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"WE'RE ALL IN THE SAME BOAT":
VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES OF STRESS,
COPING, AND HELP-SEEKING AMONG
NEW ZEALAND YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

Although there is a burgeoning body of international research exploring youth stress, coping, and help-seeking, little is known about how New Zealand youth experience these. It is well recognised that young people rarely seek professional help, but how they negotiate support within their peer groups is unclear. The purpose of the current research was to qualitatively explore New Zealand young people's views and experiences of stress, coping, and seeking help. From a social generation and strengths perspective, this study particularly sought to understand the roles of peers in these processes.

Young people aged sixteen to eighteen who were peer support mentors across two Auckland high schools participated in the current study. Thirty-two young people participated in four focus groups, and sixteen of these young people took part in individual interviews. The data was analysed using thematic analysis. Young people described social pressures to succeed academically and in the future, expectations to adhere to social and cultural norms, and the stress of adopting responsibilities to care for others in relationships. They explained how they each found ways of coping that worked for them and how they primarily relied on peer groups for support. The young people described preferring to rely on themselves individually or in peer groups, expressing hesitancy to seek help from adults due to stigma, judgement, and a lack of shared understanding and experience.

The findings raise important implications for those working with youth in New Zealand. The unhelpful expectations of success and the stigma regarding seeking help need to be addressed. Communities need to facilitate opportunities for young people to develop relationships with adults whom they can access for support once trust and understanding are established. Finally, since peers are integral to the coping and help-seeking processes, young people need to be educated and equipped with the necessary skills and resources regarding stress, mental health, and seeking help.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This research explores the ways in which New Zealand young people experience stress, how they cope, and their views and experiences of help-seeking. It does so by exploring how young people themselves make sense of these experiences in the context of their own lives, with a particular interest in their relationships with peers**.**

Since Stanley Hall (1904) 'discovered' the normative developmental stage of adolescence, the dominant psychological perspective has traditionally been marked by ideas of identity, transition, and deficit (Erikson, 1963; Gillies, 2000; Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005). In turn, sociological theories of youth have also tended to view young people from a problem-focused approach, with an emphasis on transitions or 'deviant' youth subcultures (Buckingham, 2008; Furlong, Woodman, & Wyn, 2011; Gillies, 2000; White & Wyn, 2013). However, sociologists have also argued that the definition of youth is socially constructed (Fussell & Greene, 2002; Montgomery, 2007). Accordingly, the theoretical perspectives underpinning approaches to youth research in part define and construct the way youth are perceived (White & Wyn, 2013). Therefore, it is essential that youth researchers are transparent in their approaches to youth research.

Similar to contemporary youth theorists and researchers, I have taken a "reflective turn" and challenged dominant theories rather than accepting them as truths (White & Wyn, 2013, p. 6). As such, instead of adhering to the traditional developmental perspective of adolescence, I have adopted a contemporary view of youth. Throughout this thesis, I use the term youth to refer to young people aged 13-18 years old. My approach to youth research includes the social generation framework suggested by Wyn and colleagues, which emphasises understanding how young people experience and navigate the opportunities and risks within their social contexts (Furlong et al., 2011; White & Wyn 2013; Woodman & Wyn, 2013; Woodman & Wyn, 2015; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). This approach is not predicated on a deficit or problem-focused perspective; and thus, fits with the second aspect of my approach, a strengths-based perspective (Ware & Walsh-Tapiata, 2010; White & Wyn, 2013). In accordance with these, in the current study I endeavour to facilitate youth voices in order to expand our understanding of their experiences.

This stipulated approach to the current research also helped shape the research itself (Treharne & Riggs, 2015). For example, my approach to the current research viewed young people in terms of agency rather than powerlessness (Spencer & Doull, 2015). Further, researcher reflexivity is essential, as this allows transparency and reflection regarding how my views, values, and experiences as the researcher influenced and shaped the research itself (Treharne & Riggs, 2015). First, I was born and primarily raised in the United States of America and moved to New Zealand after high school. I was transparent about my lack of personal experience of being a young person in New Zealand with the young people who participated in this study, and explained to them that I was deferring to their expertise. Perhaps this helped me adopt the role of a naïve inquirer and encouraged the youth to share their experiences with me.

Second, it is important to highlight that I am passionate about youth mental health in part due to my own experiences during youth. As such, topics such as stigma were particularly salient for me and may have helped shaped how these were illustrated in the current research. Third, all aspects of this research may have been influenced and shaped by my role as a training clinical psychologist and my professional experience in youth mental health. In response, I actively took my 'professional' hat off and put my 'youth worker' hat on to engage the young people in this research. However, my perspectives as a privileged adult and professional still likely shaped the youth perspectives represented in this research.

From the perspective of my approach to youth research, the social context of contemporary youth is of particular interest. Contemporary theorists have posited that rapid social change has occurred in Western societies, resulting in an increasingly complex social world for contemporary young people marked by an expansion of both opportunities and uncertainties (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Cotterell, 2007; France, 2007; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005; White & Wyn, 2013). In response to a hypothesised individualisation of society, in which collective structures have declined, many youth researchers have argued that contemporary youth are now responsible for navigating their lives in an uncertain social context not faced by their parents' generation (Beck, 1992; Bauman, 1998; Furlong et al., 2011; Giddens, 1991; White & Wyn, 2013). Despite individualisation, many contemporary researchers have argued that the agency afforded to contemporary youth is constrained by social structures and the available subjectivities (France &

Threadgold, 2015; Furlong et al., 2011; Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005; Spencer & Doull, 2015; Thomson, 2007; White & Wyn, 2013). Further, it is argued that contemporary young people have responded to the erosion of collectivism by searching for belonging and connection, particularly with peers (Cuervo & Wyn, 2014; France, 2007; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Furlong et al., 2011; Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005; Thomson, 2007).

Moreover, Wyn and Andres (2011) have argued that the complexity of the contemporary Western society causes stress and contributes to mental health problems for young people. Indeed, youth mental health and suicide are salient issues of concern in New Zealand. Whereas the international prevalence of youth mental health disorders has been estimated as 1 in 5 young people (Kataoka, Zhang, & Wells, 2002; Merikangas et al., 2010; World Health Organisation, 2003, 2007), in New Zealand a longitudinal study suggested a prevalence of 1 in 4 young people at the age of 15 and an increase to 40% at the age of 18 (Fergusson & Horwood, 2001). Even more concerning, New Zealand has the highest rate of youth (15-19 years) suicide in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2012). Despite these alarming trends, there is a lack of research exploring what stress young people in New Zealand face and how they experience their social contexts.

Further to understanding the experiences of stress for New Zealand youth, understanding how they cope with this stress is important. From a strengths-based perspective, understanding how young people cope would enable future initiatives to build and support these skills across youth. Although there is a growing body of literature regarding youth coping, including models and patterns of youth coping, there is a paucity of research pertaining to the New Zealand context (Clarke & Jensen, 1997; Evans, Wilson, Hansson, & Hungerford, 1997; Jose & Shurer, 2010). Additionally, many of the conceptualisations of youth coping dominant in the literature are adapted from the adult research, adopt a problem-focused approach, and view coping as individualistic. Further, youth coping research has predominantly consisted of quantitative methods that have effectively silenced the voices of young people. Finally, the youth coping literature largely neglects the social context of youth, except for identifying social support as a hypothesised buffer for stress (DuBois, Felner, Brand, Adan, & Evans, 1992; DuBois, Felner, Meares, & Krier, 1994; Murberg & Bru, 2004; Ystgaard, 1997).

Social support can be conceptualised under the umbrella term help-seeking, which differentiates between formal and informal sources of help (Offer, Howard, Schonert, & Ostrov, 1991). In contrast to conceptualisations of youth coping, prominent models of help-seeking in the literature acknowledge the importance of social relationships and processes (Cauce et al., 2002; Gross & McMullen, 1983; Pescosolido, 1992; Srebnik, Cauce, & Bayder, 1996). Some researchers have also represented the voices of contemporary youth through including qualitative methodology in their research (Rickwood, Deane, Wilson, & Ciarrochi, 2005). However, these conceptualisations fail to situate youth help-seeking within its social context or appreciate the role of peers.

Indeed, understanding the role of peers in youth coping and help-seeking is paramount, since young people describe seeking support and help from peers the most (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Klimes-Dougan, Klingbeil, & Meller, 2013; Michelmore & Hindley, 2012; Raviv, Raviv, Vago-Gefen, & Fink, 2009; Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2005). These relationships are particularly important given that young people, both internationally and in New Zealand, rarely seek help for distress, mental health problems, or suicide (Fergusson, Horwood, & Lynskey, 1993; Horwood & Fergusson, 1998; Kushner & Sher, 1991; Mariu, Merry, Robinson, & Watson, 2012; Offer et al., 1991; Rickwood et al., 2005; Whitaker et al., 1990). Therefore, in the current research I aim to explore how New Zealand young people aged 16-18 years old experience stress, coping, and help-seeking, with a particular interest in how peers influence these experiences. It is hoped that the current research will provide a first step in understanding the experiences of young people in New Zealand; and, by facilitating youth to share their expertise, will offer a strengths-based understanding that can inform clinical work with youth.

The remainder of this thesis is comprised of four chapters. In Chapter Two, I will review the relevant literature regarding understanding youth, including defining youth, the social context of youth, and youth mental health and suicide in New Zealand. Following this, I will discuss the dominant youth coping literature, including conceptualisations, models, and features of youth coping. In this chapter I will also review the current research in youth help-seeking, including models of help-seeking and patterns of youth help-seeking, and I will finish the chapter with a discussion of peer support and an overview of the current study. In Chapter Three, I will outline the methodology, including theoretical framework, methods, and thematic analysis. In Chapter Four, I will discuss the findings of the thematic analysis, and discuss the nineteen themes across the three categories of stress, coping, and

help-seeking. Finally, in Chapter Five, I will explore the key ideas across the findings and discuss recommendations for future research, clinical implications, and the limitations and strengths of the current study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I discuss the relevant literature associated with the main topics of the current research, including understanding contemporary youth, youth coping, and youth help-seeking. I begin the chapter with a discussion of definitions of youth, the social context of youth, and youth mental health and suicide in New Zealand. Following this, I will discuss youth coping, including varying models of stress and coping proposed in the research and the gaps relevant for understanding youth in their social context. In the youth help-seeking section, I will discuss models of help-seeking, patterns of youth help-seeking, and the neglect of research in understanding peer support processes. I will end the chapter with a review of the current study in the context of the reviewed literature.

Understanding Contemporary Youth

There are different conceptualisations of youth and variable approaches to studying youth issues. Accordingly, the first section of this chapter will elucidate the dominant theoretical underpinnings within psychology and sociology, and clarify my theoretical stance towards youth research. In the second section, I will discuss the social context in which contemporary youth navigate their lives, highlighting relevant social processes for youth such as individualisation and belonging. Finally, there will be a section on youth mental health and suicide in New Zealand, as this constitutes an important aspect of the New Zealand youth experience.

Definitions of Youth

There are varying utilisations and definitions of the terms 'youth' and 'adolescence' among historical and contemporary theorists and researchers across multiple disciplines. These terms originated from different sociological and psychological perspectives, respectively (Gillies, 2000; Griffin, 1993). Accordingly, youth and adolescence tend to be applied and defined according to the theoretical lens through which they are studied. In the following discussion, I will highlight some of the dominant psychological and sociological approaches to studying youth. The current theoretical lens that I have adopted will be elucidated and the importance of this clarity argued in relation to the current research and youth research in general.

The psychological perspective. The historically dominant perspective within psychological traditions utilises the term 'adolescence' and defines it as a discrete developmental stage of life. This developmental perspective can be traced back to Hall's (1904) reported discovery of adolescence as a stage of transition between childhood and adulthood. Many of the contributors to this view have been Western psychologists who focused on the internal changes, both physiologically and psychologically, that occur in adolescent individuals (Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005; Thomson, 2007). From this perspective, the life stage of adolescence has been defined by the parameters of biological and cognitive maturation and conceptualised as a normative, universal stage of human development (France, 2007; Gillies, 2000; Montgomery, 2007; Wyn & Woodman, 2006).

In addition to emphasising the physical changes present in adolescence, such as puberty, the dominant psychological perspective includes Erikson's (1963) proposition that adolescence revolves around the development of personal identity, which must be accomplished in order to enable transition to adulthood. Erikson (1963) termed this psychosocial crisis 'identity versus role confusion'. According to his theory, adolescents must explore and establish who they are and what roles they have in this world, which requires increasing autonomy from their parents. From this perspective, identity is conceptualised as a single, stable self-concept primarily attained during a discrete life stage (Buckingham, 2008; Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005; Vignoles, Schwartz, & Luyckx, 2011). Additionally, Erikson (1963) acknowledged the impact of relationships during adolescence by purporting that adolescents negotiate independence from their parents during their discovery of identity. Therefore, although this theory posits the development of identity as primarily an individual endeavour, it also points to the role of social context in personal identity formation (Buckingham, 2008; Gillies, 2000; Vignoles et al., 2011).

The theories of Hall (1904) and Erikson (1963) represent two of the defining features of the developmental and psychological perspective. Together they describe adolescence as a time of development and transition for the individual, largely separated from social context (Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005). It is important to highlight that these perspectives also entail a problem or deficit approach to adolescence. Firstly, Hall's (1904) reported discovery of adolescence occurred in the context of the 'youth problem' in Victorian England, in which Hall explored the 'storm and stress' of predominantly white, middle-class men (France, 2007; Griffin, 1993). From this perspective,

adolescence has been viewed as a problematic experience marked by risk, immaturity, and irresponsibility (Buckingham, 2008; Kehily, 2007). Similarly, Arnett (1999) categorised the 'difficulties' of adolescence into conflict with parents, mood disruptions, and risk behaviours. Secondly, Erikson's (1963) proposition that adolescents must successfully navigate the identity crisis in order to transition to adulthood purports that unsuccessful navigation of this process reflects maladaptation (Buckingham, 2008). Thirdly, the perspective of adolescence as a normative developmental stage has resulted in problem-focused research targeted at identifying and resolving deviations to this normative development (Gillies, 2000; Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005).

Sociological perspectives. Whereas the psychological perspective defines adolescence by predominantly internal developmental changes, sociological perspectives tend to utilise the term 'youth' and emphasise its social context. Specifically, youth is considered from this perspective as a social category that is constructed by its context (Fussell & Greene, 2002; Montgomery, 2007; White & Wyn, 2013). According to this view, the definition of youth is fluid and flexible, with its meaning and parameters varying across time and societies (Mizen, 2004; White & Wyn, 2013). Historical and contemporary sociologists have posited that youth is socially constructed predominantly by bureaucratic boundaries defined by state policies (France, 2007; Mizen, 2004; White & Wyn, 2013). As such, the parameters of youth have been demarcated by the ages in which youth are granted varying economic, educational, and legal rights and responsibilities from the state (France & Threadgold, 2016; Mizen, 2004; Montgomery, 2007).

Historically, sociological perspectives have constructed youth as a social problem and the two dominant perspectives have conceptualised and studied youth in terms of transition or subcultures (Buckingham, 2008; Furlong et al., 2011; Gillies, 2000). Both of these approaches originated in the 20th century amidst rapid social change, marked by the rise of youth unemployment in Western countries (Furlong et al., 2011; White & Wyn, 2013). Whereas for previous generations the transition from school to work was linear and predictable, for modern, Western societies this transition became a problem (White & Wyn, 2013). Youth research utilising this transition framework tended to study deviations from normative transition to adulthood through focusing on inequality and the concepts of class, gender, and ethnicity (Buckingham, 2008; Gillies, 2000). As social change continued across Western societies, according to this perspective, the perceived transition from youth to adulthood

became increasingly protracted and complex, making the distinction between youth and adulthood less discrete (Arnett, 2002a; France & Threadgold, 2016; Furlong et al., 2011). Due to delays in modern youth achieving the perceived adulthood milestones, such as full-time work, economic and living independence from parents, and marriage (France & Threadgold, 2016), some contemporary theorists have described this prolonged transition as 'extended' or 'arrested' (Cote, 2000), or distinguished it as its own stage, such as 'emerging adulthood' (Arnett, 2002a).

The second dominant sociological framework utilised in youth research has been cultural, predominantly focusing on youth subcultures (Buckingham, 2008; Furlong, et al., 2011; Gillies, 2000). Researchers applying this framework have historically sought to understand the meaning of youth by exploring how young people adopted cultural resources to construct meaning and express themselves (Buckingham, 2008; France, 2007; Furlong et al., 2011). Subcultures, such as hippies, goths, and skaters, were viewed as subversive cultures with their own norms and values that resisted the mainstream culture with its established social norms (Buckingham, 2008; White & Wyn, 2013). Again, this perspective can be considered a problem-oriented approach, with research tending to focus on subcultures deemed deviant or delinquent (Kehily, 2007; White & Wyn, 2013). Post-subcultural theorists have rejected the notion of fixed youth subcultures and emphasised the diversity, fluidity, and individualisation of youth culture (Bennett, 1999; Hodkinson, 2016).

Alternatively, contemporary theorists such as Wyn and colleagues have proposed viewing youth as a social generation, a perspective not predicated upon the construction of youth as problematic (Furlong et al., 2011; White & Wyn, 2013; Woodman & Wyn, 2013; Woodman & Wyn, 2015; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). It is built upon Mannheim's (1952) concept of generation, in which he posited that people living in the same period of time develop a 'generational consciousness' through common experiences. The social generation perspective situates youth within a specific context, in which the construction of youth is impacted by political, economic, and social conditions (Furlong et al., 2011; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). Accordingly, Woodman and Wyn (2015) describe this perspective as focusing on "the way in which social conditions create distinctive opportunities and risks that young people must navigate" (p. 1403). From this view, youth can be constructed by diverse experiences within a common social context. Furthermore, White and Wyn (2015) suggest that the most important aspect of the social generation approach is that it emphasises "the meanings that young people

themselves attribute" (p. 12). Thus, a social generation approach to youth allows for diverse, individual experiences and collective, generational understandings (White & Wyn, 2013; Woodman & Wyn, 2015).

My approach to youth research. The previous sections have detailed how the terms adolescence and youth tend to be defined and utilised according to their underpinning theoretical perspectives. In this research, I draw from both psychological perspectives that acknowledge internally driven processes of change during this period and sociological perspectives that place greater emphasis on how development is shaped by social context. Given there is no universal consensus regarding the age range of the youth category, I will review literature specifically relating to high school or secondary school aged youth, approximately 13-18 years old in New Zealand, in order to reflect the population included in this research. Regardless of whether research reviewed utilises the term adolescence or youth, I will consistently utilise the term youth to denote young people within the 13-18 years old age range.

As outlined in the Introduction chapter, in this research I endeavour to situate youth within their social context of New Zealand, thereby applying a social generation framework of understanding (Furlong et al., 2011; White & Wyn, 2013; Woodman & Wyn, 2013; Woodman & Wyn, 2015; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). Further, I purposefully challenge the deficit approach to youth, and instead adopt a strengths-based approach (Ware & Walsh-Tapiata, 2010; White & Wyn, 2013). Both facets of my approach can be facilitated by promoting young people's voices through qualitative research (France, 2007; White, 2008). Although statistics reveal social changes, they do not provide understanding regarding the meanings of these changes for young people themselves (White & Wyn, 2013). As such, contemporary youth researchers consider young people to be "social agents who are active meaning-makers in their own lives" (Allen, 2008, p.565).

Talbut and Lesko (2012) have argued that the 'truths' of historically dominant youth perspectives have been internalised by the general public, thereby influencing their views of youth. As Smith and colleagues (2002) argued in their New Zealand study, youth stereotypes, which may be conceptualised as 'truths' incorporated into society's construct of youth, have been perpetuated by the lack of research promoting young people's views and experiences. Therefore, I purposefully aim to

facilitate the participation of New Zealand youth voices to provide an opportunity for their views and experiences to be heard.

In summary, the terms and definitions applied to understanding youth have differed according to theoretical underpinnings and perspectives. Most of these perspectives have incorporated a problem-focused or deficit approach to youth research by viewing youth as either normative or deviating from this normative mould. However, a social generation approach is not based on such a foundation and, instead, incorporates strengths-based approaches such as youth participation. For the current research, I have reflexively challenged the deficit approach to youth. I have adopted a social generation framework and strengths approach to youth research, to facilitate a process of understanding contemporary young people's experiences and meanings of their complex world.

The Social Context of Youth

Many contemporary theorists agree that Western societies have undergone rapid social change in recent decades, and various theorists have labelled this contemporary age of Western societies as 'late modernity', 'high modernity', or 'second modernity' (Bauman, 2000; Beck & Lau, 2005; Giddens, 1991). Such theorists have argued that globalisation and changes in economies and state policies have caused a fragmentation of traditional social structures (Arnett, 2002a; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Buckingham, 2008; France, 2007; White & Wyn, 2013). From this perspective, contemporary life is conceptualised as increasingly complex and uncertain, as individuals are freed from traditional structural constraints to construct new life trajectories and meaning (Cotterell, 2007; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005). However, many theorists also argue that the expansion of opportunities is accompanied by increased pressure and responsibility for the individual (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; France, 2007; White & Wyn, 2013). The rapid social changes that contemporary theorists and researchers have identified include changes in education, employment, technology, and relationships (White & Wyn, 2013). In the following discussion I will explore this social context and its impact on youth living in Western societies.

Many youth theorists and researchers have emphasised the increasing significance of education for contemporary youth, as globalisation, technology, and the expansion of opportunities have also brought increased competition (White & Wyn, 2013). For example, Cote (2014) suggests

that post-graduate degrees may be considered the new version of undergraduate degrees for today's youth in the Western world. Accordingly, Thomson (2007) argues that educational decisions and success have become central to the lives of contemporary youth. Further, many theorists and researchers have observed that an individual's life trajectory from school to work has become uncertain and complex; for example, with many young people working and studying concurrently (Cotterell, 2007; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; White & Wyn, 2013).

Theorists highlight how Western societies have transitioned to post-industrial, globalised economies and politics, generally marked by a decrease of the welfare state, deregulation of the labour market, and the creation of the youth labour market (Buckingham, 2000; Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005; White & Wyn, 2013). Despite greater flexibility in employment and more women in the workforce, contemporary theorists agree that there is a continuity of social inequality in Western societies (France & Threadgold, 2015; Woodman & Wyn, 2015). Similar to many OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries, government statistics have revealed rising income inequality within New Zealand society (OECD, 2014; Perry, 2015). Government statistics have suggested that the percentage of New Zealand children and young people living in poverty continues to rise annually, last reported as 29% in 2015 (Simpson, Duncanson, Oben, Wicken, & Pierson, 2015).

In addition, White and Wyn (2013) have argued that ethnicity and migration are important contextual factors in understanding the experiences of contemporary youth. In New Zealand, the most recent statistics from the 2013 Census state that 74% of the population identified as European, 14.9% as Maori, 11.8% as Asian, and 7.4% as Pacific Islander (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). Many of the respondents identified more than one ethnicity, and all of these ethnic groups increased in size since the 2006 census (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). Similarly, the most recent Youth2000 survey of New Zealand secondary students showed that 42% of the young people identified themselves as belonging to more than one ethnic group (Clark et al., 2013). When taking into account only the first ethnicity each young person identified with, Clarke and colleagues (2013) reported that 48% of the young people identified as European, 20% as Maori, 14% as Pacific, 12% as Asian, and 6% as Other. Further, the most recent government statistics have suggested that immigration to New Zealand has been rising over recent years, with record highs in net migration rates (Statistics New Zealand, 2016).

The highest rates of migration were attributed to people from India, China, the Philippines, and the United Kingdom (Statistics New Zealand, 2016).

An area of particular interest within youth research in recent years has been the changing social context for youth due to expanding technology, communication, and the internet (Buckingham, 2008; France, 2007; White & Wyn, 2013). Contemporary youth are considered by many to be 'digital natives' since they have grown up with modern technology (Birmingham, 2008). France (2007) has suggested that contemporary adults are responding with a 'moral panic' reminiscent of the moral panics with which society responded to youth subcultures in the 1970s and 1980s. Whereas some researchers have explored these anxieties regarding the negative effects of technology on today's youth, other theorists and researchers have posited and explored the perspective of technology as liberating for young people (Birmingham, 2008; France, 2007; White & Wyn, 2013). Furthermore, many theorists have described contemporary Western societies as consumer societies, with a focus on consumption of the newest commodities (Arnett, 2002a; France, 2007; Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005). Some of these theorists suggest that such consumerism is particularly relevant for young people, including technology and appearance-based commodities (France, 2007; White & Wyn, 2013).

In regard to social change evident in relationships, contemporary theorists have emphasised changes both between individuals and between individuals and Western society (France, 2007; White & Wyn, 2013). First, researchers have described changes to traditional, nuclear family structures characterised by rises in divorce, single-parent families, and step-families (Arnett, 2002b; Robb, 2007; Wyn, Lantz, & Harris, 2011). As mentioned previously, from a developmental approach, independence from parents is considered a key task of youth. However, this notion has been challenged recently as contemporary youth tend to live at home longer, termed 'extended dependency' (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007), or return to live at home after independent living, termed a 'yo-yo' transition (Biggart & Walther, 2006). Second, contemporary theorists have postulated that peers have become increasingly significant in the lives of young people today, as youth today spend substantially more time together in leisure activities or communicating through technology (Arnett, 2002b; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007). Third, youth researchers have described trends in Western societies in which young people are having sex younger and getting married older compared to previous generations (Arnett, 2002b; Robb, 2007).

Individualisation. Many contemporary theorists argue that a crucial component of the rapid social change in Western societies has been the process of individualisation within social structures. These theorists posit that individualisation has changed the relationship between individual and society, as the fragmentation of traditional social structures has produced an influx of uncertainty, responsibilities, opportunities, and choices for the individual (France, 2007; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; White & Wyn, 2013). According to the risk and individualisation thesis originally posited by Beck (1992), contemporary Western society is marked by uncertainty, and changes in social policies and institutions have caused the burden of this uncertainty to rest with the individual. One impact that various theorists have highlighted is the individualisation of social inequalities, wherein social problems are perceived as individual failings (France, 2007; White & Wyn, 2013).

Prominent sociologists such as Beck (1992), Bauman (1998), and Giddens (1991) have proposed varying perspectives on individualisation that, according to White and Wyn (2013), converge on the following central thesis: individuals are now under pressure to "actively shape their lives" (p.10). From this perspective, young people are responsible for choosing and navigating their life trajectories in the context of uncertainty (Furlong et al., 2011; White & Wyn, 2013). Many contemporary theorists have discussed the 'responsibilisation' of contemporary youth in Western societies, wherein they are extended both rights and responsibilities for their health, education, and employment (France, 2007; Thomson, 2007; White & Wyn, 2013; Wyn & Harris, 2004). Furthermore, France (2007) states that "personal responsibility for individual achievement over everything else" has been incorporated into middle-class values (p. 85).

In turn, theorists have discussed the tension between agency and structure for contemporary youth (France & Threadgold, 2015; Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005; Spencer & Doull, 2015). Whereas some have interpreted the expansion of choices and opportunities afforded to contemporary youth as a freedom from previous structural constraints, others have argued exactly the opposite (White & Wyn, 2013). Indeed, there is a revitalised body of research exploring the concept of agency in youth, predicated on observations that agency does not necessarily translate into power for young people (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Giddens, 1984). Furlong, Wyn, and colleagues argue that contemporary youth actually face greater constraints as they attempt to navigate a more complex and uncertain social context filled with increased pressures and expectations (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Furlong et

al., 2011; White & Wyn, 2013; Wyn et al., 2011). In addition, others have proposed concepts such as 'structured individualisation' or 'bounded agency' to convey the constraints of contemporary society on individual agency (Brannen & Nilsen, 2002; Lehmann, 2004; Roberts, 2003).

Many contemporary youth researchers have applied the concept of subjectivity to the discussions regarding individualisation, agency, and structure (Thomson, 2007; White & Wyn, 2013). Subjectivity refers to the social context, comprised of opportunities and constraints, within which individuals can develop their identities and possibilities for being (White & Wyn, 2013). From this perspective, youth agency to develop identities and navigate possibilities is limited by the subjectivities available to them (Thomson, 2007; White & Wyn, 2013; Wyn et al., 2011). For example, Kelly (2006) posits that a fundamental subjectivity available to young people today in Western societies is the 'entrepreneurial self', in which they are constrained to be "rational, autonomous, and responsible" (p. 18).

Belonging. Whereas developmental perspectives adhere to Erikson's (1963) supposition that identity is a stable construct formed during youth, many contemporary theorists consider identity to be a fluid, active process of becoming and closely associated with the concept of belonging (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Buckingham, 2008; Thomson, 2007; White & Wyn, 2013). Premised on the individualisation of contemporary society, many have argued that there has been an erosion of collective identities and predetermined belonging (Cotterell, 2007; France, 2007; Furlong et al., 2011; Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005). Some argue that this has left young people isolated without a sense of community or belonging (Coburn, 2000; Eckersley & Dear, 2002).

Others have proposed that the breakdown of collective identities and belonging has resulted in young people searching for belonging and connectedness (France, 2007; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Furlong et al., 2011; Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005; Thomson, 2007). Accordingly, Wyn and colleagues have promoted the metaphor of belonging to emphasise the significance of relationships in young people's lives and to enable it to remain central to youth research (Cuervo & Wyn, 2014; White & Wyn, 2013). Cuervo and Wyn (2014) describe belonging as connectedness with the three main elements of people, places, and times. They suggest that belonging to the times captures the social generation approach and the pressure for contemporary youth to shape and navigate their lives through balancing the opportunities and constraints of contemporary society (Cuervo & Wyn, 2014).

Cuervo and Wyn (2014) describe belonging to places as young people connecting and forming attachment to local and global places and communities. Amidst the plethora of research regarding the benefits and risks of the internet and social media for contemporary youth, some researchers identify these mediums as global spaces of potential belonging and connectedness for young people (Bers, 2012; Wood, Bukowski, & Lis, 2016; Wu, Outley, Matarrita-Cascante, & Murphrey, 2016). From this perspective, the internet and social media could provide both place and people belongingness for young people. Recent reviews have suggested that the benefits of youth connecting to these spaces include: increased social capital, perceived social support, increased self-esteem, increased self-disclosure, and safe identity experimentation (Best, Manktelow, & Taylor, 2014; Wood et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2016). However, these reviews have also described the risks of young people connecting with others over social media as including: cyber-bullying, social isolation, increased exposure to harm, and depression (Best et al., 2014; Wood et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2016). Similarly, Thomson (2007) suggests that bullying constitutes a form of exclusion from belonging.

Furthermore, Cuervo & Wyn (2014) describe belonging to people as reflecting the relationships of significance in young people's lives. As such, Wyn et al. (2011) argue for the importance and relevance of family connections and relationships for contemporary youth. Similarly, Jose and Pryor (2010) explored the statistical relationship between connectedness and wellbeing in a prospective study with New Zealand youth. They described finding that all four types of connectedness (family, school, peer, and community) predicted wellbeing over time, with family and school connectedness providing the strongest predictive relationships (Jose & Pryor, 2010).

Overall, recent research exploring youth relationships has drawn attention to the significance of peer friendships. This research tends to adhere to a dominant view that a young person's social network changes during youth. Specifically, whereas during childhood parents are argued to be the primary sources of support, during youth it is argued that peers become the primary sources of support (Coleman, 2011; Cotterell, 2007; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). Researchers exploring the nature of youth friendships suggest that youth friendships become increasingly close over time, positing that intimacy is one of the core features of youth friendships (Buhrmester, 1996; Bukowski, Simard, Dubois, & Lopez, 2011; Nickerson & Nagle, 2005; Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2005). They argue that disclosure is a key part of this intimacy, and that self-disclosure, in turn, elicits emotional

support from peers (Buhrmester, 1996; Cotterell, 2007; Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2005; Wood et al., 2016). Additionally, Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2005) suggest that trust, advice, dependability, and reciprocity are important components to youth friendships. Others have also proposed that shared activities and shared inactivity among young people fosters companionship within their friendships (Coleman, 2011; Cotterell, 2007).

In addition to the role of individual youth friendships in belonging and connectedness, others have argued that the concept of belonging includes group identities and membership (Buckingham, 2008; Thomson, 2007). For example, some have suggested that shared ethnicity or culture can provide a source of group identity and connection (Thomson, 2007; White, 2008; White & Wyn, 2013). As such, I would suggest that ethnicity could also provide a sense of belongingness within multicultural cities, such as the location of the current research. Moreover, Cotterell (2007) suggests that being accepted or fitting in to a group is part of belonging. From a sociological perspective, White (2008) utilises the term affiliations to convey connections among young people based on shared circumstances. Similarly, Cotterell (2007) links peer belonging with the contemporary social context by commenting that for young people, "Friends become increasingly significant guides and fellow travellers and as supports in establishing identity, because they are moving along in the same part of the stream of history" (p. 74).

In conclusion, a review of the literature on the contemporary context of youth suggests that young people living in Western societies today must navigate their life trajectories within a social context marked by both expanding opportunities and increased pressures. Many have argued that the individualisation of social structures has caused young people's futures to become uncertain, pressuring them to be active agents who shape their futures. Yet, theorists also suggest that the possible identities and futures available to youth are constrained by subjectivities. They identify a tension between agency afforded to youth and structural constraints within the social context. Further, in the context of individualisation and changes to social structures, belonging has been promoted as integral to understanding contemporary youth. Related to this concept of belonging, research has focused on youth friendships, although peer group belonging presents a potentially significant avenue for future research. However, much of the research pertaining to these suppositions and trends has

been conducted outside of New Zealand, which raises concerns about the applicability to youth across different social and cultural contexts.

Youth Mental Health and Suicide in New Zealand

Whereas historical research has tended to underestimate the strengths that young people bring to their experiences, recent research has emphasised young people's agency and their active search for connection as possible sources of strength. Yet, I do not wish to respond to the historically dominant deficit model by dismissing the significant sources of stress for young people present in contemporary social contexts. In this section, I will first briefly discuss the stress young people describe encountering in contemporary Western societies. Following this, I will review the current research regarding the mental health and suicide struggles of young people in New Zealand.

Historically, researchers have tended to explore the sources of stress for young people through quantitative measures of daily hassles and life events (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Compas, 1987; Daniels & Moos, 1990; Davis & Compas, 1986; Roy, Kamath, & Kamath, 2015). In the current literature, various researchers have proposed different constructs to reflect stress in young people's lives; however, few of these were based on stressor items generated by young people themselves (Byrne, Davenport, & Mazanov, 2007; Compas, Davis, Forsythe, & Wagner, 1987). Byrne and colleagues (Byrne, Byrne, & Reinhart, 1995; Byrne & Mazanov, 2002) developed the Adolescent Stress Questionnaire and they subsequently revised the measure in light of feedback from young people that drew attention to more contemporary concerns they were facing, such as future education, employment, and economic stability. Byrne and Mazanov argued (2002) that measures for understanding youth stress need to be continually updated as the stressors faced by young people, and the language they use, changes over time. In their revised measure, Byrne and colleagues (2007) suggested the following ten domains: stress of home life, stress of school performance, stress of school attendance, stress of romantic relationships, stress of peer pressure, stress of teacher interaction, stress of future uncertainty, stress of school / leisure conflict, stress of financial pressure, and stress of emerging adult responsibility.

The dominant perspective within research has been that stress during youth poses a risk to the young person's psychological health and well-being (Compas, Connor-Smith, Saltzman,

Thomsen, & Wadsworth, 2001; Gould et al., 2004; Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007). For example, Wyn and Andres (2011) argue that the contemporary social context in which Western youth navigate their lives not only produces stress for them, but adversely affects their mental health. Eckersley (1993) posited that the 'failure' of contemporary Western societies to provide a sense of belonging contributes to youth suicide; whereas, Eckersley and Dear (2002) have argued that society's "unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of individual freedom and autonomy" also contributes to youth suicide (p. 1891).

International studies have reported the estimated the prevalence of mental health problems in youth to be about 20%, or 1 in 5 (Kataoka et al., 2002; Merikangas et al., 2010; World Health Organisation, 2003, 2012). In New Zealand, the longitudinal Christchurch Health and Development Study reported that a quarter of the youth in the cohort met the criteria for a mental health disorder at age 15 years (Fergusson & Horwood, 2001). They reported an increase of prevalence at age 18 years, with 40% of the youth cohort meeting the criteria for a mental health disorder (Fergusson & Horwood, 2001). Additionally, 12% of the cohort reported experiencing suicidal ideation and 3% reported a suicide attempt prior to 16 years of age (Fergusson & Lynskey, 1995). Again, these increased with age, as more than a quarter of the cohort reported suicidal ideation and 8% reported a suicide attempt prior to 21 years of age (Fergusson & Horwood, 2001).

The Youth2000 survey series in New Zealand reports on the health and wellbeing surveys completed by secondary students (ages 12-18) nationwide in 2001, 2007, and 2012 (Clark et al., 2013; Fleming et al., 2013). According to the most recent 2012 survey, 76% of the young people reported good emotional wellbeing, (Clark et al., 2013; Fleming et al., 2013). However, 16% of the young women and 9% of the young men reported clinically significant symptoms of depression; and, 38% of the young women and 23% of the young men reported feeling periods of low over the past year (Clark et al., 2013; Fleming et al., 2013). Additionally, 29% of the young women and 18% of the young men reported having engaged in deliberate self-harm during the past 12 months (Clark et al., 2013; Fleming et al., 2013). In the past year, 21% of the young women and 10% of the young men described suicidal ideation; whereas, 6% of the young women and 2% of the men reported making a suicide attempt during that time (Clark et al., 2013; Fleming et al., 2013). When comparing the trends in reporting from 2007 to 2012, the researchers described small increases in reports of depressive

symptoms and deliberate self-harm, with no significant changes in suicidal ideation or attempts (Clark et al., 2013; Fleming et al., 2013).

Youth suicide within the New Zealand context is of particular concern and relevance, as New Zealand has the highest suicide rates for youth aged 15-19 years old in the OECD (OECD, 2012). The most recent New Zealand government statistics from the Ministry of Health are from 2012 and report the rate of completed suicides in youth aged 15-19 years as 24.7 per 100,000, with rates of 33.7 for young men and 15.2 for young women in this age range (Ministry of Health, 2015). The report cites suicide as the cause of death for approximately 45% of youth within this age range in 2012 (Ministry of Health, 2015). In regards to ethnicity, the report describes a significant difference between Maori and non-Maori youth suicide statistics, with the rate of suicide in Maori youth aged 15-24 as 2.8 times the rate of suicide in non-Maori youth (Ministry of Health, 2015). Overall, the highest rate of suicide for New Zealand women was reported for those aged 15-19; and, the highest rate of suicide for New Zealand men was for those aged 15-19 and 40-44 (Ministry of Health, 2015).

In summary, young people in contemporary Western societies face significant stressors across multiple domains of their lives. The high rates of mental health problems and suicide may be understood as a response to these experiences. However, the current literature regarding youth stress, mental health, and suicide is predominantly comprised of quantitative approaches that have provided limited understanding of how young people actually experience these challenges in their lives (Horowitz, Wilner, and Alverez, 1979; Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer, & Lazarus, 1981; Payne, 2000). From a social generation and strengths approach, understanding how youth navigate these issues and experiences within their social worlds would be beneficial.

Summary of Understanding Contemporary Youth

In this section, I have discussed variable theoretical underpinnings to studying youth issues, clarifying my own approach as one adopting a strengths perspective within a social generation framework of understanding. Whereas developmental and traditional psychological approaches posit that changes and challenges are inherent in the youth experience, within a social generation framework, the social context of youth is understood as presenting both opportunities and risks for contemporary young people. As such, many have posited that contemporary young people must

balance agency and structure in navigating their increasingly complex lives. These changes in the social world that contemporary youth encounter may reflect the prominent ideas proposed by contemporary theorists, such as individualisation and belonging. Indeed, belonging represents a strengths-based approach to interpreting the individualisation of social structures, wherein young people are perceived as actively looking for belonging and connection. Finally, while I take a strengths-based approach to this research, it is important to also recognise the challenges of stress, mental health problems, and suicide that New Zealand young people face.

Youth Coping

In this section, I will first cover the dominant model of stress and coping in the adult psychological literature, as this understanding of stress is primarily utilised in the youth coping literature. I will then discuss the relevant conceptualisations of youth coping, patterns of youth coping, and the role of social support. Throughout these discussions, I will argue for the importance of qualitative research in promoting young people's voices in order to understand their experiences, highlight strengths-based approaches, and emphasise the importance of social and collective considerations in coping.

Transactional Model of Stress and Coping

Coping research was born out of the stress research boom that occurred in the mid-20th century. Stress research dates back to Cannon (1939) and his perspective that stress occurred when there was a threat to the body's natural homeostasis, resulting in the physiological human stress response of 'fight-or-flight'. Selye (1950, 1976) then became known as the father of stress research, as he was the first to explore a relationship between aberrant stress responses and the development of chronic disease (Melzack, 1999). Stress was viewed in terms of the stress situation and the stress response. Selye (1976) promoted the idea that stress situations disrupted the homeostasis of the body, causing the body to respond by trying to adapt and restore balance. He proposed that stress could be categorised as eustress or distress, in which eustress lead to positive responses and distress lead to negative responses (Selye, 1976). Cannon (1939) and Selye (1976) based their theories of stress and the human stress response on their research with animals, applying the

automatic, physiological responses to threat found in animals to theories of stress in humans. Whilst their ideas are still regarded prominently today, the idea that the human body responds automatically, and therefore involuntarily, to threats has long been viewed by many researchers as only one piece of the puzzle regarding human responses to stress.

Across multiple seminal works, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) explored stress as a relationship between human and environment, positing that stress was not a linear stimulus-and-response process, but instead, a transactional process. The research of Lazarus and Folkman was the first to present the idea of cognitive processes in stress (Folkman, 1984; Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Folkman (1984) defined stress as "a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and as endangering his or her well-being" (p. 840). This proposed transactional view of stress is process-oriented, in which the relationship between the person and environment is a dynamic, continually changing, and bidirectional interaction (Folkman, 1984). From this perspective, stress is not an inherent characteristic of a stimulus; rather, stress results from the person's appraisal of the environment and available resources. Specifically, Lazarus (1991) posited that stress occurs when there is an imbalance between the perceived demands and perceived resources available to cope with the demands. Therefore, Frydenberg (2008) suggested that stress can be conceptualised as the presence of a deficit in the adaptation process.

This deficit view of adapting to change and challenges evolved into the coping research, which focuses on the abilities and capacity to deal with and adapt to changes and challenges. As part of their transactional model of stress and coping, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined coping as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (p.141). In essence, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed that coping can be viewed as the efforts implemented to deal with their definition of stress, and that both stress and coping are part of the dynamic, transactional relationship between the person and environment. Valentiner, Holahan, and Moos (1994) reiterated this notion by defining coping as "a stabilizing factor that can help individuals maintain psychosocial adaptation during stressful periods" (p.1094).

Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) model of stress and coping emphasises the psychological processes, termed primary and secondary appraisals, that mediate the relationship between the person and the environment. They described primary appraisals as judgments that determine whether a transactional relationship is irrelevant, benign-positive, or stressful (Folkman, 1984; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). They posited that transactional relationships appraised as stressful are then appraised into the categories harm/loss, threat, or challenge (Folkman, 1984; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The harm/loss appraisal category refers to damage or loss that has already occurred. Threat appraisals refer to potential harm or loss in the future. Challenges appraisals are those transactional relationships judged as opportunities to learn, grow, or gain (Folkman, 1984; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In addition, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed that primary appraisals are influenced by personal and contextual factors, such as beliefs, values, and goals.

Further, within this model, secondary appraisals include appraisals of resources and options for coping with the appraised stress. Folkman and Lazarus (1980) proposed there are two major functions or goals of coping, to regulate negative emotions (i.e. distress) and to manage the stress that is causing the distress. Accordingly, they hypothesised that coping strategies can be grouped into these two categories of emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). Specifically, Folkman (1984) posited that problem-focused coping involves purposeful action to address the transactional relationship deemed stressful; whereas, emotion-focused coping incorporates strategies to alleviate distress.

Although Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) model of stress and coping represents a cornerstone within the adult stress and coping research field, its applicability to understanding youth coping is unclear. Despite their recognition that appraisals within the model are influenced by contextual factors, the model itself promotes an individualistic view of stress and coping. It is described as transactional, yet this relationship is only posited as occurring between the individual and the environment, lacking any explanation for the social process of coping in relationships and society. From their perspective, the individual is differentiated as separate from the environment, rather than situated within a social context that for youth is highly relational. In addition, whereas many researchers have sought to validate Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) model and other adult models of coping with youth populations, other researchers have argued that developmental processes may

play a role and need to be considered within specific youth models of coping (Compas, 2009; Eisenberg, Valiente, & Sulik, 2009; Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007).

Conceptualisations of Coping in Youth

Various researchers have conceptualised youth coping in different ways, which I will review in more detail in the subsequent sections. First, the majority of researchers have described the categorisations, or dimensions, of coping. The two main categorisations include Folkman and Lazarus's (1980) problem-focused/emotion-focused coping and Billings and Moos's (1981) approach/avoidance coping. Second, a few researchers have suggested hierarchical models of coping in youth. Third, Frydenberg (2008) has proposed an integrative model of coping in youth that accounts for the process of coping itself, not simply its components.

Problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. Some researchers have argued that coping is a trait-like construct that is stable over time (Kavsek & Seiffge-Krenke, 1996). From the trait perspective, an individual utilises certain coping strategies over time, and this pattern or constellation of strategies utilised can be labelled as a coping style. Frydenberg (2008) suggested that an individual's coping style refers to the methods of coping utilised over time and across situations, but that an individual's coping style is only one of the factors influencing how the individual copes in any given situation. From this view, a coping style denotes a semantic category that encapsulates certain coping strategies that have similar functions (Frydenberg, 2008). Thus, the problem-focused and emotion-focused dimensions of coping proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) may be considered coping styles (Frydenberg, 2008).

Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989) developed a coping inventory (COPE) consisting of thirteen theoretically-derived scales based on prior research. The COPE included five scales measuring different aspects of problem-focused coping, five scales measuring different aspects of emotion-focused coping, and three scales measuring maladaptive coping (e.g. behavioural disengagement, emotional disengagement, and focus on emotions or venting emotions; Carver et al., 1989). Phelps and Jarvis (1994) extended Carver et al.'s (1989) work with the COPE by assessing its reliability and validity with youth aged 14-18 years. Exploratory principal components analyses suggested a four-factor solution for youth coping. Phelps and Jarvis (1994) identified these factors as

active coping (problem-focused coping), avoidant coping, emotion-focused coping, and acceptance coping. The active/problem-focused coping factor consisted of the subscales active coping, planning, suppressing competing activities, and seeking instrumental social support (Phelps & Jarvis, 1994). The avoidant coping factor included the subscales denial, behavioural disengagement, and alcohol/drug disengagement. The emotion-focused coping factor contained the subscales seeking emotional social support and focus on or venting of emotions. Finally, the acceptance coping factor included the subscales restraint, positive reinterpretation and growth, acceptance, and mental disengagement (Phelps & Jarvis, 1994).

Approach and avoidance coping. Alternatively, researchers have proposed that the construct of coping is comprised of the two dimensions approach and avoidance coping (Billings & Moos, 1981; Ebata & Moos, 1991; Roth & Cohen, 1986). According to this view, approach coping refers to cognitive and emotional activity directed towards the threat; whereas, avoidance coping refers to cognitive and emotional activity directed away from the threat (Billings & Moos, 1981; Ebata & Moos, 1991; Roth & Cohen, 1986). Approach coping is conceptualised as efforts to resolve the problem or change the way of thinking about the problem, and includes strategies such as problem-solving, cognitive restructuring, and seeking support (Ebata & Moos, 1991). Avoidance coping is conceptualised as efforts to avoid the problem and its emotional consequences, including strategies such as cognitive avoidance, distraction, resigned acceptance, and self-criticism (Ebata & Moos, 1991; Tobin, Holroyd, Reynolds, & Wigal, 1989). Herman-Stahl, Stemmler, and Petersen (1995) explored this two dimensional structure of approach and avoidance coping with a youth population. In their study, emotional expression items loaded onto the factor labelled avoidant coping.

Kavsek and Seiffge-Krenke (1996) looked at coping with daily problems in two age groups, 11-16 years and 17-19 years. For the younger group, factor analyses suggested a two-factor solution, consisting of approach and avoidance dimensions of coping. However, for the older group, a three-factor solution was more suitable, consisting of cognitive approach, behavioural approach, and avoidance dimensions. Kavsek and Seiffge-Krenke (1996) suggested that the factors can be conceptualised in terms of their function, meaning that the avoidance factor can reflect emotion-focused strategies, whereas the approach (both cognitive and behavioural) factor predominantly reflects problem-focused strategies.

Hierarchical models of child and youth coping. Other researchers have attempted to consolidate the problem/emotion-focused coping and approach/avoidance coping paradigms through hierarchical models. Skinner and colleagues developed a comprehensive hierarchical framework of coping for both children and youth, based on an extensive review of the prior coping research in adults, children, and youth (Skinner, Edge, Altman, & Sherwood, 2003; Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007; Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2011). They identified 12 higher-order categories that the research converges upon (Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007; Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2011). The categories of coping identified by Skinner and colleagues include: problem-solving, information-seeking, helplessness, escape, self-reliance, support-seeking, delegation, social isolation, accommodation, negotiation, submission, and opposition (Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007; Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2011). Skinner and colleagues emphasised within their model the importance of the development of coping across childhood and youth, arguing that coping needs to be viewed in the context of development, primarily through the examination of differences in coping across age groups (Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007; Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2011).

An integrative model of youth coping. Frydenberg (2008) proposed an integrative model of youth coping. In her model, Frydenberg (2008) integrated dispositional and situational factors, individual and environmental factors, appraisals, and coping intentions. Similar to the model proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), Frydenberg's (2008) model is transactional in nature, with the individual and environment responding to each other. According to Frydenberg's (2008) proposed model, the coping process begins with the interplay between the situation and the following: perception of the situation, coping intentions, individual characteristics, and caravan of resources, all of which influence each other. Individual characteristics included in this model are age, personality, temperament, biological disposition, self-regulation, self-efficacy, and optimism/hope. Additionally, the caravan of resources includes social support, social learning, family connectedness, and school connectedness.

Frydenberg (2008) argued that the individual characteristics and caravan of resources are important because of how they impact upon the individual's perception of the situation. The perception of the situation is essentially described as Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) primary appraisal process and includes appraisal of the situation into the harm/loss, threat, or challenge categories.

Within Frydenberg's (2008) model, primary appraisal leads to the secondary appraisal of resources, which is also influenced by individual characteristics and the caravan of resources. According to the model, appraisals interact with coping intentions, which includes goals and motivation, to result in coping behaviours and the coping outcome. Finally, tertiary appraisal, or a review of the outcome, occurs and may result in subsequent coping behaviours (Frydenberg, 2008). This reappraisal of the coping process is a core feature of the model, as Frydenberg (2008) argued that it allows the individual to improve their coping repertoire by adding or rejecting coping behaviours based on their effectiveness.

Summary of conceptualisations of youth coping. Youth coping has been conceptualised predominantly in three ways, through binary categorisations, hierarchical models, and Frydenberg's (2008) integrative model. First, the binary categorisations of problem/emotion and approach/avoidance coping were adapted from adult research to youth research. Second, Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck's (2007) hierarchical model of youth coping was proposed through integrating and extending both adult and youth coping research. Their model is unique in emphasising the changing nature of coping as children and youth grow. However, these conceptualisations of youth coping are largely based on quantitative methods. The limited qualitative research conducted in this area in turn limits the active participation and voices of young people to convey their views and experiences. As such, it is important to emphasise that these conceptualisations are adult representations of youth coping.

In the third conceptualisation of youth coping, Frydenberg (2008) appears to emphasise a strengths-based approach, incorporating and highlighting the resources available to and within the young person. In some respects her model parallels the relational aspect of youth by including a tertiary appraisal stage, which suggests a fluid, flexible process of coping. Frydenberg's (2008) caravan of resources is also unique among the conceptualisations of youth coping in acknowledging the importance of relationships to young people and within the process of youth coping. Yet, like the other conceptualisations, Frydenberg's (2008) model is individualistic in nature and does not acknowledge the possibility of collective coping processes for youth.

The reviewed conceptualisations of coping lack an appreciation for the changing social context of contemporary youth. Although some of these conceptualisations acknowledge the impact

of contextual factors on the young person's coping, they neglect to situate the young person within their social context or fully acknowledge the young person's evolving relationship with this social context. Accordingly, much of the research exploring youth coping has focused on individual factors and associations, which will be discussed in the following section.

Patterns of Youth Coping

Utilising the above conceptualisations, researchers have investigated different patterns within youth coping. In this section, I will cover some of the relevant individual factors that have been researched, including age, gender, and ethnicity. I will then review the common patterns reported in research regarding the effectiveness of various coping styles. Lastly, I will focus on the role of social support in youth coping.

Individual factors. In exploring patterns of youth coping, researchers have predominantly investigated the relationships between youth coping and individual factors hypothesised within coping models. First, researchers have identified age-related differences in coping. For example, some have suggested that emotional coping increases as young people get older, suggesting that older young people typically using more tension-reduction strategies compared to those younger than them (Compas, Malcarne, & Fodacaro, 1988; Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993; Frydenberg & Lewis, 1999). Other researchers have proposed that problem-focused coping tends to increase in age across childhood and youth, although some studies have suggested contrasting or null findings (Ebata and Moos, 1991; Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007). Skinner and Zimmer-Gimbeck's (2007) review proposed that escape declines slightly and cognitive distraction increases from childhood to youth. Also, they described that behavioural distraction tends to increase from childhood to youth in response to stressors deemed less controllable (Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007). Finally, their review suggested an increased use of support-seeking from peers, self-reliance, and positive self-talk during youth compared to childhood (Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007).

Second, researchers have emphasised gender differences in the ways young people tend to cope with stress. Generally, studies have suggested that young women tend to utilise emotion-focused coping more and overall use a wider range of coping strategies than young men (Bird & Harris, 1990; Compas et al., 1988; McCubbin, Needle, & Wilson, 1985); and, young men tend to use

more avoidant coping compared to young women (Phelps & Jarvis, 1994). Specifically, studies have proposed that young women are more likely to use acceptance, social support, worry, self-blame, and wishful thinking (Bird & Harris, 1990; Frydenberg & Lewis, 2000; Hampel & Petermann, 2005; Phelps & Jarvis, 1994). Conversely, studies have suggested that young men are more likely to use ventilation, ignoring the problem, and keeping things to themselves (Bird & Harris, 1990; Copeland & Hess, 1995; Frydenberg & Lewis, 2000; Phelps & Jarvis, 1994).

Third, the role of ethnicity in youth coping has been studied. Although the majority of this research has been conducted internationally, a few studies have been conducted in New Zealand. Jose and Schurer (2010) proposed the following three cultural differences: increased use of rumination by Maori and Asian New Zealand youth, compared to European New Zealand youth; higher levels of externalising by Maori and European New Zealand youth, compared to Asian New Zealand youth; and, higher use of problem-solving by Maori and Asian New Zealand youth, compared to European New Zealand youth. A few studies have suggested no differences in the utilisation of social support by Maori and Pacific Island youth compared to European New Zealand youth (Clarke & Jensen, 1997; Evans et al., 1997; Jose & Shurer, 2010).

Effectiveness of coping styles for young people. The majority of studies exploring the effectiveness of coping styles for young people have looked at the cross-sectional associations between type of coping and psychological dysfunction. This body of research has categorised youth psychological dysfunction into internalising problems (i.e. anxiety, depression, and somatic symptoms) and externalising problems (i.e. aggression and conduct problems). First, several studies have suggested that problem-focused coping and approach coping are associated with fewer internalising and externalising problems (Compas et al., 1988; Connor-Smith et al., 2000; Ebata & Moos, 1991; Eisenberg et al., 1994; Frydenberg & Lewis, 2009; Herman-Stahl et al., 1995; Hoffman, Levy-Shiff, Sohlberg, & Zarizki, 1992; Plancherel & Bolognini, 1995; Windle & Windle, 1996). Second, studies have suggested associations between emotion-focused coping and more internalising and externalising problems (Compas et al., 1988; Hoffman et al., 1992; Plancherel & Bolognini, 1995; Windle & Windle, 1996). Third, studies have suggested associations between avoidant coping and more internalising problems (Compas et al., 2001; Connor-Smith et al., 2000; Dumont & Provost,

1999; Ebata & Moos, 1991; Herman-Stahl et al., 1995; O'Brien, Bahadur, Gee, Balto, & Erber, 1997; Seiffge-Krenke, 2000).

The role of social support. Far fewer studies have looked at the relationship between coping and well-being. From the studies that have explored this, a stress buffer hypothesis has arisen regarding social support. Proponents of the stress buffer hypothesis have posited that social support acts as a buffer to the negative effects of stress on young people (DuBois, Felner, Brand, Adan, & Evans, 1992; DuBois, Felner, Meares, & Krier, 1994; Murberg & Bru, 2004; Ystgaard, 1997). Whilst there have been mixed results to support this hypothesis that social support plays a mediating role, studies have suggested an association between social support and well-being (Chu, Saucier, & Hafner, 2010; Lewis & Frydenberg, 2004; Saha, Huebner, Hills, Malone, & Valois, 2014).

There is also a significant amount of research proposing an association between social support and fewer emotional problems in young people (e.g. Helsen, Vollebergh, & Meeus, 2000; Rueger, Malecki, & Demaray, 2010; Weinstein, Mermelstein, Hedeker, Hankin, & Flay, 2006). Although most of the studies have been conducted internationally, Jose and Shurer (2010) found a similar association with New Zealand youth. Khurana and Romer (2012) conducted a longitudinal study exploring the pathways through which coping strategies influence suicidal ideation in youth aged 14-22 years. From multiple group path analyses, Khurana and Romer (2012) suggested that support-seeking was the only strategy to directly predict reductions in suicidal ideation, whereas the other strategies predicted reductions through influencing mediating factors.

Researchers have proposed that young people tend to perceive increased support from their peers and decreased support from their parents across youth (Helsen et al., 2000; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Weinstein et al., 2006). In addition, researchers have suggested that young women tend to perceive more social support than young men (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Kerr, Preuss, & King, 2006; Murberg & Bru, 2004; Slavin & Rainer, 1990). Some studies have suggested positive correlations with between peer support and wellbeing or fewer emotional problems (Berndt, 1999; DuBois et al., 1992; Slavin & Rainer, 1990; Prinstein, Boergers, Spirito, Little, & Grapentine, 2000; Rueger et al., 2010; Weinstein et al., 2006). In contrast, other studies have suggested an association between peer support and emotional problems (Bal, Crombez, Van Oost, &

Debourdeaudhuij, 2003; Barrera & Garrison-Jones, 1992; Berndt & Keefe, 1995; Garnefski & Diekstra, 1996; Hirsch & DuBois, 1992; Kerr et al., 2006).

In summary, in the current section on patterns of youth coping, I covered relevant individual factors of coping explored in research, the current research regarding the effectiveness of different coping styles for young people, and the role of social support in youth coping. Overall, the research regarding youth coping has sought to understand youth coping within structural frameworks, primarily utilising quantitative methods to categorise and describe processes and relationships. As such, research has investigated the direct associations between individual categorisations such as age, gender, and culture and type of coping utilised. These approaches neglect to identify or address the complexity of contemporary young people's lives. Although ethnicity perhaps represents a start in situating young people within their social contexts, the utilisation of it solely as a means of categorisation does not allow for an understanding of how context impacts coping. In addition to the lack of research attempting to understand the experience of youth coping, there is a lack of research aiming to understand how and why individual factors, let alone entire complex contexts, impact the experience of youth coping.

Similar gaps are evident in the research investigating the effectiveness of different coping styles for young people. These studies attempt to apply structural constraints to capture an evolving relationship without taking account of the social context within which this relationship occurs. Again, there is a lack of research aimed at understanding the youth perspective, including their views and experiences regarding the utility of different coping strategies. Furthermore, this body of research predominantly employs a deficits approach by focusing on psychological dysfunction. Lastly, the growing body of evidence regarding the importance of social support for young people perhaps reflects the relational aspect of youth, as these studies have suggested that parent and peer relationships are important aspects of youth coping. However, there is still no acknowledgement or exploration of possible collective coping processes, which might be expected within peer groups as part of belonging and connection.

Summary of Youth Coping

Much of the research regarding youth coping has sought to quantitatively categorise different strategies and measure their effectiveness through outcome studies. However, these conceptualisations of youth coping have neglected to appreciate the social context in which young people exist and the relational processes relevant to understanding their experience. Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck (2007) attempted to deviate from the traditional conceptualisations of coping based on adult understandings by emphasising the impact of developmental changes on youth coping. Yet, their conceptualisation can be viewed as quite narrowly developmental. Alternatively, Frydenberg (2008) proposed a relatively comprehensive model with a strengths approach and unique tertiary appraisal. However, similar to the other conceptualisations, it fails to situate coping within the young person's social world. Additionally, the voices of contemporary young people have largely been silenced in the present research. Finally, the possibility of collective coping processes appears to have been largely ignored in the existing coping research, despite recognising the beneficial role social support can play for young people. The following section will expand on this concept of social support by discussing youth help-seeking.

Youth Help-Seeking

Researchers have used different terms for help-seeking, including seeking social support, seeking instrumental support, and support-seeking (Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007). Accordingly, different aspects of help-seeking have been categorised under approach coping, problem-focused coping, and emotion-focused coping depending on the aspect of help-seeking measured (Boldero & Fallon, 1995). For example, support seeking has often been divided into instrumental and social support seeking, with instrumental support seeking being classified as problem-focused coping and social support seeking as emotion-focused coping (Carver et al., 1989). However, subsequent factor analyses have suggested that both instrumental and social support seeking load onto the single factor known as support seeking or help-seeking (Ayers, Sandler, West, & Roosa, 1996; Carver, 1997). Additionally, help-seeking is predominantly narrowed into 'formal' help-seeking and 'informal' help-seeking behaviours (Offer et al., 1991). Formal help-seeking refers to seeking help from formal, professional sources such as school counsellors, General Practitioners (GPs), or mental health

professionals. Informal help-seeking refers to seeking help from informal sources such as family or friends.

In their comprehensive review, Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck (2007) argued that there are several elements to the strategy of help-seeking, including source of help (e.g. peers, parents, teacher), method of seeking help (e.g. verbal request, proximity-seeking, expressing distress), domain (e.g. medical, academic), and type of help sought (advice, comfort, guidance). Help-seeking is typically not viewed as an isolated decision and resulting behaviour; rather, it is predominantly conceptualised as a process over time, with various models delineating different components of this process (Gross & McMullen, 1983; Srebnik et al., 1996). Additionally, Rogler and Cortes (1993) conceptualised help-seeking as a pathway that has direction and duration. Whether conceptualised as a process or pathway, help-seeking is commonly understood as a complex sequence of events that is influenced by individual, cultural, and social factors (Rogler & Cortes, 1993). Therefore, models of help-seeking have been proposed in order to define these influencing factors.

The term 'help-seeking' is used in the current thesis as an umbrella term for a coping strategy that encompasses the above components, with a principal distinction between formal and informal help-seeking. In the following section, I will briefly explore some of the prominent models of help-seeking, or explanations of the help-seeking process, which have been proposed in research. Following this, I will discuss the patterns of youth help-seeking internationally and within New Zealand. Throughout these sections, I will argue for the importance of informal help-seeking, particularly in regards to peer support, as this constitutes a significant gap in the current research.

Models of Help-Seeking

Similar to the coping research, much of the help-seeking research, including its theoretical models, originated in research with adults. Since then, researchers have adapted and expanded these models to apply to an understanding of youth help-seeking. Additionally, many of the models that have been proposed for understanding youth help-seeking are not specific to youth; and, instead, are focused on both children and youth. Although various models of help-seeking have been proposed, many of them share the same structure with three phases, including problem recognition, decision to seek help, and implementation of help-seeking (Cauce et al., 2002; Goldsmith, Jackson, &

Hough, 1988; Gross & McMullen, 1983). The following discussion will elaborate on these three stages, emphasising the adaptations proposed by researchers for understanding child and youth help-seeking.

The first stage of the help-seeking process is posited to involve the process of perceiving or recognising something as a problem (Gross & McMullen, 1983). Goldsmith and colleagues (1988) suggested that this first stage is influenced by various features of the problem such as type, severity, frequency, and distress. Both adult and child/youth models of help-seeking have acknowledged that problem recognition often occurs within the individual's social network (Cauce et al., 2002; Goldsmith et al., 1988; Srebnik et al., 1996). Predominantly, adult models suggest that problem recognition occurs by comparison of oneself to others in the social network (Wills, 1983); whereas, child and youth models have emphasised the roles of parents in problem recognition (Cauce et al., 2002; Srebnik et al., 1996; Zwaanswijk, Verhaak, Bensing, Van der Ende, & Verhulst, 2003).

In the second stage of help-seeking, it is posited that the individual makes the decision regarding whether to seek help (Gross & McMullen, 1983). Mirroring the help-seeking process as a whole, this stage is not conceptualised as including a single decision, but rather is considered a process of decision making in which the individual weighs up coping resources versus the costs of asking for help (Fischer, Weiner, Abramowitz, 1983; Gross & McMullen, 1983). Accordingly, Goldsmith and colleagues (1988) proposed various psychological and social predisposing factors affect this decision to seek help. For example, Gross and McMullen (1983) suggested that seeking help may present as a threat to an individual's self-esteem as it can be experienced as embarrassing. Additionally, Goldsmith and colleagues (1988) suggested that social role obligations, such as gender roles, may influence whether an individual decides that the perceived costs of seeking help outweighs the distress caused by the problem.

Gross and McMullen (1983) argued that the cost-benefit analysis present within this stage of the process would not be as integral to informal help-seeking, proposing that since these relationships are more private, help and support would be typical parts of these relationships. They also hypothesised that help-seeking within relationships would provide supplementary benefits such as increased intimacy (Gross & McMullen, 1983). The models which have been adapted for children and youth have expanded upon the predisposing characteristics that influence this stage two decision-

making process regarding seeking help. These models have added demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, and ethnicity (Srebnik et al., 1996). They have also emphasised social and cultural factors, including the values, beliefs, and knowledge of the family (Cauce et al., 2002; Srebnik et al., 1996).

The third stage of the help-seeking process is proposed as involving choosing a help source and seeking help from them (Gross & McMullen, 1983). Within these models, stages two and three are both impacted by facilitator and barrier factors (Goldsmith et al., 1988). Facilitators are conceptualised as factors which promote and enable help-seeking, whereas barriers are thought to reflect factors which restrict or block the help-seeking options available to the individual (Goldsmith et al., 1988; Srebnik et al., 1996). For example, social pressure from family, friends, and others can advocate for the individual to seek or not seek help (Srebnik et al., 1996). Overall, Pescosolido (1992) suggested that the help-seeking process as a whole is embedded within the individual's social network; and, as such, interactions within the social network impact help-seeking at each step of its process.

Likewise, child and youth models emphasise similar barriers and facilitators, including the community and social network. These models account for the impact of social network attitudes towards help-seeking and their knowledge about suitable sources or services of support (Srebnik et al., 1996). For example, some social networks may be able to address the help or support required themselves (Cauce et al., 2002). Alternatively, other social networks may discourage help-seeking from formal sources due to discordant values or beliefs (Cauce et al., 2002). However, although these models identify the importance of the social network in the help-seeking process, they fail to recognise the importance of peers for a young person; and, therefore, underestimate the impact that peers may have on the help-seeking process for young people specifically.

Other researchers have proposed different help-seeking models that place more emphasis on the social nature of the help-seeking process (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Rickwood et al., 2005). Boldero and Fallon (1995) suggested that youth help-seeking be viewed within a social cognition framework, specifically focusing on youth "perceptions and evaluations of themselves, others in their social network, their problems, and potential sources of help" (p. 207). Furthermore, Rickwood and colleagues (2005) have generated much research regarding Australian youth help-seeking, and base

their model of general help-seeking upon this youth research. The specific model they propose has four stages, including: awareness and appraisal of the problem, expression of symptoms and need for support, availability of help sources, and willingness to seek out help and disclose to sources (Rickwood et al., 2005). Rickwood and colleagues (2005) take a distinctly different stance on the overall approach to help-seeking by conceptualising help-seeking as a social transaction. Essentially, they suggest that the help-seeking process moves from a personal, internal process (i.e. thoughts, feelings) to an interpersonal process marked by utilising relationships for help and support (Rickwood et al., 2005).

The help-seeking models reviewed in this section reflect less individualised concepts than the dominant coping models reviewed previously by emphasising social processes. However, while the traditional help-seeking models acknowledge that social relationships play a role in the process, youth help-seeking models fail to emphasise the likely importance of peers in this process. The conceptualisations proposed by Boldero and Fallon (1995) and Rickwood and colleagues (2005) offer perspectives centred on social processes, which may be more applicable to understanding youth help-seeking. However, even these conceptualisations fail to situate the individual fully within their social context. Although they highlight the importance of the immediate social network for young people, there is a lack of appreciation for how social structures and collective social processes may impact on youth help-seeking. Nonetheless, Rickwood and colleagues' (2005) assertion that help-seeking is a social transaction fits within a social generation approach to understanding contemporary youth. Perhaps this notion of social transaction could also be applicable towards understanding the young person's relationship in society and towards the young person's relationship in peer groups, as part of collective help-seeking processes.

Lastly, similar to Frydenberg's (2008) coping model, the above approaches to understanding the process following the identification of a problem can be understood from a strengths perspective. Facilitating opportunities for contemporary young people to contribute their understandings and experiences of help-seeking could also facilitate a strengths approach. Contrary to other models proposed, Rickwood and colleagues (2005) proposed their model following numerous quantitative and qualitative studies conducted with Australian young people. Perhaps their inclusion of studies

which capture youth views helped shaped their unique understanding of the youth help-seeking process as a social process.

Patterns of Youth Help-Seeking

Research focusing on youth help-seeking has identified that young people in Western societies rarely seek help for their problems (Kushner & Sher, 1991; Offer et al., 1991; Rickwood et al., 2005; Whitaker et al., 1990). As such, many researchers have explored factors that impact youth help-seeking behaviours. In this section, I will discuss the common factors identified by researchers as being associated with poor rates of youth help-seeking.

The service gap. Although a significant number of youth experience distress or mental health problems, the majority do not seek professional help for these problems (Kushner & Sher, 1991; Mariu et al., 2012; Offer et al., 1991; Rickwood et al., 2005; Whitaker et al., 1990). Statistics from the USA and Australia have largely contributed to the international body of research showing that young people tend not to seek help for personal and emotional problems from professionals (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1999; Rickwood et al., 2005). In New Zealand, Fergusson and colleagues suggested that less than a quarter of youth who met criteria for a mental health diagnosis had sought treatment (Fergusson et al., 1993; Horwood & Fergusson, 1998). As part of the Youth2000 survey series of New Zealand youth, Mariu and colleagues (2012) proposed that over 80% of those experiencing significant mental health problems had not sought help from a GP. Accordingly, Stefl and Prosperi (1985) first coined the term 'service gap' to explain the phenomenon in which many of those, adults and youth alike, who experience psychological distress do not seek professional help. In accordance with the help-seeking models presented in the previous section, research exploring the service gap phenomenon has largely focused on facilitating and barrier factors to youth help-seeking.

Facilitating and barrier factors. Many facilitating and barrier factors for youth help-seeking have been identified by researchers. Some of these factors include the following: problem type, treatment fears, past experiences with professional help-seeking services, and emotional competence (Carlton & Deane, 2000; Ciarrochi & Deane, 2001; Fallon & Bowles, 1999; Gulliver, Griffiths, & Christensen, 2010). Overall, however, studies have suggested the most common facilitating and barrier factors for youth help-seeking as age, gender, problem severity, stigma, attitudes towards

help-seeking, and sources of help (Gulliver et al., 2010; Raviv et al., 2009). In the following sections, I will discuss each of these factors in turn.

Age. Researchers have described mixed findings regarding the factor of age on youth help-seeking. Some researchers have proposed an increase in help-seeking among older youth participants compared to younger participants (Michelmore & Hindley, 2012; Schonert-Reichl & Muller, 1996). However, other researchers have suggested a reduction in help-seeking intention in older participants (Ciarrochi, Wilson, Deane, & Rickwood, 2003) or no age differences across youth (Fallon & Bowles, 1999). Further still, other researchers have proposed variable age effects depending on other factors, highlighting the fact that none of these factors act in isolation (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Raviv et al., 2009; Rickwood et al., 2005). For example, in Boldero and Fallon's (1995) study, older participants described going to peers the most for help, taking more responsibility for their problems, and perceiving their problems as more serious; whereas, younger participants described going to family the most for help and ascribed greater stigma to their problems.

Gender. Rickwood and colleagues (2005) proposed an intersection of age and gender. Specifically, they suggested that young women tend to reduce their help-seeking from family across youth, whilst increasing their help-seeking from peers. However, they suggested a different trend for young men, wherein young men tended to reduce their help-seeking from family across youth but did not replace this or compensate with peer help-seeking (Rickwood et al., 2005). Overall, researchers have proposed that young women are more likely and more willing than young men to seek help for problems (Offer et al., 1991; Raviv, Sills, Raviv, & Wilansky, 2000; Raviv et al., 2009; Rickwood & Braithwaite, 1994; Zwaanswijk et al., 2003).

Problem severity. Researchers have presented contrasting results for the relationship between problem severity and formal help-seeking. Some have suggested that there is a positive correlation between problem severity and youth willingness to seek formal help and actual formal help-seeking (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Raviv et al., 2000; Raviv et al., 2009; Zwaanswijk et al., 2003). However, other researchers have proposed an inverse relationship between problem severity and help-seeking (e.g. Wilson, 2010; Wilson, Deane, & Ciarrochi, 2005). The most poignant example of this inverse relationship comes from the Australian and New Zealand youth studies expounding upon the 'help negation' effect, which refers to the phenomenon in which higher levels of suicidal ideation

correlate with lower levels of help-seeking intention (Carlton & Deane, 2000; Deane, Wilson, & Ciarrochi, 2001; Wilson et al., 2005). Results from the Youth2000 survey suggested low help-seeking rates for New Zealand youth with suicidal ideation (Mariu et al., 2012). While Rickwood and colleagues (2005) proposed that help negation was strongest in regard to informal sources of help for Australian youth, other researchers have suggested that suicidal youth seek help from their peers (Klimes-Dougan et al., 2013; Michelmore & Hindley, 2012). For example, Coggan, Patterson, and Fill (1997) completed focus groups with New Zealand youth to explore their views of how to address suicide. The youth in their study described how they would cope by themselves or go to a friend if they felt suicidal (Coggan et al., 1997).

Stigma. Researchers who have conducted systematic reviews of quantitative and qualitative studies have suggested stigma as one of the key barriers to formal help-seeking for youth (Clement et al., 2015; Gulliver et al., 2010). For example, Canadian young people in Bowers, Manion, Papadopoulos, and Gauvreau's (2013) study named stigma as the largest barrier to accessing school-based mental health services. Further, Clement and colleagues' (2015) systematic review, which included adults and youth population studies, suggested that stigma is a disproportionately larger barrier for youth compared to adults. Their review also proposed that stigma regarding seeking help and internalised stigma, such as embarrassment or shame, were the specific types of shame associated with reduced formal help-seeking (Clement et al., 2015). Gulliver and colleagues (2010) found a similar key concern regarding stigma and embarrassment in their systematic review of the youth research.

Attitudes towards help-seeking. Attitudes towards help-seeking has been proposed as a significant correlate of formal help-seeking intention and behaviour, with negative attitudes acting as barriers to seeking help and positive attitudes acting as facilitators to seeking help (Cauce & Srebnik, 2003; Gould et al., 2004; Rickwood et al., 2005). In particular, researchers conducting studies in Australia and New Zealand have suggested youth beliefs and attitudes towards formal help-seeking are crucial factors in the help negation effect (Carlton & Deane, 2000; Wilson et al., 2005). Unfortunately, although studies have provided evidence of a relationship between attitudes and youth help-seeking, few of these studies actually specify what these attitudes are to the reader. Nonetheless, some of the attitudes researchers have proposed create barriers to formal help-seeking

for youth include: concerns about confidentiality and trust, concerns about disclosure of personal issues, and doubts about the utility of professional help (Dubow, Lovko, & Kausch, 1990; Gibson, Cartwright, Kerrisk, Campbell, & Seymour, 2016; Gulliver et al., 2010; Rickwood et al., 2005; West, Kayser, Overton, & Saltmarsh, 1991). Overall, the main attitude cited in research concerns young people's preference for and belief in self-reliance (Curtis, 2010; Dubow et al., 1990; Gulliver et al., 2010; Rickwood et al., 2007). These researchers propose that contemporary young people generally believe that their problems are theirs to cope with and solve (Rickwood et al., 2005; Wilson et al., 2005). As Cauce and colleagues (2002) point out in their model of youth help-seeking, perhaps this belief in self-reliance reflects the individualistic values of society more broadly.

Sources of help. If young people do choose to seek help, researchers have suggested that they are more likely to seek help from informal sources than formal sources (Raviv et al., 2000; Rickwood et al., 2005; Sheffield, Fiorenza, & Sofronoff, 2004; Zwaanswijk et al., 2003). Specifically, young people most commonly seek help and support from friends (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Klimes-Dougan et al., 2013; Michelmore & Hindley, 2012; Raviv et al., 2009; Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2005). Furthermore, an interesting trend shown in research has been that young people are more willing to seek formal help for friends than for themselves (Curtis, 2010; Raviv et al., 2000; Raviv et al., 2009). However, young people still prefer to refer their friends to informal, rather than formal, sources (Curtis, 2010; Raviv et al., 2009). Other than these patterns identified in research, little is known about young people seeking help from peers.

In summary, researchers have identified a service gap phenomenon in Western societies including New Zealand, in which young people who are distressed tend not to seek help. In addition, the help negation effect implies that young people who are more distressed are less likely to seek help, a particularly concerning issue given the high rates of youth suicide in New Zealand. Although there have been mixed findings regarding the impact of age on youth help-seeking, gender differences have been noted, in which young women are described as more willing to seek help than young men. Further, stigma and attitudes towards seeking help, including self-reliance, have been proposed as barriers to young people choosing to seek help for distress. Finally, researchers have suggested that young people prefer to go to informal sources for help, namely peers. Yet, there is a paucity of research exploring this aspect of youth help-seeking, as most of the research has been

focused on formal help-seeking. If young people have reported that they go to peers the most for help and support, it seems likely that this peer process is an integral part of youth coping and help-seeking. Accordingly, the following section will address the notion of peer support in youth help-seeking.

Peer Support in Youth Help-Seeking

It has been argued that peers become increasingly important for contemporary young people as they travel through youth, even displacing their parents as their primary source of support. The importance of belonging and connectedness for youth, especially peer belonging and connectedness, was previously explored. Additionally, research exploring the nature of youth friendships was reviewed, and concepts such as intimacy and self-disclosure are thought to be central features of such relationships. It has even been proposed that seeking help and support from peers is actually an instrumental aspect of youth friendships, as it likely increases intimacy and allows for vicarious learning through collective help-seeking processes (Nelson Le-Gall, 1981; Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2005). Further, social support has been identified by researchers as an important element of youth coping, evident within Frydenberg's (2008) caravan of resources and the stress buffer hypothesis. Gulliver and colleagues (2010) described in their review of youth help-seeking that social support or encouragement from others was shown to be a facilitator for youth formal help-seeking.

Yet, there is still little research exploring how young people support and help each other as part of informal help-seeking. In turn, it is unclear how peers influence the formal help-seeking process. If attitudes and stigma are key barriers to formal help-seeking, it seems reasonable to hypothesise that the attitudes of those within a young person's peer group would influence the young person's process of help-seeking, as a whole and at each step. In regards to the steps of identifying a problem and appraising whether help is required, Meyer (2001) found that about half of the young women diagnosed with an eating disorder in their sample did not think seeking help was needed because their eating habits fitted within the norms of their peer group.

Additionally, in relation to the step of actively seeking help, although young people report more willingness to seek help for a friend than for themselves, these help-seeking rates are still alarmingly low (Curtis, 2010; Raviv et al., 2009). Specifically, researchers have suggested that about 75% of young people who have supported a suicidal friend kept it a secret (Curtis, 2010; Klimes-

Dougan et al., 2013; Michelmore & Hindley, 2012). Therefore, in addition to the service gap between individual and service, Raviv and colleagues (2000) have proposed that there is also a "personal service gap" between the service and peers who could seek help for the distressed young person. However, as Michelmore and Hindley (2012) identify in their review study, there is little research exploring why young people choose not to seek help for a suicidal peer.

In summary, peer relationships and the peer group context appear to play vital roles in youth coping and help-seeking. Unfortunately, they are under-researched and not clearly understood. It would be difficult to understand such complex social processes without incorporating the knowledge and experience of young people themselves. Quantitative methods of research have been applied to understanding associations between peer social support and outcomes, but they could not decipher a clear picture. Conversely, qualitative methods of research would enable young people to describe these processes of support and help and impart their knowledge to those outside their generation.

Summary of Youth Help-Seeking

Help-seeking represents an important aspect of youth coping, yet there is little understanding of the process itself for New Zealand youth, except that they rarely seek formal help. Seeking help occurs within a social context and can be considered a social process, from the first step of identifying that there is a problem that needs to be addressed, to the last step of taking action to seek help. Whilst models of help-seeking have incorporated social networks as influential and important, they have ignored the potential impact of other aspects of social context. For example, it is likely that stigma and negative attitudes towards help-seeking exist within social structures, not just within an individual or their direct social network. From a social generation approach, it would be beneficial to understand how contemporary youth navigate and experience help-seeking in their specific social contexts.

Further, research has highlighted that young people seek help and support from peers the most, but what this support looks like and how it is experienced remains unclear. The importance of peer relationships and peer groups in youth suggests that peers are significant contributors to the social context of help-seeking. Therefore, the impact of peer relationships and collective processes on help-negation, stigma, and attitudes towards help-seeking, in addition to the overall process of help-

seeking, are valuable areas to explore. Qualitative methods of exploring these experiences appear especially appropriate as they are likely to contribute to a strengths approach to youth research by enabling an understanding of how young people are already helping and supporting each other.

The Current Study

The approach to youth research I have adopted incorporates a social generation framework and strengths perspective. Instead of defining youth according to developmental and traditional psychological perspectives, I have chosen to pursue a more contemporary sociological approach to understanding youth. Rather than focusing on traditional concepts of change and transition within the individual, I focus on the social context of youth. Accordingly, I have reviewed contemporary arguments regarding the rapid social changes that have occurred in contemporary Western society, which have been posited as resulting in increased opportunities and risks for young people today. One of the significant concerns I highlighted was that of mental health problems and suicide among New Zealand youth. Following this, I reviewed the current literature regarding youth coping, in which salient models of youth coping were presented and the role of social support highlighted. Finally, I discussed the process of help-seeking among youth and explored the significant barriers to young people seeking help for distress. Within the coping and help-seeking sections, I argued for the importance of understanding the roles that peers play in these processes for young people, since these friendships have been purported to be of increasing significance during youth.

Several limitations and gaps in the available research have been highlighted. First, although contemporary theorists posit plausible arguments regarding social changes within Western societies, research conducted to address their suppositions has largely been conducted internationally. Given the relevance of changes across societies in affecting the social context of young people, research specific to the experience of youth within New Zealand is necessary. Specifically, it is important to understand the stress that young people in New Zealand experience and how they cope with this stress, including the process of help-seeking.

Second, as highlighted throughout the section on youth coping, the dominant models of youth coping are particularly individualistic in nature, and largely disregard the impact of the surrounding social context, including the peer group context. Although some acknowledge the importance of social

support, this does not situate youth coping within a contemporary social context or attempt to understand peer coping processes. The help-seeking models reviewed present a more social approach to understanding youth help-seeking, but they still do not sufficiently orient the understanding of youth help-seeking within its social context, an integral aspect to understanding the experiences of contemporary youth. Thus, research exploring young people's experiences of coping and help-seeking within their social contexts, and with particular emphasis on peer groups and relationships, would address the current gap in the literature.

Third, there is a wealth of research showing what coping strategies young people utilise in response to stress and how these relate to outcomes. However, as White and Wyn (2013) suggest, identifying trends in youth research is different to understanding the young people's experience. As such, there is a paucity of research exploring youth perspectives on coping or how useful they perceive their coping strategies to be. Similarly, few researchers have endeavoured to understand and promote youth experiences of help-seeking. Altogether, the research has tried to apply adult research understandings to a youth experience. Instead, it is imperative that youth research illuminate understandings of these processes with the expertise of young people themselves.

Fourth, many of the studies regarding youth coping and help-seeking have utilised quantitative methods. These studies have been informative regarding rates and types of coping strategies and help-seeking behaviours. However, it has been difficult to elucidate coping and help-seeking processes among youth utilising these quantitative methods alone. As discussed, these methods do not promote the participation of young people, which is afforded by qualitative methods. They also do not allow for an understanding of young people's experiences within their social contexts. Conversely, qualitative studies have provided valuable and enlightening information beyond the scope of quantitative methods.

The rationale behind the current study is to take the first step in understanding how New Zealand young people cope with stress by asking them directly. By developing an understanding of their experiences of stress, coping, and help-seeking, a foundation will be set for future research to explore possible points of intervention. For example, from a strengths approach, a plausible avenue of intervention would be to support and enhance the coping strategies that New Zealand youth already utilise and find helpful. Second, by understanding the attitudes New Zealand youth hold about help-seeking, these can be targeted as part of future interventions (Rickwood et al., 2005).

Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to qualitatively explore how New Zealand young people cope with stress. The aim of the research is to explore New Zealand youth views and experiences of stress, coping, and seeking help, with a particular emphasis on the role of peers in the support and help processes.

The following are the five main research questions guiding the research:

1. What particular stresses do today's generation of young people face in New Zealand?

2. How do young people cope with these stresses?

3. How do young people describe their views and experiences of seeking help?

4. What role do peers play in these processes?

5. How do young people understand the origin and development of their attitudes towards seeking help?

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The current study aims to explore the particular stresses young people experience in contemporary New Zealand society, how they cope with them, and their views and experiences of seeking help. I have a particular interest in understanding the role of peer relationships and peer groups in these processes and experiences. Qualitative methods of research allow for the depth and richness of data required in order to understand these views, experiences, and processes. In addition, given my social generation and strengths approach to youth research, qualitative methods enable the promotion of New Zealand youth voices in research. Focus groups and individual interviews were chosen as the methods of data collection as these would likely produce complementary sets of data that inform an understanding of how young people talk about stress, coping and help-seeking amongst themselves as well as their more personal experiences of dealing with these issues. Thematic analysis was utilised for analysis to capture the 'reality' of the young people's views and experiences from a critical realist stance.

In the following chapter, I will provide a further elucidation of the theoretical framework, building on previous discussions of a social generation and strengths approach to youth research, including discussions of epistemological stance and researcher reflexivity. I will then describe the methods of data collection, including the study design, participant demographics, recruitment of schools and participants, ethical considerations, and data gathering. Finally, I will outline the data analysis and discuss the issue of quality in qualitative research.

Theoretical Framework

Current Approach to Youth Research

Contemporary researchers have argued that approaches to youth research help shape the research itself (Treharne & Riggs, 2015; White & Wyn, 2013). As outlined in the previous chapter, my approach to youth research draws on a social generation framework and utilises a strengths perspective. This approach clearly contrasts with developmental and traditional psychological approaches, which have tended to emphasise a problem or deficit approach to youth research through defining youth as a normative developmental stage marked by risk and difficulties. Spencer and Doull (2015) have argued that researchers also need to clarify their approaches towards agency

in youth research. I have adopted and applied a lens of agency, rather than powerlessness, to the current understanding of young people.

In order to understand the meanings and experience of youth, a social generation and strengths perspective promotes the participation of youth voices themselves. Youth can be considered a marginalised voice, and this research provided an opportunity for their voices to be heard (Bagnoli & Clark, 2010; Ungar, 2003). Thus, the current research proposed to engage youth in discussion about stress, coping, and help-seeking in order to learn from their experiential expertise. For example, I began each focus group and interview by reiterating the desire to learn from the young people's own expertise and, subsequently, encouraging them to drive the direction of their interviews.

A qualitative research approach was utilised to enable this discussion through the collection of rich, deep, and meaningful data (Howitt, 2010). Qualitative research is concerned with the meanings and insights participants offer regarding the processes and relationships that are studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Rich & Ginsburg, 1999). Accordingly, a qualitative methodology fit the research approach and questions better than quantitative methods. Indeed, qualitative methodology is best suited to research with youth that asks questions such as 'why' and 'how' (Rich & Ginsburg, 1999). It provides the opportunity to understand context and processes rather than static variables (Ungar, 2003). Specifically, qualitative methods provide the appropriate means to explore the processes of coping with stress and seeking help from the perspectives of young people, by affording them the space to explore their own ideas, processes, and experiences (Bagnoli & Clark, 2010; Wilkinson, 2008).

In addition, qualitative methods focus on capturing the individual's perspective and the reality constructed by each individual (Howitt, 2010). As such, this fits the current approach of attempting to understand how contemporary young people in New Zealand view and understand their experiences. Qualitative methods also embrace a naturalistic approach, which allows me to endeavour to situate research in the 'real' world to provide knowledge, insight, and understanding of the social context experienced by contemporary New Zealand young people (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Wilkinson, 2008). Whereas quantitative research posits that reality and truth can be elucidated through direct observation and logical reasoning, qualitative research posits that "language may be a window onto reality but cannot represent reality" (Howitt, 2010, p. 7).

Given there are multiple epistemological stances from which to conduct qualitative research, it is important to clearly state my personal epistemology. I take a critical realist stance, which holds that there is a real world independent of human observation, knowledge, and interpretation (Easton, 2010). Yet, our knowledge about this reality is socially constructed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Therefore, critical realism is a contextualist view that suggests reality is viewed through lenses that are influenced by social and cultural contexts (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Howitt, 2010). Accordingly, the interpretation of reality, or the meaning made by a person, depends on the lens through which it is viewed. However, critical realism also acknowledges that the "real world breaks through" these social constructions (Easton, 2010, p. 120). This epistemological stance highlights the importance of me, as the researcher, taking a curious and naïve stance, rather than making assumptions (Danermark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen, & Karlsson, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Critical realism fits closely with a social generation approach of trying to understanding the reality of contemporary society for young people and how young people themselves make meaning of these experiences.

Researcher Reflexivity

Researcher reflexivity is an important consideration in qualitative methods of research. Reflexivity refers to the understanding that the researcher shapes the research itself, as they bring their own values, experiences, and social contexts to all aspects of the research process (Treharne & Riggs, 2015). As such, researcher reflexivity involves disclosing and reflecting on how relevant personal factors may impact the research process. Indeed, this aligns with the focus of the current research that seeks to highlight the importance of social processes and context in young people's experiences. Accordingly, my experiences contribute to the social process of the research itself.

First, as a European with an American accent, my upbringing was a salient factor in the current study, for both the researcher and the participants. Since I moved to New Zealand after high school, I have minimal knowledge about New Zealand high schools and no prior experience of them. As such, this was part of the introduction to each focus group. I presented myself as a naïve inquirer, which is exactly what I was in regards to the New Zealand youth experience. Interestingly, some of the participants expressed that they felt they could trust me. Upon reflection, I wonder if this was partly due to my disclosure at the beginning regarding where I was raised and my inexperience

regarding the New Zealand youth experience. The impact of my American high school experience on conducting and analysing the current research was perhaps beneficial, as it helped me to separate the two in different contexts. If I had gone to high school in New Zealand, perhaps I would have superimposed my experience onto those of the participants.

Second, it is necessary to acknowledge that I have a particular interest in youth mental health in part due to my own experiences during youth. My experiences of mental health problems, asking for help, and subsequent stigma from peers likely made these and associated topics particularly salient for me during the present research. This particular lens was evident to me when I viewed and experienced the data during analysis. At times I felt as though I was in their world and able to understand their perspective; whereas, at other times, I was more an observer from the other side, trying to make sense of such an unknown world.

The third potential issue that influenced my perspective was my professional experience as a team leader and staff trainer in the youth mental health sector. In that setting, I worked predominantly with young people who were experiencing psychosis and trained staff specifically in how to work with young people. Accordingly, although this experience helped me learn how to quickly develop rapport with young people, it also put me in a position of power and expertise. As part of my clinical psychology training, I have predominantly worked with young adults and adults. When conducting the research, I made the conscientious choice to take my "psychologist" hat off and put my "youth worker" hat back on. I used food and connection in an attempt to create a more social, comfortable environment. I also adjusted my language to create a more informal environment. All of these attempts also served the purpose of trying to reduce the power imbalance inherent within the circumstances of a Pakeha adult and professional researching a disempowered group. However, it is important to acknowledge this privileged position as also potentially influencing the analysis of the data (Claveirole, 2004).

Methods

Recruitment

The initial design of the study included recruiting at least two high schools. The inclusion criterion for high schools was that the school had a peer support or peer mentoring programme. The decision to focus on students in peer support or mentor programmes was made primarily for two reasons. First, it was thought that these students would have a wealth of experience, both personally and in supporting others, to draw from, thereby potentially maximising the breadth of data. Second, it was hoped that these students would have effective coping strategies and strong support structures already in place, thereby informing the strengths approach of the study.

Further, it was hoped that the study could include at least one high decile school and one low decile school. The 1-10 decile ranking is used in New Zealand to determine government funding to schools based on their proportion of students from low socio-economic communities (Ministry of Education, 2016). Specifically, high decile schools have low proportions of students from low-socioeconomic communities, and low decile schools have high proportions of students from low-socioeconomic communities. It was thought that including different decile schools in the study might increase the breadth of the data collected. High school in New Zealand ranges from Years 9 through Year 13 (Ministry of Education, 2016).

Recruitment began by researching and contacting Auckland high school counsellors to enquire whether their school met the inclusion criterion and whether they were potentially interested in participating in the study. After liaison with the school counselling heads of department, a decile 4 school and a decile 10 school agreed to take part in the research study. It was not possible to recruit a school with a lower decile than 4 due to poor response rates. The principal from each school received the Participant Information Sheet for Principal and Board of Trustees (Appendix A) and signed the Consent Form for Principal and Board of Trustees (Appendix B). Given the decile 4 school only had one peer support team, this was selected by the head of department as the suitable group for the research. The peer support team included peer support mentors assigned to classes of students in their first year of high school. At the decile 10 school, there was more than one student team, and the head of department at this school selected the peer leadership team as the most suitable team for the research. Whilst the other teams at this school had narrow focuses (i.e.

substance use), the peer leadership team had a broader focus and included peer leaders in charge of various school activities and tasked with a focus on reducing bullying in the school.

The school counsellors invited all of the students on each of these teams to attend a meeting with me if they were interested to hear about the study. I then attended one meeting at each school. At these meetings, the school counsellors introduced me to the students who chose to attend the meeting. At the decile 10 school, the counsellor left after the introduction. At the decile 4 school, the counsellor remained for the meeting and left prior to students giving me their contact information. As such, confidentiality was preserved and the school counsellors were not aware of who showed interest or who participated in the research. After being introduced, I presented the study to potential participants. For their information and to enable the opportunity to ask any questions, at the meeting I gave potential participants the Participant Information Sheet for the Young Person (Appendix C) and the Consent Form for the Young Person (Appendix D). Students who were interested in taking part in the focus groups gave me their contact information after the meeting. All of the interested participants were invited to participate in focus groups. Following the focus groups, I texted all the participants to ask who was interested in participating in the individual interviews.

Participants

Participants were students in their last two years of high school (Years 12-13). Inclusion criteria for participants included being at least 16 years old and being a peer support leader or mentor. A total of 32 participants took part in the focus groups and 16 of these participants then completed individual interviews. All participants who completed individual interviews had previously taken part in a focus group. At the decile 4 school, eight participants took part in focus group one and 12 participants took part in focus group two, with 20 participants in total. Twelve of these participants then completed individual interviews. At the decile 10 school, seven participants took part in focus group 3 and five participants took part in focus group 4, with 12 participants in total. Seven of these participants then completed individual interviews.

The participant demographic information can be seen in Table 1. Of the 32 participants, eight were young men and 24 were young women. Five young men and 11 young women completed the individual interviews. All participants were within the age range of 16-18 years and the average age

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was 17 years old. Twenty-five of the participants were in their final year of high school (Year 13), and the remaining seven participants were in their second to last year (Year 12). In total, 20 participants described themselves primarily as New Zealand/European, three as Filipino, three as Maori, two as Indian, two as Tongan, one as Samoan, and one as South African. The first ethnicity identified by each participant was used for these totals.

Participants also provided information on how long they had participated in the peer support team or peer leadership team and information regarding any part-time employment (Appendix E). Most of the participants (n=26) had participated in the peer support or leadership team for one year, with the remaining six participants reporting two years of participation. Eighteen participants reported having part-time employment, including 12 participants from the decile 4 school and six participants from the decile 10 school. The average hours worked per week was 7.6 hours, as reported by 15 of the 18 participants. Participants from the decile 4 school reported working an average of 8.6 hours per week, as reported by 11 of the 12 participants. Participants from the decile 10 school reported working an average of 5 hours per week, as reported by four of the six participants.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

	Focus Groups	Interviews
Gender		
Young men	8	5
Young women	24	11
Mean Age	17	17
Decile 4 School	20	9
Decile 10 School	12	7
School Year		
12	7	2
13	25	14
Ethnicity		
New Zealand European	20	10

Maori	3	2
Filipino	3	1
Indian	2	0
Tongan	2	2
Samoan	1	0
South African	1	1

Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval was granted for the current study from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee. The details of this approval were stated in the Participant Information Sheet for the Young Person, Participant Information Sheet for the Principal and Board of Trustees, Consent Form for the Young Person, and Consent Form for the Principal and Board of Trustees (see Appendices A-D).

Since participants were 16 years or older, parental consent was not required for the study. Informed consent was an ethical consideration that was attended to by thoroughly explaining the consent form and research process with participants twice, once at the recruitment meetings and for the second time at the beginning of the focus groups. In both instances, the participants were given the opportunity to ask any questions. Also, the option of withdrawing their consent at any time was emphasised to them. Confidentiality was a concern throughout the research process. This was addressed in a number of ways. First, the schools were unaware of which students elected to take part in the research. Second, all data relating to the participants was kept secured at all times, either password protected electronically or stored securely. Third, I was mindful of confidentiality with regards to what the participants shared among their peers in the focus groups. As such, I discussed confidentiality at the beginning of each focus group, in which I asked the participants to be respectful of each other's privacy. Participants were asked to share general ideas and examples, rather than detailed and personal ones, in the focus groups since confidentiality among group members could not be guaranteed. The researcher highlighted the importance of only sharing what each participant was comfortable sharing in a group setting of peers. These issues were also outlined in the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix C).

The last ethical consideration was the risk of participants feeling distressed by sharing experiences in the focus groups or interviews. As such, I was transparent with the participants and explained that the intent was not for them to share experiences which would cause them distress, and instead emphasised the strengths approach of the research. In addition, prior to meeting with participants, I negotiated with the school counsellors for them to be available as sources of support if any participants became distressed or disclosed safety concerns. Accordingly, the conditions under which confidentiality would be broken were outlined in the Participant Information Sheet and discussed prior to the focus groups (see Appendix C). Specifically, if participants disclosed safety concerns about themselves or others or if they became distressed and declined to seek support, I would notify the school counsellor. Further, I closely monitored the participants' emotional responses during the focus groups and interviews, looking to manage any distress that might occur. I was confident in my ability to manage distress and assess any risk due to my prior professional experience as team leader of a youth mental health respite facility and ongoing clinical psychology training. My supervisor, a registered clinical psychologist, was also available should I need advice. Since all focus groups and interviews took place on school grounds, the counsellors themselves were accessible if needed.

Data Gathering

Each participant was given a $20 gift certificate for each part of the study that they completed. The researcher also provided food for the focus groups. All focus groups and individual interviews were voice recorded in their entirety for verbatim transcription. The focus groups and interviews took place on school grounds in private rooms and participation remained confidential from school staff.

Focus Groups. Focus groups were selected as the first part of data collection to allow the participants to explore their views, opinions, and experiences within a social context (Bagnoli & Clark, 2010; Morgan, 1997; Wilkinson, 2008). The aim of this social context was to facilitate young people constructing and making sense of their views and experiences through interactions with others (Wilkinson, 2008). Bagnoli and Clark (2010) argue that focus groups embody a collectivistic research method instead of an individualistic one. When the nature of the study is to understand the inner world of youth within their peer groups, recreating a social and collective context from which to explore this

appeared apt. I endeavoured to make the focus groups and interviews informal and social, in order to facilitate organic participation and processes (Fox, 2013; Malone & Hartung, 2010). Rather than creating a formal research environment that would perhaps mirror school to the participants, the focus was on sharing food, establishing connection, and creating a comfortable and permissive atmosphere (Fox, 2013; Krueger & Casey, 2014). As discussed in the section on researcher reflexivity, I attempted to create a comfortable atmosphere, adjust my language, and put my 'youth worker' hat on, all with the intent of challenging the power imbalance between a young person and an adult researcher (Fox, 2013).

In focus groups, the researcher acts more as a facilitator and moderator than an interviewer, guiding the discussion and providing prompts, but mainly allowing participants to decide dynamically the discussion priorities (Howitt, 2010). There are several benefits to this approach. First, it allows for unexpected issues outside of the researcher's agenda to be raised and discussed (Skop, 2006). Second, the interaction among participants stimulates discussion, debate, and disagreement, all of which add breadth and depth by generating multiple points of view (Morgan, 1997; Skop, 2006). Third, although the researcher plays an active role in creating discussion, most of the data is generated by the interaction among participants, not between participants and researcher, which hopefully empowers the participants and reduces the control of the researcher (Bagnoli & Clark, 2010; Kitzinger, 1994).

It has been recommended that focus groups range in size from a minimum of 4 participants to a maximum of 12 participants, and that saturation is reached at four focus groups (Howitt, 2010; Krueger & Casey, 2014; Wilkinson, 2008). Two focus groups were conducted at each school prior to the individual interviews. The focus groups ranged in duration from 1 hour to 1 hour 40 minutes. The Focus Group Schedule can be seen in Appendix F. There were two main categories of questioning, coping and seeking help. With regards to coping, participants were asked to share their ideas regarding the types of stressors young people face, how young people cope with these stressors, how they learned these ways of coping, which ways of coping are helpful or unhelpful, and whether there are differences in the types of stressors and ways of coping between young people today and their parents' generation. In terms of seeking help, participants were asked about the general culture

among young people around seeking help, the origins of attitude towards seeking help, who they seek help from, what stops them seeking help, and what makes a young person decide to seek help.

The questions on the Focus Group Schedule were used as a guide and provided prompts to stimulate and elicit discussion among the participants (Howitt, 2010). At the beginning of each focus group, I encouraged the participants to draw both on their own experiences and on their understanding of their peers' experiences. Each focus group then began with the question, "what kind of issues do you think young people today have to deal with?".Typically the discussion jumped around the different topics, since it was led by the participants themselves (Howitt, 2010). I followed along and provided summaries and clarifications or asked prompting questions during silences. If there were divergent views and experiences expressed by participants, I summarised these differences and asked for others' input on the issue also. If the topic of discussion became significantly irrelevant, I gently steered the discussion back to a relevant topic.

Individual Interviews. Semi-structured individual interviews were chosen as the second part of data collection since they allow for more in-depth, detailed, and personal explorations of topics following the focus groups (Howitt, 2010). In semi-structured interviews, the researcher acts as an interviewer who uses questions, both predetermined and spontaneous, to clarify the participant's story and ensure the research questions are covered (Howitt, 2010). Given the power relationship between an adult interviewer and young interviewee, a semi-structured format was preferable. This format allows for the structure of a formal interview balanced with the flexibility of an informal conversation, which enables the development of rapport in the relationship (Willig, 2013). Whereas the focus group relies on the social process of group discussion, the semi-structure interview relies on the social process and relationship between the interviewer and interviewee (Willig, 2013). Therefore, it seemed a good fit, alongside the focus groups, to facilitate the research through social processes, given the importance of social processes to the focus of the current study.

Generally, there is no recommendation as to how many interviews should be completed in a qualitative study; instead, it is recommended that interviews should be conducted until data saturation has been reached (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002). However, given researchers need to estimate a saturation level for ethics and funding, Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) suggest that data saturation using thematic analysis occurs within twelve interviews. When designing the

study, the aim was to complete 10 individual interviews, as this was anticipated to be a realistic number that would approach saturation. However, focus group participants expressed greater interest than anticipated in taking part in the individual interviews. I conducted all focus groups and interviews, and made the decision to complete all of the individual interviews requested by participants, regardless of saturation. The primary reason for this decision was, in keeping with the youth participation approach to research, it was important to value each participant's voice and willingness to share their voice. In addition, it is important to highlight possible reasons for the unexpectedly high interest in participation. First, the $20 gift certificate likely played a role, and this was perhaps a contributing factor to the higher participant numbers at the lower decile school. Second, it could be argued that participants wanted to skip class in order to participate. While this may have been the case for some, many actually participated in the research outside of class time. Third, participants reported enjoying the focus group process, and many went on to report appreciating the individual interview. These participants reported that they found the disclosure helpful.

The interviews were completed, ranging in duration from 30 minutes to 1 hour 10 minutes. The semi-structured Interview Schedule can be seen in Appendix G. My role was quite different in the interviews. The social process was between the participant and myself, placing me as the researcher much more centrally. The interviews were structured around the participants' stories of stressful experiences and methods of coping. Many participants also shared stories of supporting others during stressful experiences. Each interview began with asking about how the participant experienced the focus group and whether they had any thoughts from the experience they wanted to share. Often participants came in with stories ready to tell. As participants told their stories, I asked questions to elicit detail, provide clarity, and explore aspects of their experiences. As recommended by Willig (2013), I adopted the role of a naïve inquirer to encourage participants to share detailed accounts. However, as Willig (2013) identifies, given the informal conversational style of the semi-structured interview, sometimes participants share more than they intended or later feel comfortable with. As such, I was mindful of this and, similar to the focus groups, I encouraged participants to choose what and how much they shared in regards to difficult experiences. I reminded them of this at times when they shared distressing experiences. This also served to challenge the power relationship by reminding the participants that they were leading the interview and in control (Fox, 2013).

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is a widely used analytic method in qualitative research (Boyatzis, 1998). Essentially, thematic analysis is a method for identifying, organising, reporting, and interpreting patterns within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is flexible and does not stem from a particular theoretical framework or epistemological stance and can be adapted to fit the perspective of the researcher (Howitt, 2010). It can be used both to reflect reported 'reality' and to explore the meanings and process of 'reality' (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, thematic analysis was an appropriate method to utilise with a critical realist epistemological stance.

In thematic analysis, the themes within the data are not passively discovered by the researcher; rather, the researcher plays an active role in determining the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As Ely, Vinz, Downing, and Anzul (1997) argue, the themes do not 'reside' in the data; if anything, the themes 'reside' in the researcher's head from thinking about the data. From a critical realist stance, although the researcher aims to give the participants a voice, it must be understood that the 'reality' that the participants speak of has first gone through the participant's lens of interpretation and secondly through the researcher's lens of interpretation.

Thematic analysis calls for transparency and reflexivity regarding the researcher's theoretical framework and decisions at each point of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This reflexivity also includes transparency about the researcher's previous experiences, views, and motivations that may influence the research in any way, which I have outlined previously in this chapter. As Braun and Clarke (2006) recognise, data is never analysed within a vacuum, but is influenced by experiences such as prior reading and research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, I took a theoretical approach to thematic analysis informed by my understanding of youth in contemporary Western society and the youth coping and help-seeking literature. Additionally, I took a semantic approach to thematic analysis, in which analysis progressed from describing the data to interpreting the meaning of the data (Boyatzis, 1998; Brown & Locke, 2009).

All focus groups and interviews were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriber who signed the Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement (see Appendix H). I went through areas of the focus group recordings that the transcriber had difficulty hearing and added verbatim information if possible.

I also randomly verified the accuracy of the transcripts during this process. The audio recordings were deleted after the transcripts were completed. The hard copies of the transcripts were stored in a locked filing cabinet inside a locked office at The University of Auckland. The electronic versions of the transcripts were stored on a secure university server and password-protected. All data was made anonymous by removing all names and potentially identifying details (e.g. school name, suburb name). Each participant was assigned an identification number and these numbers were used to identify the interview transcripts from this point onwards.

The focus group and interview data were combined and analysed together. Prior to data collection, I had intended to analyse the data sets separately, with the assumption that the different methods of data collection would produce qualitatively different sets of data. However, as the focus groups and interviews progressed, it became clear that the interviews could perhaps be considered an extension of the focus groups. Indeed, often the participants began their interviews by referring to something they had voiced in the focus group. Consequently, much of the data produced from the interviews was similar, but more detailed, than the data obtained from the focus groups. Additionally, data from the different decile schools were combined, rather than analysed separately. The rationale for this decision was along similar lines, in which many of the same ideas were covered across the schools. Where there were differences, these are specifically highlighted in the Findings chapter.

Similarly, the data were not separated according to the participants' cultural backgrounds. Indeed, it was not anticipated prior to data collection that there would be evident cultural differences. This was in part due to the initial recruitment region in Auckland, which is predominantly New Zealand European. When there was a poor response rate from schools in the initial region, recruitment expanded to other Auckland regions with higher proportions of other ethnicities. Additionally, as data collection occurred, it became clear, especially at the low decile school, that there were cultural differences being identified by participants. Since the focus groups were culturally diverse, cultural distinctions could not be made regarding focus group transcripts. However, culturally relevant excerpts were identifiable in individual interviews and when focus group participants specified their cultural backgrounds as part of the discussion. Therefore, any differences in the findings that may be influenced by or attributable to cultural differences are explicitly noted in the following chapter.

The practical steps of the thematic analysis were guided by the method described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Since I conducted all of the focus groups and interviews, I was already familiar with the ideas and stories captured by them prior to beginning the formal data analysis process. Nonetheless, I first immersed myself in the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts and noting thoughts in the margins. After a few readings, I started generating a list of potential codes. I then systematically and manually coded all of the transcripts on Word documents, adding to the master list of codes as I discovered new codes. I coded extracts with as many codes as relevant. Once all of the focus group and interview transcripts had been coded, I collated the codes by copying and pasting all of the extracts into new Word documents. Once I had all of the codes collated, I began mind-mapping in order to search for potential themes and to understand the relationships among the codes. These mind-maps were re-drawn several times until they represented a coherent structure that incorporated all of the codes. This process was quite hierarchical in nature, with several themes, subthemes, and codes ordered.

The mind-maps of the themes and subthemes were then discussed with my primary supervisor for validity. This resulted in further revision of some themes, restructuring of other themes, and collapsing of the subthemes. The revisions of the themes involved looking both at the collated extracts for each theme and looking at the themes in relation to the data as a whole. Phases five and six of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis method involve defining and naming the themes and producing the report, respectively. These phases occurred somewhat simultaneously, as writing about the data led to further revisions (phase four), which altered the definitions and names of the themes. These final revisions of the themes were informed by feedback from my supervisor.

Finally, it is important to note that the prevalence of themes within the data have not been quantified and are not reported accordingly. Although references to prevalence are made (i.e. "many participants reported"), these references do not reflect the importance of themes within the data, but rather are intended to add to the rich description of the data. Indeed, it is important to acknowledgement that prevalence within qualitative data does not equate to significance (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Quality in Qualitative Research

The issue of quality in qualitative research is a difficult one to address given the lack of consensus regarding the criteria (Treharne & Riggs, 2015). However, the criteria for trustworthiness developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) are often utilised within qualitative research to demonstrate quality. The four criteria they described included credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described credibility as ensuring that the findings reflect the experiences of the participants. One of the methods for establishing credibility suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and widely used is the triangulation of sources and researchers, in which the comparison of different sources or researchers corroborate the credibility of the findings (Treharne & Riggs, 2015).

In regards to sources, triangulation often refers to mixed-methods research that utilises both quantitative and qualitative methods, but it can also refer to using multiple qualitative methods (Treharne & Riggs, 2015). As such, I propose that I established credibility in the current study by utilising two methods of data gathering. The data from these separate methods of data gathering provided evidence of convergence, as the similar findings produced a consistent narrative (Erzerberger & Prein, 1997; Treharne & Riggs, 2015). Additionally, during the focus groups and interviews, I contributed to the credibility of the findings by clarifying what the participants said and asking others for their views, exploring for convergence and divergence (Erzerberger & Prein, 1997; Treharne & Riggs, 2015). Instead of utilising a triangulation of researchers, as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), I explored, challenged, and sought consensus with my supervisor (Hill et al., 2005).

The second criterion of transferability refers to establishing that the findings can be applied to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Treharne & Riggs, 2015). Traditionally qualitative research has not intended for its findings to be generalisable since the focus is on gathering and understanding information within a certain context (Leung, 2015). This is especially true for the current study, in which the focus centres on the social context of the New Zealand young people who participated. Therefore, the current findings are not intended to be generalised across New Zealand youth. However, the findings may inform our wider understanding of the experiences of New Zealand youth in similar contexts. Future researchers may choose to assess the generalisability of the current findings through methods such as the proximal similarity model, which judges generalisability based on similar times, places, people, and social contexts (Leung, 2015).

The third criterion of quality described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) was dependability, which occurs when the research trail is transparent, allowing another researcher to understand how the research findings were produced. In this study, I have provided a careful account of the research process, allowing other researchers access to both the strengths and weaknesses of the research. I also demonstrated transparency with my supervisor during the research process, through verbal and written communication.

Finally, the fourth criterion of confirmability occurs when there is recognition and discussion of how the research can be shaped by the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Treharne & Riggs, 2015). I employed two methods to establish confirmability of the current research, personal reflexivity and transparency, both of which I have discussed above.

Summary of Methodology

The current study utilises qualitative methods of research to explore the views and experiences of New Zealand young people in regards to stress, coping, and help-seeking. I take a theoretical approach which incorporates a social generation framework, strengths perspective, and critical realist stance. As such, the participation of youth voices was paramount in the current research, in order to understand how the young people make meaning of their realities. Focus groups and individual interviews were used as the data gathering methods to enable the research to be conducted within social processes, as these are integral to understanding youth, particularly within the scope of this study. Thematic analysis was used as this provided a flexible approach that could respect the perspectives of the young people whilst also acknowledging the role that I, as the researcher, play in the analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The current chapter presents the results of the thematic analysis of the study data, incorporating the participants' views, experiences, and attitudes regarding the stress they encounter, the ways in which they cope, and seeking help from peers and non-peers. Due to the breadth of data afforded by four focus groups and sixteen interviews, there were nineteen themes in total, broken up into the three overarching categories defined by the research question: stress, coping, and help-seeking. The stress category incorporated the following seven themes: pressure to succeed, pressure to live up to family expectations, stressful family responsibilities, dealing with financial problems, fitting in with a friend group, the burden of sharing stresses, and pressures of relationships and sex. In the coping category, the following seven themes were identified: finding the right amount of distraction, choosing to see things differently, letting it out works for us, we find ways of coping that work for us, negotiating support from friends, social media can be helpful and harmful, and we cope differently from our parents. Finally, the help-seeking category included the following five themes: we deal with our problems ourselves, we decide whether our friends need help, we want someone we already know and trust, we want someone who listens and understands, and we don't want to be judged. An overview of the themes can be seen in Table 2. In the following discussion, each theme will be elucidated and illustrated primarily via excerpts from the focus group and individual interview transcripts.

Table 2

Overview of Themes

Stress	Coping	Help-Seeking
Pressure to succeed	Finding the right amount of distraction	We deal with our problems ourselves
Pressure to live up to family expectations	Choosing to see things differently	We decide whether our friends need help
Stressful family responsibilities	Letting it out works for us	We want someone we already know and trust
Dealing with economic pressures	We find ways of coping that work for us	We want someone who listens and understands us
Fitting in with a friend group	Negotiating support from friends	We don't want to be judged
The burden of sharing stresses	Sharing on social media	
Pressures of relationships and sex	We cope differently to our parents	

Stress

Pressure to succeed

Participants in this study often spoke about the pressure they felt to succeed in their lives. They described pressure to have their future success planned, as well as pressure to succeed academically in the present. The following discussion will illustrate how participants felt society, peers, and teachers contributed to these pressures. First, participants described feeling an ongoing social pressure to have their lives under control, as depicted in the following quote by a focus group participant:

> There's a lot of pressure to make it look like you've got your life under control and you know what you're doing, where you're going... It just comes down to expectations again, that you're supposed to have your life together. (Focus Group 1)

As part of this social pressure to have their lives under control, many participants explained that they felt there was a social expectation for them to have their futures already mapped out:

And especially like say you didn't know what you want to do next year, you want to take a gap year or just a breather or something. But they're like, "You should take this, you can be a nurse, you can be a doctor, you can be this, you can be this." Like yes, I can be all those things, but is that what I want? And like most adolescents, they haven't figured it out yet. (Focus Group 4)

Second, participants often spoke about the social pressure to succeed academically in the present in order to pave the way for their future successful lives, as one focus group participant described in the following quote:

Yeah, it's just that the stress of life, like everyone goes, "Crap I have to do well at school so I can get a, go to university, get a good job that pays enough money which means I can live comfortably." Nobody wants, yeah, "I'll do crap at everything and live on the streets for the rest of my life." Everybody wants to sort of, that social pressure to do well. (Focus Group 1)

In addition, many participants talked about experiencing their teachers as pressuring them to succeed. This pressure to excel academically by their teachers was described by some of the participants as excessive in nature, as depicted in the following quote:

You've already got that internal stress and it's like I can't be pushed anymore, can you please stop. And [teachers] don't get it because they feel like it's their job to push you. It's not, you break down. (Focus Group 2)

Some of the participants also explained that they felt as though their teachers had little understanding of the pressures they were under academically:

You go into the class and it's as if, for them because that's their only subject, they feel like it's as if it's our only subject as well. Like we have 5 other ones as well, but it's almost as if it's just their subject that's important. (Focus Group 2)

Further, participants in the study described how they experienced their peer relationships as filled with pressure and expectation. For example, as the following participant described, they spoke about experiencing an atmosphere of comparison, in which they were striving to be noticed amidst their excelling peers:

Yeah, and I think there's that pressure to do well, 'cause there's so many people that are doing great things and you, like as an individual you want to be noticed. Not noticed in a bad way but you want to at least be complimented on something, acknowledged in something. And then when there's all that pressure of like everyone's great you want to be up to there as well so that your work or something that you've done is noticed. (Focus Group 4)

This atmosphere of comparison among peers was also described by participants as one of competition. For example, in the following quote, a participant described a scenario in which excelling above peers in turn marked them as the competition to beat:

> And stuff like if you've had like a really good couple of academic years everybody sees you as that academic person. If you don't do as well then people kind of take is as, "Oh, we beat you." (Focus Group 3)

In summary, the participants in this study tended to be future-focused in their accounts of the social pressure they felt to succeed in their lives. They felt that their path to future success was determined by their performance at school, and that this context was marked by achievement and peer competitiveness. They also spoke about feeling as though their teachers contributed to this pressured environment and perhaps did not always understand the difficulties of their academic pressure. Thus, the pressure to succeed in their individual lives could be understood as an important experience of their social context, in which they described feeling this pressure from society and within interpersonal relationships.

Pressure to live up to family expectations

Whereas the previous theme illustrated the pressures the participants felt to succeed as individuals, in the current theme participants described feeling pressure to live up to expectations of success from their families and cultures. The following discussion will explain the four types of expectations the participants spoke about feeling in the contexts of their families and cultures.

First, many participants talked about feeling a pressure to succeed academically from their families. As one participant described, they carried this pressure around with them, describing that, "It's good intentions, they want you to do well. But you feel so like, oh, you've got the weight of your family" (Focus Group 4). Additionally, some of the participants explained that once they achieved the expected level of academic excellence, there was ongoing pressure to maintain this level of performance for their family:

> You've got to maintain it because once you slip then everyone's going to start asking questions and everything. But then it's like oh you're trying to do this for your parents, but then… You can't make any mistakes pretty much. (Focus Group 2)

Second, some of the participants spoke about pressure to surpass their parents' achievements. However, this idea was only evident in the transcripts from the focus groups and interviews with participants at the lower socioeconomic high school. This concept of the younger generation surpassing the older generation also appeared to be a cultural one, specifically encapsulated below within the context of Samoan culture:

So like the way my Samoan family fully works, 100 percent, is like every generation has to be better than the one that raised them…. It's not about what I want to do now, it's about what's going to make you more successful than they were. (Focus Group 2)

The diverse cultural backgrounds of the participants, particularly at this school, meant that a proportion of them were first or second generation immigrants to New Zealand. Accordingly, some of these participants talked about feeling pressured to surpass their parents' achievements because their parents sacrificed for them.

They make sure you get it like a million times a day, "We came back to New Zealand for you guys… I worked so hard for you, this is how you repay me." (Focus Group 2)

Similarly, the third type of family expectation participants spoke about was the expectation to follow their parents' future plans for them, again relating to choosing successful future paths. This expectation to follow their parents' future plans for them was predominantly, but not solely, evident in the transcripts from the lower socioeconomic school participants. As articulated in the following quote, participants talked about pleasing their parents and sacrificing their individual dreams:

Like I'm going to university next year and I'm going to study commerce. That's not what I want to do. Like I don't want to do commerce. It's something that I don't mind doing, like I don't not enjoy it but like I, like my passion and what I want to do is in design. But that's not what I'm going to do. You have to sacrifice what you want for what your parents want. (Focus Group 2)

Fourth, participants from the lower socioeconomic school described feeling an expectation to maintain their family images. Similar to the pressure to surpass their parents' achievements, this pressure to maintain the family image was portrayed by participants as related to their culture. For example, as one participant described below, participants from Pacific Island cultures described the stress of feeling that their actions and achievements reflect upon their families:

There has to be like maintaining like a certain expectation for them, because yeah, in our culture, like Tongans and stuff, like it's always about image and stuff. The parents, their family members stuff is all what they're all about. And if you do anything to disrespect that family

name, that's actually a really big issue. So that stress also adds onto whatever we're doing every day, so it kind of like, what you do now kind of reflects your whole generation, past generation and stuff. So you're basically branded for who you are right now and what you do every second. (Focus Group 2)

Furthermore, when participants compared the pressures they experienced to the ones their parents faced in their generation, many participants spoke about how there were increased pressures on their generation compared to their parents' generation:

Like I think things now is like society and culture changes, that there's a lot more stresses put on us and a lot more like problems that we have to go through and like, yeah. Especially just like as life and everything gets more like advanced, it just puts on more pressure, so it like has the pressure that our parents had, so that's still a factor, but then it has all of this other stuff kind of put into it as well. (Participant 16)

Since they perceived differences in what the generations faced, participants described feeling as though their parents did not understand the pressures they faced in today's society. For example:

And also I talk to them about stuff and they don't know what I'm talking about. It's not only because they didn't do high school, or finish high school, but everything's different now. (Focus Group 1)

Additionally, those with immigrant parents identified that the change in culture compounded this lack of understanding between generations.

Because my parents grew up in a very conservative South Africa… But sometimes it's a major problem because I am living in a whole different place, and a whole different time to them. And a lot of other kids are in New Zealand, because like I said there are so many immigrants here. (Focus Group 4)

The young people in this study highlighted the pressure they feel to be successful, not just as individuals, but as representatives of their families and sometimes their cultures. Participants from the lower socioeconomic school associated particular types of expectations to their experiences of their cultures, including sacrificing their individual desires for the collective expectations. Participants from both schools also described how they felt their parents failed to understand the different pressures each generation faced due to differences in social contexts. Overall, participants described feeling increased pressures to succeed compared to their parents and experiencing a lack of understanding of this by their parents.

Stressful family responsibilities

The participants in this study described adopting roles of responsibility within their families and cultures. The following discussion illustrates the ways in which this sense of collective responsibility impacted their individual lives. First, one of the participants from a traditionally collectivist cultural background spoke about her responsibilities to her family and culture, which left her with little time to be an individual:

Like I know we're, you're [New Zealand European] and I'm a Tongan, but what I go through as a Polynesian is so different to what you go through. It's like I have school but I don't just have school. I have church, I have commitments to my family, and I told her that I'm lucky if I have two hours just for myself in that day just to study. But you're lucky. You can do everything. (Participant 18)

Regardless of cultural background, many of the participants spoke about feeling a sense of responsibility to help at home and lighten the load on their parents, for example:

Like this issue, like there was just lots of stuff with my brother and I was like I'll be the good like Christian daughter and I'll just do everything. And I would like do all of the chores, I'll do everything, I'll like anything they ask, I'll do, like I'll help everything and I'll like… And you like, but you feel the responsibility of that. And you're like I can't, like I can't let them have to worry about all of this other stuff. Like I've got to help wherever I can and whenever I can regardless. (Participant 16)

Additionally, some participants described holding particular roles of responsibility in their family. For example, those who were eldest children described feeling increased responsibility within their families. As such, the following participant described this pressure and responsibility within a single-parent home:

Probably having the half of the responsibility… The eldest child has to have the responsibility at times, which can be a little tough. (Focus Group 2)

A poignant example of the responsibility many participants described feeling towards their roles within their families was in regards to the death of family member. In addition to individual grief involved with losing a family member, various participants spoke about sacrificing in order to support and take care of family members in those times. For example, the following quote is from a participant whose mother passed away:

But then I also felt like I had to be strong for my brother. 'Cause he's younger… And then Dad told me in the car that [mum] was going to die. And I broke down and I couldn't deal with it, but then I gathered myself together and we went to pick my brother up… And I don't know why but I felt like I needed to step up and be the mum. So I, like I kind of, it definitely affected me quite bad because I was helping him with homework, I was making dinners. So I would be disadvantaged as well 'cause I couldn't get my homework done, I couldn't do things. (Participant 30)

Participants also described feeling constrained by their parents' expectations of responsibility. Some of the participants gave examples of partying and drinking, in which they or their friends resisted the expectations imposed by their parents:

But like some people's parents are so crazy. Like this one girl I know, one of my friends, her Mum won't let her go out to parties or anything, even if she's not going to drink. And she has to tell her Mum that she's having sleepovers at her friend's house so that she can. (Focus Group 3)

Finally, as the following Tongan participant describes, a few of the participants talked about being constrained by their parents' expectations regarding romantic relationships:

She was very demanding, she was like, "You're going to serve a mission, then you're going to come back and study, you're not going to have a girlfriend." (Participant 10)

The participants described adopting individual roles of responsibility within their families and cultures. Although some resisted or felt constrained by these expectations of responsibility, overall, participants spoke about sacrificing in order to fulfil their responsibilities to their families. The roles of responsibility described by the participants were understood to be reflective of the wider social and cultural context of Auckland.

Dealing with financial problems

Financial difficulty within the family was identified by participants as presenting an ongoing stress. Similar to the previous theme of family responsibilities, participants described elements of responsibility and sacrifice in regards to their family's financial situation. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this theme was only evident across the focus groups and interviews with participants from the lower socioeconomic high school rather than with participants from the higher socioeconomic high school. First, participants in the current study identified worrying about their parents' financial struggles:

I don't know, I'm finding it really stressful, like money issues, with my parents. And that stresses me out a bit 'cause I worry about, you know, all that stuff as well. (Focus Group 1)

Consequently, some of these participants spoke about feeling a responsibility to help their families financially. Many participants had part-time jobs and gave their parents money, as described by the following participant:

I was helping out with all the bills, paying the water bill and everything. And you know, any extra shifts that I could, I would take it even if it was like an after school one. So it was, it was tiring spending a whole day at school and then working till like 9 o'clock and then coming home, sleeping and then doing the whole thing the next day. (Participant 4)

Accordingly, some of these participants also described sacrificing their study time in order to work and choosing to miss out on school and social activities to save their parents money:

A perfect example's like today, I wanted to pay for my photos, my prefect photos and everything, and then my Mum was like we're struggling and I need a lot of money. And I was like "Oh, I don't want to spend it on photos." But now I probably can't buy the Year 13 photo because I need to help out my Mum. (Focus Group 2)

In addition to the stressful impact of financial constraints at home, some participants described feeling embarrassed in social contexts that they and their families could not afford things:

And then when people are like, if something comes up like a school trip or something, they're like, "Oh are you going to go?" And I don't want to say that I can't afford it… Yeah, because you don't want to be embarrassed. (Focus Group 2)

It was interesting that participants from the lower socioeconomic school spoke about such embarrassment, where it may have been hypothesised that financial stress would be less stigmatised. Instead, as the quote below illustrates, there appeared to be a culture of silence about finances:

But also like I remember this one time we were talking about camp… And they said that even $2 will tip some people off. And someone in the class shouted, "Oh, even $2?" And I was just like, "Nah, that does tip people off." Like I won't be able to go to a sports thing because of $5. (Focus Group 2)

Participants from the lower socioeconomic school in this study talked about the difficulties of their parents' financial struggles. They also described feeling embarrassed and identified a silence around poverty at their school, which could be understood as reflective of social expectations. Overall, echoing the previous theme, participants again talked about feeling responsible to help their families, in this context financially. Again, this role of responsibility entailed sacrifice.

Fitting in with a friend group

The participants in this study spoke about the value of their friendships but also described a difficult process of finding belonging within a friend group. The following discussion will explore how they described navigating different demands in order to find inclusion within their peer groups.

Participants often spoke about the importance of "finding your group" at the beginning of high school. As one participant said, "Yeah, you have to find your group in Year 9. Especially if you turn up to high school by yourself" (Focus Group 2). They explained that fitting in socially was part of this process of finding group inclusion at the beginning of high school, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

Year 9 and 10 is for making friends and trying not to be seen as the weird kid. You know, trying to make sure that people like you and you're not hated by everyone and you're not too sure what to expect. So if you're a sort of reasonable person you try and follow the rules and fit in and just do what you can to sort of not stand out for a bad reason. Most people try not to stand out for a good reason either. I mean they try and get involved but most people want to fit in and not be noticed. (Participant 3)

Participants described examples of social expectations, including social pressures to drink alcohol, be physically attractive, and adhere to popular culture trends. In the following focus group excerpt, one participant gave an example of being "uncool" if they did not follow the current social trend:

It's such a domino effect within society and schools. Like I remember when I was Year 9 the cool thing was to carry your drink bottle in your hand. Everyone used to do it, and if someone didn't do it everyone was like you're so uncool. (Focus Group 4)

Additionally, as one participant described below, the participants in this study also talked about a tension between fitting in with the collective group and being an individual:

Yeah, and that's the funny thing because everyone's like, "Be yourself, be individual… Be like who you are, but be exactly like us." It's like what the hell. (Focus Group 4)

One of the participants who was a New Zealand immigrant spoke about how being an immigrant added to this tension between group inclusion and individual identity:

Because a lot of us are foreigners, it's hard. 'Cause you actually don't know what you are and you don't know where you belong or are accepted. And that adds to the natural teenager, oh I don't belong, I'm not accepted. (Focus Group 4)

Further, some of the participants in the study explained that bullying occurred more during Years 9 and 10 and how it made finding inclusion and belonging difficult. Participants described the bullying they experienced and witnessed as subtle in nature. They described the bullying as being comprised primarily of "teasing" or "hurtful comments", mostly under the guise of humour. Some of the participants spoke about how they and their peers could not say anything to stop the bullying because of its subtlety:

I think it's a little bit worse as well, 'cause most of it's not really what you'd class as over bullying and so they're not like I'm being bullied come and help, make it stop. (Focus Group 3)

One participant spoke in her interview about her opinion that bullying is under-reported because of this façade of humour. Due to its subtlety, this participant only realised upon reflection that she had been bullied in the past, as she described in the following excerpt:

Because bullying is not reported as much as they should be. People don't realise that, I didn't know that I was being bullied until I look back to it. It's like, hey actually they were bullying me. So maybe, like, and some people think like hey it's just a joke. Like a joke to you may not be a joke to someone else. (Participant 31)

Conversely, participants in one focus group said that bullying had not affected them. Participants in this focus group also talked about their views that cyber-bullying was not the prevalent phenomenon that media portrayed it to be:

Yeah, there's one instance of cyber-bullying and it gets blown up on the media like it's this huge problem and it's happening everywhere... Yeah, there have been cases for like one or two people, not for like masses. (Focus Group 1)

Overall, participants described bullying as a type of social exclusion that subsided after the first few years of high school as they found their friend groups. As one participant described in the following quote, they also suggested that bullying decreased as they developed a clearer sense of themselves:

But even with some instances that we had in, like, year 10 and stuff, like that sort of stuff doesn't happen anymore. Everyone's sort of like, I mean that's the age where you're trying to find out who you are as a person. And so everyone sort of does different things and people might see that as strange and they mock you for it but now that everyone's sort of older and know who they are, people are less, because, well if you're trying something new and someone says that you look stupid, they're like, "Oh maybe I'm not so good at that". Whereas

when everyone's found out who they are and someone goes, "Oh I hate you", you're like, "Well good for you, I don't really care 'cause this is who I am," sort of thing. (Focus Group 1)

Participants in the study discussed the importance of navigating the tension between being an individual and fitting in socially in order to find inclusion and belonging within a friend group at the beginning of high school. They described bullying as one of the difficulties that arose as they navigated this balance, and spoke about being constrained by the subtle qualities of this bullying. In accordance with the previous themes, in this theme the participants described feeling pressured by social expectations.

The burden of sharing stresses

While friendships were clearly an important aspect of participants' lives, they also described them as a source of stress. Participants in this study described a process of compounding stress that could occur when they shared their struggles with each other and an accompanying sense of responsibility for each other. This shared stress could be between two friends or exist within an entire peer group. In the following quote, one participant described shared stress as a leeching process:

And if someone's stressed out you kind of leech off of their stress, and you kind of, you don't understand where it's coming from but it's coming from a person and you've taken their stress as well. (Focus Group 2)

Some participants described almost a 'responsibility for other' component to this process:

I've known depressed people in high school that just come to you, and then suddenly their trouble's your trouble and they're not going to anyone else. So that's like the main focus at school. (Focus Group 2)

Similarly, some of the participants also reported a 'reliance on other' dynamic within the shared stress experience:

Yeah, and they rely on each other which then makes another person stressed because they've got the other person's stress added onto theirs. (Focus Group 3)

Although these shared stress experiences within peer groups could be related to daily stresses, such as school work, participants mostly spoke about bigger sources of shared stress. For example, one focus group discussed a shared grief experience when a peer in their year group had

died. Similarly, another focus group talked about a shared stress experience when a friend's parent passed away:

> Like friends whose parents have died and stuff actually puts so much, like this huge cloud of stress on everyone. (Focus Group 3)

Moreover, participants spoke at length about the shared burden of supporting a suicidal friend within peer groups. The process of supporting a friend in this manner will be explored further in the "we decide whether our friends need help" theme. Relevant to this theme is the stress of supporting a suicidal friend, as it appeared to take up much of the individual's time and resources. Again, there was an element of 'responsibility for other' evident; in this example, it was specifically related to a feeling of responsibility to keep the other alive:

> It was like the weight of the world on your shoulders and you would be like this, you'd kind of start not blaming yourself, but being like whatever happens it's because of me. Like even though like they're their own person... And it was a constant thing, like you, like I know that if she had ended up killing herself it would have been I should have texted her or I should have done this. And like it would have been such a this is all my fault, like everything that happened is like me. (Participant 16)

In summary, participants in the study often described feeling their peers' stress, which added to their own. This experience extended to examples of grief and the burden of supporting a friend who was suicidal. They described the experience of stress not as an individual process, but one shared collectively. Additionally, participants described an aspect of this shared experience as involving a sense of responsibility to care for each other. Similar to previous themes relating to their families, participants described a sense of individual responsibility to help and care for those within their collective group.

Pressures of relationships and sex

The participants in the study described difficulties relating to romantic relationships and sexuality. There were two distinct components to this theme, namely distress regarding romantic relationships and the pressure to have sex, either within or outside of relationships. First, participants in the focus group simply gave one word responses (i.e. "love", "boys", "relationships") to identify romantic relationships as a stressful part of youth. Two of these participants gave details and

recounted their experiences in their individual interviews, both of whom were young women who described the difficulty and distress related to the break-up experience, such as the following:

> Okay, well, I guess I'm kind of overcoming it still, but I recently, by recently I mean three months ago, broke up with my boyfriend of three years… It was hard. And it wasn't a very healthy relationship so it was hard coming to terms with it. But probably one of the most stressful things I've ever been through in my life so far. And it's hard, it's very hard. (Participant 22)

The second component of this theme was the pressure to have sex, which was discussed in one focus group. For example, participants in this focus group talked about feeling a pressure in relationships to have sex:

> But there's also that pressure, like in a relationship there's that pressure to have sex. Which is kind of like, you're in a relationship and then you've kind of been in a long relationship and you kind of want to have sex, that kind of thing. (Focus Group 4)

These participants also talked about perceiving a pressure to have sex outside of relationships, describing a "culture of one-night stands" and "friends with benefits". As a result, one of the participants in the focus group spoke about having to decide their values relating to sex:

> So there's that pressure in teens, it's like, "What do I believe in? Do I believe in sex before marriage? Or do I believe in like having sex with a really, with a guy that I've been in a relationship with? Or do I just do it so that I can learn in the future?" (Focus Group 4)

However, even though there was a pressure to have sex, one of the participants in the focus group identified that there were also gender-determined double-standards about sexual activity, as described in the following quote:

> I think because of the media, I mean girls who have sex with six guys are a slut. Whereas boys who have sex with six girls are like a stud. (Focus Group 4)

Although the prevalence of themes is not a focus of this qualitative research, it is interesting to point out that the prevalence of the current theme regarding romantic relationships was relatively minimal in comparison to other themes. Additionally, it is relevant to note that the focus group which spoke openly about a pressure to have sex was one comprised only of young women, whereas the other three focus groups incorporated mixed genders. In summary, some of the participants in this study spoke about romantic relationships, and particularly break-ups, as distressing experiences. One

of the focus groups discussed how some confronted questions about their individual sexual values in a social context that contained pressures to have sex and double-standards about sexual activity.

Summary of Stress

The young people in this study explained facing considerable pressures to navigate social expectations of themselves as individuals and as part of collective groups, including their families, cultures, and peer groups. They described being constrained by the expectations around them to be successful, responsible, and adherent to social and cultural norms. They also spoke about adopting roles of responsibility; although not depicted as out of obligation, they can be understood as reflective of their experience of their social context. Navigating inclusion and belonging in a complex social world was emphasised as important but difficult, with group belonging also involving the additional stress of sacrifice and supporting others.

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Coping

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Finding the right amount of distraction

As the current theme will depict, participants described a continuum of distraction, from helpful to unhelpful. At the helpful end, they described how distraction gave them a break from their distress; whereas, at the unhelpful end, procrastination could multiply their distress. Firstly, the participants in this study often explained that they found it helpful to "distract" themselves from distress with activities so that they did not think about the distress or cause of it. For example, "You just go on the internet… Sometimes it's good because it, like, takes your mind off things" (Focus Group 1). Many participants also talked about studying as a helpful means of distraction from sources of distress in their lives, as the following quote described:

> So, and I think studying helps as well, 'cause you're focused on what you need to learn and not other things. (Participant 30)

Additionally, a few of the participants described an almost perpetual state of helpful distraction, in which they were too busy with school work to have time to think about other stress in their lives:

I think it helps that I'm just always busy all the time now, like I'm always doing school work so I don't have much time to think about, much time to ponder life. (Participant 25)

Nevertheless, participants in this study also explained that distraction became unhelpful at a certain point. For example, some participants talked about "procrastinating" as unhelpful in coping with the pressure to succeed at school because, "…putting it off doesn't help at all because it just makes you even more stressed" (Participant 3), which is perhaps unsurprising given the above account of studying as helpful. However, the same participants who identified procrastination as unhelpful also admitted that they would still procrastinate because, as one participant explains in the following quote, they did not want to "deal" with the stressful situation:

I procrastinate so much. Because I don't want to do it 'cause I don't want to deal with things. The stress, 'cause I know I was going to be stressed and I just, like, and I know I should be doing it but I'm just like, nah, I've had a long day, I don't want to, like, make myself even more upset than I am. So I just procrastinate and, I don't know, I'm just lazy, I don't like doing things. (Participant 19)

Similarly, a few of the participants reported that "ignoring" the stressful situation resulted in increased distress for them:

Oh, I tried, I guess I tried by not coping or just not doing anything about it and getting even more stressed. And that definitely wasn't good. (Participant 8)

Further, it is important to highlight that participants were drawing on an array of stressful experiences, not solely referencing academic stresses, when discussing the pros and cons of distraction. For example, in the following quote, a participant spoke about how it had been unhelpful to distract herself from her distress regarding her mother's death:

It was quite funny because she, obviously I didn't go to school the day she died but then I went to school every day after that… Yeah, I don't know why I went to school, I probably shouldn't have. I think 'cause I was quite a, I need to do this, this and this, and I was quite a smart kid. And I had a test so I had to do the test. I didn't pass though obviously. And that's, I think I was really upset about that as well. Which made it even worse. (Participant 30)

Similarly, another participant talked about her past experience of self-harm as a way of distracting from distress and ignoring stressful situations, as described in the below quote:

Yeah, probably hurting myself. That was kind of stupid because I felt a bit hypocritical. Oh you can't hurt yourself it's really bad and but it made me feel like now I know why they do that. It's

to find a different way of pain. To distract themselves from the pain that they are having. Probably ignoring the situation. (Participant 31)

In summary, participants described different experiences of the helpfulness of distraction in coping with distress. They spoke about how distracting themselves could be helpful at times but that it became unhelpful if it turned into procrastinating or ignoring, as these delays in dealing with stressful situations only served to increase their distress. A few of the participants used the description "lazy" when speaking about their procrastination behaviours, providing a juxtaposition to the views of other participants who described studying as a helpful distraction. These can be conceptualised as reflecting the social expectations of success explored in previous stress themes. Overall, the participants described the importance but difficulty of balancing their coping with stressful situations between distracting themselves and actively dealing with them.

Choosing to see things differently

In this theme, participants explained various ways they chose to see stressful situations, distress, and themselves differently, all of which were described as helpful ways of coping by the participants. Participants described being active agents in changing their views of stressful experiences and choosing to encourage themselves not to give up. Accordingly, participants explained that they found it helpful to get perspective in order to think clearly about problems, as one participant described in the excerpt below:

> I think getting your own space kind of thing, and then doing something, oh that does help… Doing it kind of like changes your perspective and stuff…and you can actually think more better about things and stuff. (Focus Group 2)

Also, some participants identified that it was helpful to help others; and, as one participant suggested in the following quote, helping others could also be a way to help oneself get perspective:

> So I wanted to help other people because I knew that I was, by helping others, it made me help myself as well. It made me feel hey it's not that bad. It can get better through time. (Participant 31)

Further, participants described prioritising and breaking things down in order to manage stressful situations and resulting distress, such as the following:

Maybe it's always, I can't remember what they say, they say how you always eat an elephant while biding your time. So if I come home and I might have so much stuff to do and I'm freaking out, like okay what's due first, what's worth the most credits, what do you need to do today, what do you need to do tomorrow. (Focus Group 3)

In addition, participants talked about how they found it helpful when they chose to think positively about stressful situations. For example, in the following quote, a participant talked about this in regards to her experience of her grandmother's death:

I didn't cry a lot at that one, I think it was just like a, 'cause she was 93 and I was, I knew how lucky I was to even have a great grandma, 'cause a lot of people, like my best friend doesn't have any grandfathers and she has one grandma. So I had met all my grandparents and a great grandma and I had another great grandma when I was really younger. So I was kind of like, I was lucky to have met her and then grown up to 14 with her still in my life. (Participant 21)

Several of the participants in the study reported having a Christian faith, and most of these participants described their faith and turning to God as helpful, as depicted in the following quote:

So for Christianity I suppose just, my God gives me peace in knowing that it's okay, I'm fine… So, I suppose for me handling stress as a Christian is great 'cause I can pray about it and I can keep calm. And I'm fine with just that peace, whatever happens happens, and that's a hard thing to accept. (Participant 28)

In addition, participants spoke about aspects of character and identity that shaped their perspectives towards stress. For example, they expressed the importance of being persistent in response to stressful situations:

I think one of the most important thing is just getting back on track and not staying in that rut of not doing anything, or working really hard. Getting back on track. (Participant 28)

Participants described themselves as the driving agents in encouraging themselves to keep going. As described by one participant in the following quote, she encouraged herself to keep going and actively join clubs in order to cope with her distress:

So I think I made myself think, "Hey, I need to keep going." No one's going to be, like yes I'm going to be sad but no one's going to be sad with me… So I, kind of, kept going and then joined all these clubs, joined all these leadership things and I think people saw positivity in me. (Participant 31)

The same participant also poignantly described her determination not only to move through stressful situations, but also to learn from them:

Because there's a difference between acknowledging it and then dwelling on it. There's a difference when you acknowledge it and learn from it. And I think we should acknowledge and then learn from it. Not like know that I'm going through this and feel horrible again, you know? Like, we should try move on from that. (Participant 31)

Although participants had described in a previous theme a tension between pressures to fit in and being an individual, participants also talked about knowing who they were and believing in themselves as significant sources of strength. In the following quote, one participant described her experience entering high school and coping with not fitting in by believing in her differences as strengths:

And I came into high school and in kind of the same thing, those morals that my grandma said, you know, "you've got to be different. No one's going to be the same like you."… Yeah, she always told me like, "you're different, and that's a good thing… You're not born to be ordinary."… I got bullied my first couple of years of high school 'cause I didn't fit in. But I didn't care because who are they to tell me that I have to be like them? (Participant 18)

Therefore, participants described various ways in which they responded to stressful situations by choosing to view them differently. They described active approaches in which they were the driving agents of this choice and change. Many of the strategies and experiences participants spoke about reflected a sense of determination to keep going. The different strategies incorporated within choosing to change their views of stressful situations, distress, and themselves as individuals reflected both individual and relational processes of coping.

Letting it out works for us

The participants in the current study explained that it was helpful to express their distress, primarily through talking to others. First, participants gave various examples of ways in which they let out their distress, including writing and listening to music. Mostly, however, participants in this study spoke about the importance of talking to others in order to express their distress:

Yeah, I have to talk it out and I tell other people you have to talk it out. 'Cause like what's the point of putting on a mask if you're not okay? (Participant 18)

Many participants also identified that crying was a helpful part of letting out their distress:

Crying it out because if you just keep it in, keep keeping it in it's just going to build up until you feel like there's no way out. So it's good to put it out a little bit, you don't have to show people, you can just go in your room, hide under the blankets whatever, cry it out a little. It's okay to cry. (Participant 31)

Similarly, as one focus group participant describes below, participants explained that it was unhelpful to keep distress bottled up inside, as this would cause a mounting pressure to occur emotionally:

So I think if you're under pressure the worst thing you can do is keep it to yourself. Because there's all this emotion building up inside you and you will crack. (Focus Group 4)

After describing the importance of expressing their distress, some of the participants also spoke about the need to subsequently pick themselves back up and move on:

But I think dealing with a situation like that, after that I just cried, I'm like okay I'm going to cry now and after that I'm going to move on. Because I think it's okay to cry, like if we go through any kind of rejection or heartbreak or something cry for one night or something. You cry for a little bit of time but promise yourself that after you cry you're going to try move on. You're going to take, even though it's really hard, take one step at a time to move, to bring yourself up. (Participant 31)

In contrast to the views and experiences expressed by most of the participants, a small number of the participants said they found it unhelpful to talk about their distress. For example, some of these participants said that it was unhelpful since it would bring things back up and upset them again, as one participant described in the following excerpt:

'Cause it's people's, like, initial reaction when you tell them something sad, they constantly check how you are and ask if you're okay and then when they ask if you're okay it just reminds you of why I wouldn't be okay. (Focus Group 1)

Instead of talking to others, most of these participants described that they preferred to deal with their distress on their own, which is illustrated in the following focus group quote:

I feel like when I'm in trouble isolating myself would be better, rather than telling anyone. Because it's my problem, I need to get this done now. Rather than I want to tell everyone… Yeah, it's kind of better just kind of solving it yourself. (Focus Group 2)

Overall, participants often spoke about the value of expressing their distress. Most of the participants described finding it helpful to talk about their distress, and some explained that letting out their distress allowed them to move on. However, a few of the participants described that they found talking about their distress unhelpful. Most of the participants who found talking unhelpful also explained that they preferred to cope alone, reflecting a more individual process of coping compared to the former collective process of expressing distress with others.

We find ways of coping that work for us

The participants in the study spoke about how they had individually learned how to cope and explained that they had different strategies to use at different times. They particularly explored the different ways of coping preferred by young men as opposed to young women.

Participants described learning to cope with stress primarily through individual trial and error, describing a process of persistently trying different strategies until they found ones that worked for them. For example, one participant described her journey of finding different ways that worked in the quote below:

> I guess, you know, it's trying different ways. When I used to, I used to keep a diary or a journal, but, we have trust issues in my house and my Mum sort of read mine… So then like I don't use that anymore... I used to hold it in but that didn't help… So I told my friends and that, it worked fine, so you know, it's just sort of playing which, which ways work for you to help you cope and everything. (Participant 4)

Accordingly, participants in one of the focus groups talked about how it would have been helpful to have been taught how to cope with stress when they were younger. One of the participants described their idea in the following excerpt:

> It's almost like you need someone to sit you down… And be like this is how you cope. Like can someone give me like a page of bullet points, this is what you do… I think in Year 9 and 10 you're just sort of, especially in Year 9, you're just sort of coming into the environment that you're going to be sort of living in for the next 5 years. And it's a big difference from Year 8, so it's like they're just learning how to cope. And sometimes a few people take it the wrong way at first, and then they get back on track. But I think there might be, in Year 9 we do, we do quite a lot of work with Year 9s and stuff, like making sure they're not, we focus on like

bullying and stuff. But also I think self-harm, and also coping with stress, it's almost like you need to be taught how to do it, like how to cope. (Focus Group 4)

Overall, the participants in this study talked about how different people had different coping strategies that worked for them. They also described how each individual had a variety of strategies to choose from, and different strategies worked at different times for them. For example, one participant said, "There's not like a set thing that I'll do to try and get rid of it. It'll just kind of be like whatever I feel will make me like better at that time." (Participant 12).

In regards to general differences in coping across participants, participants of both genders identified and discussed that young men tended to have specific ways of coping that differed from young women. Indeed, both genders appeared to agree with one another regarding the coping differences. Once the general ideas had been discussed in broad terms within the focus groups, the young men then went into greater detail during their individual interviews about these gender differences. First, participants spoke about social expectations for young men to be "staunch" and "guys can't cry". In the following excerpt, a young woman participant described a poignant example of this:

> I found out that my friend he was, when he was here this guy threw an apple at his back. And he cried 'cause it's a hard apple and it bruised apparently and stuff like that. But all his friends was just laughing. The guy that threw the apple, like because he's a guy everyone has that, "Why are you crying, man up," you know? It's just an apple. But still, like, you know? They made fun of him, that's what makes him sad. And he left, and stuff. 'Cause no one knew what he was going through. And actually, like, he walked in on his dad, like, committed suicide. (Participant 31)

Second, participants talked about how young men generally did not talk about their stress to each other. For example, in the quote below, a young man recounted how his friend did not tell his friends that his father had died:

> I'll start off with, I know one, my friend's dad died last year. And, 'cause I mean, he, he didn't actually tell anyone about it. It was, one of my other mates found out and told us for him. Because I mean, guys, you wouldn't really come in and tell people about that… Because I mean, guys don't really, like, talk about it or anything. (Participant 23)

In order to cope, the young men talked about how they tended to bottle up their distress, which eventually needed to be released. One of the young men described this during his interview, as illustrated in the quote below:

> I tend to bottle things up and then eventually I have a huge release moment where I have a spaz and sort of yell and rant about everything and then I feel much better. But I sort of, I'm one who bottles everything up and sort of doesn't let it show on the outside. But I can seem happy and calm on the outside but there might be just one little thing that you say which just sets me off. (Participant 3)

Furthermore, the young men spoke about how they preferred to solve problems rather than dwell on them. They also described the importance of doing activities together with friends, as described here:

> Just for guys as well, just being there and doing something, like not talking at all. Like my friend's Dad died, and the day after me and a mate just took him out and went for a walk on the beach. And I didn't talk or anything, but just doing stuff. (Focus Group 3)

Although young men reported that "guys don't talk", as they told their stories in the interviews of supporting others and receiving support, they actually described that they did sometimes talk about stress. They explained that young men tended to prefer to talk to young women about their problems, as one of the young men described in the following excerpt:

> I think guys find talking to girls a lot easier about that stuff. And so usually we'll get one of their good girl friends to go in and talk to them... Yeah, or sometimes we'll talk with him. But I mean, like… You know, a guy, girl-guy, will probably be a bit more emotionally opening up than guy-guy. And so that sort of helps that a little bit. (Participant 23)

In this study, the participants talked about how they individually coped differently, but they also described general differences in the ways young men coped with stressful problems and distress. They explained how they each had a variety of ways of coping and would choose their strategies dependent on the circumstances. In regards to the ways in which young men coped, they explained navigating social expectations such as "guys can't cry" and "guys don't talk", and they highlighted the importance of social connectedness through spending time together.

Negotiating support from friends

The participants in the current study often talked about going to their friends for support and explained how they and their friends supported each other. However, seeking support from friends was not described by participants as a straightforward process, but rather, one that required a complex negotiation of risks and constraints.

Participants talked about the importance of trust within friend relationships. There were varying views and experiences of trust, ranging from finding it difficult to trust others to having a close group of confidants. In accordance with finding it hard to trust others, some participants spoke about feeling uncertain or cautious about trusting others. For example, in the following quote, one participant described this hesitancy to trust as reflective of parental warnings:

> And it comes out of things, like your parents say, "Don't talk to strangers or don't trust people that you don't know," and then it comes to, like, at what point do I know someone enough to, (a) not call them a stranger and (b) trust them enough to tell them something? (Focus Group 1)

Consequently, many of the participants described slowly building up trust with friends through experiences of opening up piece by piece, as described in the following quote:

> Yeah, with like trust, you like do something, you tell them something and then if they kind of follow through with that and they don't tell anyone then you trust them a bit more and then it slowly builds up and up and up. (Focus Group 1)

The young men in the study talked about being able to trust their friends to take them seriously when they needed them to, as one young man talked about here:

> And with friends, like, I mean guys insult each other pretty much every sort of second word but if you've got good enough friends, you can still insult them all the time but when it comes down to it and you actually want to talk to them about something serious, they can actually sit down and listen to your problems rather than just, if you say something they won't just laugh at you and go, "Ah shame." If it's something serious you know that they'll actually listen. (Focus Group 1)

In addition to this careful journey of building trust with friends, some of the participants also described experiencing two different layers of trust once friend groups were established. Specifically, participants differentiated between an inner, close friend group whom they trusted and opened up to,

and an outer, wider friend group who they did not share their problems with, as depicted by one participant in the excerpt quote:

Yeah, well there's like seven of us in our, in our close group. 'Cause we are, like it's like a close group and then there's a bigger group where, you know, you're friends with, but you don't talk about those problems. And so at least with this, this close group, the seven of us you can, you have that trust to be able to talk to each other. (Participant 4)

The same participant also described an unspoken confidentiality within her close friend group. She explained that if one person told another person a secret, that secret was then shared with the others in the close friend group, but remained confidential from the wider friend group, as she described here:

…And we know that if we tell one person something the whole group of seven of us is gonna find out but also know that no one else will find out. We trust our group and it will stick to our group. But no one else. (Participant 4)

Moreover, participants described at length the various ways in which they supported their friends and felt supported by their friends. First, as discussed in the "letting it out" theme, participants identified talking to others as helpful in expressing distress, and here they clarified that they found it helpful to talk to their friends in particular. As one focus group participant described it, "…You just kind of vent and then lean on each other" (Focus Group 3). One of the participants also identified that talking to friends could be helpful even if it was not specifically about the stressful situation:

Talking to people helps, even if it's not specifically sort of about that incident, just talking with someone who you know, who you're friends with or you can trust, about anything. Doesn't have to be about that, just talking, just generally relaxing rather than sitting there with everything sort of, like, bottling all up inside you. It's nice to release. (Focus Group 1)

As suggested by the participant in the quote above, friends supporting each other was not simply about expressing distress. Rather, participants described how they found it helpful just being with their friends, as expressed in the following excerpt:

But just being with friends. So, I know that my friends are really supportive. And like, friendly people. So being around them, if you talk about it or not, that definitely helps. Just hanging out with them. (Participant 23)

This idea of connecting with friends, whether utilising talking or not, was the principal way participants described supporting friends and feeling supported. Without talking, participants

described providing connection and support through doing things together. In the following quote, one participant described this in the context of supporting her bereaved friend:

> I remember we went back to the wake and that was at my friend's house and we hid in her bedroom and wore animal hats and played 500 for no, like we were just okay this is what we want to do, 'cause my friend didn't want to speak to all the grieving family. And they'd be like I'm so sorry and stuff 'cause at that point she was just like I've had it already this week and she didn't want more of it. (Participant 21)

When talking was used as the means of connection, participants spoke about the importance of feeling heard and understood by friends. The participant in the following quote talked about the importance of this when supporting friends:

> And then but then other times, like if it's a close friend, you get, just sometimes just them talking to you and you just kind of listen and like just be like I understand, like you're not going through this alone, and like letting them realise that they've got someone there. (Participant 16)

Further, participants in the study reported that a foundational component of connecting with friends and feeling understood was having shared experiences with them.

> Yeah, 'cause we kind of like, if we have something like going on, we'll kind of tell someone else and then they'll somehow have something else going on as well that they've never mentioned before. And so you feel like they can relate somehow… It's like someone else feels it as well, kind of thing, yeah. (Participant 12)

Based on these shared experiences and understandings, participants explained that part of the support they and their friends gave each other included giving advice:

> Because they're the same age and stuff like that, the friends you're close with do have similarities in terms of lifestyle or, you know, personality and stuff like that. So they might've had similar, same sort of problems and they can offer their advice on how they coped. (Focus Group 1)

Other ways participants spoke about supporting friends and feeling supported by them included humour, encouragement, offering regular support, and providing practical support (i.e. buying them lunch if their family cannot afford food). They also talked about learning how to cope through supporting each other. One participant described how young people can learn helpful coping strategies from each other:

I think if you have one good person in a group who can handle a situation, like if they know how to deal with it really well, everyone sort of learns from them. (Focus Group 3)

In contrast, a smaller number of the participants said that they preferred not to talk to their friends about their stress in the first place; and, further, participants described some considerations regarding sharing their stress with friends. For example, some participants reported that they only shared about particular types of problems with their friends and not others. Additionally, some of the participants described being able to talk to friends about their stress exclusively when at parties and drinking alcohol. When exploring why these limitations existed regarding talking to friends, participants described fearing judgement, as described by one participant in the following quote:

'Cause I think it's like the fear of being judged is why like guys don't really talk to each other about stuff. Once you realise that they're all going through the same stuff that you are, then you feel you can like open up to them more, so yeah. (Participant 8)

Additionally, some participants reported contrasting experiences to the message of shared understanding and connectedness through shared experiences. These participants described experiencing friends as minimising their problems or competing to have worse problems themselves. In the quote below, one participant described this in reference to her experience of depression:

And the depression got a bit much, I don't know why, like I wasn't depressed when Mum died. I think a year afterwards I was very suicidal, I was very depressed but I never told anyone about it… And whereas with friends I had back then whenever I would open up to them it would become a competition about who's had the worst life. And it was just, like, let me talk about my problems before you butt in… Like, my friends were awesome back then but I felt like they would just laugh it off and be like oh she's just joking, like this isn't important. (Participant 30)

Lastly, participants described withholding telling their friends about their problems at times because they did not want to cause them stress or be a "burden".

Because usually I'm like, because I don't like bringing my, like, problems or whatever to, like, school or something. So if I do have, if I am stressing out then I prefer to just stay at home so I don't, like, affect other people. (Participant 19)

In summary, this theme captured the complex nature of peer support described by the young people in the study. In describing friends supporting each other, participants highlighted key ideas such as shared understanding, shared experiences, and social connectedness. However, they also spoke about having to navigate risks in order to seek support. Overall, the ideas within this theme

reflected the opportunities of collective coping processes in their friend groups; yet, they also highlighted the risks and constraints the young people felt in these relationships.

Social media can be helpful and harmful

Similar to how friendships were discussed in the previous theme, participants described how social media offered them both opportunities and risks in connecting with others. Firstly, participants in this study described finding it helpful to be able to express their distress through various social media platforms, as described by one focus group participant in the following quote:

> You see people, like I have a Tumblr account and you see people like unleashing their problems. And I think that's therapeutic for some people… Yeah, some people need to let it out in cyberspace. (Focus Group 4)

The participants who talked about finding it helpful to express their distress on social media did not talk about wanting connection with others through this medium. Instead, they spoke about being able to release their distress to no one in particular when doing it on social media. However, as one participant acknowledged in the following quote, they were, in fact, telling everyone:

> And it's like just straight away you're like I need somewhere to voice my rage or why I'm upset, and you just type it to no one in particular. But then you're spreading it to everyone. And like Tumblr and stuff. And Facebook. (Focus Group 2)

One participant talked about how she blogged about her problems, with the specific aim of encouraging other young girls:

> And then now what I've done to kind of still cope is I've set up this blog and it's encouraging young girls, but it's also encouraging myself in some ways. And I mean it's tough. (Focus Group 2)

In contrast, social media was also identified by participants as a potentially unhelpful source of connection with and influence from others. One focus group gave the following example of the social media forum 'Ask FM', where young people revealed personal information, and as described in the following quote, could result in comments such as "kill yourself".

> So basically 'Ask FM' is a site that you can make an account and people can ask you questions. And it can either be anonymous or not anonymous. So pretty much people can just write anything they want. And people post it on their Facebook saying, "Oh here's my 'Ask

FM', I'm going to have an honest hour where I answer all your questions." And people ask them questions like, "Are you a virgin? Who's your boyfriend? Who's this guy on your forum?"... The most common thing I've read is, "Kill yourself." That is the most common thing. (Focus Group 4)

Further, the participants in the study spoke about being negatively influenced by posts on social media. For example, participants reported that they looked at sad posts on social media when they were sad, even though they knew it was unhelpful. Additionally, participants described a similar process to the shared stress concept, in which people's problems were compounded when they were shared on social media.

There's a lot of like, like with like social media and stuff, like people will sort of like mention their problem, kind of thing, and then everyone will kind of try and like add like their kind of problem thing, and then it kind of multiplies, kind of thing. And then like when there's like Tumblr and stuff and they have like posts about like depression kind of thing, and then like everyone kind of feels like they should be as well… And then they get these problems that they didn't think they were problems. And then they all just add up. And it's like, oh, it's not actually that good. (Participant 12)

Finally, a poignant example participants talked about was self-harm and suicidality. Specifically, participants identified the unhelpfulness of being exposed to "glamourised" depictions of self-harm and messages of cutting as the "easy" coping strategy on social media:

I just want to say like Tumblr especially, like it glamorises [self-harm] but as well it makes it like, it's like the easy thing to do. Like if you're upset, if you just cut your wrists…. And it's like oh, okay and so people do it. And I'm just like it's not helping you... I guess it's 'cause we were impressionable and we see it all the time, and it's like glamorised almost. (Focus Group 2)

Similar to the previous theme, participants described having to navigate the tension between the potential source of support and connection afforded by social media with the risks involved, such as harmful connection. The potential harms described by the young people occurred both in relationships with others online and through exposure to societal messages. Although they described how expressing their distress online was not directed at connecting with others, it was understood as reflective of a collective coping process rather than an individual one.

We cope differently to our parents

Similar to differences that participants saw in the stresses experienced by each generation, they also discussed how they thought their parents' generation coped with stress differently than today's generation. The following discussion highlights the main differences the participants spoke about.

Participants described how they felt that their parents did not tend to talk about problems openly:

But we don't really talk about stuff like, at my house. Like everyone knows we have problems but like, I don't know, sort it out. (Participant 19)

As described below, one of the participants talked about an association between their parents not talking about stress and a perceived generational pressure to be tough:

I think it might've been different, 'cause like my dad, he definitely doesn't talk about any sort of stress or anything with, well definitely not with me. So I think maybe, 'cause he grew up in England, it might've been like, "You're a young man, you're not supposed to have stress."… And they used to put all the emphasis on, like, how males aren't supposed to have emotions… You're the man… You're meant to be tough and staunch… (Focus Group 1)

Overall, the participants in this study reported thinking that their parents had more pressure to be tough than today's generation.

My mum came from a very tough, strict family. So if you had a problem you just dealt with it, you just get over it, you know. Swallow a concrete pill kind of attitude back when Mum was our age. But I could say our generation is a lot softer than what it used to be, and I'm sure there's a lot of people that would agree. It's not a bad thing I guess, we can't really help it. (Focus Group 3)

Additionally, some of the Tongan participants described that this perceived generational practice of not talking about stress was an ongoing, present component of their Tongan culture, as described by one participant in the following excerpt:

And in the Tongan culture, I don't know what it is, but we don't necessarily talk about it. I think it's more or less unnoticed growing up, if you're going through a tough time you kind of just keep it to yourself... And so it's not like mainstream, like you don't talk about it. So it's harder to bring stuff up like that when it's a big issue in your life. You can't talk to them about it. (Focus Group 2)

Moreover, participants suggested that social media made it more difficult for today's generation of young people to cope with stress because of the wider exposure to others' problems and less confidentiality compared to their parents' generation.

Like with my parents, it would be easy to deal with things, I'm not saying it's easier for them, but like for them you can talk to your friends about it and they can't tell other people as much because they didn't have online, like Twitter's real bad. Not many people have Twitter, but the people who do, on my Twitter I just see people's problems all the time. It's like people bitching about other people. (Focus Group 2)

Additionally, in contrast to their parents' experiences, participants described self-harm and suicidality as common coping responses for today's young people:

But I feel like with our generation, I don't know what it is, but suicide and self-harm is such a massive thing. And like my parents, when they were young, it wasn't as common as it is now. I know three, four people who I've been close with who have talked about suicide. And I'm just like, it's like if you can't deal with something it's like the first answer in our minds, suicide and self-harm. (Focus Group 1)

In summary, participants described ways in which they thought their parents' generation coped differently to today's generation within a framework of understanding changes in the social contexts. As referenced in previous themes, participants in this study described experiencing their parents' generation as choosing not to talk about stress. This was contrasted with the increasing exposure for today's generation to discussion about problems via social media. Lastly, participants identified the generational differences in self-harm and suicidality as a means of coping.

Summary of Coping

Participants in this study described utilising active individual coping approaches and negotiating complex considerations to engage in more collective means of coping. Many of the themes reflected both individual and collective coping, with the young people taking active roles in navigating these processes. They described differences in coping among them, often relating to the balance between individual and collective coping, with careful consideration of the opportunities and risks. They highlighted ideas such as shared understanding, shared experiences, and connectedness as part of collective support and coping. In contrast, they raised concerns about trust, judgment, social expectations, and unhelpful responses when considering the risks. Finally, participants

described differences in coping between their generation and their parents' generation through situating these in their respective social contexts.

Help-Seeking

We deal with our problems ourselves

In this theme, participants described their hesitancy to seek formal help, preferring instead to cope as individuals or within their friend groups. They described individual, collective, and wider social contributions to their views and experiences. Similar to sentiments described in previous themes, participants described a sense of responsibility for their problems as individuals:

> I feel like my opinion, it's my problem and I don't want to like… It's like it's my problem, they don't need another thing to worry about. (Focus Group 4)

They explained that they tried to solve their problems themselves, with one participant referring to this in the following quote as a "DIY, do it yourself" attitude:

> In terms of whether young people ask for help too late or not, I guess from my point of view you want to see if you can solve it yourself before you ask someone else for help… DIY, do it yourself. (Focus Group 2)

The participants in this study talked about feeling as though they did not need formal help for their problems. As one participant described, they reported viewing their problems as "not really that bad":

> It just doesn't seem necessary to ask for help… We're kind of in denial of our problems. Like it's not really that bad, I don't need to talk to someone about it. (Focus Group 1)

Furthermore, the participants often spoke about how their problems needed to be "serious" in order to seek help from a school counsellor or other professional:

> I don't have depression or like, you know, you feel like it has to be a huge problem… It's like that, I can deal with it myself, can't really be bothered going up and making a big deal. (Focus Group 3)

As such, participants described needing to reach a point in which they acknowledged their problems and realised they were serious enough to warrant formal help. Participants also described their experiences in which they and their peers did not seek formal help until they reached "breaking

point". In the excerpt below, one participant described reaching this point of realising that she needed help for depression:

> Oh I was just sick and tired of being tired. And feeling like I'm not good enough and things like that, so that's when I really realised that I needed to get help. 'Cause it wasn't normal... It's like you've come to terms that you have a problem. Whereas you might have dismissed it and convinced yourself that you're okay. (Participant 30)

However, in accordance with views expressed by the participants in the "negotiating support from friends" theme, participants in this study often described coping in their friend groups rather than alone as individuals. Indeed, the overwhelming response from participants to the question of who they go to for help was "friends". One participant described going to friends for help as, "like a security blanket" (Focus Group 4), and participants often described going to friends, "because we're all in the same boat" (Focus Group 2). One participant related this shared experience with peers to the stress they experienced together by saying, "Close friends. I mean they're like stressing out as well, so everyone's in the same boat" (Focus Group 3). As such, participants spoke about how friends helped them to deal with their problems. For example, as one participant described in the quote below, they spoke about how friend groups solved most of their problems without going to adults:

> So probably about 90 percent of issues, like 99 percent of issues are solved within friends. And then one percent maybe adults and parents. (Focus Group 3)

As part of this peer coping, the participants spoke about how the decision to seek formal help occurred when friends either suggested or initiated that help. Essentially, participants described relying on each other to determine when help was necessary:

> Some people don't want to like let other people know that they're upset, but I will like, like I won't make sure everyone knows I'm upset or anything, but I'll kind of mention like what's wrong or something. And if people don't like think, like if they're not like really concerned or something, then I'll be like, okay, it's not really major then. Because my friends would say something if they thought that I needed to go and see someone or something like that. (Participant 12)

Thus, participants explained that seeking help from formal sources was a last resort, occurring only after they had tried everything and everyone else first:

> I mean if you can't help yourself, your friends can't help you and your family can't help you then by all means go to a counsellor. (Focus Group 2)

When discussing why the participants felt this way about coping and seeking help, participants explained that New Zealand culture expected them, as young people, to cope with their problems by being "tough", "calm", and "chilled".

But that whole blokey thing, it rubs off on girls as well. Like you're just meant to be like New Zealanders, we have this whole stereotype. And we're all like, not even tough, but like we're all just calm, like chilled… Like it's okay to be sad but in New Zealand you're meant to just be chill about everything. You're not meant to worry about things. (Focus Group 2)

Additionally, as one participant reflected in the following quote, they had been told to seek help but they did not see other people actually seek help:

But they're not taught, like our generation wasn't taught like, we're told if you need help go to talk to someone. But like you never see it happen and it never like actually happens. (Focus Group 2)

Finally, participants in the study expressed that they would prefer that society change its message to make it clear that "it's okay to not be okay":

Even John Key, just front up and say when you did wrong, and just be like, hey, I didn't go through this part of my life was not good, but hey, look where I am now, I'm Prime Minister. Like it's okay to not be okay, and I want people to be more vocal about it, 'cause it's like all happy chappy and stuff, but like, really? Do we have to strive to be perfect 'cause I'm pretty sure you're not one bit perfect. (Participant 18)

In summary, the participants in this study often spoke about feeling as though they needed to cope alone or in their peer groups, with formal support as a last resort. They described viewing their problems as not serious enough to warrant formal help until they reached "breaking point" or their peers suggested or initiated help. They explained how social expectations within New Zealand society contributed to this attitude of coping without help. These ideas reflected a tension between social expectations that they cope individually and their desire to cope collectively, often resulting in coping within their friend groups and without non-peer help.

We decide whether our friends need help

Following on from the idea expressed in the previous theme that peers may suggest or initiate formal help for friends, in the current theme participants described varying views and experiences of determining whether help was required for distressed and suicidal friends. They described being

responsible for collectively coping with these serious problems and making decisions about seeking formal help.

Participants expressed concern that they did not always know how to help their friends when they needed help. As captured in the following quote, one participant described that friends' problems could be "really big", which made it difficult to know what to do:

It's always hard though, like 'cause you don't, you're not trained in it. And so if it's especially if it's like a really big thing and you're like I don't know how to help you with this 'cause I'm not trained in this area, like I'm a high school student. (Participant 16)

Some of the participants said that they would encourage their friends to get help from parents or the school guidance counsellor if the problem was serious, as one participant expressed from a hypothetical view in the excerpt below:

I'd probably like I would go and, I would say like if they feel that what we can talk about isn't enough, and they've like talked to their parents, I would like actually probably tell them to go to the counsellor's. (Participant 12)

Most of these responses from participants were hypothetical in nature. In the few examples given in which participants had encouraged friends to seek help for distress, not suicidality, the participants reported that they had either gone to the school counsellor for or with the friend. For example, in the following quote, one participant talked about a past experience of going to the counsellor about a friend:

I went to the counsellors with one of my friends to talk about another person at school who we thought needed help as well. And we were like, our friend, like she's just always upset. And we don't know what else to do but go to the counsellors. (Focus Group 2)

As previously discussed, participants in the study spoke about supporting and helping a suicidal friend as an intensely stressful journey. Participants who shared about this type of experience explained that their peer group tried to cope and help the suicidal friend solely within the peer group. One participant described this arduous task in the excerpt below:

She had, there was me and a couple of others that were her real close friends. And it was super stressful. Like this was like staying up, like it would be like the kind of staying up, like getting no sleep 'cause you're texting her throughout the night and like… It was just very like everything was devoted to this… So like you'd, I remember, I once said to my friend, I was

like she just, she hasn't replied and she was like, okay, I'll try get hold of her and like. You just kind of looked for her together and then everything ends up fine... (Participant 16)

Further, the same participant described in the following quote that it was supportive having peers to talk to and share the experience with:

We like all talked about it and knowing that, 'cause it was so hard thinking that you were like the only one to be like, oh my gosh, I don't know what I'm doing, like I can't handle all of this. But like to know that there were other people as well, and like talking about it... Like we could go through this together... Like if she's texting me, she's most likely texting you, and then so I can talk to you about it and like you can keep me going and then stop me like freaking out. And I can keep you going and stop you like freaking out. So that was good. (Participant 16)

However, as the same participant went on to explain, even though there was support in this shared coping process, the burden of supporting a suicidal friend grew too intense for the peer group:

Even though we had each other, we were like we've been thrown in the deep end, like regardless of the fact that there's a group of us going through this... we're still like, we are 17, right? We don't know what we're doing, like we don't, like you don't know if you'd help her by saying something or if we'd just make it worse... Eventually, like me and these people were just like... We actually can't do this anymore... And so we just kind of being like, hey, no, we need to like stop this 'cause this has gone on for like over a year. And like we just need to let it go 'cause this is getting way too intense. (Participant 16)

She also described that she and her peer group did not actively seek help for their friend. They encouraged the friend to see the school guidance counsellor, but it did not occur to the participant or her peer group to directly seek help from the counsellor. Another participant talked about an experience in which she had gone to a suicidal friend's brother for help, instead of breaking the friend's trust by going to a professional.

When I knew the person you were talking about, and then he went out and refused to go home because he was so annoyed with his family. But I knew his brother so I ended up telling his brother where he was so he could go home. But I don't think I'd tell a professional, because I think they'd stop trusting you if you go to someone else about them. So you don't really want to do that. (Focus Group 2)

Conversely, a few of the other participants spoke about how they had sought professional help for suicidal friends in the past. For example, one participant described that she had gone to all sources of help possible, including police, counsellors, parents, friends, and teachers. Further, some

participants described reaching the decision to seek professional help when they thought the suicidal friend was "serious" about suicide, as one participant described in the following quote:

> You'd get to a point where, like 'cause they'd just be like talking about [suicide] and stuff and you'd be trying to help them as much as you can to get rid of those thoughts. But then I think I'd get to a point where you kind of thing they're really, genuinely serious about this. And you think I'm not trained to deal with this, so from there you'd kind of say you need professional help. (Focus Group 2)

Participants described themselves as gatekeepers for friends accessing professional help and support. They explained how they often tried to cope with severe problems within the friend groups and would have to make difficult decisions about whether to seek outside help. Whereas some participants expressed willingness to seek outside help for friends, others described hesitancies. These ideas could be understood as reflective of wider social expectations about taking responsibility and coping alone.

We want someone we already know and trust

Outside of seeking help and support from peers, the participants in this study described particular types of adults they would prefer to seek help from. The following discussion differentiates between informal and formal sources, although the participants' desires regarding the qualities of the sources remained the same. Overall, participants often spoke about wanting support and help from an adult they already knew and trusted.

In regards to seeking help from informal sources, participants talked about finding it useful to be able to get advice from someone older. Participants described how they appreciated being able to gain different perspectives from individuals who were slightly older than them and outside the family, including church youth leaders, older friends, and friends' older siblings.

> 'Cause you feel like they're your age but they're not… They're like early 20s so they're not like your parents age but they're not like your age. So they kind of see a different view… Different from talking to your parents, but different from talking to your friends as well. (Focus Group 2)

The participants in this study emphasised the requirement that the person they sought help from was someone they already had a relationship with. They described wanting someone who

already knew them because that person would already know about their life, genuinely care about them, and they would be able to seek help from them again in the future.

> 'Cause no one feels comfortable talking to a stranger about your problems… 'Cause when you actually know the person you know that they genuinely care. 'Cause otherwise they'll be like I don't personally know you… And they know the situation, like it's so different being in a situation and explaining it. Like they know the people, they've seen it happen. (Focus Group 2)

Indeed, the defining feature participants described of these informal sources was that they were adults the participants knew well enough to trust, as one participant describes in the following quote:

> Probably 'cause I can trust [my youth leaders] and I'm close to them but I'm not like really close, like for example, like parents. I wouldn't tell them stuff 'cause it'd be weird, like yeah, 'cause I see them like once or twice a week and, yeah, they, yeah, I've seen that they're trustworthy. (Participant 8)

In regards to seeking help from formal sources, similar sentiments were expressed by the participants. Many of the participants from the lower socioeconomic school described how they did not have well-established relationships with the school counsellors since they had only minimal contact with them in their peer programme. Alternatively, the participants from the higher socioeconomic school all described having well-established relationships with at least one school counsellor due to the nature of their peer programme. Subsequently, participants who tended to not know the counsellors reported that they might seek help from a teacher they already had an established relationship and trust with.

> Yeah if you build up a good relationship with a teacher and you really trust them then they're always good to talk to. (Focus Group 1)

In contrast, some of the participants who already had relationships with a school counsellor talked about previous helpful experiences of having gone to that counsellor for support. For example, in the below excerpt, one participant described her previous experience:

> I think that it's great. I've done it before with [the counsellor], but yeah, I think it is a great, great thing for people when you need just to get a load off. Like, you know, just talk and talk and talk. And that's great 'cause they just sit there and listen... I guess you go through situations in your life where you know you can't just talk to someone about that. Like you need

to talk to someone a little older or someone that's not going to judge you. And you don't want that risk of being judged about a situation. So I guess a counsellor was just a, seeing a counsellor is just a much safer environment then. (Participant 22)

In contrast to this, others who already had relationships with the school counsellors described willingness to refer friends to the counsellor but were unsure whether they would go themselves:

I don't know. I guess it depends, like, I don't actually know if I would go. I would refer other people. (Participant 23)

These participants also identified that their responses would likely be different to peers, who did not know the school counsellors and, therefore, likely would not go see them. Additionally, participants in one focus group talked about accessing help from online support services. They described wanting more of a connection with someone than an online modality would allow. In regards to the local phone support service available, again many participants expressed concern about the lack of personal relationship when seeking support from a stranger.

In summary, the participants in the study spoke about wanting the non-peer source they sought help from to be someone they already had a relationship with and someone they already knew they could trust. These ideas paralleled the concerns raised by participants in previous themes, in which seeking support from adults was marked by both opportunity and risk. Negotiating these opportunities and risks was described by participants as requiring careful consideration of relational aspects such as trust.

We want someone who listens and understands us

Participants described wanting support and help from someone who would listen to them and could understand their experience. As mentioned in the previous theme, when they sought help and support, the participants in this study emphasised the importance of already knowing and trusting the person they went to. In addition to finding advice from someone older helpful, participants in this study often talked about wanting the person they sought help and support from to listen to them, as one participant described in the following excerpt:

I think an open mind and a set of ears is the best like. Sometimes I feel like when I need to talk to somebody I would rather just blast and just keep going and keep going and just talking

and talking, and then them say something. Not have their inputs in between every single, you know. It's just like, okay, I just need a set of ears, just listen to this, okay? (Participant 22)

Similarly, participants in the study also described that it was important to talk to someone who would not judge them. For example, in the excerpt below, one participant described this in reference to their siblings:

'Cause like I can talk to them… So in that way kind of thing it feels like you can trust them in a way. Because they're listening, and that's the most important thing they could give us. They don't judge us on the spot like our parents and stuff. So that's who you really want to go to. (Focus Group 2)

Further, in addition to being listened to and not judged, the participants often spoke about the significance of being understood by the person from whom they sought help and support. Specifically, participants talked about choosing to seek support from those who could understand them because they had similar experiences to them, a key concept previously discussed as part of the "negotiating support from friends" theme. Again, in the following quote, a participant described being able to share with his brother because of shared experiences and understanding:

And 'cause I knew my brother did the same things as well so that's why I feel like he understands as well, I can open up to him as well. (Participant 10)

Significantly, one participant talked at length in her individual interview about the importance of talking to someone from the same cultural background so that they came from a place of shared understanding. She described her view in the excerpt below:

Like I guess because I am Pacific Islander and Maori, I guess if [the counsellors] were of the same descent because I feel like they'd understand my cultural background and where I come from and so they'd be a lot more understanding of what I'm going through. That's probably why I don't go to guidance counsellors... So it has to be kind of like, like I'd talk to, like, some teachers, like, 'cause I talk to my Maori and PI teachers because I feel comfortable talking to them… Yeah, because like, I feel like they would've maybe gone through similar things or, like, it would've happened in their family and so I wouldn't have to, like, spend all this time trying to explain why, you know? Because they'd be like, "Oh yeah, I get that." (Participant 19)

Similarly, some of the participants described feeling able to talk to church youth leaders because of a shared faith and understanding with them:

And also [youth leaders have] got like the same faith as you as well, which to me it helps. And like they just, they can talk to you and they give you wisdom. And like you know that you can talk to them about it and it's kind of like… They're kind of the same. (Focus Group 2)

In regards to their roles as peer support mentors and leaders, one participant talked about how he had been approached for help by Year 9 students after he had shared an experience they could relate to with them.

I actually know, yes, a few have come up to me in class. I was saying how classmates were picking on me so then we had to take it up through the teachers and then the teachers sort it out. (Focus Group 1)

In contrast, other participants reported that they had not experienced Year 9 students approaching them for help, and one participant suggested this was due to a lack of shared understanding:

No, not at all… Everyone keeps to themselves… From Year 9, looking back, the Year 12 and 13s, they seemed like adults. They seemed like they were so in control of everything, and it was really intimidating. (Focus Group 4)

Moreover, the participants who described seeking support from various family members, mainly siblings, explained doing so because these family members shared and understood the participants' experiences at home. The participants in the study said that they did not seek help from their parents because their parents did not have a shared understanding with them, as depicted in the following focus group excerpt:

I feel like when you're younger you look to your parents a lot for support. But I've found especially this year it's like they've started to not fully I think understand the pressures that I'm going through. So it's like I find myself turning more and more to people in my year, like my close friends because they can directly relate. (Focus Group 4)

Further, participants also described past experiences in which seeking support from their parents had been unhelpful because of the lack of understanding:

And like, sometimes your family doesn't even really help if you do tell them. Like, 'cause if I'm stressed or something, my dad's one of these type of people that are, like, well, life is just going to get harder. Like you're only at high school, he thinks that it's easy. He doesn't understand, like, how bad it is sometimes, so they're not really that much help. (Focus Group 1)

Similarly, participants described thinking that a counsellor would not be able to help them because a counsellor would not understand them, as one participant points out here:

> I don't know, I just feel like they can't help me. Like I've never talked to them before, but just like, I don't think they'd understand me, just coming straight off it, like they just look like they wouldn't. (Participant 19)

The participants in this study emphasised that the person they sought help from must be able to listen non-judgmentally and understand their experience. From the young people's perspective, this was most likely to happen when the person they sought help from had similar experiences to them. As such, they sought out people who shared a common framework of understanding, whether this was religious or cultural. Similarly to previous themes, the current theme highlighted aspects of relationship that participants felt were important in considering whether to engage in collective coping by seeking help from adults.

We don't want to be judged

Participants in this study described fearing judgment, predominantly from peers, if they were to seek help from a school counsellor. They described their experiences of stigma relating to seeking help from a counsellor and how peers had been judged for this. Although some of the participants had previously said they would seek help from a school counsellor if they needed it, many of them actually reported that, while it was okay for others to seek help from counsellors, it was not for them personally:

> Yeah, I think I'm being pretty hypocritical when I tell people to go to the counsellor. Because when I was going through things I was pretty much forced to go to the counsellor. And I just ended up being like, "No." (Focus Group 4)

Participants spoke about how they would be embarrassed to see a counsellor as it would be "admitting defeat", whereas others expressed concern that a counsellor would judge them as "they are only people".

> I don't want people to know that I'm hurt or I'm weak, so I'm going to just deal with it, it'll be fine. (Focus Group 2)

The main concern the participants in this study expressed was that others would find out if they went to see the school counsellor. As such, the participants often talked about the labelling and judgment from peers that they feared would subsequently occur. In the following excerpt, a focus group participant described how going for help would lead to peers thinking they were "suicidal" or had "alcohol or drug problems":

> And if you go to a counsellor to talk about how you're stressed about internals and someone hears you're going to a counsellor, like, they might blow it out of proportion and, "Oh, they're going to a counsellor, they're going to kill themselves."… That's what people think. If you're going to a counsellor, they think, oh they're suicidal or they've got alcohol or drug problems. (Focus Group 1)

In addition to the above labels, participants in the study described that accessing professional help meant someone was "weak", "bad", "weird", "can't handle [their] problems", had "something mentally wrong with them", "depressed", "on the edge", and "mentally ill". In fact, the participants themselves often spoke about these labels as "stigma" about seeking help, as one participant explained here:

> I think there's a stigma around people going to counsellors as well. Like as soon as someone goes to a counsellor for anything there's this like label on them. It's like they need a counsellor, they're either depressed or you know a little bit on the edge. And that sort of changes the way you think about people… Yeah, like there's something mentally wrong with them. (Focus Group 3)

Many of these participants later identified their own views as stemming from stigma and judgment that they have been exposed to within society. For example, the participant in the following quote was talking about the connection between these labels and perceptions with how needing help for a problem was portrayed in popular culture:

> You see it in the movies and it just makes you look like a bad kid who has to go and see… Like the weird kid... Yeah, it kind of makes you feel like, yeah… They'll think there's something wrong with you. (Focus Group 2)

Moreover, participants discussed the specific judgment or label of "attention seeking". First, as illustrated in the excerpt below, participants identified that asking for help may cause them to be labelled as such:

I mean you ask for help but… You're going to come off as you just want attention, you're not actually that upset about it… Like in our culture, like don't [seek help], and then when you do it's like the attention thing. (Focus Group 2)

Ironically, participants spoke themselves about self-harm as potentially attention-seeking. For example, in the following quote, one participant talked about being uncertain how to know whether someone "legit" needed help for self-harm or "just want[ed] attention":

Self-harm. So kind of now you're wary about talking about it. It's like is that attention seeking, or is that legit, like you need help… And it is hard to tell the difference these days. 'Cause there are still some people in our years who self-harm, which is horrific. And some of them I feel really have problems, but I know it sounds weird but I swear some of them just want attention. (Focus Group 4)

Participants discussed similar concerns about the attention seeking nature of suicidal peers, as poignantly expressed in the excerpt below:

Like with that person [who was suicidal], I just felt like after a while I just gave up because I was like you just want the attention. Like if you were really that upset, that sounds really horrible but… Like if you were that upset you would've done it already. (Focus Group 2)

Overall, participants in the study emphasised that they did not want to be judged, and they feared that they would indeed be judged by peers if they sought help from the school counsellor. They described different judgments used by peers and themselves regarding those who needed help from a counsellor as reflective of stigma within society. However, this stigma was also noticeable in their descriptions, most notably regarding the concept of peers with self-harm or suicidality struggles as "attention seeking". Again, ideas within this theme reflect the concerns of participants regarding the risks associated with seeking help from adults.

Summary of Help-Seeking

Similar to concerns raised in the coping category of themes, the participants in this study described having to negotiate complex considerations regarding seeking support from non-peers. These considerations reflected previous ideas discussed in relation to seeking support from peers, including trust, judgement, shared understanding, and shared experiences. They described preferring to cope by themselves, either individually or within their friend groups, but felt burdened by this when

responsible for supporting suicidal friends. Participants spoke about their views and experiences in relation to the wider social context marked by social expectations and stigma about seeking help.

Summary of Findings

Throughout this chapter, themes have captured the participants' experiences, views, and attitudes about the unique issues they face in their contemporary world. The young people themselves situated their views within their social contexts, reflecting on the impact of the social expectations they experienced through relationships, society, and culture. Many of the themes depicted the complex processes participants had to negotiate between pressures of individualism and collectivism, between the social worlds of peers and adults, and between the opportunities and risks inherent within supportive relationships.

The participants emphasised experiencing significant pressures and expectations to succeed. They described feeling pressures to succeed academically, plan future paths of career success, and adhere to family and cultural expectations of success. The young people also described the pressures of managing social relationships, which was often marked by adopting roles of responsibility as individuals and within their families and peer groups. They explained how they had to navigate social norms and expectations in various domains, which was particularly evident in the process of establishing peer group belonging. Within these peer relationships especially, the participants highlighted the stress and sacrifice involved in supporting others.

The participants described various ways in which they were active in learning and implementing coping strategies. Many of their accounts reflected their sense of individual responsibility to manage the stress in their lives. The young people explained how finding the right amount of distraction, letting out their distress, and changing their approaches to distress were all helpful to them. They emphasised differences in the ways they each coped, particularly highlighting the different ways young men tended to cope compared to young women. Instead of coping solely as individuals, the participants described engaging in collective coping in order to receive support from peers through shared understanding, shared experiences, and social connectedness.

However, the participants also explained that there were risks involved with seeking support and help from others. Whether they spoke about seeking support from peers or adults, they raised

similar concerns, such as trust and judgement. Yet, they preferred to rely on themselves, as individuals and as peer groups, rather than seeking help from adults. As such, they described how they tended to cope with significant distress, and even suicidality, within their peer groups and rarely sought help from adults. The difficulty of feeling understood by adults and the social stigma and judgment of seeking formal help appeared to contribute to these views and experiences.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of the current study was to explore New Zealand young people's views and experiences of coping with stress. It aimed to understand the stress young people face in contemporary New Zealand society and how they cope with these particular stresses, with a view to understanding the contexts in which these experiences occur. More specifically within this, I was also interested in the role of peers in coping and help-seeking processes and in the young participants' attitudes towards seeking help from non-peers. As the previous chapter delineated, the data were thematically analysed into nineteen themes, ranging across the categories of stress, coping, and help-seeking. In the current chapter, I will first review the key findings in relation to the current literature in each of these domains. Subsequent to this discussion, I will explore recommendations for future research and discuss the clinical implications of the findings. Finally, I will discuss the strengths and limitations of the current study.

Stress

The current findings provide more in depth understandings of the stress youth face in contemporary society. In this section, I will discuss the young people's experiences of social pressures and expectations to succeed in relation to existing research. I will also explore the heightened sense of responsibility young people experience and the constraints this places upon them. Throughout these discussions, I will highlight how the young people actively tried to negotiate the constraints of contemporary social pressures.

The young people in this study described experiencing significant pressure to succeed in their lives. They first described this in relation to academic success in high school, explaining that they felt pressure from the expectations of society, peers, teachers, and parents. Indeed, the youth stress literature has consistently highlighted academic performance as one of the main sources of stress in young people's lives (Frydenberg, 2008; Persike & Seiffge-Krenke, 2012; Roy et al., 2015; Seiffge-Krenke et al., 2012; Suldo, Shaunessy, Thalji, Michalowski, & Shaffer, 2009). Previous studies have also argued that young people experience such expectations from others. For example, on Byrne and

colleagues' (2007) stress questionnaire, young people endorsed items relating to parents and teachers "expecting too much" (p. 402). Additionally, McGee and Stanton's (1992) study showed that New Zealand young people reported frequently feeling "pressured to get good marks" from their parents (p. 1003). There has, however, been less acknowledgement in the literature that young people also experience academic pressure to match up to their peers. Overall, the current findings support the view that academic pressure is a significant part of young people's lives and that young people experienced these pressures across a range of relationships in their lives.

Further, the young people in my study emphasised the expectations they felt from society and their families to be successful in the future. These findings reflect recent research that has highlighted a trend towards increasing concern among contemporary youth about their futures (Byrne et al., 2007; Elgar, Arlett, & Groves 2003; Frydenberg, 2008; McKay, Percy, & Byrne, 2014; Seiffge-Krenke et al., 2012; Suldo et al., 2009). Particular stress cited by young people in these previous studies include worries about future education, employment, and financial stability and success (Byrne et al., 2007; Seiffge-Krenke et al., 2012; Suldo et al., 2009). This finding aligns with Thomson's (2007) suggestion that educational decisions and the way these relate to future success are central issues in contemporary young people's lives.

There were, however, some differences found in my study in comparison with other research on young people's experiences of academic pressure. Seiffge-Krenke and colleagues (2012) noted the lower pressure regarding their futures that young people in European countries experienced relative to those from other regions. However, their conclusion was that this group experienced less pressure from family obligation and felt freer to pursue their own future interests (Seiffge-Krenke et al., 2012). This differed from the findings in my study, in which the young people from the lower socioeconomic school, who tended to be from collectivist cultures and immigrant families, particularly described experiencing pressures to pursue the life paths their parents chose for them, surpass their parents' achievements, and maintain their family image through individual achievement. These family and cultural pressures have not been identified before in stress research conducted in Western societies, including New Zealand specific studies (McGee & Stanton, 1992; Payne, 2000). As Western societies such as New Zealand become increasingly multi-cultural, cultural variation in the stress that young people face is an increasing consideration (White & Wyn, 2013). These pressures

are consistent with the finding that youth in collectivist cultures do not experience the same degree of choice, agency, and individual identity formation as youth in more individualist cultures (Cote & Levine, 2002). Overall, the pressure to have their futures mapped out corresponds to contemporary theorists' supposition that young people are pressured to "actively shape their lives" (White & Wyn, 2013, p.10). However, the pressures to succeed also constrain their agency to freely construct their life trajectories (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Furlong et al., 2011; White & Wyn, 2013; Wyn et al., 2011). Thus, the young people in this study seemed torn between the demands to assert their individual agency and the constraints of fitting in with the demands of their family and culture.

Many of the young people in this study also described adopting roles of responsibility within their families and cultures. They described feeling a sense of responsibility to help at home by taking care of others, needing to be independent, and to contribute financially. There has been minimal previous research exploring these ideas of responsibility. The notable exceptions to the lack of research in this area have been studies utilising Byrne and colleagues' (2007) Adolescent Stress Questionnaire, which has been shown to include a "stress of emerging adult responsibility" factor (p. 403; McKay et al., 2014; Moksnes, Byrne, Mazanov, & Espnes, 2010). The items within this factor closely relate to the current findings, as they reflect the stress of responsibilities within the family and at work (Byrne et al., 2007).

In addition, the young people in my study spoke about the stress of financial constraints at home. This is similar to previous research that has described how young people often cite 'not enough money' as a stress in their lives (Byrne et al., 2007; Daniels & Moos, 1990; McGee & Stanton, 1992; Roy et al., 2015). The young people's descriptions of financial responsibility also closely align with the "having to take on new financial responsibilities with growing older" item on Byrne and colleagues' (2007) scale (p. 403). Again, these experiences of financial hardship and sacrifice were only described by young people from the lower socioeconomic school, which is unsurprising given the expanding economic pressures and social inequality in New Zealand (OECD, 2014; Perry, 2015).

In contrast to these concerns with family and financial responsibility, some of the young people described the stressful experiences of being constrained by the restrictions around partying and dating set by their parents. Previous research has consistently identified interpersonal problems with parents as a stress for young people (Bolder & Fallon, 1995; Compas et al., 1987; Daniels &

Moos, 1990; LaRue & Herrman, 2008; Phelps & Jarvis, 1994; Van Oort, Verhulst, Ormel, & Huizink, 2010). Many of these studies have not expanded on the specific nature of this stress, although a few studies have previously reported stress relating to house rules (Byrne et al., 2007; McGee & Stanton, 1992). In New Zealand, where drinking and dating are regarded as normative in the dominant culture, parental restrictions may be experienced as constraints upon the individual young person's agency (Abel & Plumridge, 2004; Clark et al., 2013; Coleman & Cater, 2005; Nairn, Higgins, Thompson, Anderson, & Fu, 2006).

Moreover, despite the overlap between the current findings and the notions of responsibility captured in Byrne and colleagues' (2007) research, the young people in this study also described an element of sacrifice within some of these responsibilities. For example, there were striking examples of stress and sacrifice as peer groups coped with and cared for their suicidal friends. Previous research has highlighted that, although peers are more likely to seek help for friends than themselves, they still rarely seek help for suicidal friends (Curtis, 2010; Klimes-Dougan et al., 2013; Michelmore & Hindley, 2012; Raviv et al., 2009). Yet, research has yet to explore how young people subsequently cope in peer groups with suicide.

Although previous research has generally identified romantic relationships as sources of stress for young people (Byrne et al., 2007; Nieder & Seiffge-Krenke, 2001), the specific issue of sex has rarely been researched, possibly due to young people's hesitancy to talk about sex with adult researchers (Brown, Feiring, & Furman, 1999). Young people in this study were similarly reticent about discussing the stresses around sex and sexuality. However, some young women in this study spoke about the social pressures to have sex and having to question and establish their values regarding sex.

Further, previous research has reported that interpersonal relationships are sources of both support and stress for contemporary young people (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Byrne et al., 2007; Camera, Bacigalupe, & Padilla, 2014; Phelps & Jarvis, 1994; Suldo et al., 2009). Indeed, the young people in this study spoke about the stress of peer relationships in particular. They spoke about the shared stress that occurs in relationship with peers, as their individual stress compounds in a collective experience. Whereas previous research has explored the risks of youth peer group

belonging in the form of risk behaviours (La Greca, Prinstein, & Fetter, 2001; Newman, Lohman, & Newman, 2007), this particular shared stress phenomena has not previously been identified.

While a sense of belonging within a peer group was clearly a priority for the young people in this study, the process of negotiating this in order to establish inclusion was also clearly a source of stress. Other researchers have also described the difficult negotiation of fitting in socially to a friend group in order to establish belonging (Byrne et al., 2007; Frydenberg, 2008). The young people in this study also described bullying as one of the difficulties to navigate during this process, a stress that has been previously identified in research (Byrne et al., 2007; Coggan, Bennett, Hooper, & Dickinson, 2003) and mirrors Thomson's (2007) argument that bullying is an exclusion from belonging.

There were two key concepts that help to explain the experiences the young people in this study found stressful. The first relates to a tension that young people seemed to feel between individual agency and responsibility within collective groups. While many theorists have promoted young people's freedom to choose in contemporary society, the young people in this study felt a tension between this and the responsibility they felt to live up to expectations that others had of them, and the expectations they had of themselves, to meet what they saw as their responsibilities. These responsibilities ranged from practical demands, such as financial and caregiving responsibilities, to responsibilities to make the most of themselves and make good life decisions. In the face of these demands, they experienced their lack of agency as a personal sacrifice.

The second area of tension relates to young people's need to find a sense of belonging with others. While this was described as a source of support, this was also a burden for them as they negotiated social expectations to fit in, the demands of caring for others, and feeling responsible for their peers. Overall, although there has been ample discussion about the expansion of opportunities for contemporary young people, the constraints described by the young people in this study perhaps reflect the argument posed by Furlong, Wyn, and colleagues that the increased complexity of an uncertain social context actually presents greater constraints for contemporary youth (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Furlong et al., 2011; White & Wyn, 2013; Wyn et al., 2011).

Coping

The young people in this study described negotiating social expectations of self-reliance to cope actively as individuals. As such, in this section I will first discuss the coping strategies the young people described utilising in relation to the youth coping literature. I will then explore how they saw their ability to cope as a reflection of their individual agency. Following this, I will discuss the gender differences in coping described by the young people. Finally, I will explore the importance of collective coping processes within predominantly peer relationships.

The young people in this study often spoke about being active agents in their individual coping (Seiffge-Krenke et al., 2012). The coping strategies that they described using can be categorised according to previous research. They described utilising a range of problem-focused coping strategies, including working harder, gaining perspective, and persistently dealing with problems (Carver et al., 1989; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Phelps & Jarvis, 1994). They also describe using emotion-focused coping strategies, including emotional expression and talking to others about their distress (Carver et al., 1989; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Phelps & Jarvis, 1994). Although previous research has associated emotion-focused coping with more problems (Compas et al., 1988; Hoffman et al., 1992; Plancherel & Bolognini, 1995; Windle & Windle, 1996), the young people in this study emphasised the helpfulness of expressing their emotions. Either emotional expression itself was experienced as effective by the young people; or, as Compas et al. (2001) suggested, this strategy was helpful when used in conjunction with other strategies. Indeed, participants did describe expressing their emotions through crying, then choosing to move forward, which could be considered a subsequent coping strategy.

In addition, the young people described problem-focused and approach strategies as helpful in coping, which aligns with previous research that has suggested that problem-focused and approach coping are associated with fewer problems (Compas et al., 1988; Connor-Smith et al., 2000; Ebata & Moos, 1991; Eisenberg et al., 1994; Frydenberg & Lewis, 2009; Herman-Stahl et al., 1995; Hoffman et al., 1991; Plancherel & Bolognini, 1995; Windle & Windle, 1996). However, some studies have also shown an association between approach coping and more problems (Compas et al., 2001; Dumont & Provost, 1999; Ebata & Moos, 1991; Frydenberg & Lewis, 2009). Perhaps the participants in this study made sense of these conflicting findings when they explained that it was helpful at times to

temporarily distract themselves, but that it became unhelpful if they ignored dealing with their problems altogether.

These individual coping strategies, which have been fundamental to the youth coping body of research, also reflected the individual ways in which the young people generally learned to cope with stress. The young people in this study explained how different coping strategies worked for them at different times, and they would try different ones until they found ones that worked in particular situations. This process reflects the tertiary appraisal within Frydenberg's (2008) coping model, in which the individual assesses the effectiveness of the coping approach taken and adjusts if necessary. Essentially, they described learning to cope with stress and problems chiefly through trial and error rather than through parental modelling, which contradicts previous notions of social learning (Frydenberg, 2008). Additionally, the young people explained how they faced a more complex social context than their parents did at their age (Beck, 1992; Bauman, 1998; Furlong et al., 2011; Giddens, 1991; White & Wyn, 2013), and they described navigating these pressures by individually experimenting with coping strategies. This mirrors previous suggestions that contemporary young people cannot rely on their parents' roadmaps for navigating an uncertain contemporary world, since their parents' roadmaps were constructed in a more prescribed social context (Furlong et al., 2011).

The young people in this study clearly saw themselves as needing to be responsible for managing the stress in their lives. They also explained that they experienced New Zealand culture as promoting social expectations not only that young people are "tough" about stress, but that they are also "calm" and "chilled" in their coping. Additionally, they described feeling a social expectation that they have their lives "under control". Thus, whereas self-reliance has previously been conceptualised in terms of autonomy initiated by young people (Carlton & Deane, 2000; Wilson et al., 2005), the current findings promote an understanding of how young people's social context creates and shapes self-reliance as an expectation. This sense of responsibility for coping and the subsequent self-reliance parallel the notions of Kelly's (2006) 'entrepreneurial subjectivity' and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2002) 'do-it-yourself biography', in which contemporary youth are tasked with being responsible individuals who actively navigate their lives.

Similar to previous research, the young people in this study identified gender differences in coping, in which young men preferred to solve problems themselves and bottle up distress rather than

talking about it (Bird & Harris, 1990; Copeland & Hess, 1995; Frydenberg & Lewis, 2000; Phelps & Jarvis, 1994). The young people associated these gender differences in coping with social expectations that young men be "staunch" and "don't cry" in coping with their problems. Indeed, these social expectations align with research that explores the pressure young men feel to conform to masculine norms, such as emotional control and self-reliance (Mahalik et al., 2003). However, the young men in this study also described negotiating these social expectations to meet their needs. Instead of coping as individuals, as suggested by the constraints of these social expectations, the young men described coping collectively through shared activities with other young men and through talking about distress primarily to young women (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2005).

Overall, in fact, despite feeling constrained by social expectations of self-reliance (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Kelly, 2006), many of the young people in this study described resisting expectations that they should be self-reliant individuals. Self-reliance in previous studies of youth coping has referred to individual reliance (Gulliver et al., 2010; Raviv et al., 2009; Rickwood et al., 2005; Wilson et al., 2005), but the current understanding challenges this notion. Most of the young people spoke about relying on their friends for support, reflecting previous research which has suggested that young people increasingly turn to their peers for support rather than their parents (Bolder & Fallon, 1995; Nickerson & Nagle, 2005; Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2005). This finding of peers as the primary source of support aligns with the developmental shift described in Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck's (2007) coping model. Also, in relation to Frydenberg's (2008) integrative model of coping, peers were considered the primary resource within the caravan of resources available to the young people.

In terms of the effectiveness or impact of peer social support, there have been mixed findings in previous research (e.g. Bal et al., 2003; Berndt, 1999; DuBois et al., 1992; Kerr et al., 2006). Yet, the young people in this study chiefly described the support from their friends, and support given to friends, as helpful. The relevant matter is how and why they find peer support helpful (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2005). From this perspective, the young people in the current study conveyed that there were two primary elements to their friendships, trust and understanding.

The young people talked about the importance of trust in their friendships, but explained that it could be difficult and often it was a slow process to build it up (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2005).

When trust was established within their friendships, the young people described benefitting from talking to friends about their problems and receiving emotional support, features of friendship also described by Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2005). Second, the young people described the importance of a mutual, or shared, understanding. At this point it seems apt to reiterate Cotterell's (2007) statement that, "Friends become increasingly significant guides and fellow travellers… Because they are moving along in the same part of the stream of history" (p. 74). Indeed, the young people in this study described feeling understood by peers because of their shared experiences, which perhaps reflects the group identity aspect of belonging (Buckingham, 2008; Thomson, 2007; White, 2008; White & Wyn, 2013). Conversely, being misunderstood by peers and the fear of judgment were the primary barriers to seeking support from peers. This emphasis on shared understanding and experiences mirrors White's (2008) notion of affiliation to convey social connectedness underpinned by shared circumstances.

Furthermore, some of the young people described finding it helpful to express their distress on social media, whereas others talked at length about the unhelpful exposure to harmful content and connection on social media, especially in regards to self-harm and suicidality. The mix of experience described by participants reflects previous research that has found benefits and risks for young people online (Best et al., 2014; Wood et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2016). Wu and colleagues (2016) posit that the 'challenge' for young people is to avoid such harmful influences. Indeed, the young people in this study explained that they sought out unhelpful content online when upset. One interpretation is that this reflects an emotion-focused strategy that the young people choose sometimes even though it is ineffective. Alternatively, it could be argued that the young people are searching for understanding and validation through shared experiences, a process they typically described receiving from peers.

As they did in relation to stress, the young people in this study emphasised the importance of social inclusion and belonging in their ability to cope. In addition to establishing belonging to people within peer groups, the navigation of connection online described by the young people can be conceptualised as searching for belonging to people and place through social media (Bers, 2012; Wood et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2016). Despite the arguments of some theorists that contemporary youth in Western societies lack social inclusion and belonging due to an erosion of collectivism and rise of individualism (Coburn, 2000; Eckersley & Dear, 2002); the young people in this study described

searching for inclusion and belonging, which concurs with the assertions of many other contemporary theorists (Cuervo & Wyn, 2014; France, 2007; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Furlong et al., 2011; Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005; Thomson, 2007; White & Wyn, 2013). This corresponds with Wyn and colleagues' assertion of the importance of the metaphor of belonging for youth. She and her colleagues argue for the necessity of maintaining the visibility of youth relationships central within youth research (Cuervo & Wyn, 2014; White & Wyn, 2013).

Overall, the young people in this study described themselves as active agents in their coping, finding and utilising a range of coping strategies that they had predominantly learned through individual pursuits. The young people's ability to adjust their coping and meet their needs reflected their strengths in managing the stress they face in contemporary society. For example, in response to stressful situations, many of the young people described utilising approach and problem-focused coping strategies, in which they persistently addressed the problems facing them; but, they carefully balanced these approaches with some time out and talking to their friends. The young people in this study also described a social constraint of self-reliance, which they resisted by relying on friends and peer groups, not solely on themselves as individuals. Seeking support from peers was depicted more as a fluid part of the collective coping process, a 'coping with' process rather than a 'seeking help from' process. Therefore, in addition to complementing the youth coping literature that focuses on individual coping (Frydenberg, 2008; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007); the current findings also highlighted collective coping processes within trusted friend groups, which can be understood as reflective of their strengths as active agents in coping.

Help-seeking

The findings in the current study regarding youth help-seeking primarily reflect the findings of previous research and expand upon them as the young people provided a deeper understanding of the central role peers played for them in help-seeking processes. In this section, I will first discuss patterns of youth help-seeking described by the young people that align with previous research. Next, I will discuss the key barriers to non-peer or formal help-seeking illustrated in the findings. Finally, I will explore the young people's descriptions of how peers influence each stage of the help-seeking process in relation to dominant help-seeking models.

The young people in this study described seeking help primarily from their friends and coping together in peer groups. This 'coping with' peers contrasted with the more discrete process of seeking help from non-peers. They described a hesitancy to seek help from adults, especially from formal sources such as school guidance counsellors. Overall, this concurs with previous suggestions that New Zealand youth rarely seek formal help for distress (Carlton & Deane, 2000; Fergusson et al., 1993; Horwood & Fergusson, 1998; Mariu et al., 2012) and clarifies that they are turning to their peers for help and support instead. Whereas researchers have suggested differences in youth help-seeking due to age (Ciarrochi et al., 2003; Michelmore & Hindley, 2012; Raviv et al., 2009; Rickwood et al., 2005; Schonert-Reichl & Muller, 1996) and gender (Offer et al., 1991; Raviv et al., 2000; Raviv et al., 2009; Rickwood & Braithwaite, 1994; Zwaanswijk et al., 2003), the young people in this study did not identify such differences. The young men in this study talked about differences in coping individually and with peers, but they did not identify any differences in seeking help from non-peer sources.

Although some of the young people spoke about experiences of seeking help for their friends from the school counsellor, Raviv and colleagues' (2000) 'personal service gap' was still strikingly evident in the findings, most prominently illustrated in examples of not seeking help for suicidal friends (Kushner & Sher, 1991). Similar to previous research findings, the young people in this study described coping with distress and suicidality primarily in their peer groups, rather than seeking help from adults or formal sources (Coggan et al., 1997; Klimes-Dougan et al., 2013; Michelmore & Hindley, 2012). These experiences are congruent with Deane and colleagues' findings of help negation in New Zealand and Australia, wherein youth suicidality correlates with low levels of help-seeking intentions and behaviours (Carlton & Deane, 2000; Ciarrochi et al., 2002; Deane et al., 2001; Wilson et al., 2005). Given the high rates of youth suicide in New Zealand (OECD, 2012), it is concerning that the young people in this study described a personal service gap between professional services and themselves as peers who could seek help for their suicidal friends. It is particularly concerning that these young people, as peer mentors and leaders, described experiences of not seeking help for suicidal peers. Some of the young people explained that they had, or would, go to the counsellor for peers when the peer's problems became serious. Yet, this would be reliant on the young people's appraisals of the problem, which in reality refers to their ability to assess the risk of a peer's suicidality. Regardless of the strengths approach adopted for this research, this is indeed a heavy burden the young people placed upon their responsible shoulders.

Moreover, the young people in this study identified stigma as a particular barrier to help seeking (Bowers et al., 2013; Clement et al., 2015; Curtis, 2010; Gulliver et al., 2010) and attitudes (Carlton & Deane, 2000; Curtis, 2010; Dubow et al., 1990; Gulliver et al., 2010; Rickwood et al., 2005; Rickwood et al., 2007; Wilson et al., 2005). The young people in this study described the stigma regarding seeking help for distress present in New Zealand society and wider contemporary Western society. They described fearing judgments from their peers stemming from this stigma, such as being labelled as "mentally ill", "suicidal", or "attention seeking" if they were to seek help from the school guidance counsellor. This fear of stigma and judgment has recently been highlighted in an Education Review Office (2013) report that reviewed the guidance and counselling services of New Zealand high schools. In contrast, this report also suggested that 70% of the New Zealand young people surveyed thought it was socially acceptable to go to a guidance counsellor (Education Review Office, 2013). Yet, 25% of the young people did not respond to this question and an unknown percentage of the above 70% actually reported that it was "acceptable depending on what it is about" (Education Review Office, 2013, p. 32). It is possible that the young people surveyed as part of the Education Review Office (2013) report held similar attitudes as the young people in this study.

As previously mentioned, the young people in this study described preferring self-reliance, either as individuals or as peer groups, to seeking formal help. The young people spoke about their problems as theirs to deal with. As individuals, they described a sense of responsibility for coping with their problems without seeking formal help, unless the problem was "serious". Indeed, previous research has identified self-reliance as one of the principal barriers to youth help-seeking (Gulliver et al., 2010; Raviv et al., 2009; Rickwood et al., 2005). Whereas these findings appear to coincide with Cauce and colleagues' (2002) supposition that self-reliance reflects individualism within contemporary society, the young people in this study also described resisting this individualism by also relying on each other, describing a responsibility as a peer group for coping with problems primarily without asking for external help. Overall, the barriers of stigma and self-reliance expressed by the young people in this study directly mirror Curtis's (2010) findings of the importance of stigma and self-reliance from a survey of New Zealand young people's perceptions of suicide and help-seeking.

Other attitudes towards help-seeking described by the young people in this study pertained to characteristics of the source of help. The trust the young people spoke about in regards to their

friendships appeared to revolve around knowing the person well enough and confidentiality. In turn, the young people spoke about similar requirements for seeking support or help from adult sources. Specifically, they described wanting someone they have an established relationship with and already trust, a finding that has previously been suggested in research (Education Review Office, 2013; Rickwood et al., 2005; Rickwood et al., 2007). Similarly, the young people in this study who expressed willingness to seek help from the school counsellor were almost exclusively those who already had established relationships with the school counsellor. Yet, even those with these established relationships were unsure whether they would seek help from the counsellor.

The young people also emphasised wanting help and support from someone who would listen to them non-judgmentally and understands them, reflecting sentiments also captured by the Education Review Office (2013) report. Also expressed by young people surveyed in that report, the young people in this study explained that they would go to someone with similar experiences to them to enable a shared understanding. Young people in the Education Review Office (2013) report described the importance of age, gender, and ethnicity in creating a shared understanding, and the young people in this study similarly identified age and ethnicity. A shared cultural understanding appeared to be a particularly salient factor for some of the young people in this study. Although previous research has indicated that there are no cultural differences in the utilisation of social support among Maori, Pacific, and European New Zealand young people (Clarke & Jensen, 1997; Evans et al., 1997; Jose & Shurer, 2010), these studies did not explore the sources of social support.

Further, a key contribution of the current findings to the existing literature on youth coping and help-seeking was an understanding of the roles peers play in help-seeking processes. They described how peers influenced each other at each stage of the help-seeking process, which aligns with previous propositions by researchers regarding the influence of an individual's social network in help-seeking processes (Cauce et al., 2002; Goldsmith et al., 1988; Gross & McMullen, 1983; Pescosolido, 1992; Srebnik et al., 1996). For example, the first stage of help-seeking models incorporates the individual's appraisal that there is a stress or problem that needs to be addressed (Cauce et al., 2002; Gross & McMullen, 1983; Rickwood et al., 2005). Some of the help-seeking models have emphasised that this problem recognition occurs within the individual's social network (Bolder & Fallon, 1995; Wills, 1983). Whereas child and youth help-seeking models have specifically suggested that parents

play influential roles (Cauce et al., 2002; Srebnik et al., 1996), the young people in this study suggested instead that their peers play significant roles. More than simply influencing their appraisals, the young people identified that they tended to rely on each other to determine whether a problem was truly a problem.

The second stage of help-seeking models generally includes considerations of resources available and appraisals of whether help is required (Goldsmith et al., 1988; Gross & McMullen, 1983). As Rickwood and colleagues (2005) have posited, the young people in this study certainly described seeking help as a social transaction. The young people described relying on each other to determine whether their problems required help. This was particularly salient in the examples of supporting suicidal peers, in which outside help was not sought until the peer group deemed they could not cope any longer or the peer was "serious" about suicide. Similar to the findings of previous research, the young people in this study described increased willingness to seek help for friends than for themselves; however, they still appeared to rarely seek help for friends, even when friends express suicidality (Carlton & Deane, 2000; Raviv et al., 2009; Rickwood et al., 2005).

The third stage of the help-seeking process is purported to involve selecting a source and seeking help from them (Goldsmith et al., 1988; Gross & McMullen, 1983). In terms of seeking help from peers, these dominant models do not fit the illustrations provided by the young people in this study, as they described peer help and support occurring from the initial stage. However, these models appear to hold more applicability in terms of the process for seeking help from non-peer sources. The young people in this study explained how peers tended to act as gatekeepers during this stage, making decisions and seeking adult help if they deemed it necessary, as individuals themselves tended not to initiate this. This idea of gatekeepers has previously been explored by researchers in relation to adults (Capp, Deane, & Lambert, 2001; Rickwood et al., 2005), but not in relation to peers.

Despite going to their peers with their distress, the young people described a significant reason for deciding against seeking help from formal sources was their fear that peers would judge them and label them (Bowers et al., 2013; Clement et al., 2015; Frydenberg, 2008; Gulliver et al., 2010). Given the importance of peer belonging, perhaps their fears of judgment and labelling stem from concerns regarding rejection or exclusion from peer group belonging (Frydenberg, 2008;

Thomson, 2007). Indeed, the young people's fears of judgment, and possible exclusion, align with the findings of a 2011 New Zealand Mental Health Commission report, in which young people who experienced mental distress reported the highest levels of social exclusion compared to other New Zealand age groups (Mental Health Commission, 2011).

Overall, applying a social generation framework of understanding, the young people emphasised having to navigate the opportunities and risks of seeking help from others. They described managing the risks of seeking help within their peer groups in order to benefit from the support, but they expressed hesitancy to do so within adult relationships. The young people aptly explained how they and their peers were "in the same boat". This boat was constructed through shared experiences and understanding, and produced trust and a lack of judgment in their relationships. This boat also reflects the concept of generational consciousness contained within a social generation framework (Furlong et al., 2011; Mannheim, 1952; White & Wyn, 2013; Woodman & Wyn, 2013; Woodman & Wyn, 2015; Wyn & Woodman, 2006).

Conversely, the young people in this study described feeling how adults did not understand the boat they travelled in, due to differences such as generational experiences, age, and cultural background. Given the ocean dividing the young people and their peers from the adults in their lives, they described a sense of responsibility for their peers in their boat. They explained how their peers were instrumental at each stage of the help-seeking process. The roles of responsibility and gatekeeping adopted as peers can be understood as reflecting the strengths of belonging to peer groups. However, these strengths existed alongside fears of stigma and judgement, as well as the risks associated with young people relying solely on each other to manage serious issues such as suicide.

Recommendations for Future Research

The current study expands upon previous research and provides a stepping stone for future research to build upon. In regards to previous research, the current findings have expanded upon our understanding of the pressures New Zealand young people face, their views and experiences of coping and help-seeking, and the roles peers play in these processes. This section will first discuss general research recommendations and then outline specific areas for future research.

It would be beneficial for future research to continue expanding upon our understanding of the views and experiences of New Zealand young people, rather than relying on international research. The young people in this study identified elements of New Zealand society which influence them, such as various social and cultural expectations of success and the stigma and judgement of seeking help (Curtis, 2010). Congruent with my approach to the current research, the young people identified the importance of their social contexts. Whereas it can be helpful and informative to understand the social contexts of Western societies in general, it is essential to continue developing our understanding of the New Zealand context for contemporary young people (Wyn & Harris, 2004). Factors such as diversity and high youth suicide rates provide a strong rationale for New Zealand specific research to be conducted in order to appreciate its cultural and social differences and the impacts they have on the young people (Clark et al., 2013; OECD, 2012; White & Wyn, 2013).

This research supports the value of approaching youth research with a social generation framework and strengths perspective. These approaches facilitated the participation of youth voices, which led to an expansion of our understandings (Furlong et al., 2011; Woodman & Wyn, 2015; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). The young people's voices in this research enabled an understanding of the pressures they face, how they manage these pressures, and how they rely on peers for help. The current research also provides evidence of the utility of qualitative research in understanding the views and experiences of young people, as such depth would not have been possible through quantitative methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Howitt, 2010; Rich & Ginsburg, 1999). It is recommended that future youth research continue to emphasise the integral role research approaches play in facilitating our understanding of young people (White & Wyn, 2013; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). It is imperative that youth voices are situated at the centre of future youth research in New Zealand (Wyn & Harris, 2004).

A specific area for future research includes further exploration of the gender differences in the views and experiences of New Zealand youth across stress, coping, and help-seeking. Gender differences have been identified in previous research regarding youth coping and help-seeking (Bird & Harris, 1990; Phelps & Jarvis, 1994; Raviv et al., 2009; Rickwood et al., 2005), and the current study suggests this avenue of research would continue to provide beneficial insights. In particular, the current findings suggest it would be beneficial to explore how young men in New Zealand experience

society compared to young women, as there were preliminary findings that they face different pressures in regards to coping (Mahalik et al., 2003). It would also be useful to explore how these pressures regarding coping specifically impact young men's views and experiences of formal help-seeking.

In addition, the current study provided some insights into cultural differences across New Zealand young people. Given the diversity in New Zealand, this is a significant area of interest for future research (Clark et al., 2013; Statistics New Zealand, 2014; White & Wyn, 2013). More research is required to understand the particular experiences of Maori, Pacific, and immigrant youth as minorities within the dominant culture (White & Wyn, 2013). The young people in this study described balancing the demands of individualism and collectivism, and it would be beneficial to explore the role of culture in this compared to the argument that young people are driven to establish belonging due to an erosion of collectivism in contemporary society (Jose & Shurer, 2010). Moreover, the young people in this study spoke about how their experiences of high school got better after the first few years, describing that bullying tended to decrease. Accordingly, it is recommended that future research explore the views and experiences of young people at the beginning of high school to establish some understanding of the differences in pressures, coping, and help-seeking during that time.

Given the young people in this study can be considered high achieving, it would be beneficial to understand the views and experiences of young people in New Zealand who are not as high achieving or may have fewer resources available. In particular, it is recommended that this research be expanded to young people in New Zealand rural communities, as White and Wyn (2013) highlight that there are often substantial differences in their social contexts and experiences. Finally, it is recommended that future research consider further exploration of the New Zealand young people's experiences of school counselling given the hesitancy described by the young people in this study who were peer support leaders and mentors, many of whom had knowledge about or established relationships with the school counsellors. Given the Education Review Office (2013) report evaluating high school guidance counselling reported that 70% of the students they surveyed found it socially acceptable to see the counsellor, further research to explore and understand these different findings would be enlightening.

Clinical Implications

In this section, I will discuss the key clinical implications emerging from the findings of this study. I will discuss these implications in terms of youth stress, coping, and help-seeking. The young people in this study identified how aspects of the social context in which they live contribute significantly to the expectations they perceived, and subsequently, to the ways in which they coped with these pressures. They identified social expectations that they be successful, responsible, and self-reliant. These pressures suggest a number of clinical implications. First, the young people themselves suggested that New Zealand society work to change these unhelpful messages. They recommended that messages that they "have to strive to be perfect" be changed to messages that "it's okay to not be okay". Second, the young people, from both socioeconomic schools, described the immense pressures they felt to succeed; suggesting that this pressure was reflective of the wider social context. While the source of these pressures may be contemporary Western society's emphasis on individual achievement (France, 2007; White & Wyn, 2013), adults working with young people should try to counter these views with a greater emphasis on young people's well-being rather than achieving 'success'. Third, given the burden of responsibility described by the young people in this study, it is important that those working with young people reconsider adding to this burden with further pressures, expectations, and responsibilities.

In regards to coping, the findings of this study advocate a number of clinical implications. First, given they play crucial roles in supporting each other, peer relationships need to be facilitated. In terms of facilitation, the young people described the importance of trusting friendships and the difficulty of establishing these at the beginning of high school. As Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2005) suggest, schools can facilitate opportunities for friendships to develop, particularly through after-school programmes where young people can meet others with similar interests. However, as described by the young people from the lower socioeconomic school in this study, financial cost of such programmes can be a barrier (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2005). Promotion of community activities and involvement provide further facilitating contexts for young people (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2005).

Second, they young people in this study identified an absence of coping and help-seeking modelling by others. The primary example of this was the repeated discussion about how their

parents tended not to talk about stress and coping. Thus, it seems imperative that young people witness adults in their communities modelling how to acknowledge problems and seek help for them. Third, the young people in this study identified that, retrospectively, it would have been helpful if others had taught them effective coping strategies rather than being self-reliant on independent trial and error. They talked about the difficulties faced primarily during the beginning years of high school; and, therefore, would have appreciated such guidance prior to or during the first year of high school. Equipping young people with coping skills is a reasonable directive for communities, and the school environment is likely the most accessible means of delivering such programmes (Frydenberg, 2008). There are many school-based programmes available internationally that seek to equip young people with coping skills (Frydenberg & Brandon, 2007; Hayes & Morgan, 2005; Kowalenko et al., 2002; Shochet, Holland, & Whitefield, 1997). However, the effectiveness of such programmes within New Zealand schools should be considered. Presumably the high schools in New Zealand with peer mentoring programmes understand these programmes to be effective. Yet, the overall absence of discussion regarding the utility of peer mentoring amongst participants of this study is relevant. It is striking that, out of thirty-six participants, only one participant mentioned interacting with younger students within their peer mentoring role.

In terms of help-seeking, the service gap problem, in which those young people who need help do not seek it, has been evident for a long time (Kushner & Sher, 1991; Stefl & Prosperi, 1985). While efforts to reduce the barriers to help-seeking are essential, it is also prudent to utilise a strengths approach of equipping young people with the resources they need ahead of time (Ware & Walsh-Tapiata, 2010). The young people in this study explained utilising peers as their main resource for support and help; therefore, it is also essential for interventions to utilise them. First, given that peer groups play such an important role in the provision of support, these networks need to be educated about stress, mental health concerns, and seeking help. There need to be more focused interventions to reduce stigma and judgment towards mental health problems and change attitudes towards seeking help for distress (Carlton & Deane, 2000; Rickwood et al., 2005). For example, the young people suggested that schools could promote seeking help for smaller problems, to dispel the belief that problems need to be serious in order to seek help from the school counsellor. Second, they need to be equipped with skills and resources. Since they are the primary sources of support, they need to be taught how to support each other safely (Frydenberg, 2008).

Third, given the young people in this study described acting as gatekeepers to seeking formal help, it is imperative that peers be taught how to identify when help is needed for themselves and for each other. This personal service gap that Raviv and colleagues identified (2000), in which those who could seek help for an individual that needs it do not do so, urgently needs to be addressed. Whereas others have implemented gatekeeper training for adults in the community to support suicidal individuals (Capp et al., 2001), a similar approach needs to be taken in order to support peers in their roles as gatekeepers.

Fourth, the young people explained that the adults from whom they seek support and help tend to be non-parent family members, such as siblings and cousins, or community members, such as friends' siblings, youth pastors, and teachers. They described wanting the sources from which they seek support and help to be people they already know, trust, and can be understood by through shared experiences. Therefore, a community response is required to encourage opportunities for relationships to develop and facilitate spaces for young people to seek support and help within these established relationships (Rickwood et al., 2005). The young people commented that they appreciated participating in the study and found the process of disclosure helpful. A few of them described trusting the interviewer within the span of one to two meetings. Perhaps this provides simple evidence that young people are willing to establish trust within confidential relationships and spaces.

Finally, the young people in this study emphasised how stigma in society contributed to them feeling as though it was not okay to ask for help. They explained that stigma regarding mental health problems and seeking help came from their exposure to society's stigma and judgments, particularly evident in popular culture. Although New Zealand has implemented a mental health anti-stigma and discrimination programme since 1997 ("Like Minds, Like Mine") and surveys since have revealed improvements in public attitudes towards mental health, continued work is required at this level to reduce stigma and discrimination within the New Zealand public (Ministry of Health and Health Promotion Agency, 2014; Thornicroft, Wyllie, Thornicroft, & Mehta, 2013; Wyllie & Lauder, 2012).

Limitations of the Current Study

As a qualitative study, the current research did not endeavour to be generalizable to all New Zealand young people. The purpose of this study was to provide a depth to an understanding of the way that some New Zealand young people experience their world. There were, however, some limitations in relation to the sample used in this study. This study included participants who might be considered high achieving youth, as they tended to be achieving academically and held leadership roles within their schools. These young people, in general, appeared to be on the path that society has told them to take; for example, many, if not all, were intending to attend University. The same study including participants who were not in the peer mentor or leadership programmes could have produced vastly different responses.

In addition, it is important to acknowledge that the young people who participated in this study self-selected both in terms of participation and in regards to the ideas and experiences which they shared. One limitation of this was the unknown motivating factor that the voucher for participation may have played. As mentioned, this may have contributed to the high response rate from young people at the lower socioeconomic school. Indeed, some of the young people in one of the focus groups at that school did not contribute to the focus group. Yet, the majority of the young people actively participated and those who self-selected to participate in the individual interviews certainly contributed. Another limitation was the gender balance, with predominantly young women compared to young men participating in the current study. This likely reflects wider research patterns that suggest women are more likely than men to participate in research and be interested in talking about these kinds of issues (Holden, Rosenberg, Barker, Tuhrim, & Brenner, 1993; Range, Turzo, & Ellis, 1990). Further, there were unique ideas shared in the one focus group comprised entirely of young women. Ideally there would have been a similar focus group comprised entirely of young men, as this may have elicited unique views from them also.

Finally, a clear limitation of the current study was a lack of foresight regarding the cultural diversity of the participants. Cultural consultation was not sought, yet it would have greatly benefited the collection and analysis of the current study. However, it could also be argued that there was an absence of cultural agenda which may have allowed more space for the participants to explain their views. Indeed, of their own accord the young people from different cultural backgrounds described

relevant aspects of their culture to the interviewer. As such, the cultural elements described within this study come solely from the participants, not from literature or experts.

Strengths of the Current Study

Despite its limitations, it is important to appreciate the strengths of the current research. Predominantly, the strengths of this research reside within its methodology. My particular approaches to this research were conscientiously decided and transparently outlined. First, adopting a contemporary social generation framework and strengths approach challenged the traditional views of youth as a problem or as a normative developmental stage marked by problems. By challenging this perspective, this research provided an opportunity for New Zealand young people to voice their experiences with the absence of an agenda that seeks to label their behaviours as normative or dysfunctional. Overall, the young people's voices were central to this study.

Second, the utilisation of qualitative methods not only enabled this promotion of young people's voices, but it also expanded our understanding of young people's experiences and the meanings they create in a way that quantitative methods could not achieve. As White and Wyn (2013) argue, whilst quantitative methods provide information about trends, they do not provide an understanding of how these trends are experienced by young people, which is the crux of youth research. Similarly, the particular methods of focus groups and individual interviews situated the process of data gathering within social processes, which is particularly appropriate both for research with youth and for the focus of this research.

Third, key processes such as transparency, triangulation, and reflexivity established the quality of the current research. The transparency has allowed for the current findings to be analysed by others and for the study to be replicated by others. Triangulation between the two methods of data gathering contributes to its credibility. As part of reflexivity, it is important to acknowledge that the same study utilising a different researcher would have produced different findings. My identity as a woman, European, a professional, and an adult all likely influenced the participants' responses. The particular questions, prompts, and responses I used also shaped the young people's responses. Therefore, it is important to consider that the data were uniquely produced in a certain social context, created in relationship with me.

Similarly, my views, values, and experiences shaped the approach, methods, and analysis of the current research. As much as possible, I have been mindful of these biases, but I have also been transparent and reflexive about how, as the researcher, I may have shaped the research itself. For example, I have clarified that my approaches have viewed young people in terms of agency, rather than powerlessness, and this helped shape the idea of young people as responsible agents.

Further, it is important to consider that the peer context of the focus groups likely helped shaped the findings. For example, the focus group which contained only young women spoke about issues that other focus groups did not. Additionally, the young men tended to share more within their individual interviews compared to the focus groups. Thus, gender appeared to play an influential role, and perhaps different responses would have been facilitated through a focus group comprised of young men only.

Finally, the key findings of this study constitute one of its significant strengths as these findings provide novel contributions to research. While some of the findings were similar to previous research, the contemporary social generation framework and strengths approach applied to the current findings allowed for more complex, social processes to be illuminated. First, this particular lens drew attention to the tension the young people seemed to feel between individual agency and responsibility within collective groups. This included the example of experiencing the pressures to succeed as constraining their agency to freely construct their lives, and the example of navigating inclusion and belonging in friend groups.

The second main finding was that the young people were active agents in individual coping processes. Third, the findings highlighted how the social context created and shaped self-reliance as an expectation of coping for the young people in this study. In turn, this led to fourth finding, in which the young people challenged the constraints of this self-reliance through collective coping processes. Overall, the lens applied to the current research drew attention to how the young people navigated both individual and collective processes within the constraints of their social contexts. Lastly, this research highlighted both the burden and strengths inherent within the central role peers and belonging played in coping and help-seeking for the young people in this study.

Concluding Remarks

The current qualitative study aimed to explore New Zealand young people's views and experiences of stress, coping, and seeking help using a social generation framework and strengths-based perspective. The young people provided significant insight into the pressures they face in contemporary New Zealand society, illustrating how they experienced expectations and responsibilities to succeed and care for others in various ways. They described a tension between their agency and social constraints, which at times entailed a sense of sacrifice. The young people responded to expectations of self-reliance by actively coping through both individual and peer coping processes, reflecting their strengths and agency in managing contemporary pressures. Peers and belonging were integral features of their experiences, providing both sources of stress and support for the young people. They described a generational consciousness of travelling in the same boat, comprised of shared experiences and understanding, which made it difficult to seek help from those outside the boat. Fears of stigma and judgement also acted as significant barriers to seeking help outside the peer group. Thus, peers were tasked with a difficult burden as they tended to cope among themselves and act as gatekeepers who were responsible for whether adult help was required. Clinical interventions and future research should honour these young people's views and experiences by endeavouring to expand upon them and explore mechanisms of change within their communities and societies. Perhaps this can begin by equipping and strengthening the boats in which these young people travel together.

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
Principal and Board of Trustees

A Qualitative Exploration of Young Persons' Views of Seeking Help for Stress

My name is Emma Edwards. I am doing some research, as part of my Doctorate of Clinical Psychology, together with my supervisor Dr. Kerry Gibson, who is a Clinical Psychologist and Senior Lecturer at the University of Auckland. We would appreciate if you could take the time to read the following information and consider partnering with us in this research.

What is the research about?

We are trying to understand how young people tend to cope when they face difficulties or stress. We want to hear their stories and the experiences they have had with their peers when going through tough times. We are interested in what they and their peers have done in response to problems personally, at school, at home, and in relationships with each other. By better understanding what helps (and does not help) young people to cope, we hope to promote those helpful coping strategies in the children and young people of New Zealand.

Who can take part in the research?

We are looking for participants who:
- Are a peer mentor/support in their school's peer mentor/support programme
- Are between the ages of 16 and 18
- Currently feel like they are in a place where they can safely talk about past stressful experiences

We hope to partner with high schools on the North Shore to recruit participants. We have chosen your school as one of the potential partnering high schools because it has a peer mentor/support programme. Ideally we would like to engage at least two high schools to partner with us in this research.

What will taking part in the research involve?

There are two parts involved in this research, focus groups and individual interviews. Participants can choose to either take part in either a focus group or both a focus group and an individual interview. At each school, we are hoping to conduct 1-2 focus groups, with approximately 6 participants in each, and approximately 5 individual interviews.

The focus group will be a group conversation with approximately 6 students from your high school, all of whom are in the peer mentor/support programme. The focus group will take 1-2 hours and we would hope to run these onsite at the school if possible. We would work with

your school to negotiate when the focus groups could take place, potentially during lunchtime or after school. We will provide food and drink for the students during the focus group. At the focus group, the students will be asked to fill out a consent form to ensure they are happy to participate in the research and for it to be voice recorded. During the focus group, we will ask them to talk about coping when faced with stressful situations, whether they be related to school, home, friends, emotionally, etc. We are interested in what strategies they try when they need support, like who they turn to (or do not turn to) and what strategies tend to be helpful or unhelpful. During the focus groups, we will encourage students to share their general views and opinions rather than details of personal experiences. By agreeing to take part in the research, we do ask that they are willing to actively share their views and opinions.

The second part of the research is an individual interview. This is a one-to-one interview with the researcher for an hour. Again, we would hope to conduct these onsite at the school. During the interview, the participant will be asked to share their experiences with coping and seeking help from others when things have been stressful. We are wanting to hear stories about what they have found helpful or not helpful, and we are particularly interested in hearing how they managed to make it through such stressful times. The interviews will be voice recorded like the focus groups.

Why participate in this study?

Participants will have a chance to talk about their experiences of coping. They will be contributing to valuable research that aims to support New Zealand youth to cope with stress. If they are interested, we will send them a summary of the findings of the research once we are finished. We hope these will be useful and interesting for them. We will also give each participant a $20 mobile phone top-up or a $20 Westfield voucher for each part of the research they complete, as our way of thanking them for their time and contribution.

As a thank you to your school, we will send you a copy of the findings once we are finished and we are happy to come talk with your school about what have found, including what coping strategies tend to be helpful (or unhelpful) for young people. If your school is interested, we can facilitate a training regarding youth coping and resiliency for the peer support/mentor programme. This training would be provided for all students and staff involved in the peer support/mentor programme, regardless of participation in the research.

What if talking about this upsets the participants?

Sometimes talking about stressful experiences in the past can be upsetting. We will strongly encourage the participants to let us know if this happens. We will provide support at the time and connect them with the school counsellor or other professionals to ensure they get the support they need. By recruiting 16-18 year olds in the peer mentor/support programme at your school, we hope to minimise the likelihood of this occurring, as we imagine these students are more likely to have effective coping strategies and good mental health and wellbeing.

Will it be confidential?

As there will be other participants in the focus groups, we cannot guarantee confidentiality with respect to the participants' identity and the information they share. However, we will inform the participants that they do not have to disclose anything that they are not comfortable sharing with the group, and we will ask participants in the group to be respectful of each other's identity and what was discussed.

With regards to the individual interviews, only the researchers will know who participated and what they shared. Everything they talk about is confidential.

If there are concerns about risk rising from what a participant shares in the focus group or individual interview, confidentiality may be broken in order to ensure safety. If confidentiality needs to be broken, the school counsellor will be the point of contact and the individual responsible to follow up the concerned participant. This process will be discussed and agreed upon with your school's counsellor prior to the study commencing.

A trusted transcription service will be involved in transcribing the voice recordings from both the focus groups and the individual interviews, but they sign a confidentiality form to ensure all information remains confidential.

Who decides who participates in the study?

Even with your consent for the school to participate in the research, it will be up to each young person to decide whether or not they want to participate in the study. Choosing not to participate in the research will not disadvantage or negatively affect students in any way. Choosing not to participate will not impact their access to school or participation in the peer support/mentor programme. Even if they agree to take part in the study, they can change their mind at any time and decide to stop. For example, they can choose to leave the focus group at any time and choose to stop the individual interview at any time. However, once the focus group is completed they cannot withdraw any information they have already shared within it as it will be part of the general group conversation. If they decide they do not want what they said in the individual interview to be used in the research, they have up to two weeks after the interview to let the researchers know.

What will happen to the research?

The information shared in the focus groups and individual interviews will be made anonymous, taking out any identifying factors, so that no one can identify the participants. Quotes and examples will be used to illustrate the themes of the research, but these will anonymous. The research and findings will be written up for Emma's doctoral thesis. We would also like to present the research at future conferences and publish articles to share the research with others.

What will happen to the focus group and interview recordings and transcripts?

The voice recordings of the focus groups and individual interviews will be erased following transcription and analysis. All researchers are obliged to keep the transcripts and consent forms. These will be kept in separate locked cabinets in the School of Psychology at the University of Auckland. The transcripts and consent forms will be kept for six years and then securely destroyed.

So what do you need to do next?

We would like to gain your consent to liaise with the appropriate teachers in your school who can help us to invite students in the peer mentor/support programme to participate in the study. We would prefer to recruit through your existing structures rather than posting advertisements, but this is negotiable. We would also like your consent to use a private room within the school grounds to conduct the focus groups and individual interviews. Please be aware that you can withdraw the school's participation at any time during the study if you are concerned about the process.

If you are interested in helping with this research, or would like to hear more about it, then please contact **Emma Edwards**. You can phone her on ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or email her at **eedw014@aucklanduni.ac.nz**

Emma's supervisor is: Dr Kerry Gibson
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For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may have, contact:
The Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee,
The University of Auckland Office of the Vice Chancellor,
Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142.
Telephone: 09 373 7599 ext. 83711.

Approved by The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 13th May 2014 for 3 years, until 13th May 2017. Reference Number 011649.

APPENDIX B

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau

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CONSENT FORM
(Principal and Board of Trustees)

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS

Project title: A Qualitative Exploration of Young Persons' Views of Seeking Help for Stress

Names of Researchers: Dr Kerry Gibson and Emma Edwards

I have read the Participant Information Sheet and understand the nature of the research and why students from my school have been asked to take part in the research. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I agree to allow the researchers to recruit peer mentor / peer support senior students through the appropriate staff members.

- I agree to the researchers using a private room at the school to conduct the focus groups and individual interviews.

- I give my assurance that students, counsellors and careers advisors' decisions to participate/assist or not participate/assist will not affect their relationships with the school. I understand that I should not pressure any eligible students to participate in the research.

- I am aware that I will not be told which young people are participating in the research.

- I am aware that I will not be allowed to see the transcripts of the young people's focus groups or interviews or any information that may identify a participant.

- I am aware that the school counsellor(s) may need to support the young people who take part in the research should they request it.

- I understand that I am free to withdraw the school's participation at any time if I am concerned about the process.

- I wish / do not wish to receive the summary of the findings (please specify a physical or email address below if you wish to receive the summary of the findings).

Name: _____ (Principal / Representative of Board of Trustees)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Physical or email address: _____

Approved by The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 13th May 2014 for 3 years, until 13th May 2017. Reference Number 011649.

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND
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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
A Qualitative Exploration of Young Persons' Views of Seeking Help for Stress

My name is Emma Edwards. I am doing some research, as part of my Doctorate of Clinical Psychology, together with my supervisor Dr. Kerry Gibson, who is a Clinical Psychologist and Senior Lecturer at the University of Auckland. We would appreciate if you could take the time to read the following information about the research and consider participating in it if you are interested.

What is this research about?

We are trying to understand how young people tend to cope when they face difficulties or stress. We want to hear your stories and the experiences you have had with others when going through tough times. We are interested in what you (and others) have done in response to problems personally, at school, at home, and in relationships with others. By better understanding what helps (and does not help) young people to cope, we hope to promote those helpful coping strategies in the children and young people of New Zealand.

Who can take part in the research?

We are looking for participants who:
- Are a peer mentor/support in their school's peer mentor/support programme
- Are between the ages of 16 and 18
- Currently feel like they are in a place where they can safely talk about past stressful experiences

What will taking part in the research involve?

There are two parts involved in this research, a focus group and an individual interview. You can choose to take part in either the first part or both parts.

The focus group will be a group conversation with about 5 other students from your high school who are also in the peer mentor/support programme. The focus group will take about 1-2 hours and will take place on school grounds. It may take place during lunchtime, after school, or some other arranged time, but regardless, there will be some food and drink provided. At the focus group, you will be asked to fill out a consent form that says you are happy to participate in the research and for it to be voice recorded. During the focus group, we will ask you and the other students to talk about coping when faced with stressful situations, whether they be related to school, home, friends, emotionally, etc. We are

interested in what you and others try when you need support, like who you go to (or do not go to) and what strategies tend to be helpful or unhelpful. In the group setting, we would prefer to hear about your general views and opinions rather than details of personal experiences. By agreeing to take part in the research, we do ask that you are willing to actively share your views and opinions.

The second part of the research is an individual interview. This is a one-to-one interview with the researcher for about an hour. Again, this will take place on school grounds and at a time which suits you. During the interview, you will be asked to share your experiences with coping and seeking help from others when things have been stressful. We are wanting to hear stories about what you have found helpful or not helpful, and we are particularly interested in hearing how you managed to make it through such stressful times. The interview will be voice recorded like the focus group.

Why participate in this study?

You will have a chance to talk about your experiences of coping. You will be contributing to valuable research that aims to support New Zealand youth to cope with stress. If you are interested, we will send you a summary of the findings of the research once we are finished. We hope these will be useful and interesting for you.

We will also give you a $20 mobile phone top-up or a $20 Westfield voucher (the choice is yours) for each part of the research you complete as our way of thanking you for your time and contribution.

What if talking about this is upsetting?

Sometimes talking about stressful experiences in the past can be upsetting. If this happens, *please* let us know. We can provide support at the time and/or help you to get some support by putting you in touch with professionals who can offer support (e.g. school counsellor, Youthline).

Will it be confidential?

There will be other students in the focus group, so we cannot guarantee confidentiality with respect to your identity and the information you share. However, you do not have to disclose anything you are not comfortable sharing with the group. We will also ask all students in the group, including yourself, to be respectful of each other's identity and keep everything discussed confidential.

In your individual interview, only the researchers will know what you have shared, and we will make sure that everything you talk about is confidential.

Confidentiality may be broken if the researchers are concerned for your/others safety. This would only happen if you disclosed information about current risk in the focus group or individual interview, or if you become significantly distressed and declined to seek support. In the unlikely event that confidentiality needs to be broken, the researcher would notify the school counselor of their concern.

A trusted transcription service will be involved in transcribing the voice recordings from both the focus groups and the individual interviews, but they sign a confidentiality form to ensure all information remains confidential.

Who decides whether I participate?

Your school has given permission for the study to take place, but it is **your** choice whether or not you want to participate in the study. If you decide not to take part in the study, there will be no negative effect or consequence. Choosing not to participate will not impact your access to school or participation in the peer support/mentor programme. If you agree to take part, you can change your mind and stop your participation in the study at any time. For example, you can choose to leave the focus group at any time and choose to stop the individual interview at any time. However, once the focus group is completed you cannot withdraw any information you have already shared because it will be part of the general group conversation. If you decide you do not want what you said in the individual interview to be used in the research, you have up to two weeks after the interview to let us know.

What will happen to the research?

The information shared in the focus groups and individual interviews will be made anonymous, taking out any identifying factors, so that no one can identify you. Quotes and examples will be used to illustrate the themes of the research, but these will anonymous. The research and findings will be written up for Emma's doctoral thesis. We would also like to present the research at future conferences and publish articles to share the research with others.

What will happen to the focus group and interview recordings and transcripts?

The voice recordings of the focus groups and individual interviews will be erased following transcription and analysis. All researchers are obliged to keep the transcripts and consent forms. These will be kept in separate locked cabinets in the School of Psychology at the University of Auckland. The transcripts and consent forms will be kept for six years and then securely destroyed.

What should I do next?

If you are interested in taking part in this research, or would like to hear more about it, then please contact **Emma Edwards.**

Text or phone her on ▬▬▬▬▬ or email her at **eedw014@aucklanduni.ac.nz**

Emma's supervisor is:　　　　　　　　Dr Kerry Gibson
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The Head of the School is:　　　　　Professor William Hayward
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Email: w.hayward@auckland.ac.nz

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For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may have, contact:
The Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee,
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Telephone: 09 373 7599 ext. 83711.

Approved by The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 13th May 2014 for 3 years, until 13th May 2017. Reference Number 011649.

APPENDIX D

School of Psychology
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CONSENT FORM (Young Person)

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS

Project title: A Qualitative Exploration of Young Persons' Views of Seeking Help for Stress

Names of Researchers: Dr Kerry Gibson and Emma Edwards

I have read the Participant Information Sheet and understand the nature of the research. I have been able to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I agree to take part in this research. I understand that the principal has given his/her assurance that my decision to participate or not participate in this study will not positively or negatively impact me within the school environment or my participation in the peer support/mentor programme.
- I understand that I will participate in a focus group with my peers for about 2 hours. Then, in agreement with the researcher, I may or may not participate in an individual interview for about 1 hour.

- I understand that I can change my mind and withdraw my participation any time before and during the focus group. However, I cannot withdraw information I have already shared once the focus group is completed.

- I understand that I can withdraw my participation any time before and during the individual interview. I can withdraw information traceable to me up to two weeks after the interview.

- I have considered and acknowledge that I am currently able to comfortably talk about experiences of coping and seeking help. I understand that I can ask for help if I become distressed. I understand that the researcher may approach me if concerned about the information I disclose, and that confidentiality may be breached if I/others are at risk.

- I agree to be audio recorded. I understand that a third party who has signed a confidentiality agreement will transcribe the audio recordings. I understand that transcripts will be kept for six years, after which they will be destroyed.

- I give permission for my data to be quoted anonymously in a doctoral thesis, conferences and publications arising from the research.

- I wish / do not wish to receive the summary of the findings (please specify a physical or email address below if you wish to receive the summary of the findings).

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Physical/Email address:
_____

Approved by The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 13th May 2014 for 3 years, until 13th May 2017. Reference Number 011649.

APPENDIX E

Participant Information

Name: _____

Gender: _____

Age: _____

School Year: _____

Cultural/ethnic group: _____

Are you employed? If so, what type of work and how many hours per week?

_____

_____

How long have you been involved with the peer support programme?

_____

_____

APPENDIX F

Focus Group Schedule

Demographic Information

This will be collected at the start of the focus group and will include the following:

- Gender
- Age and year in school
- Cultural/ethnic group
- Are you working? What work do you do?
- How long have you been part of the peer support/mentor programme?

Before asking any questions, participants will be asked to spend a few minutes thinking about past difficult experiences from which to answer questions and contribute to the discussion. They will also be asked to think about experiences of supporting peers/friends through difficult times.

Participants will be asked general questions in two main categories. The aim is to facilitate group discussion and sharing of experiences. Questions and prompts will be given to facilitate sharing and stimulate discussion, and to ensure all topics are covered.

1. **Coping**
   - What kind of issues/stresses do you think young people today have to deal with during adolescents?
   - How do young people manage to cope with all these demands?
   - Are there ways of coping that young people find more helpful than others?
   - Where do you think young people learn how to deal with problems/distress in society today? (e.g. family, school, media, peers, etc.)
   - Do you think there are any differences in the types of issues your generation / future generations face compared to your parents' generation? Do you think there is a difference between how young people today cope with distress and how your parents' generation might have coped with similar issues growing up?

2. **Seeking help**
   - What are the general attitudes and culture amongst adolescents today about:
     - o Telling friends about struggles? Going to friends for help / support?
     - o Telling family about struggles? Going to family for help / support?
     - o Going to a professional (e.g. GP, school counsellor, psychologist) for help?
   - Any ideas where these attitudes and culture come from?
   - Who do young people today tend to go to the most for help/support and why?
   - What makes a young person decide to tell someone or ask for help?
   - What stops young people from asking for help sooner / at all? Why do you think teenagers who are struggling don't ask for help?

APPENDIX G

Interview Schedule

To start the interview, participants may be asked questions such as:

- Can you tell me about a difficult time in your life and how you overcame it?
- Has there been a time when you have supported a friend to cope with something difficult?
- Have you experienced a difficult time and found it hard to cope? Can you tell me about how you tried to cope and how you eventually got through it?

The body of the interview

The interview will be conducted in the form of a conversation that allows the participant to tell their own story and experiences in their own words. In narrative methodology, the structure is largely decided by the participant. As such, the researcher may ask questions to prompt the participant and facilitate him/her sharing their story.

As the interview progresses, participants may be asked questions such as:

- Did others around you notice that you were struggling? How did they try to help?
- How did you try to cope on your own? How many strategies / times did you try?
- What did you find helpful? Unhelpful?
- What made you decide to tell someone about your distress?
- What made you decide to ask for help?
- What stopped you from asking for help sooner / at all?
- Is there anything that would have encouraged you to seek help sooner?
- What do you think was the turning point / how did you eventually cope?
- Where do you think you learned your approach to coping with distress and problems? Do you think there is a difference between how you try to cope and how your peers try to cope? Compared to how your parents might have coped with similar issues growing up?
- How do you support a friend if they need help coping? How do they support you? What is helpful about the support?

Participants may be prompted to elaborate their accounts:

- Can you tell me a bit more about that?
- Can you tell me what happened in a bit more detail?
- Can you give me an example of that?

APPENDIX H

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TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Project title: A Qualitative Exploration of Adolescents' Views of Seeking Help for Stress

Researcher: Emma Edwards

Supervisor: Dr Kerry Gibson

Transcriber/Research Assistant:

I agree to assist with transcribing the audiotapes for the above research project. I understand that the information about participants and both the focus group and interview data is confidential and must not be disclosed to, or discussed with, anyone other than the researchers.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Approved by The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 13th May 2014 for 3 years, until 13th May 2017. Reference Number 011649.