when a visually impaired student is enrolled in a given school and assigned to a specific classroom. Since visually impaired children have traditionally been educated in segregated schools for the blind, their enrollment in public schools can be seen to challenge the basic assumptions of existing school culture, hence, both teacher and pupil cultures. For example, one dimension in which basic underlying assumptions form within a cultural paradigm is the nature of reality and truth (Schein, 1985). This set of assumptions concerns what is real. Social reality is associated with those beliefs upon which a school staff or a pupil body agree. These beliefs are not externally testable as issues of physical reality are but, like other forms of constructed

reality, are a product of learning and based on such things as tradition (e.g. visually impaired children need to be educated in schools designed specifically for the blind with trained teachers and special equipment, books and materials) or pragmatic criteria (e.g. handicapped children cannot be evaluated in the same way as other students) (Schein, 1985). Since the basic assumptions which become part of a given school's culture are learned responses to a group's problems of internal integration and external adaptation (Schein, 1985), aspects within such dimensions as the nature of reality and truth, related to visually impaired children and their education, will be important considerations. Integration challenges the basic assumptions of elementary school culture--a "new shared experience begins the formation of a new culture" (Schein, 1985, p. 184). However, as this culture evolves contradictions will be evident.

A contradiction is a statement, belief or practice which is at variance, incompatible or inconsistent with the general circumstances within a given situation. In this study there were two significant contradictions, evident at all sites, which appeared to detract from the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students. Both were related to the incompatibility existing between the philosophical implications of integration and the cultural assumptions currently intrinsic to elementary schools. The first was related to how participants in the study perceived difference among children; the second was the contradiction evident between the concept of individualized programming and progress explicit to integration and the



basically competitive learning environments present in elementary classrooms.

The first contradiction is inherent to the assumption that to be different is undesirable. Herein lies the contradiction. Integration assumes the positive acceptance of difference while being "different" is incompatible with the established cultural assumptions of elementary schools. Most teachers and parents perceived their role in integration to be to assimilate the visually impaired students and "make them like the others." The perceptions associated with being different and the contradictions evident as adults and children spoke about this are illustrated in the following excerpts.

[Excerpt 1]

I: How does Tony think of himself in terms of his blindness?

R: ..I don't..he knows that he's different, but he's not as different as some kids. I really do think..he'll..I don't know..maybe he does feel different. It's hard to answer for somebody else. I don't think he feels he's different. I mean, there might be some days..like, if we have an off day..you know. But I don't think he..cuz we've never treated him...I've never treated him any different. That's hard to answer, because I can't speak for him. [Site III, parent]

[Excerpt 2]

I: What do her teachers do which contribute to or detract from her acceptance by peers?

R: To contribute to, um..they, I think they tend to involve her as much as they can, not to make her feel left out, ah, the detraction I think would be, her sometimes being singled out, her desk moved or..which are all things that I know cannot be helped. And like David [the itinerant teacher] said today about her printing being made into a larger book, you know, they are things which do tend to make other kids more aware of her problem, right? But which by rights there's really no other way to get around it. Her desk has to be moved up a little bit closer to the board, her printing has to be..reading has to be enlarged, and it's unfair but does tend to single her out and point to her disability more, you know. And I don't think there will ever be any way around that, you know, so..[Site II, parent]

[Excerpt 3]

I: Have you noticed other children in your class who seem to feel left out?

R: Adam [classmate], because everybody doesn't like him that much because he's..different.

I: Umhmm. How's Adam different?

R: Um, because he always wants to play while he's doing his work but the teacher won't let him so, ah, so the people try to tell him not to ah..tell him not to ah..not to worry about not doing nothing.

I: Okay. How else is Adam different?

R: Um..sometimes he likes to take a lot of breaks from the washroom and the fountain and then he hardly..and then it takes him a long time to come back cuz he just looks around and looks around till he's at the classroom.

I: Okay. What do kids think about that?

R: They think that he's ah, he's mean just because he's different. [Site III, classmate]

[Excerpt 4]

I: What do you see as the teacher's role in the social integration of a visually impaired student?

R: ..Well, I think one role is to, ah, more or less try and treat him or her just like everybody else. Cuz I think the more exceptions you make, ah, the differences are emphasized with kids. So I think it's best to just treat everybody the same.

I: Umm.

R: ..I think you have to give, I think you have to be prepared to, to, to do some extra..helping and so on. Ah..I think the most important part is more or less, treat everybody the same. [Site V, teacher]

Therefore, a conflict exists between both wanting the child not to be treated as different, yet having to treat the child differently, and in doing this, feeling "badly" about it. Thus, there is no evidence of difference being a positive aspect of a student. The positive acceptance of difference was neither routinely promoted nor enhanced in the elementary classrooms observed in this study. As illustrated in the above excerpt, being different was synonymous with being a "misfit."

Visually impaired children cannot escape their differentness nor can those who are physically or mentally disabled. Successful social integration assumes a climate of positive acceptance of difference which

was not prevalent in the schools in this study. Furthermore, a key tenet of teaching, that is, to attend to "individual differences" in instruction, was also a sporadic practice in all but the Site III classroom, where it was more apparent.

The differentness of visually impaired students challenged the basic assumptions of the existing school culture both in the classroom and on the playground. The differences in some of their social, cognitive and physical development needs were incompatible with the basic assumptions of school culture relevant to such things as the way teachers teach and the negotiated rules of group affiliation for students.

The second contradiction prominent during the study was associated with the fact that the goals of integration were incongruent with the predominately competitive learning environment of classrooms. Therefore, the second contradiction was between the stated intention of the visually impaired student to be able to progress at her/his own rate following an individualized educational program, and the pressure to compete for recognition through superior performance, regardless of the activity. In the elementary classrooms in this study, students struggled to be first--academically, athletically and socially. They were rewarded with stickers for reading the most books, by having their project chosen to be displayed or to go on to the provincial contest, by being assigned to be first in line, and, in short, for being the smartest, fastest, neatest, quietest, that is, "the best." These things were valued.

In the following excerpts the manner in which competition pervades the elementary school environment and the frustrations it creates for those who are not the top performers are apparent.

[Excerpt 1]

The students work away until it is almost time for gym. Mr. Coates hands out the spelling test from a previous week. He says, "Some of you did very well. A lot of the marks were in the 80s and 90s." He calls out the marks of those in this range as he gives them to each student. Children who did not score in this range are given their test without having their marks announced. They sit silently with their eyes glued to their desks. The children with marks over 80 hold up their papers and exchange information about their grades with the other children who have done well. [Site I, observation notes]

[Excerpt 2]

I: What are the advantages and disadvantages, for parents, of having a visually impaired child integrated in a regular classroom?

R: The advantage, you know, would be that they are being treated the same as other kids. You hope they are anyway. That they're being taught to realize, you know, that this is just an everyday thing. It is not a real problem, that you don't have to be with a special school or a special this or that just because of your vision. Disadvantage...that sometimes your child is not going to measure up to the other kids in the class. That the teacher will give them, you know, the benefit of the doubt and say the reason the printing is not as good is because she's visually impaired. You know, like, there was a time I even said to Mrs. Briggs and David [itinerant teacher], I said, "Why can't she get an 'A'?" You know, I said, "If she's doing her absolute best, why can't she get an 'A'?" Will she never in her lifetime get an "A"? Because you know, even her "B" is still not as good as some kids' work. But I said, "Why, if she's doing her absolute best?" And she did get an "A" second term, in a couple of things.

I: She did.

R: Yeah, but I, you know, felt looking at her work and I thought it's just as good or she tried just as hard as so and so did. You know. [Site II, parent]

[Excerpt 3]

In gym he's not, he can't play like they can, although he's rough and tumble and rough and ready and all that. But he doesn't have the skills, so that would detract from it [his acceptance] in that they probably don't want to be on his team. Nobody's ever said that, but I'm sure if they had the choice, most of them would choose..I mean basically you want to win. If you're forming a team you want to choose kids who are going to help you win. [Site III, itinerant teacher]

[Excerpt 4]

I: What do other teachers do to help Jamie?

R: Well, um, most of them..like, the French teacher, like, just..doesn't, like, get..like, she lets him sit up front, like, closer, like, she doesn't make him put his book down like this..like, she lets him go like this. And, like, she lets him write bigger and everything. And, like, the gym teacher, like there's nothing really that he could do because, like, gym is really gym, and..for arts, he does it a bit messier, but he's still good and like, he has a way of drawing that's messy but good and, like, so the, the art teacher doesn't really help him any, but she knows he has the visual impairment so she doesn't get mad at him for doing that. And, like, the librarians, like, he really gets books out that are really big, and like the library doesn't care, like, if he gets them from the lower kids' section. Like, there's a four..three, four, fives, and sixes class section up at the top and down at the bottom where he usually sits, there's a primary, one, two, three. [Site IV, classmate]

[Excerpt 5]

I: Have you noticed other children in your class who seem to feel left out?

R: Sometimes I think there's some people.

I: Who would you say?

R: Sometimes, I think that Joanne feels left out if she did something wrong and she's asked to maybe go to a lower group. Just today, she got brought down to the lowest group [in math] and she felt bad because she liked the group she was in cuz most of her friends were in it.

I: What group was she in?

R: A, no B.

I: Have you noticed any other kids who seem to feel left out in your class?

R: Justin..I think he feels left out because he goes, to go to a Special Ed class and he probably feels left out because he can't be in our class in the morning, just cause he knows that he can't do something that we're doing. [Site V, classmate]

[Excerpt 6]

[We have been talking about extra-curricular activities designed specifically for the visually impaired in which Charles might be involved and his mother has explained their schedule hasn't allowed Charles' participation this fall.]

I: Do you have objections to activities that are just for the visually impaired?

R: No! No! No, no I realize Charles needs, he needs, you know, to be around other kids with visual impairments, too. And I would like to get him into something like that, where he just doesn't have to compete. And, you know, work ten times as hard all the time, but ah, maybe, maybe after Christmas. [Site V, parent]

For integrated visually impaired students, excessively competitive classrooms were hostile social environments. Their responses, when they were visually unable to meet the challenges, varied: Peter initiated conversations extolling those things in which he excelled; Lisa defiantly refused to participate and either put her head down or did something else; Tony persevered regardless of the task; Jamie sat out waiting patiently for the activity to change; and Charles hung his head and seemed very morose. Regardless of their response, all of these children frequently perceived specific situations to be hopeless--because of their visual impairment they were unable to compete. Knowing they could not do well, they frequently did not participate.

Integration assumes the presence of individualized programming and instruction (Biklen, 1985; Hatlen & Curry, 1987), that is, it assumes attention to difference (see the first contradiction). In this study, teachers were observed to teach primarily to the class as a whole. Individualized instruction or instruction modified to remediate or address a student's higher and/or lower level of performance was a rare occurrence during the five months of observation. While some principals and teachers spoke of the need to adapt programs and assist students to learn at their own rate, in practice programs were rarely adapted and all children in most classes were expected to be doing exactly the same thing and using exactly the same learning materials. That is, they were not expected to be different. Therefore, the visually impaired student's need for individualized programming or modified instructional techniques was incompatible with the basic approach to learning and the

somewhat competitive nature of elementary schools observed in this study.

Sapon-Shevin (1978) suggested the existence of these contradictions associated with both competition and the positive acceptance of difference almost two decades ago:

If we, as educators and as a society, have a responsibility for insuring the success of all children in schools, then we cannot also perpetuate a system that creates deviants and failures by its competitive teaching and evaluation system. The issue of competition is closely related to how differences are viewed. Schools transmit a mixed message with regard to differences: 1) You must all be alike (the value of conformity). 2) You must be better than everyone else (competition). When examined more closely, however, these messages are not at all contradictory, but are indicative of the fact that differences per se are not esteemed and that students are likely to be judged along a single continuum. In school, students are sorted out along the same continuum, but along that continuum those differences that lead to a better performance are rewarded. (p. 120)

Clearly, these contradictions are still present in elementary schools years after the introduction of integration.

### The Dilemmas

As visually impaired children have been integrated they have challenged the beliefs, values and assumptions of the predominant cultures, that of teachers and pupils. This challenge has produced dilemmas associated with the social acceptance and interaction of integrated students. A dilemma is created when people are forced to choose between two alternatives, each alternative having negative consequences. Several were evident in this study; six are discussed in this section. These six dilemmas were associated with: the use of adaptive equipment, materials and teaching strategies; the types of adaptive behaviours developed by the visually impaired; the degree of

openness surrounding the discussion of visual impairment; the relationship between program adaptations and inclusion of the visually impaired student; the accessibility of friendship to the visually impaired; and the pressures and responsibilities expected of teachers.

The first dilemma is associated with the use of adaptive aids. In an attempt to compensate for a reduction in or lack of vision and, hence, restrictions on access to visual information required to successfully complete routine daily tasks, adaptive equipment (braille writers, talking calculators or those with large print displays), materials (tactile maps, large print books) and teaching strategies (hand-over-hand demonstrations, verbalization of words as they are written on the board) have been developed. In many cases these have been designed specifically for visually impaired students and acknowledged as distinctive components required for effective educational programs for this population (Curry & Hatlen, 1988; Scholl, 1986).

When introduced to the regular public school classroom, these adaptations, while promoting the independence of the visually impaired student, frequently interfere with social interaction and acceptance. For example, at Site III, Tony had to move to a working area adjacent to his group to complete all written tasks because his braille writer and print transcriber could not physically be accommodated on his desk located with the other three group members. At Site V, Charles sat alone at a large desk designed for two students because his large print books and materials required so much desk space. His classmates were seated in pairs with their single sized desks pushed together. As well,



dilemmas were created in relation to the provision of help by classmates. Before Tony was able to independently make his way throughout the school, students were assigned or volunteered to take him. Much social interaction, (e.g. laughter, joking, pushing and shoving) characterized these excursions. Once Tony had mastered independent travel using his cane he had to maneuver alone and classmates were requested to avoid speaking with him while he was using his cane since, for safety reasons, his full attention was to be focused on moving carefully within his environment. One itinerant teacher describes this dilemma as follows:

R: I've also found that sometimes kids that accept the use of the ah, the aids and what not, are those that have the most difficult time socially. Whereas, those that have almost rejected using, the, visible aids, are accepted, socially. So it's ah, it's a trade off between..social acceptance and independence and academic success, sometimes.

I: So whenever you intervene to assist the person to perform at a level which will bring them up to an equal standing with their peers, at the same time you add..[interrupts]

R: You're adding..the kids that are..I find the students that are, right through to high school, and I've just noticed this in the last few years, those that are most adept at using all these aids, you know, be it white cane, telescopic aids, visualteks, braille writers, whatever. The kids that want them and are very adept at using them, are, less socially accepted than the kids that aren't, because the kids that don't use them depend on, the other students. And the, often times the other students like to, lend a helping hand and that way the..bond develops..and even now, for instance the white cane, you know, as much as we promote it, ah, once a white cane goes down the hallway, everyone disperses and the blind student doesn't, isn't even..normally in touch with other students as a normally sighted would bump into another in the hall, into others.

I: Umhmm.

R: So they lose that, even that physical..contact, of having this identified. So it's, you know, often what, I've found, there is a definite contradiction. [Site IV-V, itinerant teacher]

At Site III where Tony was travelling independently within the school, the itinerant teacher had noticed, on occasion, a "regression" or return to travelling with a "buddy."

I: You mentioned Tony getting help from other people and I wondered..Tony is surrounded by people willing to help, how do you deal with this?

R: I don't know, I don't think it's as bad this year as it sometimes was last year. They would do anything for him. There are days when he'll totally accept that and others days, I guess he's feeling a little bit more independent. And when the teacher, after we had taught him to go to the washroom himself, there seemed to be a regression after a while because he was going with a buddy. And, now either, it's just like anybody else, they both enjoy getting out of the room together. Tony certainly did not need anyone to go up to the washroom with him and ah, so that, I just told the teacher, "Look! Don't allow it! If he wants to go he can go by himself and if it takes him a long way or he gets lost, that's fine, too. Don't let him go with a buddy." Tony and I have role played, last year in my office, how to sort of say, "Thanks but no thanks. I can do this by myself."

I: Umhmm.

R: It's because of who it is. If it's Patrick, he probably wouldn't want any help, he'd let him know. If it was Leslie, he'd probably be quite happy to be fussed over. [Site III, itinerant teacher]

Thus, for the integrated visually impaired child dilemmas related to their social interaction were created both when receiving help or using aids which permitted independent performance of a task. If the child accepted assistance he/she was often perceived to be less competent or more dependent than classmates but opportunities for positive social interaction were enhanced when working with a buddy. Similarly, when the visually impaired student had mastered the use of adaptive aids, thus enhancing independent performance, the use of such aids were often either incompatible with social interaction or limited the opportunity for such.

A second kind of dilemma was associated with the adaptive behaviours developed by visually impaired students to compensate for

their vision loss. For example, all four partially sighted children in this study had large handwriting which was frequently difficult to decipher. Although exchanging scribbles to correct or edit each other's work was a common practice in the elementary classrooms observed, few classmates appeared receptive to the sometimes onerous task of deciphering the visually impaired student's handwriting. As well, the close reading distance required by these children frequently interfered with the sharing of worksheets or project material during group assignments. One of the more vivid examples of a dilemma created between an effective functional adaptation developed by a visually impaired student and its effect upon classmates is illustrated in the following excerpt from the researcher's observation notes.

They are told to get on their coats and "outside sneakers." As Tony slowly makes his way out the door he stumbles over Tyler who is sitting on the floor putting on his sneakers. Tony bends over and grabs him by the back of the neck and playfully shakes him. They laugh and talk. Tyler gets up and runs out and as Tony makes his way down the hall he chats with children in his vicinity. Just after he steps out of the school he takes hold of a small boy from another class who walks with him to the equipment area. They walk with their arms around each other's shoulders. When they get to the equipment area he leaves Tony. Tony is alone momentarily and as a boy passes by, Tony reaches out and grabs him, holding on to his arm. They walk with their arms around each other's shoulders talking as they go. When they stop Tony takes his arm off his shoulder and grabs on to one of a group of four boys running by. He holds on to the backs of their jackets as they run and they laugh and wrestle. The boys run off leaving Tony alone again. He waits for a few seconds and then reaches out and grabs a girl who is going by. Next three girls surround him and he tries to catch them. They chant, "Tony can't catch me." He waits until they get quite close then grabs one. One little girl slips out of her jacket to escape and he cheers, "I've got a jacket!" As they are playing Tony's sneaker lace is untied and one of the girls kneels down and ties it for him. A few minutes later she ties his other sneaker. He seems to be enjoying this game and the three continue to play or taunt him until the bell rings. The three girls with whom he is playing are not in his class but seem to be about the same age. They run for the school leaving Tony alone. Just as Tony reaches out to grab a passer-by, a teacher

asks a girl to take Tony to the line up. She takes him to the back of the line and Debbie [a girl from his class] takes his hand and takes him to the front of the line. He enters the school first although many children have been lined up before him. [Site III, observation notes]

Tony's functional adaptation, that is, reaching out and grabbing a passerby, although often effective for initiating interaction with other children, did not always result in positive interaction with other children. Some children, particularly those who did not know Tony well, often objected to his rather unconventional approach to initiating interaction. Yet, given the situation facing him on the noisy, congested playground and the observed tendency of his classmates to avoid him, his strategy did ensure interaction. For Tony, this was a dilemma he faced daily.

A third dilemma was associated with the actual discussion of visual impairment in the presence of the visually impaired child and her/his classmates. As mentioned in previous chapters, with the exception of the site where the child was totally blind, the term "visually impaired" was not used, nor was there evidence of discussion of what it meant to be visually impaired or how the visually impaired child accommodated the visual loss.

R: Ah, unless the child's having a real problem with it [visual impairment], I don't, really like, personally I just don't feel it should be really brought out, you know, and made a special case, unless you really are a special case, sort of thing. I mean, I know, she, Lisa has a visual impairment, but for as long as she can be very accepted by the school, I think that, that's probably the best [best not to mention the visual impairment]. Ah, there are probably things that could be done you know, to make everybody else more aware, but somehow, I have a feeling that when you're made more aware, then the person becomes more different. And someone that's talked about..and that might make it even harder, instead of easier. [Site II, classroom teacher]

Parents also struggled with this dilemma, as is evident in the following excerpt.

R: I don't think at the beginning of the year they need to say you have a visually impaired child in our class and we need to be, you know, careful of where we leave things, and stuff like that. You know, if she trips over it, so what, I don't think it would be that much of an incident that would, you know, like be a really serious accident or something. Ah, and that way I don't think the classmates would feel as concerned about it. Because I think they ask a lot more questions and they're so acceptable of people anyway, that I don't think they need to even be made aware of it. It is good for them to know about it just the same. It's, you know, it's hard to say either way. Because that way they know that Lisa is different, they know that she's visually impaired, but at the same time I don't like it being my child that's being singled out, you know. [Site II, parent]

As mentioned in previous chapters, this reluctance by teachers and parents to even mention "visual impairment" was perceived by both the visually impaired students and their classmates to imply visual impairment was a "bad thing." These children perceived it to be an inappropriate and negative topic which was "none of their business." Frequently the child's visually impairment was perceived by many peers and the visually impaired students alike, as something for which one should be ashamed. For adults, there seemed to be a belief that if people were uninformed about the handicap they would not treat the child as if he/she was handicapped, that is, "different."

R: A lot of people and a lot of teachers in this school aren't even aware that Jamie has a handicap. And I think probably, ah, if they're not aware he has a handicap then, they just treat him like any other kid. [Site IV, classroom teacher]

Thus, the benefits of greater knowledge and increased insight in relation to visual impairment were frequently overlooked so as to avoid calling attention to the child's visual disability. In a social environment which did not promote the positive acceptance of difference,

open discussions of visual impairment created a dilemma. As well, it is clear that the absence of discussion relevant to the visually impaired child's disability could be seen to contribute to the classmates' persistently wrong information about the implications of vision loss (e.g. difficulty with making eye contact, limitations with regard to some types of activities but not others).

A fourth dilemma closely related to the third, was associated with the reluctance of teachers to adapt programs or activities to enhance the participation of the visually impaired student. Teachers routinely presented lessons without adaptations or accommodations which would either provide access or enhance the ease of access to the information for the visually impaired. Some explained this practice as a purposeful strategy to avoid emphasizing the child's visual impairment or making the student "stand out" as different; others perceived the necessary adaptation to detract from the learning of classmates; and others, unfortunately, perceived themselves to have limitations upon their time and/or skill. Thus, there was a dilemma created between the need for adaptations to access the information being taught and the teacher's reluctance to acknowledge the child's visual impairment by making adaptations.

Teachers who perceived overt adaptations as emphasizing the child's disability or accentuating her/his differences in comparison to classmates, seemed to be most uncomfortable with the integration process and seemed to have limited insight into the intent of this program. An example of the extreme length to which this was sometimes carried, was

the practice of giving the totally blind child a print text when braille materials were unavailable.

Skrtec (1987) contends that school programs are "the product of a particular knowledge tradition that is based on the customs and conventions of a professional subculture [educators]" (p. 21). This results in the teacher addressing only the identified student needs which are compatible with those programs or services he/she has to offer. Therefore, this:

is not a problem as long as the student's needs actually match what the professional has to offer, but when the learning style and individual needs of a particular student do not match the professional's repertoire of standard programs the student gets forced artificially into one program or another or forced out of the system altogether. (Skrtec, 1987, p. 21)

For integrated visually impaired students in this study, their social, academic and physical development needs were frequently unique to or incompatible with existing programs, and thus, poorly accommodated.

Unfortunately, for the visually impaired students this dilemma had three potentially negative consequences. First, they did not receive the assistance or information which would enhance their performance and possibly improve perceptions, both their own and their peers, related to their competence level. Second, the teacher's action, perceived to be one of ignoring the child's visual impairment, had an implicit message regarding the importance of the visually impaired child as a valued student in the regular classroom. Finally, when visually impaired children were treated exactly as their classmates, for example, given visual materials when they required tactile materials, confusion was created for students who were uncertain about the abilities and limitations associated with the visually impaired child, as well as how

to appropriately accommodate a visually impaired student. This may have contributed to the existence of some of the inaccurate expectations routinely observed during observation.

A fifth dilemma facing integrated visually impaired children was related to the children who were willing to associate with them on the playground. None of the visually impaired children in this study routinely interacted with either the popular group from their class or with a group typical of other children of the same gender at their grade level. It appeared the common factor bringing together the visually impaired child and her/his playmate on the playground was the desire to have someone with whom to play. However, as discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, children acquired a reputation based on their association and routine interaction with an unpopular playmate. The frequent interaction between the visually impaired student and unpopular peers did little to enhance the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students.

Parents also struggled with the dilemma of whether to discourage their child's association with children who they perceived to be less desirable playmates or to promote any form of companionship. Frequently the only "friend" their child seemed to have was an unpopular classmate. The following excerpt illustrates one parent's perception of this issue.

I: What's your feeling about his friendship with Justin?

R: ..Oh! This is confidential, right?

I: Yes.

R: Well, Justin's sort of ah, he's an odd kid. He's different. Ah..ah..I don't think he's a friend that I would want Charles to have for life. I'd like to have Charles to have a more out-going friend that could help Charles more. You know what I'm saying?

I: Umm.



R: Yeah, you know, somebody that could..Charles needs ah, well..he needs somebody to, he needs a friend that would ah, accept him for what he is but then, be good for him too.

I: Umhmm.

R: Yeah. I don't think Justin's good for Charles.

I: What types of ah, when you say he's not good for Charles, what are the types of things you find don't seem to be good for Charles?

R: Well, ah, he's not mature. Charles needs somebody more mature. Like, I think Charles is more mature, a lot more mature than Justin.

I: Yeah?

R: Yeah, he needs some, ah, that's one of the things that I would, you know, I would like for Charles, is to have a friend, sort of a friend that he could call and, well, I guess that comes later on, doesn't it? When they get older. [Site V, parent]

Therefore, for visually impaired students, there was typically a dilemma created in choosing between being alone on the playground or interaction with an unpopular classmate.

A final dilemma routinely arose in relation to how the teacher responded to the visually impaired student in the classroom. The elementary school day is highly structured in terms of time. There are designated periods and amounts of time scheduled to collect milk money, go to other classes (e.g. French, physical education, music), go out for recess, eat lunch, etc. Teachers and students were frequently rushing to meet these time limits. However, four of the visually impaired students in this study routinely required additional time to complete most activities, including independently taking out and putting away books and materials. Teachers were often faced with the dilemma of doing something for the visually impaired child or letting her/him complete it despite the delays it entailed for the entire class.

For the visually impaired student the dilemma was often a choice among being perceived as incapable of completing an assignment if the teacher helped, taking it home to finish for homework, or being blamed

for slowing down the entire class. One teacher describes the situation as follows:

I: What's the most difficult aspect of having a visually impaired child in your class?

R: Um. The uneven flow of things at times. When you have to hold back and get something or explain something clearer. Or you want to do a writing assignment which you know they're going to be frustrated with. Giving him a test of their ability when sometimes you feel like maybe you shouldn't be. That's kind of frustrating and deciding whether you really should continue this activity with that child or not. There's no major hold-ups, I...I don't see it as impossible but...

I: What are the reactions of other pupils to having a visually impaired child in their class.

R: Other pupils? [silence] Nothing major, except the ones I've mentioned, that..there are those who want to be the centre of attention because they're top students and get frustrated with the slowness of something, of, ah, taking extra time to go over it again or to point out a part on the map instead of speeding along like they like to do. [Site I, social studies teacher]

When teachers did things for the visually impaired child in order to "pick up the pace" or meet a time limit, classmates frequently perceived the visually impaired child to be receiving special attention, extra help or to be less competent as a student. Therefore, the integration of a visually impaired child in the regular classroom created many complex situations and dilemmas which were pervasive and difficult to address or overcome given the present structure of elementary schools.

### The Implications for Self-Concept

As contradictions and dilemmas were identified in this study, so were the potential implications for the integrated visually impaired student. Perhaps, the most significant of these was the risk to the development of a positive self-concept.

Self-images are formed from beliefs about ourselves that are integrated with those that others hold of us. Each blind and visually impaired child needs to feel that he [sic] is a worthy

and contributing member of the family and the peer group, as well as a unique individual with special talents and abilities. The visual impairment is part of the self and must be incorporated into the total self-image, but it is only one of the many attributes, feelings, and emotions. Exaggerated feelings about the limitations imposed by the impairment give it a larger role than it deserves. It is hoped that the child will come to believe that opportunities are opened because of his abilities and not closed because of the impairment. (Swallow & Huebner, 1987, p. 29)

As mentioned in Chapter 1, one of the perspectives used in this research to examine the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students was symbolic interactionism. Mead (1934), considered to be one of the more prominent proponents of symbolic interactionism, has also been acknowledged for his work related to the origins of the self-concept. As people respond to their environment in terms of the meanings they perceive, the process of social interaction is the source of their developing perceptions. Mead believed that the self was given meaning through the process of interaction as a result of the attitudes expressed by significant others toward it. Therefore, one's self-concept developed in relation to the meanings others constructed and reflected toward one, both explicitly and implicitly, during social interaction.

In this study the visually impaired children ranged from six to almost thirteen years of age. Despite their varying levels of maturity, visual disability, age, social skills, etc., they had learned some common beliefs relevant to visual impairment and those who were visually impaired. These beliefs, identified during the analysis of data during this research, are as follows:

1. Visually impaired people must depend upon sighted people for help.

2. Visually impaired people need more help to do most things than do sighted people.
3. Sighted people can do more things than visually impaired people can.
4. Sighted people can do most things better than visually impaired people can.
5. Sighted people are thankful they are not visually impaired.
6. Visually impaired people are different, and hence, inferior to sighted people.
7. Sighted people think they are superior to visually impaired people.
8. Sighted people think visually impaired people are not as intelligent as they are.
9. Being visually impaired causes extra problems for parents and teachers.
10. Parents wish their children were not visually impaired.
11. Sighted children prefer to play with other sighted children.
12. Visually impaired children are less desirable as "best friends" than are those who are fully sighted.

As the self-concepts of these children were gradually evolving and changing during the process of interaction, these beliefs were prominent features in their daily environments. Since "the perceptions and feelings an individual has about the self, whether realistic or not, cumulatively mold and shape the self-concept" (Tuttle, 1984, p. 63), the potential for integrated visually impaired children in this study to construct positive self-concepts was at risk.

Self-esteem, the evaluative component of self-concept, involves comparing one's performance with a standard which is either set by others or by oneself (Tuttle, 1984). For the four partially sighted students in this study, their performance, both in school and on the playground, was routinely viewed by themselves and their peers to be inferior to that of other children. The totally blind child in many ways had a reprieve from the frequency and severity of comparisons experienced by partially sighted children. He could not compare his braille to the printed work of his classmates, nor could they judge the quality of his work in comparison to their own. Thus, spontaneous comments concerning his level of performance were far less frequent than those for the partially sighted students. This boy was the only one of the five visually impaired students who perceived being visually impaired as something which would attract friends, as a reason other children might like to play with him.

For the visually impaired children in this study, being visually impaired was a predominant aspect of their being. During their school life, there seemed to be rarely an activity where some compensatory skill or accommodating action was not required if they were to actively participate with their peers. When things did not go well, it was because they were visually impaired. When their peers excluded them, it was because they were visually impaired. When they were slow to finish their work, it was because they were visually impaired. They seemed to perceive their level of control over the course of their own actions as being significantly restricted by their visual impairment. For the integrated visually impaired student there is an inherent danger that

their less than desirable level of acceptance by and interaction with peers be perceived as an inevitable consequence of being visually impaired. Given such a perception, "normal" social interactions with those who are sighted might seem to be a rather hopeless aspiration.

The vulnerability of integrated visually impaired students, in regard to their exclusion by peers, seemed to increase with age and grade level. As children progressed through elementary school, groups appeared to become more exclusive. At the same time, the level of competence required to participate in most activities increased. For example, by grade six, boys were skilled ball players and the difficulties experienced by the visually impaired student were blatant by contrast. As well, in school the quantity and rate of reading and writing assignments had significantly increased for students. However, the reading and writing rates of the visually impaired students had not increased proportionately. Thus, there was frequently a greater variance between the perceived quantity and quality of the work of the visually impaired student and that of classmates. These observations seem to support the conclusions of Goupil and Comeau (1983) and Eaglestein (1975) who found visually impaired students to become less accepted by peers the longer they had been integrated. It seems as classmates experience the opportunity to interact with integrated visually impaired students, the social reality they construct in relation to this child is not one which is conducive to routine interaction or a "best friend" relationship.

### Conclusion

Integration is not a culture-free concept but is laden with basic assumptions and values. Therefore, implementation of and resistance to integration should be viewed in relation to the implications for cultural change it entails. As visually impaired students were integrated, contradictions and dilemmas were created as people struggled to accommodate or chose to resist the inevitable changes integration entailed. The social environment of the elementary school is a complex one and these contradictions and dilemmas could often be seen to be interrelated. For example, the first contradiction, associated with incompatibility between the positive acceptance of difference inherent in the philosophy of integration and the undesirability of differentness in elementary schools, is obviously related to the first four dilemmas (i.e. those associated with the use of adaptive equipment, materials and teaching strategies; the types of adaptive behaviours developed by the visually impaired; the degree of openness surrounding the discussion of visual impairment; and the relationship between program adaptations and inclusion of the visually impaired student). The implications of this first contradiction is inextricably linked with each of these dilemmas.

Therefore, if integration of the visually impaired is to be realized, leadership is critical to both the creation and modification of culture to enhance the acceptance of this change. It will require insightful leadership to acknowledge and confront the philosophic and pragmatic issues intrinsic to integration. As Scott (1969b) contends:

The disability of blindness is a learned social role. The various attitudes and patterns of behavior that characterize people who are blind are not inherent in their condition but, rather, are acquired through ordinary processes of social

learning. Thus, there is nothing inherent in the condition of blindness that requires a person to be docile, dependent, melancholy, or helpless; nor is there anything about it that should lead him [sic] to become independent or assertive. Blind men are made, and by the same processes of socialization that have made us all. (p. 14)



## CHAPTER 11

### Conclusions, Recommendations and Directions for Future Research

#### Introduction

Through exploring the social interaction and perceptions of students and relevant adults, the five site studies reported in this thesis have brought into view aspects of pupil culture and school culture which shape the social integration of visually impaired children. The analysis of contradictions and dilemmas has made visible ways in which the environment is hostile to the visually impaired child.

This final chapter outlines the conclusions and the recommendations which follow from these. In setting the stage for these conclusions and recommendations, this chapter first summarizes the perspectives of each of the key actors (i.e. the visually impaired child, the classmates and the adults), as well as summarizes what can be seen when the social context, both within and beyond the school setting, is taken into account. The chapter ends with a discussion of suggested directions for future research.

#### Summary of Perceptions and Social Context

Inherent in the concept of normalization is the belief that the handicapped will have an opportunity to participate in the everyday world of the culture in which they reside. For school age children who are handicapped, integration into the normal surroundings of public school placements necessitates integration into the social world of

their nonhandicapped peers. During the past several decades, researchers who have focused on the culture of school age children contend that there is an independent pupil culture, separate but interrelated with that of the existing school culture, with negotiated rules and practices much like any social system. This social world, known as pupil culture, is the one which the integrated visually impaired child encounters.

The aim of this research was to develop an understanding of the process of social integration of visually impaired pupils into the regular classroom, in particular, to gain insight into how the visually impaired, through interactions with their sighted peers, are received within the pupil culture. Guided by the dual theoretical frameworks of symbolic interactionism and the concept of organizational culture, qualitative research methods (i.e. participant observation and interviews) were employed in the collection and analysis of data.

The cultural inferences initially constructed by the researcher during the process of data collection and initial interpretation and analysis were repeatedly tested to ascertain whether they represented the perspectives and ways of making meaning of the participants, that is, whether the cultural assumptions had been accurately translated. Eleven basic assumptions of pupil culture related to friendship and peer interaction were identified. The perceptions of both the visually impaired students and their classmates in relation to these basic assumptions were examined. Similarly, seven assumptions of adult culture relevant to the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students were identified and the perceptions of teachers, principals and parents considered in regard to these.

Finally, educational assumptions focusing on the social environment encountered by integrated visually impaired students were identified and examined. Contextual aspects or processes, both beyond the elementary school setting (e.g. the stigma of visual impairment, provincial legislation or guidelines relevant to integration) and within the elementary school setting (e.g. learning environment, teacher commitment to integration), which appeared to contribute to or detract from the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students were analyzed.

#### The Visually Impaired Child

The interaction of integrated visually impaired students varied in both quantity and quality from that of many of their classmates. The consequence of limited vision was evident as these children struggled to locate friends on the playground, compete at similar levels, and complete school work in time to participate in the "between activity" social interactions. Visually impaired students emphasized two significant criteria for friends--"they don't make fun of my eyesight" and "if I have problems they'll help me out." For sighted children, the most important criteria for friends were that they "hang around with you" and "are fun." In interaction with their peers, visually impaired students had limited access to information relevant to both their own level of competence and that of their peers. It seemed to contribute to a belief by visually impaired children that sighted people were superior humans and made it difficult for them to derive an accurate comparison between their performance and that of their sighted peers.

Visually impaired students were reluctant to join in activities they perceived as too difficult, too dangerous or requiring a skill level beyond their own. For the boys in particular, this contributed to a perception that male playmates were inaccessible to them. They often played with girls as one alternative to being alone. All of the visually impaired children routinely interacted with classmates who were outside the most popular group. Their main objective appeared to be to have someone with whom to play.

For the visually impaired students in this study, their visual impairment was a source of shame. There was a sense of confusion surrounding the concept of "handicapped" which appeared to have been constructed from the subtle, negative messages they received from peers, teachers and parents in relation to their visual impairment. Limited knowledge concerning their visual impairment was another commonality among the five visually impaired children in this study. They attributed their exclusion from particular activities by their peers to their visual impairment. Having a visual impairment was perceived by them as problematic for their friends as well as for their parents and teachers.

The visually impaired children in this study perceived their likes and dislikes, in general, to be similar to those of their peers. Their limited participation in some activities seemed to be related to their perception of incompetence in relation to their peers or actual exclusion by some peers. Their visual loss was perceived to create academic hardships for them within the class and also to hinder the process of making friends. Relevant to their perceptions of their behaviour, even

those with obvious mannerisms did not perceive their behaviours as different from those of their peers.

The willingness of classmates to help the visually impaired student was an important consideration for the integrated student. Although they considered those who helped as their friends, they perceived themselves to have limited options in choosing a playmate. All of the visually impaired children expressed a yearning to play with those classmates they perceived as popular but none routinely interacted with these popular classmates on the playground. Thus, unlike their classmates, visually impaired students did not routinely interact or play with those children they identified as "best friends."

An important aspect of pupil culture is associated with the requirement that children follow the rules, both explicit and implicit ones. Although four of the visually impaired children perceived themselves to generally follow rules, both those of the pupil culture and their teachers, there was a sense of having a degree of impunity because they were visually impaired. They perceived themselves to be "special" and in some situations (e.g. going first in the line ups) entitled to privileges unavailable to their peers. Another assumption of pupil culture was that friends ought to reciprocate the actions of their peers, whether negative or positive. The perceptions of visually impaired children appeared to differ from those of their peers in three aspects of this assumption. First, in relation to negative encounters with peers, visually impaired children perceived having a visual impairment as responsible for peers not being as harsh in their treatment of them as they would be with other children. Second, assistance

received as a consequence of being visually impaired, such as going to the office to enlarge a handout or helping the child locate something, seemed to be perceived differently than help obtained to complete a task unrelated to the consequences of being visually impaired, such as solving a math problem. In the former situation, the visually impaired child appeared to consider the assistance as indistinguishable from the particular activity itself and did not acknowledge, reciprocate, or even thank the peer who had volunteered such assistance. In the latter case, the visually impaired child perceived the peer's contribution as "helping" and routinely thanked or acknowledged those who helped. Finally, visually impaired students perceived themselves to have few opportunities to reciprocate assistance from peers.

#### The Classmates

The classmates of visually impaired children had limited knowledge concerning the actual visual abilities and disabilities of these children. Within the classroom the child's visual impairment was perceived to be something "we don't talk about." Thus, conjecture was prevalent as they interpreted their associations and interactions with their visually impaired classmate. Their perceptions of their visually impaired classmate were marked by inconsistencies and contradictions. During interviews they frequently described their visually impaired classmate as "just like a normal person" yet they expressed a sense of marked difference between themselves and the visually impaired child. Visually impaired children were perceived to need more attention, receive more help, be less competent, have some immunity from "being

picked on," and generally seemed to wish they could see as "good as the other kids."

The effect of the label "visually impaired" seemed to have a significant and negative influence upon the perceptions of classmates, particularly in relation to their perceptions of the visually impaired child's level of competence and the number of activities in which he/she could participate. One of the most significant drawbacks associated with interaction with a visually impaired classmate was the extra effort such interaction was perceived to entail on the part of the sighted child. To function as a "best friend" for a visually impaired pupil seemed to necessitate a degree of self-sacrifice on the part of her/his playmate.

The slower working rate and the large, often "messy-looking" appearance of the visually impaired child's handwork, seemed to be interpreted by classmates as evidence of incompetence or a lower level of ability. In addition, although classmates considered adaptive materials as necessary or helpful for their visually impaired classmate, they perceived work completed using adaptive materials or equipment as being of lesser quality or more immature than that produced through regular means. By the upper elementary levels, classmates were beginning to consider the use of such equipment by their visually impaired classmate as providing an unfair advantage to the handicapped student.

Visually impaired children were perceived to have different friends than most students. They were generally rated toward the bottom of the popularity list and, for the most part, perceived to interact

with less popular children in the class or with children from other classes. Visually impaired boys were perceived to more frequently choose to play with girls than did their male classmates. As well, visually impaired students seemed to possess a neutral position in relation to popularity. They were not sought out by classmates, as were popular children, nor were they the brunt of teasing and tormenting as were many unpopular children.

Few classmates spontaneously reported the visually impaired child to act differently than other children in the class. However, they did view visually impaired children as "looking different." When asked specifically about "different behaviour" of these children, responses centered upon the mannerisms typically associated with visually impaired children. Things such as arm flapping or jumping about when excited, not making eye contact, or standing too close when speaking with someone were commonly mentioned. Classmates of the visually impaired perceived these different behaviours to be undesirable. Lack of eye contact from the visually impaired child during interaction was perceived to be blatant disrespect by peers.

Visually impaired classmates were believed to require a substantial amount of help. Although they were not "best friends" with the visually impaired student, classmates felt they were obligated or at least expected routinely to assist the visually impaired child. Even when the visually impaired child was paired with a less capable student for a particular activity and completed the major part of the assignment, the classmate perceived this situation as one in which he/she had been helping the visually impaired student.



Within pupil culture friends ought to reciprocate the actions of their friends, whether positive or negative. Visually impaired children presented predicaments for classmates in relation to reciprocation. Classmates of the visual impaired student felt uncomfortable or unable to reciprocate negative actions when the visually impaired child was involved. Hitting or "telling on" this child was a difficult decision for most classmates. Peers also perceived major difficulties in the visually impaired child reciprocating the help they routinely provided her/him. As well, visually impaired children were perceived to receive special treatment and/or privileges from teachers. There was even a suspicion the visually impaired child was "faking" her/his visual impairment to get this "special treatment."

#### The Adults

From the cultural context of the playground there came an interpretation in many ways foreign to either intentions or comprehension of the adults involved. Integration challenged the basic assumptions related to the social acceptance and interaction of children as well as the interaction of teachers and children. Frequently contradictions were created when children who were perceived to be different were placed in situations where educators felt it inappropriate to treat them differently. They struggled with the complexities of accommodating a visually impaired child's disability in a fair manner yet not treating this student "differently." Confusion was created when children were neither fully sighted nor totally blind, when neither teachers nor parents fully understood the implications of vision loss on social and

academic learning, and when adults were conditioned to view acknowledgment of a child's disability as inappropriate.

The social integration of visually impaired children posed particular dilemmas for teachers. The social acceptance of children by peers was not considered a major responsibility of teachers but an aspect of child development which more or less occurred naturally as children interacted. Teachers found it difficult to accommodate the social and academic needs of visually impaired students while simultaneously treating them "the same as other students." The predominant role of the teacher was to prevent the mistreatment of children by one another, not promote positive interaction and the development of a healthy self concept. In general, children were considered responsible for making their own friends and playgrounds were almost neutral environments for teachers. While parents perceived children to have the responsibility for making friends, they were unaware of the "different interaction" of the visually impaired children while on the playground. They assumed their children were adequately accepted and actively involved with friends during recess and noon hour.

Both teachers and parents based their perception of the visually impaired child's acceptance by classmates on the absence of classmates' overt negative behaviour toward this child. This was common to every adult interviewed. Therefore, the criterion they appeared to use to determine whether the visually impaired child was accepted by peers was the presence or absence of abuse from other children rather than the presence or absence of positive social experiences.

Adults were oblivious to many of the assumptions of pupil culture which affected the acceptance and rejection of children by their peers. Despite the best of intentions, this ignorance frequently resulted in actions which detracted from rather than contributed to the acceptance of visually impaired pupils by peers. As well, teachers sometimes seemed oblivious to the ways in which they treated visually impaired children differently from their peers. Expectations for visually impaired children's level of performance were sometimes inappropriate; activities themselves could be meaningless without access to more accurate visual information; and, on several occasions, visually impaired pupils were expected to participate in ventures which posed a significant risk to their safety.

The stigma perceived to be associated with those who are visually impaired was mentioned by most adults in this study. They also described a sense of "feeling sorry" for the visually impaired, a belief that visually impaired people were more courageous than were those who were fully sighted, and a conviction that the particular student they had was an "exceptional visually impaired student" and not like most visually impaired students who would surely encounter more difficulty in coping with the regular curriculum than their particular student was experiencing.

Both teachers and parents perceived the appearance of the visually impaired children to detract from peer acceptance. Parents seemed tormented by the different appearance of their child as if it was an inescapable symbol of their child's handicap. The mannerisms of the visually impaired students were, however, an issue upon which parents

and teachers had very different perceptions. Teachers tended to ignore even blatantly inappropriate mannerisms. They seemed to feel they would call attention to or emphasize the child's handicap by addressing her/his mannerisms. Many reported not hearing other students comment upon the visually impaired child's mannerisms, and thus, perceived this as either a lack of interest or evidence of total acceptance by other children. Parents, on the other hand, perceived the mannerisms of their children to be a major problem and one that had to be dealt with on a regular basis.

Another aspect relevant to the integration of visually impaired students which proved problematic for adults was the discussion of the visual impairment, especially in the presence of the visually impaired child and/or other students. Perhaps because it was impossible to ignore the accommodations required for a totally blind child, as compared to those of a partially sighted child, people involved with the totally blind child were less inhibited when issues related to visual impairment were raised. In general, adults struggled when the topic of visual impairment was raised and were visibly uncomfortable discussing it, even during the interviews.

#### The Broader Social Context

Three processes evident in the broader context in which elementary schools are located and which appeared to be relevant to the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired children were identified during the research. These were: (1) integration as an educational innovation implemented through the schools, (2) affective education as an aim of education, and (3) society's perception of the

stigma associated with those who are visually impaired. Assumptions associated with the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired children as they relate to these broader processes were identified. This served to make some beginning connections between macro sociological processes and individual biographies at the school level.

Integration as an innovation. Both the inadequate training of teachers prior to the integration of a visually impaired student and the lack of formal evaluation of the integration process as it was implemented appeared to suggest a less than serious commitment to the process of integration in general. This, in conjunction with the routine lack of even basic textbook material in a format accessible to the visually impaired, seemed to contribute to the perception of integrated visually impaired children as less valued as students than their classmates.

Other contextual aspects which contributed to the perception of integration as a "less than serious endeavour" were the limited input teachers had into the planning and implementation of integrating visually impaired students in their classrooms and the lack of coordination or presence of a team approach to integration. Itinerant teachers who were only present in the school at specific times had little opportunity to observe the social skills of the visually impaired child on the playground or during "freetime" in the classroom, and therefore, were not particularly aware of this aspect of the child's school life. When a child had mannerisms which interfered with interaction with others, teachers had not developed uniform strategies for dealing with

these. When a child had mastered a skill in the classroom, other teachers, unaware of the change in performance, continued to provide support the child no longer needed. Teachers did not change their programs or, in the majority of cases, significantly adjust their presentation of material or information to accommodate the visually impaired student. Without a team approach or input into the integration process, common to all five sites, it would appear to be difficult for teachers to have a significant effect upon the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students.

Affective education as an educational aim. The less than explicit commitment to affective education as a significant goal of education at the elementary school level created difficulties when issues inherent to the social integration of integrated visually impaired students were examined. Teachers appeared to have neither the training nor insight necessary to address the social acceptance and interaction issues relevant to integrated students. Even when teachers were aware of sighted children who were cruelly rejected by their peers, little, if any assistance was provided the rejected child. As well, the expectations for integrated visually impaired students, both social and academic, were lower than those for their sighted peers. Socially, visually impaired children were expected to be less well accepted than their peers.

As with affective education in general, children's friendships appeared to be of little concern to educators. When children were assigned to classes, placements were based upon creating a mixed group of children by ability or separating students perceived to be "a bad

influence" upon one another. Therefore, class assignments appeared to address the teacher's need for control rather than to enhance the positive relationships or existing friendships of children.

The stigma of visual impairment. The presence of a visual impairment functioned as a "label of primary potency" influencing the perceptions of teachers, parents and classmates of integrated visually impaired children. The stigma associated with visual impairment was evident as an encompassing process inherent within the way our society thinks about those who are visually impaired and the potential they have as students within the public school system. It obscured the perceptions and the meanings others constructed in relation to the visually impaired and contributed to lowered expectations for the social, physical and academic performance of those who were visually impaired.

#### The Context of Elementary Schools

There were conceivably hundreds of aspects of the situation which appeared to influence, either positively or negatively, the perceptions constructed by sighted individuals in relation to the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students. Each site appeared to have contextual facets contributing to unique circumstances within the specific site (e.g. the congestion of the playground and resulting threats to safety for the visually impaired child). From a multi-site perspective there were processes which appeared to be common to all sites (e.g. the expectation that children who were different from their peers would be less acceptable to their classmates). An aspect which appeared to be particularly potent at one site was sometimes, in a

different contextual environment, unremarkable. It was apparent that through the dynamic process of interaction participants constructed their realities, interpreted one another and negotiated shared meanings. The degree and intensity of a single variable seemed to fluctuate as an inextricably integrated aspect of a given context.

Contextual issues influencing the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students were grouped into six categories. These were factors primarily relevant to the visually impaired student (e.g. level of maturity, social skills, type of vision loss), to classmates of the visually impaired student (e.g. physical prowess, academic ability), to teachers (e.g. teaching style, degree to which they were supportive of the concept of integration), to classroom environments (e.g. learning environment, seating arrangements), to administrative arrangements (e.g. use of a team approach, perceived level of commitment to integration by principal), and to the structure of playgrounds (availability of activities suitable for visually impaired children, size and congestion of space). In given contexts these social factors could function simultaneously to constrain and/or enable the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students.

#### The Contradictions and Dilemmas

The essence of a culture, that is, its basic assumptions, are established when a visually impaired student is enrolled in an elementary school classroom. There are understood practices, standards and beliefs which guide how students learn, work and play as well as how teachers control and teach their students. In this study, the integra-



tion of visually impaired students was seen to challenge both philosophies and practices intrinsic to the school life of participants in elementary schools. Children and adults alike were expected to assume new roles and responsibilities. Procedures which were once routine became problematic when one member of the class could not see the board, decipher the diagrams, or find favorite classmates on the playground.

As contradictions and dilemmas were identified during the process of integration in this study, so were the potential implications for the integrated visually impaired student. There were two significant contradictions, evident at all sites, which appeared to detract from the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students. Both were related to the incompatibility existing between the philosophical implications of integration and the cultural assumptions currently held within elementary schools. The first was related to the basically negative connotations associated with being different. The positive acceptance of difference was neither routinely promoted nor enhanced in the elementary classrooms observed in this study. The second was the contradiction evident between the concept of individualized programming and progress inherent to integration and the basically competitive learning environments and group instruction present in elementary classrooms. In this respect the goals of integration and the basic assumptions of school culture appeared to be incongruous.

Dilemmas associated with the social acceptance and interaction of integrated students were also evident in this study. These dilemmas were associated with the use of adaptive equipment, materials and teaching strategies; the types of adaptive behaviours developed by the

visually impaired; the degree of openness surrounding the discussion of visual impairment; the relationship between program adaptations and inclusion of the visually impaired student; the accessibility of friendship to the visually impaired; and the pressures and responsibilities expected of teachers. Actions which were perceived appropriate or critical to accommodate the unique learning needs of visually impaired students were sometimes simultaneously disruptive to their social integration. Therefore, dilemmas were created when visually impaired students had to choose between such things as competent performance and social interaction.

Examination of the contradictions and dilemmas created as the concept of integration has been introduced in elementary schools, revealed distinct implications for those students who were integrated. The implications of integration for the developing self-concept of integrated visually impaired students were evident during the interviews and observations. For these children, being visually impaired was a predominant aspect of their being. During their school life, there seemed to be rarely a minute pass by when some compensatory skill or accommodating action was not required if they were to actively participate with their peers. They seemed to perceive their level of control over the course of their own actions as being significantly restricted by their visual impairment. There was an inherent danger that their less than desirable level of acceptance by and interaction with peers be perceived as an inevitable consequence of being visually impaired. Thus, one of the more significant implications for integrated visually

impaired students was the risk to their development of a positive self-concept.

### Conclusions

This exploratory research began with some fundamental premises about the concept of integration, its relation to society as a whole, the socialization role of schools, the ways school participants construct their social reality, the structuring aspects of the social environment of schools and those of processes external to the school, the development of self-concept, the potential restrictions visual impairment imposes upon interaction, and the response of individuals to change. Some of these premises were expanded and examined in detail (e.g. the potential restrictions visual impairment imposes upon interaction). Others were inextricably linked with emerging themes (e.g. the structuring aspects of the social environment). The complexities inherent in change and in relation to the final premise, "that individuals have the potential to change themselves and their immediate environment, as well as become change agents" are now more apparent. Culture is pervasive, complex and difficult to analyze. Change must address the cultural implications integration entails.

The following conclusions are grounded in the data from which they have been identified. Guided by the main purpose and five subpurposes of the study, these conclusions have been verified through the processes of analytic induction and triangulation. Yet, the interpretive understanding of the social world must invariably recognize how meaning is socially and historically bounded, both for the researcher and those

being researched. Thus acknowledged, the following conclusions are presented.

1. The essence of a culture, that is, its basic assumptions, are present when a visually impaired student is enrolled in an elementary school classroom. There are established practices, standards and beliefs which guide how students learn, work and play as well as how teachers control and teach their students. The integration of visually impaired students challenges basic assumptions of school culture. There are significant incompatibilities relevant to the social acceptance and interaction of children within pupil culture and the philosophical and pragmatic aspects of the integration process. As well, there are critical incompatibilities between the latter and the basic cultural assumptions which guide how teachers perform their professional duties. Hence, the integration of visually impaired students into the regular classroom creates a mismatch between the unique developmental needs of visually impaired children and the established roles and responsibilities of the school system.
2. Given the incompatibilities between the existing school culture and the integration of visually impaired students, tensions, contradictions and dilemmas evolve during the process of interaction among participants (i.e. visually impaired students, their parents, fully sighted children, teachers and administrators). Visually impaired students are routinely placed in situations where they cannot perform competently. Therefore, for the visually impaired student, the existing school culture

creates a potentially hostile social environment. From both teachers and classmates, there is more a sense of tolerance than positive acceptance of difference with respect to the integrated visually impaired student. Socially, academically and physically, visually impaired students encounter barriers to competent performance within an environment specifically designed for and maintained by those who are fully sighted.

3. Adults are unaware of many of the assumptions of pupil culture which influence the acceptance and rejection of children by their peers. They possess a limited understanding of the complexity and nature of pupil culture in general, and its relevance to the social integration of visually impaired students in particular. Unaware of the implications that the integration of visually impaired students has for pupil culture, adults frequently, despite the best of intentions, act in ways which detract from, rather than contribute to the acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired pupils. Unknowingly they sometimes place visually impaired students in vulnerable situations, both socially and academically; exacerbate the naturally existing tension between adult and pupil cultures in schools; and contribute to the creation of a social environment which is often a hostile one for integrated visually impaired students.
4. The label "visually impaired" has a pervasive and negative effect upon the perceptions and meanings constructed by classmates, educators and parents of visually impaired children. The negative influence of this label is potent even in the face of evidence to

the contrary. It obscures the perceptions and the meanings others construct in relation to the visually impaired and contributes to lowered expectations for the social, physical and academic performance of those who are visually impaired. The reluctance of adults to openly and spontaneously discuss visual impairment with both visually impaired children and their peers contributes to the maintenance of negative feelings and shame associated with it.

5. The interaction of integrated visually impaired students varies in both quantity and quality from that of many of their classmates. Visually impaired students frequently are unable to respond to nonverbal communication such as hand gestures and facial expressions often used in elementary classrooms to communicate information. The consequence of limited vision is evident as these children struggle to locate friends on the playground, compete at similar levels, and complete school work in time to participate in the "between activity" social interaction. For those who are fully sighted, maintaining a conversation may become uncomfortable or stressful when the visually impaired individual is not making eye contact or has eye movements which interfere with the level of comfort experienced by the sighted participant. Although not acceptable as playmates by the more popular children, neither are visually impaired students rejected or abused by them. The concept of reciprocity, seen to be a basic assumption of pupil culture, creates particular problems for those who are severely visually impaired. It appears to have a negative influence upon the quality of relationships which evolve between visually

impaired students and their classmates. When visually impaired students cannot "exchange" interaction in what is perceived to be an equitable manner by peers, they are not as desirable as "best friends." The perceived reliance of visually impaired students upon routine assistance from peers and adults creates different criteria for friendship. Thus, visually impaired children have a neutral status, neither friend nor enemy; have different criteria for friendship; and are best described as "on the fringe" in relation to their social acceptance by and interaction with classmates on the playground.

6. There is a potential for integrated visually impaired students to become increasingly isolated from active interaction with their peers as they progress through the elementary grades. In the classroom, the gap between their rate of reading and writing and that of their peers increases as the quantity of material presented increases with each grade level. As well, the print size decreases often necessitating the use of adaptive aids which interfere with social interaction and group participation. On the playground, the skill level of sighted children also improves dramatically and they become more interested in competitive activities, particularly boys. Visually impaired students are frequently left on the playground sidelines as they advance to upper elementary grades. Therefore, even if visually impaired children are functioning at a level similar to many of their classmates when they enter school, they are perceived to gradually

"fall behind" and, hence, become more and more removed from the routine activities of their classmates.

7. Given the perceptions integrated visually impaired students have constructed in relation to their self-concept, they are at risk in the existing social environment of many elementary schools. Through the process of interaction with participants in this social context, visually impaired students perceive themselves to be less competent, more dependent, in need of more assistance, less popular, and less desirable as a playmate and/or workmate than their peers. Integrated visually impaired students perceive themselves to have a "special" but inferior status sanctioned by their visual impairment. They have limited factual information about their visual impairment but perceive it to be a predominant and negative aspect of their being.
8. Children's perceptions of their visually impaired classmate are marked by inconsistencies, contradictions, conjecture and limited factual information about the student's visual impairment or its implication. Although acknowledging the normalcy of the visually impaired student, they express a sense of marked difference between themselves and the visually impaired child. Visually impaired children are perceived to need more attention, to receive more help, to be less competent in most playground activities, to be difficult to work with as a partner in the classroom setting, to perform inferior school work, to require more effort on the part of the sighted child to include or to act as a friend of the visually impaired student, to have some immunity from "being



picked on," to receive special and extra attention from teachers, to play with different children than those of their same gender classmates, and to wish they could see as "good as the other kids." Yet, the peers of integrated visually impaired students are a significant component of the social organization (i.e. the school) which functions as a primary socializing agent for all students. Pupil culture, evolving in response to the interacting purposes of learning, peer acceptance and interaction, and self interests, is ultimately the domain within which social acceptance of integrated students will be negotiated. The confusion around and misunderstandings of the visually impaired student that were evident in the interviews with their classmates, contributed to the problems of social integration for the visually impaired child.

9. Similar to children, adults' perceptions of visually impaired students are marked by inconsistencies, misinformation and limited knowledge. They struggle with the contradictions and dilemmas which evolve when children they perceive to be different are placed in situations where adults feel it inappropriate to treat them differently. Adults hold lower expectations for the social, academic and physical progress and performance of integrated visually impaired students. It is difficult for adults to model the positive acceptance of integrated visually impaired students when they have not yet themselves developed a sense of comfort in interaction with or instruction of these students.

10. There are an infinite number of aspects of the elementary school context which may function to constrain or enable the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students. A variable which appears to be particularly potent at one site may sometimes, in a different contextual environment, be unremarkable. In this study, the degree and intensity of a single aspect to contribute to or detract from the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students seems to fluctuate as an inextricably integrated aspect of a given context. Furthermore, the limitations imposed by a student's visual impairment can be emphasized or minimized by the way elementary classrooms are organized and learning environments designed. Such things as seating arrangements and the nature of learning environments can contribute to or detract from the ease with which a visually impaired student may function both socially and academically in a given context, and thereby, influence their acceptance and interaction with classmates.
11. Acceptance is a multidimensional, dynamic construct intrinsic to the social context in which it is bound. For integrated visually impaired children, acceptance is not a single construct fixed across time and social context. The same visually impaired child who is the centre of social interaction, lively discussion and boisterous laughter in the classroom, may be avoided as a playmate on the playground. Some visually impaired children are accepted in varying degrees both in the classroom and on the playground. Some sighted children experience obvious stress during

interactions with their visually impaired classmates. Even the identification of indicators of "acceptance" may change in a given context and in relation to a specific child. Thus, the interplay of biography, situation, nonverbal communication, and linguistic exchange that characterizes all social interaction are intrinsic to the negotiations for acceptance by visually impaired children.

12. The integrated visually impaired student's level and appropriateness of social skills are an important aspect to be considered when examining the social acceptance and interaction of these children. Without specific structured intervention, visually impaired students receive insufficient feedback and information to develop such social skills as joining groups, initiating a conversation or making eye contact. Mannerisms are disruptive to positive social interaction between integrated visually impaired students and their classmates. Such behaviours are rarely censored because they are atypical of other children and hence dismissed as inherent aspects of being visually impaired which, like appearance, should not be criticized. Teachers perceive the absence of censorship by classmates as disinterest or acceptance and make little effort to address the inappropriateness of such mannerisms. Thus, immature or inappropriate social skills and mannerisms appear to be maintained by the absence of both peer and adult feedback and/or censorship.
13. At present in our elementary school system, integration is viewed as a technical or administrative problem, one that is concerned with service delivery models, physical placement of students and

financial implications. There is minimal attention given the inherent conceptual and ethical concerns (e.g. the affective development of students) or pragmatic issues (e.g. teacher input, planning, commitment and training). Integration has been imposed in a haphazard manner without formal plans for the training, implementation, evaluation or follow-up considered critical to the successful implementation of any innovation and, most certainly, for such a complex one.

14. Regular public school classrooms in which little effort is made to openly acknowledge the student's visual impairment and to accommodate the implications of visual impairment upon the affective, physical and cognitive development of pupils should be considered potentially hostile social environments for integrated visually impaired children. Without an emphasis on the positive acceptance of difference, on structuring a learning environment which accommodates the specific needs of visually impaired students, and on taking into account the school culture, that is, the social environment and educators', parents' and peers' perceptions and interactions, the potential for these students to construct a positive self-image, to encounter an accepting social environment, to participate actively in classroom and playground activities, and to enjoy their school days, is at risk.

#### Recommendations

It is evident that stronger demands will be made upon educators to accommodate a more diverse student population in the regular classroom

than has been the case in the past. The following recommendations, although directed specifically toward the integration of visually impaired students, are believed to have the potential to enhance the receptiveness of the regular classroom to all children.

1. Great attention must be focused on the process of integration and on the complex philosophical, moral and pragmatic issues inherent in this concept. Educators and parents must identify the potential effects of integration upon the basic cultural assumptions present in elementary school classrooms and the incompatible aspects associated with the integration of visually impaired students. Educational leaders must assist school participants to address dilemmas which emerge. Of particular importance is the affective development of students and the need to create a social environment which promotes the positive acceptance of difference and eradicates the stigma associated with being different.
2. Educators and parents need to become cognizant of the social world of children, their perspectives, and the role friendship plays in the affective development of students. If adults are to enhance the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired children, they must learn the rules negotiated by children relevant to acceptance, positive interaction and friendship so as to incorporate this knowledge in programs designed to address the social integration of visually impaired students. It is only through planned intervention that visually impaired students can be provided the opportunity to experience such things as reciprocating the assistance they routinely receive from

classmates. Such aspects of a visually impaired child's development must be considered as critical as are those associated with academic progress.

3. Visually impaired students, their classmates, teachers and parents must become more knowledgeable about the nature and implications of visual impairment. Visual impairment must become a topic of both formal and informal discussion in the classrooms where visually impaired students are integrated. Visually impaired children need to routinely expand the conceptual and practical understanding of their visual impairment as they mature, as do their classmates. Therefore, if the social integration of visually impaired students is to be achieved, their peers must become an informed and integral part of the integration process.
4. Teaching strategies and environments which enhance the social acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students need to be identified. Cooperative learning has been identified as one process which has the potential to enhance the acceptance of integrated students as well as promote the development of social skills for all students. As well, there is a need to analyze the interaction in regular classrooms to identify those teaching strategies and activities which routinely detract from the social acceptance and interaction of visually impaired students.
5. Playgrounds and classrooms must have available recreational and learning activities which provide the opportunity for visually impaired students to participate actively and competently. In the

classroom, teaching strategies must accommodate the limited or absence of access to visual material. Information must be available in a format accessible to the visually impaired learner. On the playground, visually impaired students must have available games and activities in which they can participate and experience success. To ensure the opportunity for integrated visually impaired students to develop a positive self-concept it is critical to provide a context which emphasizes the abilities and minimizes the limitations imposed by visual impairment.

6. Visually impaired students need to receive assistance in developing social skills which are relevant to both the pupil culture and the adult world. It is critical they have access to the rules negotiated for effective interaction and receive feedback relevant to the responses peers have to their behaviour. Teachers need to address the mannerisms of integrated visually impaired children and provide the student necessary assistance to extinguish such behaviours as well as information relevant to the responses classmates have to these mannerisms.
7. There is a critical need to monitor the social interaction of integrated visually impaired students. Attention should be focused on the frequency, type and quality of interactions of the visually impaired student as well as those which are typical of classmates of the same gender. Observations by parents, classroom teachers and itinerant teachers for the visually impaired should be recorded and compared to evaluate and direct the affective development of the visually impaired student. Early and routine

intervention is required to ensure the changing needs of the student are addressed.

8. The integration of visually impaired students should be perceived as a significant educational innovation requiring a formal plan for implementation. This plan must include training and inservice opportunities for classroom teachers, preparation of the student population, procedural guidelines, adequate funding for essential resources, and monitoring and evaluation systems. Of critical importance is the leadership essential to address the cultural changes integration entails.
9. Since regular classroom teachers have been designated as having the major educational responsibility for integrated visually impaired students, they should participate fully in the designing of program and implementation plans. Teachers should also be expected to be part of the on-going decision-making involved in the placement and programming for the integrated students in their classrooms. The involvement of regular classroom teachers is essential if integration is to become a viable educational practice.

#### Directions for Future Research

This study was an exploration of the social environment encountered by integrated visually impaired students and the perceptions of elementary school participants relevant to the social integration of these children. During the research process several questions and issues requiring a more thorough examination than was possible in this



study, as well as those associated with integration in general, were identified. These future research needs are as follows:

1. an examination of the role gender and sex-stereotyping play in relation to the acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired students in particular, and handicapped children, in general;

2. a study of parents' expectations for and explicit and implicit intervention in, the social acceptance and interaction of their handicapped child;

3. an investigation, through in depth case studies, of integrated visually impaired students who are identified as very popular and those identified as unpopular;

4. an examination of the plight of "rejected" children and those aspects of the social environment which constrain and enable their acceptance;

5. a study of the issue of awareness and self-monitoring relevant to the social acceptance and interaction of nonhandicapped, handicapped, and rejected children as they relate to the concept of metacognition;

6. an assessment of the extent to which integration, as outlined by Departments of Education and/or school boards, is implemented at the school level; and

7. a study of the way itinerant teachers are utilized within the school system and how to design services to enhance the accessibility of their expertise to teachers.

The premises of this study, as outlined in Chapter 1, are a useful framework upon which to conceptualize and conduct research focused on integration. Given a symbolic interactionist perspective and the

framework inherent to the concept of organizational culture, this research has contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the issues intrinsic to the acceptance and interaction of integrated visually impaired children in elementary school classrooms. This research has revealed the complexity of, and the need for educators to attend to, the total social environment of schools as students are integrated; some potential starting points by which to address those aspects of school culture which detract from and those which encourage the successful social integration of visually impaired students; and, more importantly, why it is critical that educators do this.

Research is an evolving process. As insights are developed new perspectives and procedures are also required. As indicated by the potential research questions identified in this section, there is much that society in general, and educators in particular, have to learn and understand about the social, instructional and temporal integration of handicapped children. Current research on integration supports the conclusion that integration is a complex innovation which requires major restructuring of "general education" if the inherent benefits of this process are to be realized. Until both the implicit and explicit issues relevant to the integration of visually impaired students can be acknowledged and addressed, these students will continue to encounter a less than positive social environment in which to spend their school days.

However, this does not imply a return to segregated educational placements for visually impaired students. To do so would be to abandon the mission to change those aspects of the public school system which are incompatible with the integration of the handicapped, and which also

are barriers to the successful performance of many other students considered "at risk" in our schools (e.g. unpopular and rejected children). It is the professional responsibility of all educators to make a commitment to promote the social, physical and cognitive development of all children.

### Conclusion

The right to be educated in a regular classroom is one most citizens take for granted. For the visually impaired student this same right is being recognized and, in some provinces, mandated by law. What cannot be mandated is the provision of a positive learning environment --one that challenges the academic, social and physical potential of each student, one that ensures the opportunity to develop a positive self-concept and high self-esteem, one that provides students the joys and benefits of peer friendships. If society is to realize the benefits of an integrated school system, it must take the opportunity integration presents to improve the learning environment for all students. There was at least one rejected child in each classroom observed in this study. The plight of these children is evidence that educators need to address the affective development of their students. That the integration of disabled students could provide the catalyst to modify the mainstream so as to enhance a positive learning environment for all students, is an optimistic note upon which to end.

"Just Me"

I am a child who cannot see  
But that sort of thing does not bother me,  
It's like somebody turned out a light  
But that's not so bad, I can read in the night.  
I can be independent and not felt sorry for,  
I can do many things and much, much more.  
I can read braille and walk with my cane,  
But sometimes I think my cane is a pain.  
Every once in a while I feel kind of down,  
I like to play music and that brings me down.  
Even though I cannot see  
I have four other senses that are useful to me.  
I can do most things that any kid can,  
But once in a while I need a helping hand,  
Blindness is something that I have overcome,  
If only other people could see that I am a person,  
"just me."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This poem was written by Jennifer Keeping while a grade 6 student at St. Mary's School in North Sydney, Nova Scotia.

## APPENDIX A

### Consent Forms

Copies of the two consent forms used in this study are presented in this appendix. The first form was used for parents of the classmates of the visually impaired student. Parent Consent Form II was used for the parents of the visually impaired child.

#### PARENT CONSENT FORM

School is participating in a research project examining the social interaction of elementary school children. The researcher is interested in what children prefer to do on the playground and during unstructured time in the classroom, how children choose playmates and workmates, how children decide who to include and/or exclude in activities both inside and outside the classroom, and friendships of elementary school aged children. The social interaction and acceptance of visually impaired children who are integrated in regular classrooms is the focus of the study.

Children and their teachers will be asked to participate in an interview with the researcher, Mrs. P. Ann MacCuspie, who is a doctoral student at Dalhousie University. All information is confidential and the research report will not contain the names of the participating students, teachers, or their school.

Parental consent is required prior to the participation of students. If you are willing to have your child participate in an interview, please sign below. Interviews will be 45-60 minutes long and recorded to enable the researcher to refer to the information when required. Since the researcher is interested in obtaining the child's perspective on this topic, please do not discuss the research with your child prior to her/his interview.

If you have further questions concerning the research, please contact Mrs. MacCuspie at the school.

I (parent's name) give my permission to have my daughter/son (child's name) participate in an interview concerning the social interaction of elementary school children with researcher, Mrs. P. Ann MacCuspie.

Parent's Signature

Date

## PARENTAL CONSENT FORM II

School is participating in a research project examining the social interaction of elementary school children. The researcher is interested in what children prefer to do on the playground and during unstructured time in the classroom, how children choose playmates and workmates, how children decide who to include and/or exclude in activities both inside and outside the classroom, and friendships of elementary school aged children.

Children and their teachers will be asked to participate in an interview with the researcher, Mrs. P. Ann MacCuspie, who is a doctoral student at Dalhousie University. All information is confidential and the research report will not contain the names of the participating students, teachers, or their school.

Parental consent is required prior to the participation of students. If you are willing to have your child participate in an interview, please sign below. Interviews will be 45-60 minutes long and recorded to enable the researcher to refer to the information when required. Since the researcher is interested in obtaining the child's perspective on this topic, please do not discuss the research with your child prior to her/his interview.

If you have further questions concerning the research, please contact Mrs. MacCuspie at the school.

I (parent's name) give my permission to have  
my daughter/son (child's name) participate in an  
interview concerning the social interaction of elementary school  
children with researcher, Mrs. P. Ann MacCuspie.

Parent's Signature

Date

## APPENDIX B

### Interview Guides

Following are the interview guides used with the classmates of integrated visually impaired students, visually impaired students, their teachers, principals, itinerant teachers for the visually impaired, and parents. The section entitled "Questions Related to Specific Events Observed by the Researcher" contained questions which varied from interviewee to interviewee depending upon the questions emanating from participant observation. The number of questions in this section tended to vary from four or five questions to as many as twenty additional queries. In most cases questions for this section were dispersed throughout the interview. This enhanced the flow of the interview and avoided presenting unrelated questions out of context.

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#### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR USE WITH CLASSMATES

##### INTRODUCTION

- thank for agreeing to participate
- purpose of interview
- There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. I want you to answer the way you really think. Your ideas will help me to know what kids your age do at school during class, recess, and noon hour, how they get along, and about friends and how you choose them. Things like that. I'm interested in finding out how you think about things or what your point of view is.
- confidentiality and permission to use tape recorder
- questions

THE SCHOOL AND CLASSMATES/PEERS (picture and/or class list was available)

1. I haven't been in this school very long so I don't really know what it's like. Could you tell me about the school and your class?
2. Tell me about the people in your class.
  - (a). Here is a list of all the kids in your class. Go down the list and tell me a few things about each one of them.

3. What other things do you think it would be important for a person to know about your school/class?

#### ACTIVITIES

4. I want to talk to you about things kids your age do in school. What things do they do during free time, for example, recess or noon hour?

5. What things do you like to do?

6. If I were to see you at recess or noon hour, what would I see you doing?

7. What is your favorite part of the school day? Tell me about it.

8. Tell me what you do in school when you're not doing school work?

9. What types of activities would you like to do at school with your friends that you can't do now?

10. What do children your age do after school or on weekends?

11. What do you like to do?

#### SCHOOL FRIENDS

12. Tell me about your school friends.

(a). Who do kids usually play with at noon hour or recess?

13. What things do you do with your friends?

14. What are your favorite things to do with your friends?

15. What do you like/not like about these friends?

16. Can you tell me the names of your best friends?

(a). How many of the kids who were your best friends in your class last year are in your class this year?

17. Here are name tags for all the children in your class. Put all the kids who are your very good friends in this pile, all the kids who are "okay friends" in this pile, and all the kids who are not your friend in this pile.

18. Tell me about your best friends.

(a). Tell me about your "okay friends".

(b). Tell me about the kids who are not your friends.

(c). What's the difference between best friends and "okay friends"?

19. Who are the kids in your class that other kids do not talk to very often? Tell me about them.



20. Which kids would you choose to work with on a project in class?  
Tell me about them.
21. Which kids would you not choose to work with on a project in class?  
Tell me about them.
22. Who are the kids in your class that the other kids do not seem to play with very often? Tell me about them.
23. You told me the kids in your class who were your friends and those who were not your friends. Tell me what a good friend should be like, how he/she should act.
24. Tell me how kids who are not friends act toward you?
25. How does this make you feel?
26. What are some things your friends do or say that help or that you like?\*
27. What are some other things you want your friends to do?\*
28. What are some things your friends do or say that don't help or that you don't like?\*
29. What do you do to help your friends know what you like?\*
30. Suppose I was a new kid just starting this school and I didn't know anything about your class, what would you tell me about things I should do or shouldn't do to be liked by the other kids?
31. How should I act if I wanted to join in with them when they're playing?
32. What should I do if I didn't want to play with a certain kid?
33. Who are the kids in your class who have difficulty making friends?  
Tell me about them.
34. We talked about friends and people who aren't friends. How do the kids in your class think about you?  
(a). How do you think of yourself compared to the other kids?

QUESTIONS CONCERNING VISUAL IMPAIRMENT (ask only if the visually impaired student has been previously mentioned by the interviewee)

35. You mentioned \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) was a kid who \_\_\_\_.  
Tell me about visually impaired people.  
(a). Tell me how kids in your class feel about having \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) in their class.
36. Tell me how kids in your class feel about working in school with \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child).

(a). Who does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) play with at noon hour and recess?

37. Tell me how kids in your class feel about playing outside at recess or noon hour with \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child).

(a). How is \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) the same as other kids in your class? Different than other kids in your class?

38. Is it easier or more difficult for \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) to make friends than other kids in your class? Tell me about this.

39. Suppose a kid in your class was playing with another kid, we'll call her/him (e.g. David, Amy) and he/she hit/tripped the kid, what would the kid who was hit/tripped do?

40. What would you do?

41. Suppose a kid in your class was playing with (visually impaired child) and he/she hit/tripped the kid, what would the kid do? Tell me about this.

42. What would you do?

43. What does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) do when you play (e.g. baseball, skipping games, etc.)?

44. Is there anything \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) cannot do in school? on the playground?

45. How do you feel about that?

46. What changes could be made so that he/she could do this?

47. You mentioned that \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) has a visual impairment (use term given by interviewee), what does it mean to be visually impaired? What is it like?

48. Tell me what you know about \_\_\_\_'s (visually impaired child) visual impairment.

(a). When \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) talk to people he/she doesn't seem to look at them. What do kids think about that?

49. Why do children have visual impairments?

50. Do you know anyone else with a visual impairment?

(a). Some people have told me \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) gets special treatment in your class because he/she is visually impaired. What do you think about that?

51. Sometimes people don't really understand what it means to have a visual impairment, they may even have silly or wrong ideas about visual

impairment. What silly or wrong ideas have you heard about visual impairment from your friends? your teachers? your parents?\*

52. What do you do or say when you hear these?

53. Suppose a friend asked you for some advice about getting along with a visually impaired kid in her/his class. What would you tell her/him?

54. I'd like to talk to you about some materials and equipment a visually impaired kid might use. What special materials or equipment have you seen used by someone with a visual impairment?

55. Are there times when using \_\_\_\_ is a problem for them? When does this happen?\*

56. What do kids your age think about \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) using \_\_\_\_ in the classroom?

#### TEACHERS AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

57. Teachers try to help students in school, and sometimes teachers may try to give special help or extra attention because a kid has a visual impairment. What are some things that your teacher does that help visually impaired kids?\*

58. What are some other things that you want your teacher to do?\*

59. What are some things that your teacher does that don't help or that you don't like?\*

#### ITINERANT TEACHER AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

60. What are some things that the itinerant teacher, \_\_\_\_, does that help?\*

61. What are some other things that you think he/she could do?\*

62. What are some things that the itinerant teacher does that don't help or that you don't like?\*

63. How do you feel when the itinerant teacher works in your classroom?\*

#### BELONGING IN SCHOOL

64. When I have talked to kids your age about how they are treated by other kids in their class, some have told me they feel they belong to the class and some say they feel alone or left out. How do you usually feel?\*

65. When do you feel you belong?

66. When do you feel alone or left out?

67. What do you do to feel more a part of your class?\*

68. What could other students do to help you feel more a part of the group?\*
69. What could teachers do to help you feel more a part of the group?\*
70. Have you noticed other children in your class who seem to feel left out?
71. What do you do when you see them?
72. When we say kids are popular, what do we mean?
- (a). What are the kids like that seem to be the most popular in your class?
  - (b). Here are the name tags. Choose the five most popular kids in your class. What makes them popular?
  - (c). Choose the least popular kids in your class. What makes them least popular?
  - (d). Choose the five smartest kids in your class. Choose the five students who have the hardest time in school.
  - (e). Choose the five best looking kids in your class. Choose the five kids who are least attractive.
73. Overall, how much do you like school?
74. If you could change your school in any way which would make it better for you, what would you do?

#### QUESTIONS RELATED TO SPECIFIC EVENTS OBSERVED BY THE RESEARCHER

#### CONCLUSION

75. How did you feel about answering these questions?
76. Is there anything else you would like to say about the things we have talked about?
77. Do you have any questions about anything we talked about?
78. I have one more question. When a researcher like me comes to a school and is interested in all the things going on, sometimes people change their behaviour because I'm watching. Sometimes they act the way they always did before I was there. What have you noticed about the kids in your class since I've been here?
- (b). What have you noticed about your teacher (say each teacher's name individually) since I've been here?
- Thank you for doing this interview with me. Your ideas and thoughts are really helpful.

\* Question taken or derived from "Reducing Isolation in the Mainstream Part I: An Interview for Vision Impaired and Hearing Impaired Students", Joint Independent School District 287, Minneapolis, 1979.

## INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR USE WITH VISUALLY IMPAIRED PUPILS

## INTRODUCTION

- thank for agreeing to participate
- purpose of interview
- There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. I want you to answer the way you really think. Your ideas will help me to know what kids your age do at school during class, recess, and noon hour, how they get along, and about friends and how you choose them. Things like that. I'm interested in finding out how you think about things or what your point of view is.
- confidentiality and permission to use tape recorder
- questions

THE SCHOOL AND CLASSMATES/PEERS (have class picture and/or list available)

1. I haven't been in this school very long so I don't really know what it's like. Could you tell me about the school and your class?
2. Tell me about the people in your class.  
(a). Here is a list of all the kids in your class. Go down the list and tell me a few things about each one of them.
3. What other things do you think it would be important for a person to know about your school/class.
4. How many children are in your class? Can you tell me their names?

## ACTIVITIES

5. I want to talk to you about things kids your age do in school. What things do they do during free time, for example, recess or noon hour?
6. What things do you like to do?
7. If I were to see you at recess or noon hour, what would I see you doing?
8. What is your favorite part of the school day? Tell me about it.
9. Tell me what you do in school when you're not doing school work?
10. What types of activities would you like to do at school with your friends that you can't do now?
11. What do children your age do after school or on weekends?
12. What do you like to do?

## SCHOOL FRIENDS

13. Tell me about your school friends.  
(a). Who do kids usually play with at recess and noon hour?  
(b). Who do you usually play with?

14. What things do you do with your friends?
15. What are your favorite things to do with your friends?
16. What do you like/not like about these friends?
17. Can you tell me the names of your best friends?  
(a). How many of the kids who were your best friends in your class last year are in your class this year?
18. Can you tell me the names of the children in your class who are not your friends? Tell me about them.
19. What about the other kids? [those not mentioned as best or not friends]
20. Who are the kids in your class that other kids do not talk to very often? Tell me about them.
21. Which kids would you choose to work with on a project in class? Tell me about them.
22. Which kids would you not choose to work with on a project in class? Tell me about them.
23. Who are the kids in your class that the other kids do not seem to play with very often? Tell me about them.
24. You told me the kids in your class who were your friends and those who were not your friends. Tell me what a good friend should be like, how he/she should act.
25. Tell me how kids who are not friends act toward you?
26. How does this make you feel?
27. What are some things your friends do or say that help or that you like?\*
28. What are some other things you want your friends to do?\*
29. What are some things your friends do or say that don't help or that you don't like?\*
30. What do you do to help your friends know what you like?\*
31. Suppose I was a new kid just starting this school and I didn't know anything about your class, what would you tell me about things I should do or shouldn't do to be liked by the other kids?
32. How should I act if I wanted to join in with them when they're playing?

33. What should I do if I didn't want to play with a certain kid?
34. Who are the kids in your class who have difficulty making friends? Tell me about them.
35. We talked about friends and people who aren't friends. How do the kids in your class think about you?
- (a) How do you think of yourself compared to other kids?

#### OUT-OF-SCHOOL FRIENDS

36. Tell me about your out-of-school friends.
37. What things do you do with these friends?
38. What are your favorite things to do with these friends?
39. What do you like/not like about these friends?
40. Can you tell me the names of your best friends when you're not in school? Tell me about them.
41. Can you tell me the names of the children outside school who are not your friends? Tell me about them.
42. How many friends do you have who also have a visual impairment? Tell me about them.

#### QUESTIONS CONCERNING VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

43. Tell me about visually impaired people.
- (a). Tell me about your visual impairment.
44. What does it mean to be visually impaired? What is it like?
45. Is there anything you want to do in school, but they don't let you do because of your visual impairment?\*
46. How do you feel about that?
47. What changes could be made so that you could do this?\*
48. Sometimes when people, like your teachers or friends, know you have a visual impairment, they don't really understand what that means, they may even have silly or wrong ideas about visual impairment. What silly or wrong ideas have you heard about visual impairment from your friends? your teachers?\*
49. What do you do or say when you hear these?
50. I'd like to talk to you about some materials and equipment you might use. What special materials or equipment do you use because of your visual impairment?\*

51. Are there times when using\_\_\_is a problem for you? When does this happen?\*

52. What are some things that you do that help?\*

53. What are some things that other people could do that might help?\*

#### TEACHERS AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

54. Teachers try to help students in school, and sometimes teachers may try to give you special help or extra attention because you have a visual impairment. But teachers don't always know the best way to help students, and they may not know the best way to help you. What are some things that your teacher does that help or that you like?\*

55. What are some other things that you want your teacher to do?\*

56. What are some things that your teacher does that don't help or that you don't like?\*

57. What do you do to help your teacher understand what you want in school?\*

#### ITINERANT TEACHER AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

58. What are some things that your itinerant teacher, \_\_\_\_, does that help or that you like?\*

59. What are some other things that you want your teacher to do?\*

60. What are some things that your itinerant teacher does that don't help or that you don't like?\*

61. What do you do to help your itinerant teacher understand what you want in school?\*

62. How do you feel when you leave the room to go to work with your itinerant teacher?\*

63. How do you feel when your itinerant teacher works with you in your classroom?\*

#### PEERS AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

64. What do the children in your class know about your visual impairment?

65. What do your friends know about your visual impairment?

66. Does having a visual impairment make it easier or more difficult to have friends? Tell me about this.

67. When I have talked to kids your age about how they are treated by other kids in their class, some have told me they feel they belong to



the class and some say they feel alone or left out. How do you usually feel? \*

68. When do you feel you belong?\*

69. When do you feel alone or left out?\*

70. What do you do to feel more a part of your class?\*

71. What could other students do to help you feel more a part of the group?\*

72. What could teachers do to help you feel more a part of the group?\*

73. Are there other kids in your school with a visual impairment? How do you feel about that?\*

74. What is the biggest problem for you in school because of your visual impairment?\*

75. If you were talking to a class who were going to have a visually impaired student in their class for the first time, what sorts of things would you tell them?

76. When we say kids are popular, what do we mean?

(a). What are the kids like that seem to be the most popular in your class?

(b). Here are the name tags. Choose the five most popular kids in your class. What makes them popular?

(c). Choose the least popular kids in your class. What makes them least popular?

(d). Choose the five smartest kids in your class. Choose the five students who have the hardest time in school.

(e). Choose the five best looking kids in your class. Choose the five kids who are least attractive.

77. Overall, how much do you like school?

78. If you could change your school in any way which would make it better for you, what would you do?

#### QUESTIONS RELATED TO SPECIFIC EVENTS OBSERVED BY THE RESEARCHER

#### CONCLUSION

79. How did you feel about answering these questions?

80. Is there anything else you would like to say about the things we have talked about?

81. Do you have any questions about anything we talked about?

82. I have one more question. When a researcher like me comes to a school and is interested in all the things going on, sometimes people change their behaviour because I'm watching. Sometimes they act the way they always did before I was there. What have you noticed about the kids in your class since I've been here?

(b). What have you noticed about your teacher (say each teacher's name individually) since I've been here?

- Thank you for doing this interview with me. Your ideas and thoughts are really helpful.

\* Question taken or derived from "Reducing Isolation in the Mainstream Part I: An Interview for Vision Impaired and Hearing Impaired Students", Joint Independent School District 287, Minneapolis, 1979.

#### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR USE WITH CLASSROOM TEACHERS

##### INTRODUCTION

- thank for agreeing to participate
- purpose of research
- how information will be used
- confidentiality and anonymity
- permission to tape

##### VISUALLY IMPAIRED PUPIL AND SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

1. As \_\_\_'s (visually impaired child) teacher, you see her/him in school during various activities. What does \_\_\_ (visually impaired pupil) do in the classroom when there is an opportunity to choose an activity?
2. What is his/her favorite thing to do?
3. What does he/she never engage in?
4. What does \_\_\_ (visually impaired pupil) do at recess or noon hour when the children are outdoors?
5. What is his/her favorite activity?
6. What does he/she never engage in?
7. When \_\_\_ (visually impaired pupil) needs help in school or on the playground, what does he/she do?
8. From whom does he/she usually request help?
9. Give me your impression of \_\_\_ (visually impaired student).

## INTERACTION WITH PEERS

10. Who are \_\_\_\_'s (visually impaired child) friends? Who are the children he/she does not appear to get along with?
11. Choose the five most popular children in this class.
  - (a). Choose the five least popular children in this class.
  - (b). What makes a child popular at this age?
  - (c). Choose the five smartest students in this class.
  - (d). Choose the five students who have the most difficulty learning.
  - (e). From a teacher's perspective, who are the five most likable students in this class?
12. What is your perception of the social acceptance of \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) by her/his classmates? by other children in the school?
  - (a). How does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) interact with her/his peers in the classroom? on the playground?
13. What social situations does he/she seek in work? in play?
14. When do other children seek out \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child)?
15. How does the approach/interaction between \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) and her/his classmates vary in different settings? at different times?
16. What does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) do which you feel contributes to her/his social acceptance by peers? detracts from this acceptance?
17. What do her/his classmates do which contribute to or detract from her/his acceptance by them?
  - (a). In relation to other children in your class, how do you see \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child's) behaviour? his social interaction?
  - (b). What relation do you feel this has to her/his visual impairment?
18. What types of things have you done to encourage \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) to make friends? Which were the most/least successful?
19. How does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) think of herself/himself in terms of her/his visual impairment?
  - (a). When \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired student) speaks with people he/she doesn't make eye contact. How do people react to this? How do you feel about it?
20. The next question may be difficult to answer with certainty, but I'd like to get your thoughts on it. In thinking about \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) as he/she gets to junior and senior high school, how do you think he/she will get along socially?
  - (a). What do you see \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired student) doing as an adult?

## INTERACTION WITH TEACHER

21. Tell me about how \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) relates to adults.

22. How does this compare with the other children in your class?
23. What were your feelings when you first learned you would be having a visually impaired child in your class?
24. How is/are the teacher(s) \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) will have next year feeling about having a visually impaired pupil in their class?
25. Describe how you relate to or interact with \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired pupil).
  - (a). How have you and \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired student) handled his handicap?
  - (b). How difficult or easy would it be for a teacher to discuss a visually impaired student's visual impairment with her/him?
26. How do you respond to \_\_\_\_'s (visually impaired child) mannerisms? other inappropriate behaviour?
27. What is \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) not permitted to do because of her/his visual impairment?
  - (a). How has \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired student) reacted to the use of special materials/equipment in class?
28. Tell me about your involvement with \_\_\_\_'s (visually impaired pupil) parents.
29. What do you think is the feeling of staff of this school, in general, to having a visually impaired child in their class?
30. What do you see as the teacher's role in the social integration of a visually impaired student? the principal's role? the parent's role? the itinerant teacher's role?

#### INTEGRATION OF HANDICAPPED PUPILS

31. What is your impression of the integration of handicapped children in the regular classroom?
32. What do you see as the advantages/disadvantages for the handicapped child? the classmates? the classroom teachers? the principal? the parents?
33. As I've been interviewing teachers about integration some have told me the acceptance of handicapped children in our schools is merely a reflection of the acceptance of the handicapped in society. What's your reaction to this statement?
34. How did your school first get involved in integrating handicapped pupils? in integrating visually impaired pupils?
35. What specific problems/rewards has the integration of a visually impaired child had for you?

36. What is the most difficult aspect of having a visually impaired pupil in your class?

37. What do you see as the effect of having a visually impaired child in your class on the other students?

(a). What's your perception of the amount of special attention \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired student) gets because he/she is visually impaired?

38. Tell me about the reactions of other pupils to having a visually impaired child in their class.

39. What guidelines or directions have you received concerning the integration of handicapped children in the regular classroom?

(a). Some teachers have told me integration has been imposed on them. Others feel they've had some input into the process. What is your feeling about this?

40. In your opinion, what would be the best educational placement for \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child)?

41. What have you learned from your experience of having a visually impaired pupil enrolled in your class?

42. How effective do you think the integration program is? What leads you to conclude this?

(a). How would you describe the working climate in this school?

#### QUESTIONS RELATED TO SPECIFIC EVENTS OBSERVED BY THE RESEARCHER

##### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

43. How many years have you been teaching?

44. What levels have you taught?

45. Where and when did you get your training?

46. What Special Education training did you receive during your preservice training? since your preservice training?

47. What was the role of the regular classroom teacher in relation to handicapped children at the time of your preservice training?

##### CONCLUSION

48. You've given me a lot of information about your experiences with the integration of a visually impaired pupil, strengths and weaknesses you've observed, and some of the things you've liked and disliked. Now I'd like to ask you about your recommendations for the integration program. If you had the power to change things about the program, what would you do?

49. Thank you for participating in this interview. I appreciate your openness and quality of the information you have given me. Before we end the interview, is there anything you would like to add to what we have discussed?

(a). What effect has my presence as an observer had on your class?

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### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR USE WITH PRINCIPALS

#### INTRODUCTION

- thank for agreeing to participate
- purpose of research
- how information will be used
- confidentiality and anonymity
- permission to tape

#### PEER INTERACTION

1. How does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) interact with her/his peers in class? on the playground?
2. How would you describe \_\_\_\_'s (visually impaired child) acceptance by peers?
3. What does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) do which you feel contributes to her/his social acceptance by peers? detracts from this acceptance?
4. What do her/his classmates do which contribute to or detract from her/his acceptance by them?
5. What types of things have been done to encourage \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) to make friends? Which were the most/least successful?
6. What activities are available for pupils at recess? noon hour?
7. What is \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) not permitted to do because of her/his visual impairment?
8. What do you see as the teacher's role in the social integration of a visually impaired student? the principal's role? the parent's role? the itinerant teacher's role?
9. The next question may be difficult to answer with certainty, but I'd like to get your thoughts on it. In thinking about \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) as he/she gets to junior and senior high school, how do you think he/she will get along socially?

#### INTERACTION WITH PRINCIPAL

10. Since administrative arrangements vary from school to school, perhaps we could start by having you describe your involvement with \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired pupil).

11. What were your feelings when you first learned you would be having a visually impaired child in your school?
12. Describe how you relate to or interact with \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired pupil).
13. How do you respond to \_\_\_\_'s (visually impaired child) mannerisms? other inappropriate behaviour?
14. Tell me about how \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) relates to adults.
15. How does this compare with the other children in your school?
16. Tell me about your involvement with \_\_\_\_'s (visually impaired pupil) parents.

#### INTEGRATION OF HANDICAPPED PUPILS

17. What is your impression of the integration of handicapped children in the regular classroom?
18. What do you see as the advantages/disadvantages for the handicapped child? the classmates? the classroom teachers? the principal? the parents?
19. How are these the same/different for visually impaired children?
20. Within the same school district some schools seem to have handicapped students integrated with few difficulties while others experience many problems. What do you think contributes to such differences?
21. How did your school first get involved in integrating handicapped pupils? in integrating visually impaired pupils?
22. How effective do you think the integration program is? What leads you to conclude this?
23. In your opinion, what would be the best educational placement for \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired pupil)?
24. What guidelines or policies are provided by your school board in relation to the integration of handicapped children? by the province?
25. What specific problems/rewards has the integration of a visually impaired child had for you?
26. What is the most difficult aspect of having a visually impaired pupil in your school?
27. What are your concerns related to integration of the visually impaired?

28. What concerns do teachers have about the integration of visually impaired children?
29. What do you see as the effect of having a visually impaired child in the regular classroom on the other students?
30. What are the reactions of other pupils to having a visually impaired child in their class?
31. How is/are the teacher(s) \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) will have next year feeling about having a visually impaired pupil in their class?
32. What is the feeling of staff of this school, in general, to having a visually impaired child in their class?
33. How does having a visually impaired child in your school relate to the goal of education in general in your school?
34. How would you describe the working climate in this school?
35. How do you decide which children will be placed in each class from year to year?
36. How do you decide to which class the visually impaired student will be assigned?

#### QUESTIONS RELATED TO SPECIFIC EVENTS OBSERVED BY THE RESEARCHER

##### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

37. How many years have you been a principal?
38. How many years have you been a classroom teacher?
39. What levels have you taught?
40. Where and when did you get your training?
41. What Special Education training did you receive during your preservice training? since your preservice training?
42. What was the role of the regular classroom teacher in relation to handicapped children at the time of your preservice training?
43. What was the role of the principal in relation to handicapped children when you received your initial administrative training?
44. Is this role different than that of today?

##### CONCLUSION

45. You've given me a lot of information about your experiences with the integration of a visually impaired pupil, strengths and weaknesses



you've observed, and some of the things you've liked and disliked. Now I'd like to ask you about your recommendations for the integration program. If you had the power to change things about the program, what would you do?

46. What effect has my presence as an observer had on your school?

47. Thank you for participating in this interview. I appreciate your openness and quality of the information you have given me. Before we end the interview, is there anything you would like to add to what we have discussed?

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### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR USE WITH ITINERANT TEACHERS

#### INTRODUCTION

- thank for agreeing to participate
- purpose of research
- how information will be used
- confidentiality and anonymity
- permission to tape

#### VISUALLY IMPAIRED PUPIL AND SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

1. As \_\_\_\_'s (visually impaired child) itinerant teacher, you see her/him in school during various activities. What does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) do in the classroom when there is an opportunity to choose an activity?

2. What is her/his favorite thing to do?

3. What does he/she never engage in?

4. What does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) do at recess or noon hour when the children are outdoors?

5. What is her/his favorite activity on the playground?

6. What does he/she never engage in?

7. What types of activities are available for \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) on this playground? in the classroom?

8. When the visually impaired pupil needs help what does he/she do?  
(a). From whom does he/she usually request help?

9. What is your impression of \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired student)?

#### INTERACTION WITH PEERS

10. How does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) interact with her peers in class? on the playground?

11. Describe \_\_\_\_'s (visually impaired child) acceptance by peers?
12. What have you observed which leads you to believe this?
13. Who are \_\_\_\_'s (visually impaired child) friends?
14. Who are the children he/she does not appear to get along with?
15. How does the visually impaired child relate to the class as a whole?
16. What social situations does the child seek in work or play?
17. Which children seek out \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child)?
18. How does the approach/interaction between \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) and her/his classmates vary in different settings or at different times?
  - (a). In relation to other grade \_\_\_\_ children, how do you see \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired student's) behaviour? her/his social interaction?
  - (b). What relation do you feel this has to her/his visual impairment?
19. What does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) do which you feel contributes to her/his social acceptance by peers? detracts from her/his social acceptance by peers?
  - (a). When \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired student) speaks with people he/she doesn't make eye contact. What's their reaction to this? What's your reaction to this?
20. What do her classmates do which contribute to or detract from her acceptance by them?
21. What do her teachers do which contribute to or detract from her acceptance by classmates?
22. What types of things have you done to encourage \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) to make friends? Which were the most/least successful?
  - (a). How has \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired student) reacted to the use of special materials/equipment in class?
23. What could be done at this school to enhance the social interaction and acceptance of \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) by the other children?
24. What do you see as the teacher's role in the social integration of a visually impaired student? the principal's role? the parent's role? the itinerant teacher's role?
25. The next question may be difficult to answer with certainty, but I'd like to get your thoughts on it. In thinking about \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) as he/she gets to junior and senior high school, how do you think he/she will get along socially?

(a). What do you see \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired student) doing as an adult?

#### QUESTIONS RELATED TO SPECIFIC EVENTS OBSERVED BY THE RESEARCHER

##### SOCIAL INTEGRATION

26. How do itinerant teachers perceive the issue of social integration of visually impaired pupils?

27. What is your perception of the social integration of other visually impaired children on your caseload and of \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) in particular?

28. How does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) think of herself/himself in terms of her/his visual impairment?

29. How does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) think of herself/himself in relation to the other children?

30. Tell me about how \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) relates to adults.

31. What do you think is the feeling of staff of this school, in general, to having a visually impaired child in their class?

(a). How would you describe the working climate in this school?

(b). How would you describe your working relationship with \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired student's) teachers?

32. Describe how you relate to or interact with \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired pupil).

33. Tell me about your involvement with \_\_\_\_'s (visually impaired pupil) parents.

##### INTEGRATION OF HANDICAPPED PUPILS

34. What is your impression of the integration of handicapped children in the regular classroom?

(a). What are the limitations on integration in this school?

35. What do you see as the advantages/disadvantages for the handicapped child? the classmates? the classroom teachers? the principal? the parents?

36. How are these the same/different for visually impaired children?

(a). What is your perception of the amount of special attention \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired student) gets because he/she is visually impaired?

37. What specific problems/rewards has the integration of a visually impaired child had for you?

38. What is the most difficult aspect of having a visually impaired pupil in the regular class?

39. How effective do you think the integration program is? What leads you to conclude this?

40. In your opinion, what would be the best educational placement for \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child)?

#### CONCLUSION

41. You've given me a lot of information about your experiences with the integration of a visually impaired pupil, strengths and weaknesses you've observed, and some of the things you've liked and disliked. Now I'd like to ask you about your recommendations for the integration program. If you had the power to change things about the program, what would you do?

42. What has \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired student) told you about my presence in this school?

43. Thank you for participating in this interview. I appreciate your openness and quality of the information you have given me. Before we end the interview, is there anything you would like to add to what we have discussed?

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### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR USE WITH PARENTS OF THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

#### INTRODUCTION

- thank for agreeing to participate
- purpose of research
- how information will be used
- confidentiality and anonymity
- permission to tape

#### ACTIVITIES

1. As parents, you see \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) in situations which are very different from the group life of school. I'd like to talk about the things he/she does when not in school. What does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) do after school? on weekends? in the evenings?
2. What is \_\_\_\_'s (visually impaired child) favorite past time?
3. What does he/she never engage in?
4. What social situations does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) seem to prefer for work? for play?
5. What types of activities are available for \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) at home? in the community? at school?

## INTERACTION WITH PEERS

6. What does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) tell you about her/his school friends? out-of-school friends?
7. Who are \_\_\_\_'s (visually impaired child) friends?
8. Who are the children he/she does not appear to get along with?
9. What types of activities does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) like to do with friends?
10. When do other children seek out \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child)?
11. How does the approach/interaction between \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) and her/his friends vary in different settings? at different times?
12. From the information you receive from \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) and school staff, what is your feeling about her/his acceptance by the other children at school?
13. Overall, how much does he/she like school?  
(a). Tell me about \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child's) homework?
14. What types of things have you done to encourage \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) to make friends? Which were the most/least successful?
15. The next question may be difficult to answer with certainty, but I'd like to get your thoughts on it. In thinking about \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) as he/she gets to junior and senior high school, how do you think he/she will get along socially?  
(a). What do you see \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) doing as an adult?

## SPECIFIC ATTRIBUTES OF THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILD

16. What does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) do which you feel contributes to her/his social acceptance by peers? detracts from this acceptance?
17. What do her/his classmates do which contribute to or detract from her/his acceptance by them?
18. What do her/his teachers do which contribute to or detract from her/his acceptance by peers?
19. What attracts \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) to other children?
20. Is it easier or more difficult for \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) to make friends than it is for children without a visual impairment?
21. What does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) think about this?
22. How does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) respond to teasing?

23. How do other children respond to \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) when he/she hits or behaves inappropriately to them?

24. Tell me about how \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) relates to adults.

#### VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

25. What does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) know about her/his visual impairment?

26. How often does her/his visual impairment come up in routine conversation?

27. How does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) think of herself/himself in terms of her/his visual impairment?

28. How does \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) view herself/himself in terms of their acceptance by other children?

29. What is \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) not permitted to do because he/she is visually impaired?

30. What activities designed specifically for the visually impaired or handicapped is \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) involved in?

31. What is her/his impression of such activities?

32. What is your impression of such activities?

#### PARENTING A VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILD

33. How is parenting a visually impaired child the same/different than parenting a child who is not visually impaired?

34. Many parents of visually impaired children have concerns about their child's acceptance by other children. What do you think makes it difficult for some visually impaired children to find friends?

35. What is the most difficult aspect of having a visually impaired child? the most rewarding?

36. Describe how you relate to or interact with \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired pupil).

37. How do you respond to \_\_\_\_'s (visually impaired child) mannerisms? other inappropriate behaviour?

38. In your experience, how do people generally react to a visually impaired child?

#### INTEGRATION OF THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

39. We've been talking about the social development of children and friendships, now I'd like to ask you some questions concerning your

opinion of the integration program, that is having visually impaired children educated in the regular classroom with sighted children. What is your impression of integration of handicapped children?

40. What do you see as the advantages/disadvantages for the visually impaired child? the classmates? the classroom teachers? the principal? the parents?

41. How are these the same/different for other handicapped children?

42. What specific problems/rewards has the integration of your visually impaired child had for you?

43. What do you think is the most difficult aspect of having a visually impaired child in a regular class?

44. How has the school involved you in the integration of your child?

45. What do you see as the teacher's role in the social integration of integrated visually impaired children? the principal's role? the parent's role? the itinerant teacher's role? the visually impaired child's role? the classmate's role?

46. In your opinion, what would be the best educational placement for \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child)?

#### QUESTIONS RELATED TO SPECIFIC EVENTS OBSERVED BY THE RESEARCHER

#### CONCLUSION

47. You've given me a lot of information about your experiences as parents of a visually impaired child, strengths and weaknesses you've observed in educational programs, and some of the things you've liked and disliked. Now I'd like to ask you about your recommendations for the integration program. If you had the power to change things about the program, what would you do?

48. What has \_\_\_\_ (visually impaired child) told you about my presence at her/his school?

49. Thank you for participating in this interview. I appreciate your openness and quality of the information you have given me. Before we end the interview, is there anything you would like to add to what we have discussed?

## APPENDIX C

### Codes and Code Definitions

As interviews were transcribed and participant observation notes reviewed, categories and themes relative to the original research questions emerged. Codes were created for emerging categories, themes, insights and information related to specific research questions, key concepts and patterns common both within and across sites. The codes are presented in the first section of this appendix; their definitions in the second section.

<b>ACCEPTANCE</b>	<b>ACC</b>
Acceptance or non-acceptance	ACC+ or ACC-
Acceptance by girls	ACC-VIG
Acceptance by parents	ACC-PA
Acceptance by teachers	ACC-T
Acc depends upon behaviour of V.I.	ACC-VI
Variables contributing to ACC+	ACC-VAR+
Variables contributing to ACC-	ACC-VAR-
 <b>ADAPTATIONS</b>	 <b>AD</b>
Program adaptations	AD-PR
Material adaptations	AD-M
 <b>ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT</b>	 <b>ADMS</b>
Positive support	ADMS+
Lack of support	ADMS-



<b>CONFLICTS</b>	<b>CON</b>
Conflicting information	CON-IN
Conflicts between interviews & obser	CON-I&O
<b>CONTRADICTIONS</b>	<b>COT</b>
<b>FRIENDSHIPS</b>	<b>FRSH</b>
Friends	FR
Best Friends	FR-B
Friends-Researcher's perspective	FR-RP
Friends of visually impaired	FR-VI
Friendships for children	FRSH+ or -
Friendships for visually impaired	FRSH-VI
What V.I. exchange for friendship	FR-VIEX
<b>INTEGRATION</b>	<b>INT</b>
Attitudes toward	INT-A
Itinerant Teacher's Perspective	INT-ITP
Parent's Perspective	INT-PAP
Peer's Perspective	INT-PE
Principal's Perspective	INT-PP
Teacher's Perspective	INT-TP
Variables contributing to +	INT-VAR+
Variables detracting from	INT-VAR-

<b>INTERACTION</b>	<b>IA</b>
Positive or negative interaction	IA+ or IA-
Chooses not to participate in IA	IA-CNP
Doesn't get partner	IA-DGP
Doesn't get chosen for turn	IA-DGT
Group interaction	IA-G
Individual interaction	IA-I
Last or near last to get partner	IA-LGP
Opportunities to interact	IA-OP
IA with V.I. initiated by peer	IA-PEI+ or -
IA assistance given peer by V.I.	IA-PEVIA
IA social-vagueness of concept	IA-SOV
Interaction with teacher	IA-T+ or IA-T-
IA assistance to teacher by V.I.	IA-TVIA
Interaction initiated by V.I.	IA-VII
Limitations of participation	IA-VIL
IA assistance given to V.I. by peer	IA-UIPEA
IA assistance to V.I. by teacher	IA-VITA

<b>NEGLECT</b>	<b>N</b>
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<b>PATTERNS</b>	<b>PAT</b>
Within site	PAT-WS
Intersite	PAT-IS

<b>PUPIL CULTURE</b>	<b>PC</b>
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Activities	PC-A
Birthday parties	PC-AB
Adults ignorant of PC	PC-AI
Invite friends home	PC-AIH
Appearance is important to friends	PC-APP
Have teams for play groups	PC-AT
Call friends on telephone	PC-ATEL
Boy-Girl relationships	PC-B-G
Boy-Girl relationship more frequent out of school	PC-BGOSC
How to get around rules	PC-GAR
Depend on others for help	PC-HO
Association is important	PC-IOA
Less popular play with same	PC-LPLP
Popular children competent	PC-PCC
Play groups	PC-PG
Do same things as peers to play	PC-PLAY
Rules	PC-R
Researcher's perspective	PC-RP

<b>REJECTION</b>	<b>REJ</b>
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<b>ROLE</b>	<b>RO</b>
Itinerant Teacher's role	RO-IT
Principal's role	RO-P
Parent's role	RO-PA

Peer's role (e.g. clown, bully)	RO-PE
Researcher's role	RO-R
Teacher's role (e.g. friend, leader)	RC-T

<b>RULES</b>	<b>R</b>
Classroom rules	R-CL
School rules	R-SC
<b>SCHOOL CLIMATE and SITE CONDITIONS</b>	<b>SCC</b>
Artifacts of school climate	SCC-AR
Researcher's Perspective of SCC	SCC-RP
Reaction to researcher	SCC-RR
Society's impression of V.I.	SCC-SI
Teacher's reaction to being observed	SCC-TRAO

<b>THEMES OF RESEARCH</b>	<b>THE</b>
Contradictions of positive acceptance of difference	THE-C+AD
Dilemma of situation	THE-DEL
Denial of visual impairment	THE-DNVI
Dependence of V.I. on adults	THE-DOA
Egocentricity of V.I.	THE-EOVI
Ignoring or not accommodating V.I.	THE-IGVI
Importance of play to children	THE-IOP
Itinerant teacher's lack of control of social integration	THE-ITCS
V.I. longer known more comfort with	THE-LKMC

Parent's lack of concern for	
social integration	THE-PACS
V.I.'s parent's memory of diagnosis	THE-PAMD
Parents deal with school through I.T.	THE-PASCIT
Principal's lack or concern for	
social integration	THE-PCS

Teacher's lack of concern for social	
integration	THE-TCS
Teacher's not prepared to teach V.I.	THE-TNP
Vulnerable children tease others	THE-VCTO
V.I. fake participation	THE-VIFP
V.I. difficulty with humor	THE-VIH
V.I. non-verbal language	THE-VINVL
Visual impairment openly discussed	THE-VIOD
V.I. tendency to follow routine	THE-VIR
V.I. preference for small group	THE-VISMG

VISUAL IMPAIRMENT	VI
Positive or negative impacts of V.I.	VI+ or VI-
V.I. answer with unrelated response	VI-ABNQ
Teachers will do as much as possible	VI-AMAP
Accuracy of reading social situation	VI-ARS+ or-
Ashamed of visual impairment	VI-ASH
Different behaviour of V.I.	VI-DB
Different treatment of V.I.	VI-DF

Double standard for partially sighted	VI-DPS
V.I. performs at equal level of peers	VI-EL
Expectations for V.I.	VI-EXP
Expectations of parents for V.I.	VI-EXPPA
Extra time needed to accommodate	VI-EXT
Extra work for teachers	VI-EXW
Extra work for parents	VI-EXWPA
Fear of teaching V.I.	VI-FE
Fear of losing vision by V.I.	VI-FLV
Belief of helplessness by others	VI-HELP
Inappropriate behaviour, mannerisms	VI-IB
Incompetent behaviour of V.I.	VI-IC
Itinerant teacher's impression of	
V.I.'s social behaviour	VI-IMIT
Principal's impression	VI-IMP
Parent's impression	VI-IMPA
Peer's impression	VI-IMPE
Researcher's impression	VI-IMR
Teacher's impression	VI-IMT
V.I. student's impression	VI-IMVI
Principal's knowledge of V.I.	
student's visual impairment	VI-KP
Parent's knowledge	VI-KPA
Peer's knowledge	VI-KPE
Teacher's knowledge	VI-KT
V.I. student's knowledge	VI-KVI

Learn to live with it	VI-LLI
Visual impairment is label of priority	VI-LP
Misconceptions about V.I.	VI-MS
V.I. perceived to be treated same	VI-ND
Nobody minds presence of V.I.	VI-NM
Parent sensitivity to impact of V.I.	VI-PASI
Perceptions of V.I.	VI-PER+ VI-PER-
Preference for talk re: successes	VI-PTG
Quiet kids difficult for V.I.	VI-QKD
Reactions to V.I.	VI-RA+ or VI-RA-
Reactions to V.I. by peers	VI-RACM
Reactions to V.I. by principal	VI-RAP
Reactions to V.I. by parents	VI-RAPA
Reactions to V.I. by teachers	VI-RAT
Reactions to V.I. by V.I.	VI-RAVI
Reluctance to use special equipment	VI-RSE
Issues of safety	VI-SAFE
Self-concept of V.I.	VI-SC
Source of all problems is V.I.	VI-SOP
Activities under teacher control	VI-UTC
Uses visual impairment	VI-UVI

#### Definitions for Codes

Acceptance [ACC] V.I. student is considered part of the group and is free to join in activities, may be asked to join, is not discouraged from joining, or participates actively

- ACC+ examples of acceptance
- ACC- examples of nonacceptance
- ACC-VIG V.I. seems more accepted by girls than by boys
- ACC-PA acceptance by parents
- ACC-T acceptance by teachers
- ACC-VI acceptance believed to depend upon behaviour of the V.I. student

Adaptations [AD] those changes in regular programs or materials that are implemented to allow for more active participation or effective learning by the V.I. student

- AD-PR adaptations to programs
- AD-M adaptations to materials

Administrative Support [ADMS] examples of actions which contribute to [ADMS+] or detract from [ADMS-] the effective integration of the V.I.

Conflicts [CON] statements or events which are not in agreement with information given by others [CON-IN]; information from interviews and observations which is conflicting [CON-I&O].

Contradictions [COT] during the course of an interview or within a given event, someone contradicts what they have previously said or done.

Friends [FR] those individuals with whom others regularly associate and with whom they seek association during the course of every day activities.

- FR-B those best friends with whom one appears to prefer to associate or with whom one seeks out for the purpose of companionship.
- FR-RP friends from the researcher's perspective--those things which appear to indicate friendships in children.
- FR-VI friends of visually impaired children; who they are; characteristics of these children; or situations involving these children.



FRSH + or - those factors which children believe constitute friendship or detract from friendship.

FRSH-VI friendships for visually impaired children; those things which appear to contribute to friendships for visually impaired children or which are emphasized for this group.

FRSH-VIEX those things which visually impaired child have to attract or keep friends, i.e. exchange for friendship; those things which V.I. children appear to lack but need.

Integration [INT] a process involving the temporal, instructional and social integration of handicapped and non-handicapped children.

INT-A attitudes toward integration

INT-ITP itinerant teacher's perspective of integration

INT-PA parent's perspective of integration

INT-PE peer's perspective of integration

INT-PP principal's perspective of integration

INT-TP teacher's perspective of integration

INT-VAR+ variables contributing to integration

INT-VAR- variables detracting from integration

Interaction [IA] communication, either verbal or nonverbal, between two or more individuals.

IA+ OR IA- positive or negative acts of communication

IA-CNP occasions when the V.I. child appears to choose not to participate or interact with peers.

IA-DGP doesn't get a partner for an activity

IA-DGT doesn't get chosen for a turn during an activity

IA-G group interaction involving more than two individuals

IA-I communication involving only two individuals.

IA-LGP last or near last to get a partner

IA-OP opportunities to interact

IA-PEI+ or - interaction initiated by a peer with a V.I. child.

IA-PEVIA interaction involving the giving of assistance to a peer by a V.I. classmate.

IA-SOV examples of individuals struggling with the vagueness or complexities of the concept of social interaction among children.

IA-T+ or- interaction with teacher (positive or negative)

IA-TVIA interaction involving the giving of assistance to a teacher by a V.I. student.

IA-VII+ or - interaction initiated by the V.I. child

IA-VII limitations imposed by visual impairment which appear to affect the interaction of visually impaired children with their peers.

IA-UIPEA interaction involving the giving of assistance to the visually impaired child by a peer or peers.

IA-VITA interaction involving the giving of assistance by the teacher to the visually impaired student.

Neglect [N] the child is not abused or mistreated by her/his peers but appears to be forgotten or overlooked by them.

Patterns [PAT] events or behaviours which seem to characterize or appear regularly or routinely in a given site or sites.

PAT-WS patterns within a single site

PAT-IS patterns apparent in all or most sites.

Pupil Culture [PC] culture of childhood is a reflection of the distinct manner in which children interpret the world, not an immature adult version, but one which is embedded in the different ways children perceive their environment.

PC-A activities which appear to be intrinsic to pupil culture.

PC-AB children invite their friends to their birthday parties; seems especially important in early elementary.

PC-AI adults are ignorant or unaware of pupil culture.

PC-AIH children invite their friends to come to their home to play with them after school or during the weekend.

PC-APP appearance seems important to children when choosing friends, especially to girls, although boys also mention this.

PC-AT kids have teams for playgroups on playground which have various activities such as building camps, skipping, capturing other children, etc. These teams comprise play and friendship groups.

PC-ATEL call friends on telephone after school or on weekends

PC-B-G examples of boy-girl relationships in class or on playground.

PC-BGOSC boy-girl relationships more frequent after school hours.

PC-GAR how children get around imposed rules which interfere with their opportunities to socialize.

PC-HO children rely on help from peers to complete significant amounts of their school assignments.

PC-IOA importance of association; who you play with is important to status in pupil culture. If you play with children who are disliked it will have negative effect on your popularity and vice versa.

PC-LPLP less popular children play with other less popular children.

PC-PCC popular children are competent at what they do (e.g. school work, sports, etc.)

PC-PG play groups of children; tendency of children to play predominately with children from their homeroom class.

PC-PLAY to actively participate with other children you have to do what they are doing e.g. run around, play on equipment, play baseball, skip, etc.

PC-R rules which appear to guide the activities or behaviour of children when associating with one another.

PC-RP researcher's perspective on aspects of pupil culture.

Rejection [REJ] the refusal of children to include a child in their regular activities; characterized by physical or emotional abuse by all or the majority of peers.

Roles [RO] the role or position actors seem to fill in a given situation or site.

RO-IT role played by itinerant teacher

RO-P role played by principal

RO-PA role played by parent

RO-PE role played by peers, e.g. clown, bully

RO-R role played by researcher

RO-T role played by teachers, e.g. friend, leader

Rules [R] rules which appear to guide the behaviour of individuals or groups as they interact in various situations. Ways of behaving negotiated between two parties.

R-CL classroom rules

R-SC school rules

School Climate and Site Conditions [SCC] the climate/atmosphere or characteristics of a school which appear to impact on the integration of V.I. and nonhandicapped children.

SCC-AR artifacts of school climate or culture.

SCC-RP researcher's perspective of SCC.

SCC-RR reaction to researcher during observation or interviews.

SCC-SI respondent's perspective of how society sees the visually impaired; society's impression of the V.I.

SCC-TRAO teacher's reaction to observation.

Themes of Research [THE] concept or idea which appears to appear with regularity in a given site.

THE-C+AD contradictions or examples which appear to negate the presence of positive acceptance of difference in an integrated setting.

- THE-DEL dilemma; those things which one adjusts to accommodate the visual impairment to enhance V.I.'s performance also emphasize her/his handicap and differences.
- THE-DNVI denial or actions which seem to negate the presence of a visual impairment.
- THE-DOA the apparent dependence of V.I. child on adults for assistance, companionship, or advocate.
- THE-EOVI egocentricity or self-centered behaviour of V.I. child.
- THE-IGVI ignoring or neglecting to accommodate the child's visual impairment, e.g. holding up pictures of an unfamiliar object beyond the visual range or instead of using a model or teaching techniques appropriate to the V.I.
- THE-IOP importance of play to children. Play is central to the lives of school age children often in direct opposition to learning or "school work".
- THE-ITCS examples of itinerant teacher's feelings of helpless in addressing evident difficulties associated with the social integration of V.I. students.
- THE-LKMC the longer a child knows V.I. peers the more comfortable they seem to be with their behaviour, presence, and/or mannerisms.
- THE-PACS examples of parent's lack of concern, interest or comprehension of the development or activity of children.
- THE-PAMD parent's report of their memory of being told their child was visually impaired.
- THE-PASCIT examples of parents dealing with the school staff through the itinerant teacher rather than directly with staff.
- THE-PCS examples of lack of concern, interest, or comprehension of the social development or activity of children.
- THE-TCS examples of lack of concern, interest or comprehension of the social development or activity of children.
- THE-TNP examples of teachers perception that they have not been adequately prepared to teach V.I. students; comments regarding the preparation of teachers for this task.
- THE-VCTO the tendency of vulnerable children, (i.e. those who are less popular, have difficulties, etc.), to pick on

other children at risk for acceptance within the pupil culture.

**THE-VIFP** situations in which the V.I. child appears to be faking participation without the necessary knowledge and/or vision to participate, e.g. watching videos from beyond visual range.

**THE-VIH** apparent difficulty of V.I. to comprehend humor, wit, etc. or to know when others are serious or joking.

**THE-VINVL** difficulty V.I. experience in accessing nonverbal language such as facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, etc.

**THE-VIOD** visual impairment is openly discussed or referred to naturally in school and/or home environment.

**THE-VIR** the tendency or preference of V.I. child to follow or adhere to a routine.

**THE-VISMG** the apparent preference for interaction within small groups for V.I. students and examples of difficulty experienced in large groups.

#### Visual Impairment [VI]

**VI+ OR VI-** positive or negative impacts/effects of visual impairment on interaction or participation.

**VI-ABNQ** the tendency of V.I. students to answer questions with an unrelated response.

**VI-AMAP** teachers seem to feel their first responsibility is to teach the lesson to the regular students and the V.I. is expected to get what he/she can from the lesson as is.

**VI-ARS+ or-** examples of accuracy or inaccuracy of V.I. in reading social situations.

**VI-ASH** examples which seem to demonstrate a feeling of shame associated with being visually impaired.

**VI-DB** examples of behaviour demonstrated by the V.I. student which does not seem to be typical of the other children in the class.

**VI-DF** examples of treatment of the V.I. child which seem to be different than that for other children in the class.

- VI-DPS examples of the existence of a double standard for the partially sighted in which they are not given the accommodations their handicap requires because of a belief they are sighted or are treated as a totally blind child might be.
- VI-EL V.I. seems to be performing at a level equal to that of her/his peers.
- VI-EXP examples of situations where the expectations for the V.I. child are different than those for other children of similar abilities in the site.
- VI-EXPPA expectations parents have for their visually impaired child.
- VI-EXT teachers and/or parents perceive that it takes extra time to accommodate a visually impaired child.
- VI-EXW examples of perception that the integration of a V.I. child results in extra work for teachers.
- VI-EXWPA examples of perception that having a V.I. child results in extra work for parents.
- VI-FE expressions of feeling a fear of teaching the V.I.
- VI-FLV fear of losing vision expressed by the V.I. as a reason for limiting or not participation in certain activities.
- VI-HELP statements which indicate a sense of helplessness inherent in the V. I. or the need to have to help them so they can function effectively.
- VI-IB inappropriate behaviour or mannerisms e.g. rocking, eye poking, flapping arms, demonstrated by V.I. child.
- VI-IC incompetent behavior of the visually impaired child, e.g. poor skipping skills, can't catch baseball, slow reader.
- VI-IM the impressions or perspectives of the social behaviour of the V.I. child given by:
- VI-IMIT itinerant teacher
- VI-IMP principal
- VI-IMPA parent
- VI-IMPE peer

- VI-IMR researcher
- VI-IMT teacher
- VI-IMVI the visually impaired child
- VI-KP principal's knowledge of the V. I.'s visual impairment.
- VI-KPA parent's knowledge
- VI-KPE peers' knowledge
- VI-KT teachers' knowledge
- VI-KVI knowledge of visual impairment by the V.I. child
- VI-LLI belief that V.I. must learn to live with her/his visual impairment.
- VI-LP the label "visual impairment" is the most significant one for the visually impaired student and seems to affect the way teachers and peers think of her/him.
- VI-MS misconceptions about visual impairment.
- VI-ND belief that V.I. student is not being treated any differently than her/his classmates.
- VI-NM statements expressing not an acceptance of presence of a V.I. student as much as an indifference i.e. nobody minds or objects to their presence.
- VI-PASI examples of parent's sensitivity to the impact of the child's visual impairment on her/his behavior or performance.
- VI-PER+ or - perceptions of the V.I.'s student which seem to be accurate (+) or (-) inaccurate.
- VI-PTG tendency of the V.I. student to persevere or regularly bring conversations to focus on the things they do well and to ignore or be reluctant to discuss those things that their visual impairment impedes.
- VI-QKD quiet classmates seem to be more difficult than others for the V.I. student to get to know.
- VI-RA+ or RA- positive or negative reactions to V. I. student by:
- VI-RACM peers
- VI-RAP principal



VI-RAPA parents

VI-RAT teachers

VI-RAVI the V. I. student her/himself.

VI-RSE reluctance by V.I. child to use special equipment or adaptations required to enable or enhance performance.

VI-SAFE issues of safety associated with having a V.I. student in a public school setting.

VI-SC self-concept of V.I. student.

VI-SOP tendency of teachers, parents, peers, etc. to consider the child's visual impairment responsible for all difficulties he/she encounters. i.e. visual impairment source of all problems.

VI-UTC activities under teacher control which the child obediently participates in but in an unstructured setting such as the playground chooses not to participate in because of anticipated danger to physical being.

VI-UVI V.I. child uses her/his visual impairment to gain an advantage, e.g. go first, avoid work, etc.

## APPENDIX D

### Nova Scotia Teachers Union Policy

Following is the Nova Scotia Teachers Union's policy on integration as passed by Executive Motion on May 8, 9, 1987.

1. A caring society provides education for all children who are able to benefit from educational services.
2. Children with special physical, intellectual or emotional needs benefit from learning in the most enabling environment, characterized by flexibility, responsiveness and support.
3. While regular classroom placement may best serve many exceptional children's needs, it is recognized that self-contained classrooms and other environments may be the most appropriate short and long term placement option for some children.
4. Ongoing, specially designated and substantial funding should support the integration of exceptional children. Each school board should be accountable both to the Department of Education, which has responsibility for providing the funds, and to the public it serves. Sharing of human and material resources among school districts should be encouraged.
5. Funding should be based on actual audited costs, be long-term in its scope, and, most importantly, adequate to the challenge of successful integration.
6. To allow for maximum success for teachers working with integrated, exceptional children, the teacher should receive the support services he or she deems necessary to provide a positive learning environment.
7. Successful integration is achieved when a child's educational program and environment further his or her cognitive, physical and affective development. The process of integration should ensure the rights of all children to an appropriate education, and an equitable distribution of resources among all students.
8. Assessments and decisions regarding the placement of individual children should:
  - 8.1 result from cooperative, planned consultations among parents, teachers and in-school administrators and other professionals as appropriate;
  - 8.2 consider the capabilities of the proposed placement environment as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the

child's creative affective, cognitive, social and physical development;

- 8.3 where appropriate, involve interdisciplinary expertise and a variety of formal and informal methods of evaluation;
  - 8.4 be subject to continuous review and flexible alternatives.
9. Regular classroom placement, if such is deemed the most enabling environment for an exceptional child, should occur only under the following conditions:
- 9.1 The administrative team, consisting of the teacher, the principal and appropriate district level personnel assume responsibility for maintenance of resources, coordination of services, and provision of support structures designed to ensure the effective provision of education for all children.
  - 9.2 The in-school administrator agrees with the recommendations resulting from the assessment process and is satisfied that adequate communication, specialist and non-specialist support services, special equipment and planning exist to ensure successful integration.
  - 9.3 The classroom teacher agrees with the recommendations resulting from the assessment process and is satisfied that conditions favouring successful integration exist.
  - 9.4 If conditions required to make the integration of children with special needs successful are not met, the following procedures should apply:
    - 9.4.1 That if either the classroom teacher or the in-school administrator doubts the viability of the placement that specific strategies be named and communicated to appropriate parties and that a target date for the meeting of these conditions be named.
    - 9.4.2 That if the conditions should not be met by the target date the matter be referred to the administrative team for disposition.
10. To manage the successful integration of exceptional children, each classroom teacher should have:
- 10.1 encouragement to draw upon the resources and expertise of his or her in-school colleagues;

- 10.2 familiarity with, and access to competent specialists and support services with whom regular consultation are carried out;
  - 10.3 experience with classroom teaching prior to accepting the challenge of integration;
  - 10.4 pre-service education designed to acquaint prospective teachers with assessment techniques, program adaption, physical, cognitive and affective goals of special education and the effective implementation of integration;
  - 10.5 access to inservice education of specific relevance to the teaching of exceptional children who are integrated into the regular classroom. In this context, access includes the provision of funding and release time within the school day to pursue such in-service education; and
  - 10.6 access to suitable print and nonprint learning materials and appropriately modified curricula.
11. To manage the successful integration of exceptional children each in-school administrator should have, in addition to that required by him or her as a classroom teacher, access to in-service education which is similar to that required to classroom teachers, but which also includes investigation of the administrator's role as supervision, coordinator of human resources and program evaluator. In this context, access includes the provision of funding and release time within the school day to pursue such in-service education.
12. The educational context should facilitate successful integration. In this regard, effective teaching and learning conditions require consideration of the physical plant, the school's affective tone, interpersonal communications, skill enhancement and teacher workload.
- 12.1 Schools and school programs should be made physically accessible and hospitable to all students. Building modifications must facilitate accessibility and preserve the safety, dignity and independence of each child.
  - 12.2 All students should be encouraged to develop an understanding and acceptance of individual needs and abilities.
  - 12.3 All those involved with determining class size and teacher workload should recognize the additional demands entailed by integration. It follows that:
    - 12.3.1 as the needs of the integrated children increase, class size should decrease;

## 12.3.3.2

personnel to assist in the physical care and routine implementation of special programs should be provided to each exceptional child who requires these services. Assistants should be expected to carry out their duties under the supervision of the classroom teacher, the in-school administrator and in consultation with additional healthcare personnel as required.

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