STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF RELATIONSHIPS

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Abstract

This thesis reports on student experiences and perceptions of the relationships they encountered in their first year of study at a faculty of education. The research design uses an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach to produce a nuanced view of the answers to the research question. Quantitative data were gathered from students via a Likert-scale survey questionnaire, followed by interviews with some of the survey participants.

The quantitative data were analysed via factor analysis and factor scores were generated for five different relationship factors. The survey data were examined from the points of view provided by the demographic data gathered from the students.

Semi-structured interviews with 17 students provided the opportunity to dig deeper into the stories that lay behind the questionnaire results.

Findings are presented as a series of propositions: that peer relationships play a powerful role in binding students to their learning; that the relationship with the lecturer also plays this role; that the evidence about institutional relationships is mixed; that for some students, it is the relationship with the content that is the binding one; and that there exists a complex ecology of student needs, which need to be understood and addressed in different ways.

Implications of the findings are that stakeholders in the higher education enterprise need to ensure the building of positive, supportive, learning relationships with students in the future; it is from the firm base of these relationships that successful, sustained learning will flow.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my gratitude to the students who agreed to take part in this research and to share their experiences of classes and lecturers with me. Their views and stories have formed the basis for this thesis, written in the hope that understanding relationships and their centrality to the experience of teaching and learning will improve experiences for future learners.

I also wish to express my sincere appreciation to my research supervisors, Dr Peter Rawlins, Dr Linda Leach and Associate Professor Nick Zepke. Thanks for the advice, guidance, support and structure you provided for my learning, and for working so patiently and tirelessly with a thesis debutant. It has been a long and fruitful journey, with many diversions and a few cul-de-sacs explored along the way. Your insistence that the learning and the thesis should be mine was at times demanding and stretching, but ultimately brought us to this place together. My heartfelt thanks for sticking with me.

To my children, Sylvie, Wilson and Jimmy, thanks for the interest and support, and for managing your time and our house capably and safely while I was away on my many doctoral weekend trips.

To my friends and colleagues, Melinda and Debora, thanks for your confidence, your time, your feedback, your ideas and your aroha. To my first university classmate Tristine—how funny that we should still be talking about classes, content, teaching and learning after all these years! Thanks for your support, confidence, and chivvying. To Susan Carter and Hilary van Uden, thanks for all your help with the theoretical and practical sides of the writing process. To Prof Gavin Brown, my thanks for your help in interpreting the foreign language of stats in a way that I could begin to understand, and to Dr Mohamed Alansari, thanks for your comprehensive feedback on my quantitative data chapter—you're a champion.

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Preface—The Origins of this Study

The Effects of a Mid-20th-Century Upbringing in New Zealand

The focus of the study arises from my life-long career as a teacher and teacher educator in Aotearoa New Zealand, but is also rooted in my life growing up in New Zealand in the mid-20th century, and the nature, balance and imbalances of the relationships I experienced.

In terms of balance in relationships, it seems that ideas of fairness run strong through New Zealand's culture and language, and there is historical evidence for why this should be the case. For instance, D. H. Fischer (2012) uses modern data-searching techniques to establish that the words and concepts of fairness and natural justice were occurring at very high frequencies in the period 1800–1850, the very time when British settlement was getting established in New Zealand. D. H. Fischer draws a parallel between these words and ideas and those of liberty and freedom. No doubt, at that time in history, these concepts had a very Eurocentric meaning, but the overarching ideas have had a significant influence on me and have developed into strong pedagogical principles, which consequently have an impact on the relationships I develop with students.

I was born into the mid-baby-boomer period of post-war New Zealand, one of the generation whose expectations were that the world could and would improve over time (L. Y. Jones, 1980). I grew through the sixties, although scarcely a teenager as that decade ended, and experienced such things as large public demonstrations against the Vietnam War, amongst other causes. Schuman and Scott (1989) note that the baby boomers can be split into two cohorts and that cohort one, to which I belong, has been characterised as social-cause oriented, amongst other things. Is this the root of the empathy I have towards the disadvantaged in society? I can only guess. Perhaps it lies more with feeling closer to my mother than my alpha-male father; perhaps it is a function of growing up the youngest of three boys, with a greater

age gap between the second and third than there was between first and second; perhaps there is no way of knowing. Certainly, as a teenager exiting a highly streamed school famous or infamous for the arrogance of its graduates, there was no clear evidence that I had a great deal of empathy for my fellow citizens, nor that I would come to see interpersonal relationships as key to my teaching and to the academic success of my students.

Two Decades of Classroom Teaching in Kohimarama, Auckland

It came as some surprise, early in my teaching career, when my principal at the time averred that I would make an excellent guidance counsellor. How did that man assess me that way? I was a full-time teacher of French language in my first year of classroom practice and had no inkling about any interpersonal or empathetic skills I might have possessed.

When my long-term relieving language position came to an end, I spent a year or so away from teaching before being asked to go back to my school to work part-time with a group of children who had been identified as very difficult to manage in their Year 9 classes. Now in Year 10, they had been withdrawn as a group into a kind of home-room situation, staffing was available to appoint someone to work with them, and I took up the appointment.

Fortunately, I was working with a very skilled colleague in the form of a primary-trained teacher recently returned from the UK, Mary Kisler; I learnt much from Mary about working with these difficult students, the majority of whom were of Māori or Pasifika[1] descent. Engaging with these students, and with their family and whānau[2], and trying to create structures in the school to support them, was a very instructive time for me in education. These particular students were difficult to manage in school, unsurprisingly, because of the general and systemic

[1] Pasifika is a collective term used to refer to the peoples of the Pacific Islands

[2] Whānau—extended family, family group, a familiar term of address to a number of people—the primary economic unit of traditional Māori society. In the modern context the term is sometimes used to include friends who may not have any kinship ties to other members.

disadvantage they experienced in their lives, via the chaotic and dysfunctional social structures around them. The stresses and strains, the underlying anger and volatility that I witnessed, were a side of teaching and of life in New Zealand that I had no experience of. It was a tangle of history, socioeconomics and ethnicity that was a real eye-opener for me, but the experience of engaging with these children was a pivotal moment for me in coming to grips with the relational aspect of teaching. It was important to know who they were, and for them to know us, in short to build relationships with them before anything approaching normal classroom activities could proceed. These students had low expectations of their teachers, based on prior experience, and we had to take the time and trouble to establish that they would be treated differently in this new environment. Relationships of trust had to develop, and this of course took place only over time.

Ngāti Whātua o Ōrākei

Some of the children we worked with were Ngāti Whātua children from Ōrākei, about whom I previously knew very little, despite having lived in Auckland for around 20 years. It was on a poster on a classroom wall that I read for the first time of the clearance of the Ngāti Whātua houses on the land at Ōkahu Bay in the early 1950s. The room was being used by my late colleague Danny Munn for te reo Māori classes at Selwyn College; coincidentally, I had first met Danny, as a young Māori undergraduate student, in the 1970s and had a good relationship with him. It was odd but encouraging to be working with him in a language-teaching environment 10 years later, as it validated a connection we had made as undergraduate students, and it was good to know that paths can cross and re-cross in the future. Danny's lived experience growing up and going to university as a Māori in 20th century New Zealand also made him a valuable resource for the school and for the wider community.

After the establishment of Tomorrow's Schools[3] and the school charter,[4] the education environment around the Treaty of Waitangi[5] changed. The management team at Selwyn College took its Treaty responsibilities seriously, and scheduled time out of normal curriculum classes for senior students to attend hui,[6] which focused on the Treaty and Treaty issues. These activities served to develop a closer relationship between the school, its students and members of the local iwi.

I became a member of the informal committee that organised these hui and was a vigorous promoter of them to our senior students, many of whom were ambivalent about the value of learning about local history and local issues. The school had a close relationship with Ngāti Whātua o Ōrākei (Matua Taiaha Hawke was a member of staff for a time), and we were fortunate enough to be able to take the students to visit the marae[7] at Takaparawha. Guest speakers were invited to address the students; memorable amongst them were Joe Hawke, Syd Jackson, Doug Graham—Minister for Treaty Settlements at the time—and David Williams, who had acted as counsel for the iwi at the time of the occupation of Bastion Point.[8] Again, over time, trusting relationships developed between the school and the Ngāti Whātua

[3] Tomorrow's Schools was the name given to a wide-ranging set of educational reforms set in place in 1989 which created schools as self-governing bodies, allocating substantial financial and administrative responsibilities to elected boards of trustees, made up of members of the parent community plus some academic representation from the school.
[4] Under the Tomorrow's Schools reforms, schools were required to develop an individual charter which set out guidelines for governance of the school. Some elements of the charter, including equity objectives, were compulsory; this included how the school would meet its obligations to Māori under the Treaty of Waitangi.
[5] The Treaty of Waitangi was signed in February 1840 as an agreement between the Crown and local Māori chiefs, as to how New Zealand would be governed on behalf of both peoples in the future. It is a broad statement of principles, outlining the contract between the British and Māori as to how to found a nation state and to create a government in New Zealand.
[6] Hui are meetings, gatherings, assemblies, conferences.
[7] Marae are meeting places, strictly the open courtyard in front of traditional buildings, where formal greetings and discussions take place. To be welcomed on to the marae is to be accepted into the local tribe and customs for the duration of the stay; it is a formal occasion and has its own protocols.
[8] Bastion Point, or Takaparawha, is a promontory situated above Auckland Harbour which came to symbolise Māori land issues in the 1970s, when the government of the day planned to sell the land into private ownership, and the local tribe responded by occupying the site for 506 days. Details can be found at https://nzhistory.govt.nz/keyword/bastion-point

community. These relationships served to support the students and staff through the difficult process of confronting misconceptions and prejudgements of the past, and establishing new positions based on the learning offered generously by the members of the tribe, some of whom could articulate their experiences all the way back to the destruction of the marae in 1952. The strength of the interpersonal relationships helped the students accept and reframe the history of the area, without guilt or defensiveness.

A huge benefit for me was that the days contributed much to my own learning; I heard first-hand stories of the destruction of the marae at Ōkahu Bay, the premature deaths of kaumatua and kuia as they were forcibly removed to state housing on "The Hill," backgrounded against the easy relationship of Ngāti Whātua with early Auckland settlers in the 19th century. Looking at documents detailing the progressive loss of land on the isthmus, I came to puzzle over the vexed notion of "partnership," as it had played out locally.

The learning was as apposite for me as it was for our students, but multifaceted. At one level, it was historical: In 1990, we celebrated the sesquicentennial of the signing of the Treaty; the Commonwealth Games opening ceremony foregrounded aspects of our colonial past and our indigenous culture. The people of New Zealand were divided over the value of settling claims made by iwi to the Waitangi tribunal; we were simultaneously being urged to right the wrongs of the past yet move forward as one people. The people who were good enough to host us on the marae at Takaparawha were still clearly and painfully feeling the grievances over their disputed claims to the land. As recently as 1978, the iwi had occupied the land for 506 days to prevent its sale and development for real estate.

Through the process of bearing witness to and engaging in the learning of the secondary students we took to the marae, I learnt so much myself. The struggle to regain the land, the tolerance of indignities suffered, the decades-long history of correctly and dutifully followed

due process seemed to characterise a people of enormous goodwill, tolerance and dignity. Their stories spoke for themselves, without the need for highlights or bullet points. The evidence was incontrovertible. Local students came away as shocked, stunned and humbled as the staff were, and yet, the patient engagement of the tribe in the Treaty settlement process endured.

At another level, the learning was about the value of simple interpersonal interactions and the value of relationships. Our students could care about what they learned at marae, because of the care they shared with those people; the relationships bound the students to the learning, and vice versa.

In respect of the idea of fairness, it appears that, despite growing up in a family which did not discuss such things around the dinner table, I inherited the purportedly typical New Zealand values of fairness and classlessness, and my learning enhanced my inchoate ideas of justice and fairness. Over time, as a teacher practitioner in a co-educational, slice-of-life state secondary school, I developed a strong bent towards social justice, and a predilection for supporting the underdog. This was later allied with an inclination towards student-centred learning, and a paradigm of pedagogical care. My interest in supporting students through care was an instinctive response to those students who simply needed help, in all sorts of different ways; their experiences and abilities did not place them well to make the necessary decoding of their environment or circumstances. I saw that, as a trusted adult, I could act as a guide and decoder for these students and make their path more straightforward and more transparent. I came to see that students could be supported in their studies by a relationship with someone who expressed confidence in them; that there was a human and humane side to teaching that had scarcely been touched on in my time as a teacher trainee (as the language went at the time). In the current literature, this might be referred to as a “pedagogy of compassion” (Zembylas, 2017). Zembylas (2017) notes that the practice of teaching for or with compassion “would necessitate that educators establish trust in the classroom, develop strong relationships with

and amongst students, and enact compassionate understanding in every possible manner" (p.185). It seemed to me that, in my practice, the chronology of this worked slightly differently, that teaching with compassion helped establish trust and build strong relationships, which then enabled further compassionate understanding.

I instinctively felt that this affective side of teaching, the development of relationships of pedagogical care, could work to engage or re-engage students who felt disaffected by their experience of school; relationships became a key part of my teaching, and, more latterly, of my conversations about teaching.

Teaching Excellence Award

In 2008, I won an award from my university for Sustained Excellence in Teaching, based on the evidence of a portfolio of written material, and evaluations of my teaching completed by student cohorts.

I was encouraged to apply for the award by my head of school at the time. She suggested that I would have a strong case, just based on my evaluations, and urged me to put the time into developing a portfolio for my application. One of the incidents I drew on in my portfolio was the first experience I had of teaching a group of "re-sit" students. These are students who have failed a key course in their degree, and need the opportunity to re-sit it so they can progress through the rest of their qualification. The challenge for them is the blow the failure deals to their self-esteem and to their motivation to engage with the same course material. I chose to deal with it head-on, to confront and acknowledge the failure and to construct a plan which would focus only on student success. We bound into a tight group, created an ethos that enabled the asking of all questions, however simple they might seem, and supported one another into understanding the material and succeeding at the assessment tasks. The success rate was extremely high, and I put it down to the relationships of trust we had built between us. This

allowed all and any types of hidden gaps or misunderstandings to be addressed in the classroom without judgement and created a climate in which previously failing students could be successful. It was an instructive experience for me.

The citation written and read by one of my former students (both at secondary school and in the tertiary environment) said, in part, the following:

> Brian relates to people respectfully regardless of their age, culture, gender, worldview and priorities. He is skilful at gently provoking reactions from students and drawing them into productive exploration of relevant ideas and issues.
>
> Brian is a strong advocate for students, going the extra mile to help them overcome barriers to success, while at the same time maintaining the integrity of standards expected. He expertly combines high expectations with genuine and personal care.
>
> Brian is highly conscious of the role all teachers play in creating learning opportunities for students. Brian's manner, above all, demonstrates to his students that he enjoys teaching, that he likes people, and that he cares about their progress as learners.

It was clear that this student was responsive to the pedagogy that I employed in my classes; she noted the focus I had on building supportive relationships with students, with a view to facilitating their academic success. I saw this as a way to ensure student engagement in my classes, to go beyond the transmission of information to something more productive for the students. Besides, in the context of courses in a teacher education qualification, I felt it important to teach about teaching in an authentic, modelling fashion; my espoused theory and my theory-in-action had to be a very close match.

This doctoral study grew out of my curiosity about student responses to different aspects of the teaching practice they encountered at the tertiary level; if asked about the practice of my colleagues and myself, what would students say? Were relationships part of the picture for

them? Did they or could they sense different theories-in-action? Ultimately, did it make a difference to them how staff engaged, or even whether they did? It was against the backdrop of thoughts such as these that this study had its genesis; I simply wished to know more about the students' experience and perceptions of relationships.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Introduction

This study used mixed methods to investigate relationships and how different groups of students experienced and perceived them in a faculty of education in a New Zealand university.

The effects of the teacher–student interpersonal relationship on student outcomes have been demonstrated for a host of countries and different types of education (Allen, Witt, & Wheeless, 2006; Cornelius-White, 2007; Hattie, 2009; Wubbels, Brekelmans, den Brok, & van Tartwijk, 2006). Research has demonstrated that students function more effectively when they feel respected and valued and function poorly when they feel disrespected or marginalised (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Stipek, 2006). Pianta (1999) tells us that students report that they work harder for teachers who treat them as individuals and express interest in their personal lives outside the institution. Stipek (2006) makes the point that supporting positive relationships "between teachers and students can contribute significantly, not only to students' social emotional health and well-being, but also to their academic performance" (p. 94). Audley and Ginsburg (2019) make the point that, when asked to write about a memorable teacher, pre-service teachers mostly write about "a teacher who cared" (p. 155) about them, as opposed to someone whose curriculum instruction they recalled. M. J. Fischer (2007) reports that in the tertiary realm, having more connections to professors was related to higher grades for all groups, and that the absence of ties to staff and peers represented a form of social and academic isolation, and was a predictor of non-completion. Shoup, Kuh, Cruce, Kinzie, and Gonyea (2008) underline the role played by the classroom for many students, being the only regular venue for person-to-person interaction with others involved in the study enterprise. Notwithstanding all of the above, and with respect specifically to the quality of the teacher–student relationship at university, Hagenauer and Volet (2014) make the point that while this is an important field for study, it has so far been under-researched, with most work undertaken in the school context

(Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). The Hagenauer and Volet study addresses the gap in the literature that exists around beginning tertiary level students. It investigated different groups of students and their responses to the types of relationships they experienced. Some of the students were representative of groups who traditionally would benefit most from interventions aimed at increasing engagement.

Audley and Ginsburg (2019) note this dissonance for pre-service teachers: the ones they themselves recollected best and chose to write most about were those who demonstrated a level of care for their students, yet the pre-service teachers struggled to see care as part of an effective pedagogy.

Other studies similarly found that engagement was particularly beneficial to those groups of students least prepared for higher education (Audley & Ginsburg, 2019; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Shoup et al., 2008; Trowler & Trowler, 2010). Trowler and Trowler (2010) see a social-justice element in institutions strategising ways to increase the engagement of various student populations, especially those for whom engagement had proven to be an issue. As a means of understanding this phenomenon, Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, and Hayek (2006) offer Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) construct of habitus as a useful way to gain insight into the complexities and subtleties of the experiences of first-generation and ethnic-minority students. They suggest that habitus, as a system of enduring dispositions built on previous experiences, can impose unconscious limits on the aspirations of an individual in terms of their career and education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). The individual becomes bound by a lack of prior experience; new ways of proceeding in the new environment are necessarily limited by what has gone before, making the individual less adaptable and more vulnerable in the new and unfamiliar circumstances of higher education. One of the strategies that might defeat the vulnerabilities experienced by such students may be to nurture the structure of relationships around them, in order to support them through their transition into their new environment.

Education as Transformation

Research has consistently shown us the value for societies and individuals of sustained engagement in education (Baum & Ma, 2007; L. Thomas, Yorke, & Woodrow, 2001; Yorke, 2006). Individual benefits might include higher incomes, better health and greater opportunities for coming generations. Societal benefits include lower unemployment and poverty rates; less dependence on social safety-net programmes; lower smoking rates, more positive perceptions of personal health, and healthier lifestyles than for individuals who did not graduate from tertiary study (Baum & Ma, 2007). This thesis stems from my interest in the concept of education having the potential to transform society. As I have outlined in the preface to this thesis, I am interested in this from a social-equity perspective: are the well-documented benefits of higher education equally available to all members of society? Do relationships affect different groups in different ways? Could supportive relationships have an ameliorating effect for some student groups?

A Preliminary Study

In 2008, I enrolled in a master's-level research methods paper prior to commencing this PhD. As part of the paper, I had to undertake a research inquiry and write up the results. What I chose for this assignment was to provide groups of faculty of education students with a list of 133 adjectives and to ask them to select the ones that (i) would apply to the best teachers they had had in the past; and (ii) would inform their own future practice, in an ideal world. In the first part of the exercise, the students could select as many words as they wished; in the second part, they were limited to only three. The word list was a mixture of both personal and professional qualities that teachers might possess, and I was looking to see how students might rate their past teachers' attributes; I was curious about the significance of interpersonal relationships as opposed to the more technical aspects of teachers' work.

In the process of carrying out this small inquiry, I was able to include two different groups of students in my research; one set of answers came from a group of conventional first-year students enrolled in an undergraduate teacher education programme, while the other set came from students enrolled in a Foundation Certificate of Studies, a bridging programme that would take them to an undergraduate course. This second group of students had not yet attained the level of academic success that would give them entry into first-year courses; I surmised that they had a different set of schooling experiences from the students who had entered university directly from school.

The results of the inquiry do not need to be reported in their entirety here; suffice to say that the different groups chose quite different words to apply in each case and left me with more questions about their intentions in choosing those words than answers. This was my stimulus for a mixed-methods approach to my doctoral research; having obtained the responses from the students, I was much more interested in finding out why they had chosen that particular set of words, and hearing what classroom experiences lay behind them. For example, when the foundation group of students chose words such as *calm, talkative, cheerful, friendly* and *motivated* as their characteristics of the ideal teacher, were they reflecting on qualities that had been present or absent from the teaching they had experienced? I was much more intrigued by these questions than I was by the surface-level data generated by the responses; I wanted to hear the qualitative responses in order to illuminate and explicate the quantitative data. The current study was established, at least in part, to attempt to clarify student perspectives on their experiences of relationships in teaching and learning.

The Locus of the Research

The locus of this research was a faculty of education which offered multiple-year undergraduate programmes in addition to graduate diplomas. I was keen to investigate the experiences of students who were new to tertiary study, and I avoided those enrolled in

graduate diplomas or postgraduate qualifications, as their initial experiences of tertiary education were well behind them. The faculty of education that I chose as the basis for the study offers mostly professional education programmes leading to teacher education qualifications, and with entry directly thereafter into the first years of teaching. The demographic data gathered at the faculty were indicative of the traditional demographics of the teaching profession itself, dominated by largely female, largely Pākehā[9] cohorts of students, and it is important to keep this in mind when considering the context for some of the other demographic minorities presented in the work that follows.

The aim of the investigation was to explore the experiences and perceptions of relationships as reported by tertiary education students in the first year of multiple-year programmes at a faculty of education. The research sought responses across a range of different types of relationships, but was largely founded on the assumption that relationships between staff and students were important. It was assumed that students would point to staff who were approachable and supportive as being an important component in their enjoyment of their studies, and to a certain extent in the success they experienced along the way.

The research sought to answer the following questions:

> RQ1. What do first-year undergraduate students in teacher education say about their experiences and perceptions of relationships?
>
> RQ2. What types of relationships do these students regard as important?
>
> RQ3. What do different groups report on their experiences and perceptions of relationships?

[9] Pākehā is the word that the indigenous people of New Zealand, the Māori, most often use to describe New Zealanders of a migrant background, or of European origin.

The Structure of this Thesis

The remaining chapters of this thesis are set out as follows.

Chapter 2 considers the body of research on the topic of student relationships and their significant role as part of the higher education enterprise. It examines the relevant research by themes which I have established and explained.

Chapter 3 lays out the methodological framework for this mixed-methods study and considers the detail of how the inquiry was carried out, and how it aligns with current thinking about mixed-methods research.

Chapter 4 details the findings of the quantitative component of the study, namely the results from the survey questionnaire, explains the process of factor analysis and ANOVA analysis of the results, and also looks at the demographic data for students who did not return for further study.

Chapter 5 considers the findings of the qualitative component of the study, namely the results from the student interviews. It addresses these data in a thematic way and nominates key findings.

Chapter 6 is a discussion of the findings of this study. It is organised around a set of propositions that the writer makes to clarify the significant points arising from the research.

Chapter 7 concludes this thesis by considering the original research question, the contribution of the study to the body of knowledge, and by discussing the implications of this study for institutional practice and future research.

The next chapter, Chapter 2, will examine the extant literature pertaining to this study.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter begins with the context for the review and the thinking that informs the selection of literature. It examines the interdependent relationships impacting on the people and institutions involved in the learning enterprise for students belonging to differing social and cultural groups.

A section of the review then explores the complex nature of the modern student, and the implications for institutions seeking to engage with this diverse population, and the attributes that they bring. Subsequent sections of the review consider the body of research on students and their relationships with peers, lecturers and with the institutions themselves.

Context for this Review

This review will consider the literature related to aspects of relationships for students with those around them; it is of course considerable and varied, and many interesting aspects of relationships pertaining to students have been explored. In particular, the well-researched and overlapping areas of engagement and motivation may be relevant and informative.

In the first instance, though, we need to be clear about what constitutes a relationship; how we are using and constructing meaning for this term. The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Onions, 1973) offers the definition that a relationship is the "state of being related" (p. 1786), which sends us back to the verb *relate*—"to bring (a thing or person) into relation with another" (p. 1786)—and thence to the noun *relation*, and it is here that we find what might be our most useful idea: "the position which one person holds with respect to another on account of some social or other connection between them; the particular mode in which people are connected by circumstances" (p. 1786).

In a more modern context, the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* suggests definitions such as "the way in which two things are connected"; "a connection formed between two or more people or groups based on social interactions and mutual goals, interests, or feelings" (Relationship, n.d., n.p.). Overall, it is this idea of connection that stands out in the use of the "relationship" for me. When a teacher (in the generic sense) supports a learner in engaging with to-be-learned material, arriving at understandings, making progress and creating success, it seems to me that a connection has been created, and the two parties have entered into a relationship of sorts, a pedagogical relationship. The longer they work together, and the better they come to know one another, the stronger the relationship may become between them, with the teacher coming to understand the needs and strengths of the learner, in such a way that that person may be better supported in working towards the goal or outcome. The relationships, then, are the connections made by and around the learner as that person progresses through a course of study, at one institution or many, towards their educational outcome.

For me, the idea of connection goes beyond a simple interaction; it may be possible for a learner to interact with a number of people in the context of their study without forming a relationship with any of them. The idea of a relationship, for me, suggests repeated contact over a period of time that might lead to an enhanced understanding for both parties: the teacher may come to understand the learning needs of the student better, in such a way as to tailor the pedagogy to meet them better; the learner may come to understand the modes of the teacher, or the particular strengths of that person.

There is also, for me, in the idea of a relationship, a deliberative action, a choice being made. As a practitioner, I know that I can engage with students in a number of different ways. As a classroom teacher, asked to relieve for a colleague on a one-off basis, I know that it was possible for me to be present as a teacher without encouraging the formation of relationships. I could present material, and a range of tasks, and supervise the class in such a way as to ensure

safety without creating relationships with those students. In a different context, with a class of Stage 1 students whom I am going to be seeing for a weekly class for an entire semester, I would interact with them in a thoroughly different way so as to enhance the opportunity for them to enter into a pedagogical relationship with me. I would learn their names; I would offer them the time to write in class about their educational history and reasons for choosing this course of study; I would create an environment in which the students feel I am interested in supporting their learning. To me, this is where we would pass beyond the level of front-of-room transactional interaction, into the realm of student–teacher relationship, and, by my actions, I am offering the possibility of that relationship to my students.

For the purposes of this project, the learner is conceptualised as occupying a place in the centre of the relationship and needs to be constructed both as student and as a person, contextualised in a sociological fashion, for example, via family, educational background, as member of an age-based group and an ethnicity.

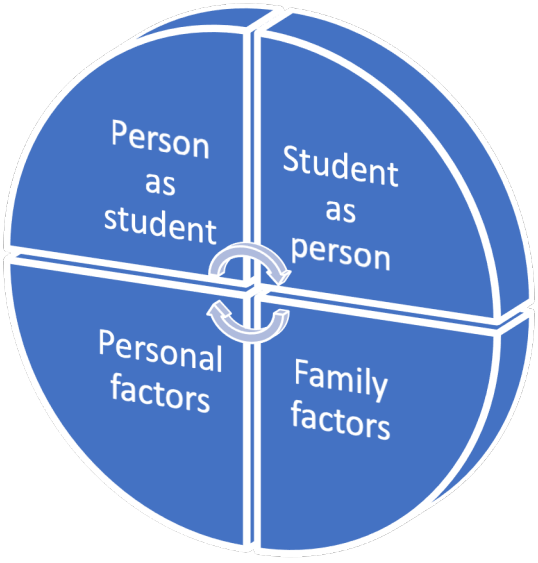

Figure 2.1. A representation of the student and the roles and factors at play.

Figure 2.1 represents the parts of the student's life which contribute to the whole. After the manner of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, it is important to locate the student in many different ways in order to begin to unpack the influences and relationships that may be at work in their educational life. Hargreaves (1998) notes that "teaching is an emotional practice which involves relationships with others" (p. 838). Giles (2011) points out that, in particular, "university teachers and students are always in relationship, and, no matter how they experience it, this relationship matters" (p. 81).

In addition to the obvious teacher–student relationships, the entry of anyone into a higher education environment necessarily creates a series of other relationships around that person: relationships with peers, encountered in and around classes; and a set of relationships with the institution for enrolment and support. The relevant literature will be considered with these overarching concepts in mind.

However, the focus of this review is relationships. The most important factor encouraging students at university to work towards their own success (however that might be defined for the individual) is relationships (McClenney & Waiwaiole, 2005; Zepke et al., 2005); students often talk about a single person who made a difference for them: a teaching staff member, a counsellor or advisor, a group of classmates in a learning community, or an administrator taking an interest in the pastoral care of student. Willcoxson, Cotter, and Joy (2011) make the point that for support strategies to be effective, institutions must have staff who are both willing and encouraged to engage in supportive relationships with students.

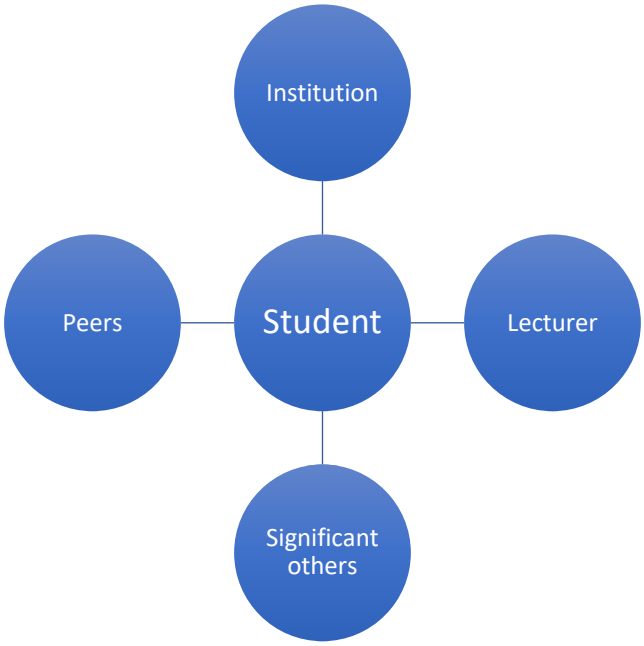

Figure 2.2. The relationships that students develop, sustain and are sustained by.

Again, after the manner of Bronfenbrenner (1979), Figure 2.2 is a representation of how relationships develop for and around students at universities. As well as their normal life outside of their student roles, there is a new set of relationships that develop in and around their place of study. There is what I have termed an *institutional relationship*; students need to engage with the institution by way of enrolment, understand formal assignment and course work submissions, and perhaps seek extensions or help of an academic or personal kind. As a result of their attendance at classes, students will develop relationships with their lecturers, which will vary, depending on the nature of the course, the size of the class, frequency of contact and the extent of the engagement on both sides.

Students will also develop both formal and informal relationships with their peers. They may be required to perform some study or assessed tasks in pairs or groups, established by their lecturers; I would categorise these as formal relationships. Students may also create acquaintanceships and friendships via contact with others inside and outside class; these are the informal relationships.

In the review of the research that follows, the literature that relates to these different student roles will be examined, but the body of research evidence across the roles is not equally balanced; there is a great deal more on teacher–student relationships, and this is reflected in the review.

Students and Their Relationships With Lecturers

The effects of the teacher–student interpersonal relationship on student outcomes have been demonstrated for a host of countries and different types of education (Allen et al., 2006; Cornelius-White, 2007; Hattie, 2009; Wubbels et al., 2006). Pianta (1999) tells us that students report that they work harder for teachers who treat them as individuals and express interest in their personal lives outside the institution. Stipek (2006) makes the point that supporting positive relationships "between teachers and students can contribute significantly, not only to students' social emotional health and well-being, but also to their academic performance" (p. 94). M. J. Fischer (2007) reports that, in the academic realm, having more connections to professors was related to higher grades for all groups, and that having more formal academic connections with staff, and both formal and informal connections with staff and peers, were all associated with satisfaction and persistence. The absence of such connections, which could be read as both academic and social isolation, has proved to be a predictor of leaving a course of study (M. J. Fischer, 2007). Shoup et al. (2008) underline the importance of the role played by the classroom for many students, being the only regular venue for person-to-person interaction with others involved in the study enterprise; as a means of avoiding isolation, contact in the classroom is the prime strategy for some students.

Researchers consistently report on the benefits at tertiary level of closer and more positive relationships between faculty and students (Cook-Sather & Luz, 2015; Creasey, Jarvis, & Knapcik, 2009; Delaney, 2008; Eccles, 2004; Kettle, 2017; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2011; Lubicz-Nawrocka & Bunting, 2019; O'Leary & Wood, 2019; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005;

Tinto, 2000; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). The benefits are wide-ranging: improvement in the level of satisfaction with education, greater engagement, greater persistence, and a better response to academic challenge. In particular, Delaney (2008) finds evidence to demonstrate why faculty contact matters, and recommends heeding Barefoot's (2000) advice to increase faculty–student interaction to achieve the goals of first-year experience programmes: "Promoting increased interaction with faculty may be one of the most effective ways to meet the major challenges associated with the first year of college" (Delaney, 2008, pp. 238–239). Hellmundt and Baker's (2017) review of the literature finds ample evidence to support the notion that relationship elements including warmth, respect and a sense of belonging help students engage in their learning, which in turn contributes not only to their perception of the learning experience, but also improves their learning outcomes.

Teacher–student relationships built via contact.

The teacher–student relationship has been posited as a nested influence on other spheres of a young person's interactions with the world, in the manner of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model. Vygotskyian learning theory places the teacher in a significant relationship with the student, as someone who scaffolds the growth of the learner (Vygotsky, 1978) through being "in relationship" with the student. Constructivist approaches to education also show the teacher as a proactive facilitator of learning, playing out this role in a relational context with the student: teacher and student are involved in learning from the other within a dynamic relationship (von Glasersfeld, 1996). It is to be expected, then, that positive teacher–student relationships have a large number of supporters in the literature. Fraser and Walberg (2005) suggest that positive teacher–student relationships, like a positive classroom-learning environment, should be considered both a means and an end. They found past research that had consistently replicated the advantages of positive teacher–student relationships and a positive learning environment in terms of promoting improved student outcomes (e.g., den Brok, Levy,

Brekelmans, & Wubbels, 2005; van Tartwijk, Brekelmans, Wubbels, Fisher, & Fraser, 1998; Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005). They assert, though, that positive teacher–student relationships and a positive classroom environment are worthwhile goals of education per se. Dobransky and Frymier (2004) make the point that since it is not possible to exclude the interpersonal influence in the teacher–student relationship, a much better option is to capitalise on it in order to maximise the benefits of that relationship (Dobransky & Frymier, 2004).

Lundberg and Schreiner (2004) find that satisfying relationships and frequent interactions with staff are strong predictors of learning for every racial group in their study, and find alignment with similar previous findings of Kuh et al. (1991) and Pascarella and Terenzini (1991, 2005). Studies also point to the increased benefits minority students, in particular, receive from interactions and relationships with teaching staff (Eimers, 2000; Mayo, Murguia, & Padilla, 1995) in helping build confidence in the role of a student. Delaney (2008) suggests that promoting increased interaction between staff and students may be one of the most effective ways to meet the major challenges associated with the first year of university study.

Hagenauer and Volet (2014) make the connection between the need for more research into quality teacher–student relationships (TSR) and the current international circumstances for universities. While these researchers draw on and highlight much work that has been done in the field of examining TSR, they repeatedly make the point that "despite some empirical evidence that TSR is crucial for students' successful learning at university…the association between TSR and teacher factors is under-researched across all sectors of education" (p. 379).

They also make the connection between the financial and human cost of high dropout rates, and the need to be able to better quantify the potential role of TSR in reversing that negative trend. They also see the need to acknowledge the effect of positive relationships and interactions on the work and well-being of university teachers. Further, given the growing

interest in quantifying excellence in university teaching, they see the need for detailed future investigation into the role of quality TSR as a likely precondition for excellence of teaching and learning at university. It is important to note that Hagenauer and Volet (2014) acknowledge the body of work done into the significance of teacher–student interaction and contact, but they are keen to establish what constitutes a quality relationship in this context.

Via an extensive review of the extant literature, Hagenauer and Volet (2014) suggest that quality TSR can be theorised as having two main dimensions, the affective dimension and the support dimension, with different aspects of previous research falling into one of these two categories. They find that in this conceptualisation, TSR as a construct could be defined more closely, allowing for the inclusion into their conceptual frame of such previously well-rehearsed ideas as closeness, care, connection, safety, trust, honesty, fairness, respect, openness, support, encouragement, availability and approachability. The support dimension is represented by words covering such attributes as honest, comfortable, open, respectful, trustworthy, safe, enjoyable, fair, encouraging and supportive.

While acknowledging the importance of the role of peer relationships for students at university (as covered in another section of this review), Hagenauer and Volet (2014) also find an extensive body of research that indicates relationships with teachers and tutors play an important role as well, in such areas as students' decisions to complete their studies or to leave after the first year. Furthermore, they find that positive relationships with university teachers not only contribute to the intention of students to persist with their studies, but could also facilitate other factors, such as commitment, effort, motivation, satisfaction, engagement, deep-learning approaches, achievement and intellectual growth (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014).

Jorgensen, Farrell, Fudge and Pritchard's (2018) study reaffirms previous findings that a sense of connectedness can grow from students' perceptions of the different types of support

provided by the institution, and that there are many benefits flowing on from this. They point out that students who feel connected, however the students may define that, are more likely to have better social and academic experiences during their time at the higher education institution, although the students themselves do not perceive these experiences as being discrete. Other positive outcomes associated with perceived connectedness include higher emotional well-being, less likelihood of substance abuse and better general health. Jorgensen et al. underline the fact that any interaction experienced by a student, with a campus employee, can foster connectedness, so the development of this perception of connection is not limited to interactions with academic staff.

Teacher influence on engagement and involvement through interaction and the building of positive relationships.

Interactive relationships with staff have been shown to have a powerful impact on learning (Astin, 1984; Cuseo, 2007; Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007; Kuh, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Peters & Mathias, 2018; Ramsden & Callender, 2015). Tinto (2017) emphasises the importance of interaction with both faculty and student peers. Tinto's model suggests a socialisation process whereby students who become successfully socialised into the campus academic and social systems are more likely to persist. According to Tinto, students must be sufficiently involved on the college campus if an institution is to have a successful retention programme. Academic and social integration lead to greater commitment to the institution and eventually to graduation. Tinto identifies a failure to become or remain incorporated in the intellectual and social life of the institution as one of three major sources of student departure in his framework. Tinto (1993, 2010, 2017) finds that a measure of students' likelihood to persist can be found in the frequency and quality of contact with faculty, staff and other students. The role of staff or faculty in this socialisation process is an idea that has been developed and elaborated on. For Bean (1980, 1983), student contact with faculty

constitutes one of the behavioural measures in his model of undergraduate student persistence. Astin (1984) nominates frequent interaction with staff as being more strongly related to satisfaction with college than any other type of involvement, and recommends that institutions find ways to encourage greater student involvement with staff. Chickering and Gamson (1987) highlight the importance of student–staff contact as one of their seven effective practices in undergraduate teaching and learning. Weidman (1989) argues that formal and informal interactions with faculty and peers play a significant role in the undergraduate socialisation process; such contact occasions and interactions offer the opportunity to create positive and supportive relationships. R. Bennett (2003) found that strong lecturer–student relationships made a significant contribution to student motivation, and that individual lecturers could play a powerful role in discouraging student withdrawal. Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) also found a positive relationship between course-related student–faculty interaction and student engagement in active and collaborative learning in the classroom. Lubicz-Nawrocka and Bunting (2019), in looking at the characteristics of staff who were rewarded for their efforts by student-led excellence awards, identify four keys themes of student conceptualisations of teaching excellence: concerted, visible effort; a commitment to engaging students; breaking down student–teacher barriers via the formation of positive relationships; and stability of support.

McClenney and Waiwaiole (2005) report that students themselves declared that the most important factor involved in keeping them engaged was relationships: students narrated a critical connection with a particular person, a faculty member, a counsellor or advisor, a group of classmates in a learning community, or a support-staff member, who made the difference for them. In order to succeed in promoting student persistence, colleges need to design engagement into the campus experience for their student body (McClenney & Waiwaiole, 2005).

James, Krause, and Jennings (2010) urge institutions and staff to ensure all students have the opportunity for closer personal interactions with academic staff, especially during the first year, on the basis that teacher empathy, interest in and respect for students are important factors in students' future academic and social engagement (James et al., 2010). Zepke, Leach, and Butler (2010) point to feelings of competence, agency and relatedness as important motivational needs for students, and recommend that practitioners seek to build feelings of competence in their learners, in addition to enjoying learning relationships with them.

Schreiner, Noel, and Cantwell (2011) strike the cautionary note that, although there has been extensive research into the range of positive effects of student–faculty interaction, this research has resulted in an only limited understanding of the process by which these relationships develop. However, they do not question the positive effects of student–faculty interaction on students' learning, integration into the college environment, and subsequent persistence (Schreiner et al., 2011).

In the New Zealand context, Zepke and Leach (2010) identify actions that teachers and institutions could take to increase student engagement: the teacher-related ones include enhancing students' self-belief, enjoying learning relationships with others and recognising that teaching and teachers are central to engagement. More than 90% of their respondents thought teacher influence had a high level of importance for their engagement, and all Māori, Pasifika and older students put teacher influence into the high-importance category (Zepke et al., 2010).

L. Thomas's (2012) projects find that staff–student relationships contribute to belonging in the academic sphere: knowing staff and being able to ask for help, and having access to personal tutoring as a means of developing a close relationship with a member of staff. L. Thomas's survey evidence finds that students thinking about leaving felt more distant from their teaching

staff than those who had not considered withdrawal. Further evidence suggests that a good relationship with staff motivates students and encourages them to work harder and achieve more. Evans, Muijs, and Tomlinson (2015) find that learner-centred approaches are a feature of "high impact pedagogies" (p. 8) in their review. Kim and Lundberg (2016) hypothesise that interaction between staff and students is positively related to students' academic self-challenge and sense of belonging, leading to greater levels of classroom engagement and facilitating greater gains in students' cognitive skills.

Student-centred and interactive teaching strategies have strong support in the research base (Bryson & Hand, 2007; Crosling, Heagney, & Thomas, 2009). Higher education commentators have previously observed that effective learning is less likely to take place in large and impersonal environments (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Researchers (Altbach et al., 2009; Kezar & Kinzie, 2006) note that the current interest in student engagement is taking place at a time when resources are stretched ever thinner under a massified system bringing greater student numbers. The effect has been to move institutions more towards the lecture method of teaching, and away from a successful student-centred teaching orientation (Bryson & Hand, 2007), thereby creating fewer opportunities for interactions between students and their teachers. Interactive learning can promote the inclusion of learners who might otherwise feel like outsiders (Crosling, As-Saber, & Rahman, 2008) and supports the development of a deeper understanding of the relationships between theory and practice (Tight, 2002).

More recently, Tight (2019) notes that the research interest previously displayed in the area of student retention has moved to student engagement, with a growing body of literature evident in this area. An interesting phenomenon accompanying the shift in focus and the shift in thinking is a realignment of responsibilities: Tight notes that "the responsibility for satisfying the student's needs has shifted from the student towards the institution" (p. 10).

Impediments to interaction: Part-time staff.

Scholars link students' satisfaction with their university experience to an increased likelihood to persist with their studies (Bean, 1980); conversely, Bean (1980) has suggested that as students become more dissatisfied, their likelihood of persistence diminishes. Research (Cotten & Wilson, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) has linked teacher–student interactions to positive outcomes. Given the positive association between teacher–student interactions and persistence, Jaeger and Egan (2011) suggest that students who have more meaningful and more frequent interactions with faculty in the first year of university increase their rate of persistence into the second year. Because part-time staff tend to have a lower level of availability and accessibility compared to their full-time counterparts, the researchers argue that students have fewer opportunities to connect with part-time staff in any meaningful way, which may negatively influence their overall level of satisfaction with their studies, and thereby, their likelihood to persist (Jaeger & Eagan, 2011). In sum, a reduction in full-time staff on campus creates less opportunity for "overlap" between staff and students, hence a reduction in opportunities for informal and incidental contact between staff and students, and erodes the possibility to build positive and supportive relationships between them.

Cultural responsiveness.

The literature also suggests that the effects of the teacher–student relationship may be more keenly felt by groups of minority or nontraditional students, although the number of studies is not extensive (den Brok, van Tartwijk, Wubbels, & Veldman, 2010). Russell Bishop's secondary-school-based work in New Zealand over an extended period has highlighted the importance of the teacher–student connection for Māori students in secondary schools. This work eventually formed the basis of the Te Kotahitanga project (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, & Richardson, 2003). The Effective Teaching Profile (Bishop & Berryman, 2005) delineates

what students have had to say about an effective teacher in the realm of "caring for the person." Effective teachers are those who:

> treat students and whānau with respect, are compassionate and understand the world of the students. They have a sense of humour, can be trusted to keep confidences, are giving of themselves and act in a fair and just manner. They are friendly and firm in relation to students, learn and ensure names are pronounced properly, ensure actions are culturally located and participate with students in a variety of ways. Their actions indicate they want to be in the classroom with students, and they are more passionate about being with the students than anything else. (Bishop & Berryman, 2005, p. 27).

The students in this project were very clear that teachers who saw them as having deficiencies, in keeping with the notion of deficit-theorising, were not able to develop positive learning relationships with them, but those of their teachers who saw students in positive terms were wonderful to be with and to learn with (Bishop & Berryman, 2005). This latter point, about the significance of the relationship for minority groups, is beginning to be underlined in the literature (den Brok & Levy, 2005; den Brok et al., 2010; Ferguson, 2002; Wubbels et al., 2006). Clement (2010) writes that "teacher support and caring provides a form of social capital that is protective of at-risk behaviours, and appears to be particularly important for marginalized students, such as those from minority cultures" (p. 15). In the local context, the experiences of the traditionally less successful students can help provide direction for teaching staff towards good, inclusive practice that can then be generalised to the whole student population.

Zepke et al. (2005) point to the particular relevance of relationships in the New Zealand context, particularly with Māori. Their data concurs that the answer to "a rhetorical question often asked by Māori—'what is the most important thing in the world?'—should be 'he tangata, he tangata, he tangata'—it is people, it is people, it is people" (p. 20). Later work

involving some of the same authors (Zepke et al., 2010) points out the reliance of Māori and Pasifika students on a favourable cultural climate within their learning environments for engagement with learning. They cite the work of Gavala and Flett (2005) who show the connection for Māori students between high levels of cultural stress, and a reduced sense of overall well-being, academic enjoyment and motivation. Earlier work by S. Bennett and Flett (2001) found that a strong sense of cultural identity as Māori mediated the effect of academic problems, and worked in such a way as to improve educational outcomes for these students. Webber (2018) articulates the same phenomenon.

There is also research into the needs and circumstances of the Pasifika minority in New Zealand education. Sterne (2006) records some of the elements relating directly to the literature on Pasifika learning needs, for example, the strong emphasis on the role of the teacher as an interactive facilitator of learning (Prebble et al., 2004); as a cross-cultural communicator (Le Roux, 2002); and as a model, guide and parent figure (Pasikale & Fiso, 1996). The findings support the call for attention to *mafaga*, the encouragement of the heart, as a significant source of motivation for Pasifika students. Tait, Horsley, and Tait (2016) note the particular importance of positive relationships with teachers for Pasifika students. Samu (2016) speaks of the importance of "learning communities that are based on caring, inclusive and cohesive relationships" (p. 47).

Teacher qualities that enhance relationships.

Teacher approachability has been found to be an important quality in the facilitation of positive teacher–student relationships (Denzine & Pulos, 2000; Devlin & O'Shea, 2012). In early work, Wilson, Woods, and Gaff (1974) suggest that students notice differing aspects of the teaching practices of staff, which provides cues to students about staff accessibility outside the classroom and could therefore explain differing rates of student–faculty interaction. In respect of support for underrepresented minority groups of students, Santos and Reigadas (2000) point

out the important roles that could be played by staff in minority students' social networks, and their ability to offer information and contacts not otherwise available to these students, in addition to much-needed support, encouragement, and guidance.

Nadler and Nadler (2001) find teacher empathy and credibility to be positively related to out-of-class communication. Lundquist, Spalding, and Landrum (2002) find that being approachable is one of the specific faculty behaviours that could contribute to student persistence. Hagenauer and Volet (2014) find approachability of lecturers not only relevant for the establishment of quality teacher–student relationships, but also for creating an overall feeling of connectedness and preventing students from becoming alienated from the university; approachable lecturers and tutors are described as very helpful for students' success in learning and adjusting to university.

Abrami, d'Apollonia, and Rosenfield (1996), building on the work of Lowman (1996), find, from a range of student questionnaires, that effective instruction could be reduced to two main factors or roles. Lowman refers to the first dimension as "intellectual excitement" (p. 34), or professors' presentation clarity, organisation, and ability to stimulate student interest; he saw the second dimension as an "interpersonal rapport" (p. 35), defined by their tendency to welcome students' questions, encourage students, acknowledge their input and feelings about the class, and express interest in students as individuals. Abrami et al. (1996) describe the differences between what they see as the instructional roles and personal roles taken on by teachers, with the latter almost as important as the former in addressing teachers' concern for students, availability, respectfulness, and willingness to answer questions and foster interaction

Importantly, attending to the personal role in college teaching is most effective when it is coupled with a focus on the instructional role (Lowman 1995). In other words, caring is a part of effective college teaching, but not the totality. Supportive relationships between faculty and

students are not at the potential detriment of instructional rigour, but instead function as a conduit for students to master difficult material.

A learner-centred approach prioritises the personal domain, of which interpersonal relationships are a large part (Deakin Crick, McCombs, Haddon, Broadfoot, & Tew, 2007). Alfassi (2004) studied the efficacy of a learner-centred environment in enhancing the academic achievement and motivation of an at-risk group of high school students. The learner-centred environment helped students attain significantly higher achievement scores, while also showing an effect on internal motivation. The study notes that "a structured academic program in a learner-centred environment could provide hope for students at academic risk and other students who are likely to be lost to the academic educational system" (p. 1). Freiberg and Lamb (2009) note that "person-centred classrooms facilitate higher achievement, and have more positive learning environments with stronger teacher–student relationships than teacher-centred or traditional classrooms" (p. 99). Hattie (2009), drawing on the work of Cornelius-White (2007), notes that "in classes with person-centred teachers, there is more engagement, more respect of self and others, there are fewer resistant behaviours…and there are higher achievement outcomes" (p. 119). Learner-centred teaching approaches have been gaining renewed attention for their effectiveness in engaging urban students (Cornelius-White, 2007; Donnell, 2007). Based on the political philosophy of Freire and the cognitive-developmental theory of Vygotsky, learner-centred teaching is premised on a model of reciprocal learning between student and teacher as distinct from traditionally hierarchical approaches. Foster (2008) finds that, from the students' perspective, the key difference of this orientation is the sense of teachers' authentic care and commitment to their academic success. Daniels, Cole, and Wertsch (2007) observe that in a constructivist (e.g., Vygotskian) perspective, the social relationship develops via interaction between the learner and the more knowledgeable person,

and is an important facilitator of learning because it provides support, encouragement, and assistance for students.

Past research has shown that teachers perceived as caring by students can have a transformative impact. The impact of perceived teacher care on students' school-related behaviour and motivation is associated with a wide range of positive outcomes including higher attendance (Cornelius-White, 2007), time spent studying (Rosenfeld, Richman, & Bowen, 2000), increased academic achievement (O'Connor & McCartney, 2007) and an increased rate of retention (Gill-Lopez, 1994). Presented in different ways and viewed through different lenses, the observation that students perform for teachers who care can be found in a multitude of studies.

Valenzuela (1999), based on her ethnographic study of the experiences of Latino students in Houston, Texas, proposes a framework for "authentic caring" relationships (p. 136). Her framework for "an optimal definition of caring" includes Noddings' earlier work as one of three interrelated ideas. In short, Noddings (2005) suggests that relationships of care are essential to teaching. She sees care as a relational interaction, and that a caring relation comes about, in its most basic form, as a connection or encounter between two human beings. Hence, in her terms, the encounters that constitute teaching-and-learning opportunities are occasions where care may be exhibited. For Noddings (2005), caring relationships provide the foundation for academic success.

Valenzuela (1999) built on Noddings' caring theory, and incorporated ideas of social capital and the Mexican cultural construct of "*educacion*." According to Valenzuela, combining these ideas means that authentically caring pedagogy flows through relationships established between teacher and student, creating a culturally responsive pedagogy in a context where

students' perceptions and feelings about school and their place in it are critical to their academic achievement.

Meyers (2009) suggests that the power of care as a teaching tool may not always be recognised by teaching staff, who underestimate the ability of supportive relationships in the classroom to encourage students to become more invested in learning, enable them to extend beyond their current abilities, and form a bridge for mentorship. Toshalis (2012) tells us that while there is little consensus on how care is to be defined and applied in the classroom, at the same time there is little argument about its central place in teaching and learning.

Korth's (2003) theoretical work also sheds interesting light on the nature of caring. Via an ethnographic of human interaction, she focuses on how "care-in-action" is co-constructed by participants in an act of caring, and how care may be shown, for instance, by friends not allowing the joke of another friend to fall flat. Such circumstances are commonplace in classroom discussions, where facilitators might be responsible for making connections between slightly digressive student contributions and the topic at hand, in order to "care" for the contributor. Korth's notion of care as an action also provides a critical perspective to caring theory, since many studies of care are based on an historically gendered discourse which represents care as an emotion, and largely female, counterposed with reason and thought, these being largely male. This traditional view has created an unhelpful dichotomisation in the discussion of the nature of caring. Korth's view is rather that caring is recognised as taking place based on a set of meanings shared by participants in an act and responds (or fails to respond) to the expectations of the group members.

Cureton and Gravestock (2018) find that students are able to articulate a number of lecturer attitudes and behaviours that they see as encouraging good inclusive learning relationships. The list includes enthusiasm, good communication skills, the ability to listen, receive and

respond to questions, amongst others. As a result of their research, the authors propose strategies for teaching that help lecturers "locate learning in both the affective and cognitive domains" (p. 68), in order to remind them of the strength of both of these areas in the creation of a classroom which values dialogue as part of learning. They suggest that the dominant lecturer view of learning being one-way does not match the student expectation of a two-way relationship, and risks damaging the underlying contract of trust that should exist between students and lecturers, with perhaps flow-on effects on motivation and engagement.

Parnes, Suarez-Orozco, Osei-Twumasi, and Schwartz's (2020) study of community-college instructors and students highlights the importance (for student success) of developing strong relationships with instructors. They find that "instructor relationships were significantly associated with all student outcomes…assessed, including both behavioral and cognitive academic engagement and GPA" (p. 16).

Relatedness and a sense of belonging.

Freeman, Anderman, and Jensen (2007) find that a sense of belonging continues to be associated with academic motivation in college-level students and that there are specific instructor characteristics that are associated with college students' sense of class belonging.

Osterman (2010) observes that a sense of belonging can fill the relatedness needs that are at the heart of human growth and development, and this sense of belonging can be most directly affected by the quality of the relationship that teachers develop with their students. Establishing a positive relationship with students, utilising teaching strategies that enable students to learn, and empowering them as learners in the classroom are all expressions of an ethic of care; the outcome is that students feel cared for and are more likely to be engaged in learning.

Osterman (2010) also notes that there is a conundrum at play in engagement and relatedness, an accumulated disadvantage: the students least likely to experience belonging in the classroom

are those who are less engaged. Connell, Halpern-Felsher, Clifford, Crichlow, and Usinger (1995) determine that teachers' interactions with students correspond with the teachers' perception of the students' engagement; but, more broadly, it would be possible to argue that teachers' interactions with students correspond with students' desirability, after the style of Rist (1970). On the brighter side, when teachers have positive feelings about students, that sense of care and acceptance is conveyed directly to the students (Osterman, 2010).

L. Thomas's (2012) study finds student engagement and belonging to be central to improving student retention and success, to such an extent that the author encourages institutions to enable a culture of belonging to be realised, in order to continue to broaden the student base and to facilitate the success of students who have not traditionally prospered at the tertiary level. High-quality student-centred learning and teaching, she posits, sit at the heart of effective student retention and success.

Strayhorn (2018) writes of the significant role that university teachers can play in developing a sense of belonging for students by facilitating positive interactions amongst them and their peers, as it is the peer group that provides the necessary feedback and support. He sees the link between sense of belonging and student success as being incontrovertible, hence recommends the adoption of policies that, across the board, seek to enhance sense of belonging via whatever means available.

The overall thrust of this body of research appears to be that students can be drawn into their learning by specific strategies that engage them and make them feel cared for and involved, and that institutions can be active in this process. Retention and academic success are not exclusively student-driven processes; there is a large part to be played by practitioners in developing authentic relationships which reinforce to the uncertain students that they are

welcome, expected and valued, and that their success is expected, too (L. Thomas, Hill, Mahony, & York, 2017).

Students and Their Relationship with Peers

Social networks: Peer relationships and social integration.

The research into the significance of peer relationships for adolescents and young adults has a considerable history, dating back to Erikson (1963) and Newcomb (1962). Researchers (e.g., Fortney, Johnson, & Long, 2001; Newcomb & Wilson, 1966; Newton & Ender, 2010) have even posited that peers are a more powerful influence in undergraduate education than their advisors and lecturers. Research is clear that peer relationships have a large part to play in the integration of students in the new social environment of their tertiary studies (Astin, 1984; Tinto, 1987). Astin (1993) further finds that factors such as interactions with other students are positively related to degree completion, as well as to a wide range of other outcomes. Research is also clear about the particular significance of friendship quality and the effects of peer relationships for emerging adolescents (e.g., Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006; Wentzel & Muenks, 2016), and the body of research into similar phenomena for university-aged students is growing (e.g., Ashwin, 2003; Dennis, Phinney, & Chuateco, 2005; Gleckel, 2015; Pittman & Richmond, 2008). However, differences have been found in the way majority and minority students' networks may affect their integration into the new educational environment, with those students whose values and behaviours are congruent with the values of the institution most likely to persist in their studies (Berger & Milem, 1999; L. Thomas, 2012; K. Thomas, 2019; Wimpenny & Savin-Baden, 2013). Phelan, Yu, and Davidson (1994) find that peer relationships play a key role in the educational lives of African-American students, and that they become extensively disengaged when they are unable to connect with peers. Byrd and Whiting (2006), and Moore, Ford, and Milner (2005) concur, identifying this as a contributing factor in the academic underachievement of African-American students.

Researchers have found that student-persistence decisions are critically affected by the level of student involvement and integration into any part of an institution's academic and social programmes (e.g., Astin, 1984; Bean, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Social integration has been defined as students' social and psychological comfort with their surroundings, connections and relationships with common groups of students, and a broader relationship, a sense of belonging to their institution. These factors can provide a sense of security which helps students bond with others and achieve common goals, one of the most important being to persist with their course of study until graduation (Kuh & Love, 2000; Roberts & Styron, 2010).

Researchers recommend that teachers find ways of building student-to-student communication strategies into courses, such that peer relationships are formed and strengthened, and student connection is enhanced (Myers et al., 2010; Sollitto, Johnson, & Myers, 2013). Such advice is based on the finding that students with collegial peer relationships in the classroom report higher levels of learning outside of that environment (Sollitto et al., 2013). Study groups can be an example of this, and may lead to enhanced levels of both social and academic integration (Byrd & Whiting, 2006; Karp, Hughes, & O'Gara, 2010; Willcoxson et al., 2011).

Hausmann et al. (2007) find that the beginning of the academic year is an important time for the building of a sense of belonging, and that students who report more interactions with and support from peers, as well as staff and parents, also report having a greater sense of belonging. They also find that, via on-campus social experiences with a view to building networks and relationships, a strong sense of belonging can be built that is independent of previous academic experiences or demographic characteristics of the students (Hausmann et al., 2007).

A social network perspective suggests that students' relationships with peers, staff, existing friends and family are amongst the attributes that contribute to what students gain from their higher education experience (Kuh, 2005; Morrow & Ackermann, 2012; Pascarella, 2006). In

order to build stronger networks amongst students, peer tutoring is a strategy used in universities to address quality education in an environment where funding is under pressure and student numbers have risen; peer-to-peer learning can be a feature of learning communities, support in online classrooms and a part of programmes designed to help with the transition into university (Colvin & Ashman, 2010).

Myers et al. (2010) suggest that engaging in group work could serve the function of helping students interact more by helping the students associate with one another and work towards common goals together, thereby improving in-class connectedness. By engaging in more active discussion amongst each other and sharing in the completion of tasks, students may feel more connected, thus increasing both affective (L. S. Johnson, 2009; Myers et al., 2010) and cognitive learning (Frisby & Martin, 2010; Myers et al., 2010). It seems that the process of adapting and becoming habituated to the university classroom influences feelings of connectedness for students (Sollitto et al., 2013), and that within the classroom, perceptions of connectedness via relationships with others help peers to become familiar with the expectations and content of the class (Zorn & Gregory, 2005).

Tinto (2010) urges institutions not to underestimate the complexity of the social task facing new students; not only do existing relationships need to be modified, but a whole new set have to be developed. The successful achievement of this task can see students gain a sense of belonging, and research has established empirical support for the idea that students' sense of belonging and peer relationships are closely interrelated (Ramsay, Jones, & Barker, 2007; Strauss & Volkwein, 2004; Swenson, Nordstrom, & Hiester, 2008). Maunder's (2018) research finds that students with strong attachments to their university friends also "demonstrated stronger attachment to the university as a whole" (p. 765), and goes on to underline the role played by social relationships in creating a sense of institutional belonging and an overall positive student experience.

Peer relationships, classroom connectedness and academic performance.

Schlossberg (1989) suggests that peer interaction is the first and most important step for students to become engaged and involved in their studies. Furthermore, researchers have found that students, rather than the teacher, may have the greatest influence on one another in the classroom. Fassinger (1995) finds that it is possible to predict classroom participation by the level of student supportiveness for one another. The same researcher has subsequently examined participation as a group experience and finds the students' willingness to speak in class is more influenced by perceptions of peer friendliness than by perceptions of the teacher (Fassinger, 1997).

Noting that students are a key component in the establishment of any tertiary classroom climate, Dwyer et al. (2004) propose the construct of classroom connectedness, which is conceptualised as the "student-to-student perceptions of a supportive and cooperative communication environment in the classroom" (p. 267). According to these researchers, when students consider the climate to be supportive and cooperative, they feel connected to the relationships they have with their peers, are less likely to be inconsiderate or disruptive (Bingham, Carlson, Dwyer, & Prisbell, 2009) and more willing to talk and participate in class (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2010; Sollitto et al., 2013).

Researchers (e.g., Ashwin, 2003; Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000; Baker & Hellmundt, 2017; Brookfield, 2013; Bryson, 2016; Dennis et al., 2005; E. McIntosh & Cross, 2017), have found that academic relationships with staff and student peers increases the time and energy that students devote to their academic experience, thereby leading to a higher level of academic performance. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) find that the most important interactions with peers appear to reinforce the academic learning that takes place in the classrooms, with the benefits of those interactions then permeating into other areas of college life, creating a virtuous cycle of engagement, involvement and success. The development of

peer relationships has been judged to be amongst the most important components in helping students adjust to the demands of their classrooms and encouraging intellectual self-confidence (Antonio, 2004; Swenson et al., 2008).

Padgett et al. (2010) find that meaningful discussions with faculty and peers outside of the classroom during the first year of college appear to stimulate a desire to engage in cognitive activities. Student-to-student connectedness in the tertiary classroom has implications for educational processes and outcomes. Research has also found positive associations between student-to-student connectedness and affective learning (L. S. Johnson, 2009), cognitive learning (Prisbell, Dwyer, Carlson, Bingham, & Cruz, 2009) and self-regulated learning (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2010). Glaser and Bingham (2012) note classroom connectedness as a way for students to learn socially and motivationally. Other benefits of quality peer relationships can be lower levels of anxiety and stress (Pittman & Richmond, 2008).

Arvanitakis and Hornsby (2016) summarise a student success framework with four future proficiency clusters, the third of which is peer teamwork, underlining the necessity for peers to learn to work successfully together. Wimpenny and Savin-Baden (2013), in a review of the student engagement literature, find a characterisation of engagement "as the value of connecting to a wide set of relationships including student to tutor, student to student" (p. 315).

Students and Their Relationships With Institutions

From the outset: Institutional belonging.

The overall level of student engagement with all aspects of university life and its role in persistence has been underlined by researchers for some time (Hausmann et al., 2007; Roberts & Styron, 2010; Tinto, 1993, 2010, 2017). The role that the institution might play in supporting these processes of integration and engagement is multifaceted, but might be to build a sense of

belonging for students by engaging them in a set of relationships. Bean and Metzner's (1985) student-persistence model includes the idea of "institutional fit," described in part as the extent to which students felt they "fit in" at the university, found to be similar to a sense of belonging. There may be monitoring of sub-groups of students known to be at risk of early departure (James et al., 2010). Institutions may encourage staff of all responsibility genres to see retention of students as a shared issue (Astin, 1984; Wyckoff, 1998; Zepke et al., 2005). Specific teaching-and-learning approaches might be adopted to support the integration of first-year students into the university (Crosling et al., 2009). There may be deliberate efforts by institutions to adapt their organisational cultures to meet the needs of diverse student groups (Zepke & Leach, 2005; Zepke et al., 2005). Institutions might provide professional development opportunities for staff, with a view to supporting new intakes of students (Longwell-Grice & Longwell-Grice, 2008).

Zepke et al. (2005) find data from surveys of students in New Zealand tertiary institutions to support the idea that "that teaching quality and support, flexibility in accommodating different learning approaches and needs, and institutions' ability to create a climate in which students felt comfortable are factors in retention" (p. 17). One of their key recommendations for teachers and institutions is to "focus on fostering positive relationships between students and significant others in the institution" (p. 20), with a view to securing the students to the institution by the "glue" provided by such relationships. Researchers have found that institutions which foster student success provide stimulating classroom experiences that encourage them to devote more time and effort to their learning and help them develop good study habits (Kuh, 2005; Volkwein, Valle, Parmley, Blose, & Zhou, 2000). There has also been recognition of the need to induct students into the wider higher education environment via more student-centred strategies to enable students to learn about and understand the expectations and culture of higher education (Crosling, 2003; Crosling et al., 2009; Yorke & Thomas, 2003). The form

this induction process takes might be the development of relationships with members of the institution, both academic and general, to provide ongoing support to students, or support on which the student might rely in times of stress of crisis.

Research (e.g., Howard, 2005; Kuh et al., 2006) has underlined the importance for students of "psychological contract theory" (Rousseau, 1995), which holds that students have certain beliefs about the appropriate nature of relationships with peers and university staff. A key feature of this theory about psychological contracts is that there is an agreement between the student and the institution as to how one is to respond to the other; however, these understandings rarely become explicit or orally articulated by or for the student, though the institution may set out expectations in course or programme materials and other such publications as codes of conduct. When the student perceives the contract is breached, a circumstance prone to happening due to the generally implicit nature of the understanding, the student may lose trust in the institution as represented by staff or peers (Kuh et al., 2006).

Some researchers have suggested that the degree of affiliation that the student feels towards the university (i.e., university attachment) is linked to better social adjustment (Tao, Dong, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Pancer, 2000), lower levels of depressive symptoms, higher academic motivation, and lower attrition rates (Beyers & Goossens, 2002). Thus researchers (e.g., Pittman & Richmond, 2008) suggest that, for younger students, a sense of school-type belonging at university may be an important component in a comprehensive model predicting college students' adjustment.

Via the Documenting Effective Educational Practice (DEEP) project, Kuh et al. (2005) describe the conditions for student learning and success at high-performing institutions, which include an improvement-oriented campus culture and the idea of shared responsibility for educational quality and student success. Revisiting these institutions in 2010, other DEEP

researchers (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2011) have found other practices that have taken on even greater importance: data-informed decision making, the ethic of "positive restlessness" (the idea that institutions should never be completely satisfied with their performance), collaboration between academic and student affairs, and campus leaders' work to increase staff understanding of the conditions for student success (McCormick, Gonyea, & Kinzie, 2013).

Tinto (2010) recommends that theories of student retention be used to inform a model of institutional action around engagement, relationships and belonging that helps with the development of policies, programmes, and practices to enhance student retention and completion. Researchers (e.g., Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008) have found that student engagement, which benefits all students, appears to benefit even more those college students with the lowest SAT scores, creating an increased advantage to those students who might appear to be less well-prepared (Tinto, 2010), and working to support those students who come to university study from a less successful academic background (Kuh et al., 2006).

Because of research and the growing body of evidence that underlines the benefits of a sense of belonging and positive relationships for first-year students, other researchers (e.g., Pittman & Richmond, 2008; Zepke et al., 2005) have called for university administrators to consider strategies to help students develop these attributes early in their academic programmes, via smaller class sizes, or access to more experienced student or faculty mentors. It has been recommended that institutions go beyond merely offering programmes; they should be high-quality, personalised experiences, grounded in a culture that focuses on success for all students (Kuh et al., 2008). The emphasis on the overall experience at the personal level is an important one; transition programmes can be very helpful for students adjusting to university, but a sense of belonging to the institution and the new academic community may need nurturing in order to develop and thrive (Yorke, 2006).

At the institutional level, academic staff have their role to play, too. As noted above, Strayhorn (2018) has written of the significance of the role of the university teacher in the development of a sense of student belonging, and developing relationships which contribute to this. He also emphasises the need for this responsibility to be taken seriously in all parts of the university enterprise; student success stems as much from policies which have an influence on overall campus climate as it does from the day-to-day opportunities to interact with peers and teachers. He is clear that "positive interpersonal interactions increase students' sense of belonging and sense of belonging leads to success" (p. 3). The importance of person-to-person relationships is clear in this context.

Aspects of the Learner

The literature review that follows will look at complexities that may face academic staff and institutions wishing to engage with an increasingly diverse student population, complexities at the personal and interpersonal levels, in terms of relationship building with and between students and peers, lecturers and institutions at which they may study.

In the current New Zealand context, institutions are now keen to demonstrate their aptitude in creating success for diverse populations of students, by addressing the needs of students who fall outside the group previously considered to be "traditional" university candidates. Such students may be first-generation students, or students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds; they may be members of minority groups who have not previously been represented at universities in large numbers. They may be international students who do not have English as a first language. As an example, part of the diversity picture is the increase in international students who, in 2017, made up 15% of the student body in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2017). Since 2005, international PhD student enrolments have increased to make up around 45% of total domestic and international PhD enrolments in New Zealand's eight universities (Berquist, 2017).

The complex nature of modern students.

The literature pertaining to the nature and needs of the modern learner is located against the backdrop of ongoing change in the tertiary sector, a broadening of scope often referred to as the massification of higher education (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009; Fox, 2002; Teichler, 2003). Rossi (2010), citing Bonaccorsi (2006), identifies the mid-1990s as the location for a significant wave of massification, following on from other such occurrences in the mid-1960s and the early 1980s. In New Zealand, in 2015, Ministry of Education (2016) figures showed that 39.2% of 18–19-year-olds and 33.5% of 20–24-year-olds were enrolled in higher education; this is well above the 15% threshold established by Trow (2007) which separates elite from mass education. J. Stephenson and Yorke (2013) identify the 1990s as a period of revolutionary change in higher education in this regard, and posit that "it is a time when it is finally being acknowledged that higher education is an extremely diverse and mass activity that cannot be supported by the elitist arguments of the past" (p. vii).

With these new enrolments came changes in the student population, and increased demands placed on institutions in respect of catering to the needs of their changed "clientele" (Schuetze & Slowey, 2002). This new nontraditional university population brought with it aspects of diversity to be found in the broader community, with all its attendant complexities (Schuetze & Slowey, 2002). Previous elitist views of tertiary student populations no longer applied, and universities found they could no longer make assumptions about their students' provenance or preparedness for higher education (Berger, 2008). As these institutions fell under increasing scrutiny (Lynch, 2006), they found their funding bodies were interested in such aspects of university life as student retention and rates of completion (Schneider, 2010). Thus, a renewed focus began to fall on this new generation of students and how to ensure their continued participation. This focus rested on much work that had already been done in the area of student

retention via an "interactionalist" model of student persistence, amongst which Tinto's (1975, 1987) work came to be most influential, alongside Astin's (1984) theory of involvement.

Astin's (1984) theory of involvement rests on a longitudinal study of student persistence which led to the conclusion that factors contributing to persistence were associated with students' involvement in college life (Milem & Berger, 1997). These theories have helped inform the present study by offering a baseline of research and understanding about the institutional and relational factors likely to impact students; the development of relationships which allow student involvement have become critical. The diverse nature of the modern student population appears to be drawing the need for student involvement and engagement into sharper focus.

Hausmann et al.'s (2007) work sought to draw a distinction between measures of social involvement and/or academic integration, as used by Bean (1983) and Astin (1975), amongst others, and the notion of belonging, that is "the psychological sense that one is a valued member of the college community" (Hausmann et al., 2007, p. 804). These ideas have been further developed by researchers such as L. Thomas (2012), Wimpenny and Savin-Baden (2013) and Bryson (2016). Again, ensuring the eventual success of an increasingly diverse student population may require institutions to attend to their needs in a different way.

Ethnicity and culture, identity, indigeneity, underrepresented minority groups.

This section of the literature review will examine the complex factors surrounding the standing, performance and persistence of differing groups of students in the higher educational environment. It will draw on pertinent sociological, psychological and anthropological sources in an effort to flesh out the background to and underlying causes of a significant issue in developing relationships which support participation and engagement, which may be relevant to this study.

Bourdieu's (1977) ideas about habitus are germane here. There are members of, for instance, a university student population whose habitus, or culture, broadly stated, matches the culture of their surroundings and those surrounding them. They are comfortable and in the right place. A useful metaphor for this state might be a fish in water (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992): the fish finds itself in its natural state, with little to challenge it and no impediments to its life and progress; the environment is suitable, appropriate and correct. This is also a useful metaphor for the privilege that accrues to those whose habitus matches their surroundings; they are as unaware of the lack of impediment as the fish which do not see the water they swim in. Equally, there are others whose habitus is not a match for the university, and who must work all the harder to decipher the codes of practice of university life and to make a success of the academic endeavour. There are many aspects of culture, broadly stated, which impact the development of relationships in higher education.

Interestingly, in the New Zealand context, Millward, Turner, and Van Der Linden (2012) find that underrepresented groups face many challenges when entering higher education institutions. In the past, these challenges have been underlined by numerous researchers, who have highlighted the effects of exposure to different educational risk factors and the impact on continued engagement with programmes of higher education (Crozier, Reay, Clayton, Colliander, & Grinstead, 2008; Leathwood, 2006; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006; Reay, 2001; Reay, Ball & David, 2002). These risk factors include ethnicity, gender, age, marital status, nontraditional entry and low-socioeconomic status. They find that the combination of being poor, having prior low achievement, being male, being Māori or of Pacific Island origin and having significant family or work commitments could increase the risk of failing to complete a higher education qualification (Millward et al., 2012).

M. J. Fischer's (2007) work in the United States considers the early departure statistics for many groups outside the mainstream of college life (minority ethnic groups, first-generation

students, students under financial pressure) and seeks to explain the difficulties faced by these groups. M. J. Fischer makes the pertinent point that while there is ample evidence that particular groups struggle to persist in higher education, few theories have been put forward to account for the continuing lack of success at this level. M. J. Fischer draws on Steele and Aronson's (1995) and Steele's (1997) work on stereotype threat as a way to theorise the difficulties experienced by groups outside the mainstream in adjusting to and making a success of college life; one such difficulty may be the relationships they experience in engaging with other groups. Drawing on Weidman's (1989) model, Sheikholeslami's (2019) study of historically underrepresented students in STEM fields in the US finds that student–faculty and peer–peer interactions and relationships play important role in academic and social experiences of these students; further, indications are that such relationships go on to shape career aspirations and development (Sheikholeslami, 2019).

Briefly, Steele (1997) proposes that negative stereotypes about the intellectual ability of minority groups may result in academic underperformance through a fear of confirming these negative stereotypes. He further argues that over time such a fear, if felt strongly enough, has the potential to interfere with performance, and can result in a defensive reaction for minority students against the environment in which the threat is experienced, a type of disidentification. Hence, Steele suggests, the adjustment process to higher education cannot be assumed to be the same as for all students, and race and ethnicity have a part to play in how college is experienced.

C. R. Kaiser, Vick, and Major's (2006) work draws on Steele to posit the ideas of prejudice expectations and prejudice apprehension. Their research demonstrates that the level of attention paid by individuals to clues in language and behaviour that imply a judgement or personal devaluing is heightened for those who expect such clues to be present. The reverse was true for those who typically do not expect such behaviour in others: they are much less likely to notice

identity-based devaluing behaviour. Their data provides support for Allport's (1954) observation that members of stigmatised groups can become on guard for signs of subtle identity devaluation. C. R. Kaiser et al. (2006) further note that attention allocated towards cues that are threatening to social identity come at the expense of attention that could be allocated towards other tasks, making the already stigmatised person less able to perform to capacity; such a phenomenon may be quite relevant to groups of students in this study and how they perceive and experience relationships in their educational environment.

Guyll, Madon, Prieto, and Scherr's (2010) work also elucidates the link between stereotype threat and social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981), which proposes that self-esteem is, at least in part, dependent upon the notion that the group one belongs to has value. Negative stereotypes are a threat to this idea because they expose the beliefs of others that the group in question may be inferior. The more strongly an individual might identify with a social group, the more important it then becomes for the individual to perceive the group favourably, to "esteem" it, and the more threatening a negative stereotype of the group will be to the individual (Schmader, 2002). Consistent with this idea, group identification moderates stereotype-threat effects, in that negative effects are greatest amongst highly identified individuals. Thus, strong identification with a social group that bears a negative stereotype can increase vulnerability to stereotype threat (Schmader, 2002). In the New Zealand context, such social groups might be Māori or Pasifika students, students moving on from South Auckland secondary schools into tertiary study, or members of other ethnic groups, cast in a particular way by media reports or word of mouth. The significance of these theories for this study is that young people enter tertiary study aware of prevalent stereotypes about their social grouping, and sometimes the institutions themselves, despite their best intentions, act to reinforce such stereotypes, exacerbating an already difficult situation for their new entrants in establishing successful and supportive relationships.

Guyll et al.'s (2010) work also draws on the ideas of Berry (2003) with regard to acculturation and the interface between a migrant population and the host equivalent. Berry suggests that there are significant differences in outcomes for populations that engage in a bicultural approach to acculturation, and those that stand more separately. A bicultural approach allows the maintenance of a strong connection to the heritage culture, at the same time as permitting a positive engagement with the host culture. The separation strategy features strong heritage ties, but little host-culture adaptation (Berry, 2003). Studies of Latino students in US university settings have found that a less strong orientation to the host culture is predictive of greater perceived barriers to college education for these students, and have made a link between a low degree of acculturation and negative academic outcomes (Guyll et al., 2010).

For less acculturated students, this process can become part of a spiral of decline. The membership of the hosted group can increase ethnic salience, as the hosted students feel estranged from the majority culture, both in response to differential treatment from the majority group and internally, as these students construct themselves as a different, minority population. The minority students then infer that others are noticing and responding to their ethnicity, and judging them as a result, and end up feeling more stereotyped and stigmatised. As a result, these students may perceive greater discrimination against themselves and other minority students, and may experience a reduction in trust and comfort in interpersonal interactions and relationships on campus (e.g., Mendoza-Denton, Downey, Purdie, Davis, & Pietrzak, 2002). As a result, and again, possibly relevant to the present study, stigma-conscious students may fail to establish appropriate relationships with the institutional resource people, such as guidance counsellors or academic advisors, making it more difficult for such students to reach their full potential (Guyll et al., 2010). At the same time, Ward and Geeraert (2016) note the mitigating role that strong social support from peers and teachers can play in fostering positive attitudes towards the host culture.

Cultural groupings in the New Zealand context.

As a modern society with a diverse population drawn from many parts of the globe, New Zealand is not unique in facing issues which relate to the relative success of different cultural groupings. However, as befits New Zealand's history as a bicultural nation, the prime cultural groupings in focus henceforth in this study will be the European or Pākehā population, and the indigenous Māori peoples of New Zealand. A third strong group also mentioned here is the population of Pacific peoples now present in New Zealand.

In the New Zealand context, there are historical reasons for the disparities in success of cultural groupings outside the European/Pākehā majority; recent improvements in completion and participation rates sit against a less positive backdrop in terms of outcomes in the academic sphere as well as other social indicators. The Ka Awatea report, commissioned in 1991, notes low educational achievement, poor health, high levels of unemployment, high state dependency and high representations in crime and imprisonment as key issues facing Māori development (Ministry of Maori Affairs, 1991). M. Stephenson's (2006) work draws a link between these outcomes and New Zealand's colonial legacy:

> European schooling was the most immediate medium through which the assumed superiority of the colonizers would be institutionalized in internally colonized territories such as New Zealand (Simon, 1990; Mead, 1996), Australia (Fletcher, 1989; Snow, 1992), America (Adams, 1995; Reyhner & Eder, 2004) and Canada (Barman et al., 1986; Miller, 1996). Educational initiatives developed by the colonizers sought variously to teach all children together, to segregate indigenous children from their families, or to separate them from settler children. Their principal objectives, however, were similar. Traditional values, customs and knowledges were to be subjugated and, through controlled access to European knowledge, and training in habits of industry and conformity, indigenous children were to be socialized to accept, as natural,

> positions in the lowest strata of the economic, social and political systems which were being imposed with colonization (Simon, 1990). (M. Stephenson, 2006, p. 310)

Leach (2013) makes a salient point about the standing of the Pākehā/European majority group in higher education in New Zealand, that they experience much less need to feel they belong or to have their cultural background respected, inasmuch as they are already a good fit for the habitus of the institutions in question—they are "fish in water" and take their surroundings and acceptance for granted. Other ethnic groups, unfamiliar with the academic and social worlds in which they find themselves, are much less at ease and are "fish out of water," not feeling the sense of belonging to which they might be sensitive. The challenge, then, is to create an environment in which all groups feel equally at home and in which supportive relationships might flourish.

The component elements of such an environment have been the focus of work commissioned by the Tertiary Education Commission in New Zealand. Chauvel and Rean's (2012) review of the literature draws on different sources (e.g., Alton-Lee, 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2009) in asserting that "the quality of the teaching and the effectiveness of the learning environments facilitated by teaching staff is identified as crucial to Māori learner engagement in tertiary education" (p. 59). They identify several core elements as being important to Māori learner success, including effective teacher relationships and interactions, quality teacher delivery and Māori cultural values and tikanga[10] being central to learning. The absence of some of these core practices, discussed later in the Cultural Responsiveness section, in many students' experiences of the tertiary education mainstream may help in understanding

[10] Tikanga may be defined as a correct procedure, custom, habit, lore, method, manner, rule, way, code, meaning, plan, practice, convention, protocol—the customary system of values and practices that have developed over time and are deeply embedded in the social context.

the disparities which have arisen over time; the following section seeks to articulate these disparities.

Culture and disparity.

While New Zealand has had some successes in reducing inequalities, the gaps in equality amongst the majority of the indicators investigated show worsening achievement for Māori and Pacific peoples (Marriott & Sim, 2015). In respect of educational attainment, it has been the case for some years in New Zealand that a wide dispersion of academic achievement has existed in which two ethnic groups, Māori and Pasifika, are overrepresented at the lower end (Millward, Stephenson, Rio, & Anderson, 2011; Scott, 2005; Tumen, Shulruf, & Hattie, 2008).

While Marriott and Sim (2015) find an improvement in the indicators measuring participation in early childhood education and tertiary participation, and a closing of the gap between Māori and Pākeha in the measure of school-leaver qualifications, they do not find those gains extending into the tertiary sector, with increases in gaps of those holding bachelor's degrees or above. They note that "it is the higher levels of qualifications that are most likely to significantly impact on other inequality measures such as employment and income" (p. 26).

The fact that issues relating to inequality have become raised in the consciousness in recent times may be due, in part, to the work of such people as Nash (2003, 2005), Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) and Stiglitz (2012). Such work has contributed to a broader understanding of the wide-ranging and long-lasting effects of inequality, and not just on those experiencing it at the lower socioeconomic level. The diversion of young people from a strong educational pathway for reasons such as income inequality will eventually limit their opportunities to develop and be productive contributors to the economy and more broadly to society. If an enhanced level of attention to ensuring the success of these young people at tertiary institutions via a set of meaningful and supportive relationships that help glue them to the academic enterprise, then so much the better for all concerned.

The data outlined in Marriott and Sim's (2015) research indicates that New Zealand's strategy to address inequality, as it relates to Māori and Pasifika, has not been successful. The majority of the indicators investigated in their study "show worsening outcomes for Māori and Pacific people… This growing gap in inequality between Māori and Pacific people with the European population, warrants greater government attention if the gaps are not to continue increasing into the future" (p. 27). As pointed out above, the needs of traditionally underrepresented groups in higher education can differ from those of the mainstream and institutions may need to respond to these needs in nontraditional ways, if an equality of success is to be enjoyed by all students.

The need to address social disparity via increased access for all groups in society is neither new nor localised, but despite study and effort, participation in post-secondary study has not benefited all sectors of society to the same extent. Berger and Milem's (1999) study in the US points to a troubling finding: even those African-American students who enter a post-secondary institution with strong levels of institutional commitment are less likely to perceive the institution as being supportive through positive relationships and less likely to persist. They describe as "alarming" their finding that being black is the third largest negative predictor of persistence and is the only measure that has a statistically significant effect on persistence.

Altbach et al.'s (2009) report for UNESCO cites a comparative study that shows in 15 countries, despite programmes to support greater inclusion, the privileged classes retain their relative advantage. They note that "providing higher education to all sectors of a nation's population means confronting social inequalities deeply rooted in history, culture and economic structure that influence an individual's ability to compete" (p. vii). Their study cites international efforts to address the issue: initiatives in Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania were aimed at increasing female enrolment numbers; Mexico's Ministry of Education invested in the development of additional educational services in disadvantaged

areas with some success: 90% of students enrolled were first in their family to pursue higher education, 40% lived in economically depressed areas; the Indian government obliged universities to reserve a set of spaces for "socially and backward classes" (p. viii).

Schreiner et al. (2011) examined the research on high-risk students and the obstacles they face in achieving a college degree, and conclude that, despite significant efforts to enhance the success of such students, their rates of persistence to graduation continue not to match that of their peers. African-American and Latino student graduation rates, for instance, lag 16 to 25 percentage points below the rates of Asian Americans and European Americans. They conclude that because degree attainment is considered by many to be the definitive measure of student success (Kuh et al., 2006), it appears that American higher education has made little progress towards ensuring that the full spectrum of students admitted to college are successful (Schreiner et al., 2011, p. 321).

Tinto's (2010) work looks at differing expectations held by differing students, and the effect it has on them, via differential labelling and grouping, and eventually differential treatment, particularly by staff, in terms of sense of belonging and positive relationships. Suarez-Balcazar, Orellana-Damacela, Portillo, Rowan and Andrews-Guillen (2003) find that African-American students experience more differential treatment by staff in academic settings than do other students. The lower expectations held of African-American students are conveyed by such behaviours as ignoring their participation, treating them stereotypically, and expressing impatience with their responses; such interpersonal markers of disrespect can only impact negatively on the relationships experienced by those students in the broadest sense.

However such ideas of difference might be communicated, students clearly pick up the related expectations and are influenced by the degree to which those expectations and their relationships with those around them validate their presence on campus. In this context, Tinto

draws a parallel with Rendon's (1994) work on validation and success for nontraditional community-college students.

First-generation students.

In general, the literature attests to the fact that being a first-generation college student is a risk factor for early departure or an out-of-time degree completion (Ishitani, 2006; Kuh et al., 2006; Pascarella, Wolniak, Pierson, & Terenzini, 2003; Terenzini et al., 1994). Collier and Morgan (2008) find statistical data to show that the concerns about first-generation student success are well-founded; such students are less likely to graduate than peers who have at least one parent with a college education. They also point out that while Tinto's work on academic integration provides a general framework for understanding student retention, most subsequent research on retention amongst first-generation students in particular emphasises the difficulties with social integration and the formation of relationships, citing the work of Hurtado and Carter (1997) as an example.

The reasons for the performance of first-generation students are multiple and complex; Kuh et al. (2006) cite the obstacles of having personal and time-management skills developed to a lesser degree, less social and family support for their higher education, less knowledge of the upcoming challenges and less experience of making sense of bureaucracy. Longwell-Grice and Longwell-Grice (2008) point out that first-generation students also lack assistance in preparing for their college experience, feel less supported and less well-attached via secure relationships when they are there; and all of these factors are aggregated with the usual pressures and anxieties experienced by any other college student. At the same time as they are trapped in the position of needing more help than other students, the conundrum appears to be that, given their less-attached status, they are less likely to ask for it (Longwell-Grice & Longwell-Grice, 2008).

Low-income students.

The relationship between levels of income and potential university success is evident in the literature and may be a reflection of the sense of belonging (or lack of it) discussed earlier. Large discrepancies in success rates have been found over time for low-income students: for example, Tinto (2010) finds 56% of all high-income students persist to earn a 4-year degree within 6 years of beginning their studies, but only 26% of their low-income peers do so; Schreiner et al. (2011) find students with low-socioeconomic status to be an at-risk group for not succeeding in higher education; less than 29% of low-income students graduate, compared to 73% of high-income students and 55% of middle-income students; Thayer (2000) finds that first-generation university students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds are least likely to be retained through to degree completion.

Chowdry, Crawford, Dearden, Goodman, and Vignoles's (2013) study makes the point that socioeconomic disadvantage does not begin at the point of entry into higher education; rather it is the cause of a low level of achievement throughout secondary education, which culminates in a student who may then go on to higher study being less well prepared for the challenge than peers from higher socioeconomic strata. The task may therefore lie with the ability of the new institution to ensure that efforts are made to integrate and acculturate the arriving students in a manner that prepares them for what lies ahead, and to create the requisite supportive relationships around such students to enhance their chances of success.

In respect of connection via relationships, research has identified strategies which work to mediate or mitigate this experience for students. Stephen, O'Connell, and Hall (2008) argue that the approachability of lecturers is relevant not only for good relationships with students, but that this can provide for an overall feeling of connectedness to the university and prevent students from becoming alienated from the university. Devlin and O'Shea (2012) underline the significance of approachable and available university lecturers for the adaptation process of

first-year students from a low-socioeconomic background; that is to say, relationships help such students. Approachable lecturers and tutors are described as very helpful not only for students' success in learning but also in aiding their adjustment to university. Schreiner et al.'s (2011) study emphasises the significant role staff might play in helping at-risk students to succeed. High-risk students at community colleges spoke of staff who respected them, had faith in them, believed they could succeed, and respected the students and their cultures; these non-formalised relationships were key to the success of these students.

Academic advice and pastoral support: At-risk student groups.

A conundrum for institutions is that high-risk students do not often seek help or take the initiative with staff (Lundberg, 2003); staff who are alert to the needs of these students and are willing to invest time and energy into developing relationships in order to help them at a critical point can make a difference in the ability of such students to succeed and persist.

Research over time has indicated the vulnerability of particular student groups to early departure from their studies, amongst these first-generation students (Ishitani, 2006; Longwell-Grice & Longwell-Grice, 2008; Richardson & Skinner, 1992), students of ethnic-minority populations (e.g., Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Fleming, 1981), and students from a low-socioeconomic background (Carnevale & Rose, 2003). Increased participation by more diverse cohorts of tertiary students around the world has sadly not been matched by increased success; high rates of attrition for these students have been reported in Australia (McInnes, James, & Hartley, 2000), the United Kingdom (Yorke, 1999), and the US (Braxton, 2000), as well as in New Zealand (Scott, 2005; Zepke & Leach, 2007).

The need for effective and timely academic and social support and counselling is stressed in much research (e.g., Anderson, Crockett, Houland, & McGuire, 1997; Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011; Tinto, 2000, 2010; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). Reason et al. (2006), in a study of 6,700 first-year students across a large number of campuses, find that students' perceptions of

university support of their academic, personal, and social needs are the most powerful predictor of the growth of their academic competence. Roos (2012) finds that students in an at-risk group which receives academic advising are retained at a 62% higher rate than those students who receive no such support.

Recommendations about the potential roles for professional or ancillary staff in this process of integration and engagement are made evident in the body of research, especially the part that can be played by student affairs officers or their equivalent (e.g., Astin, 1984; Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011; Long, 2012; Roberts & Styron, 2010; Tinto, 1993, 2003; Zepke & Leach, 2010). Researchers have found that it is particularly important for institutions to invest in academic-support services designed for the needs of diverse students (Alfonso, Bailey, & Scott, 2005; Zepke et al., 2005) and for student and academic affairs to work together to improve the learning climate in and outside the classroom, in order to have the greatest impact on student success (Kuh et al., 2006). They have found that institutional conditions associated with student success include academic-support programmes tailored to meet student needs, collaboration amongst student and academic affairs, and an environment that emphasises support for academic work. All of these things work together to create a network of relationships around students that helps them stay, survive and thrive.

Social identity: Notions of well-being, shame and humiliation.

This section explores both students' well-being and ways in which they may feel threatened in tertiary contexts. It acknowledges the growing body of neuroscientific knowledge that helps our understanding of the ways in which well-being plays out, particularly with respect to the interactions between cognition, emotion and social context, and the implications such interactions have for students engaged in thinking, reasoning, judgement and action (Clement, 2010). Notions of shame, particularly as they relate to Māori students, will be covered in the next section of this review.

Theorists support the notion that learning depends on the interaction of cognitive and emotional networks which empower the intellectual abilities of a person, a fact which can escape educationalists who teach complex content as if it is detached from emotion and human physicality (Damasio, 2003; Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007). They suggest that cognition and reason depend on supportive affective states, and intellectual engagement is enhanced by particular emotional states, and limited by others—effective learning is one of the outcomes of the interaction between cognitive engagement and the affective states that facilitate and help sustain it (Kusché & Greenberg, 2006; Storbeck & Clore, 2008). Opdenakker and Van Damme's (2000) study of first-year secondary school students demonstrates that schools and classes do have an independent effect on student well-being and academic achievement, with the impact on academic achievement being the greater. Further, Van Petegem, Aelterman, Van Keer, and Rosseel (2008) point out the effect over time of classroom climate on student well-being, as well as suggesting a link between student well-being and academic achievement (Clement, 2010). The work of Engels Aelterman, Van Petegem, and Schepens (2004) points to the importance for student well-being of student agency, teacher support and caring, academic emphasis and support, school facilities and infrastructure, school ambience, and relevance of the curriculum. Additionally, there are several student characteristics indicative of their well-being: positive behaviour, intrinsic motivation, and positive relations with friends. Van Petegem et al.'s (2008) research indicates that, amongst other factors, the quality of the student–teacher relationship has proved to be a significant dynamic in helping establish and maintain motivation and interest.

The findings of Van Petegem et al. (2008) serve to emphasise the importance of the quality of the student–teacher relationship for student engagement and student well-being. Teacher support is found to increase emotional security, which, in turn, is related to task involvement (Thijs, Koomen, & van der Leij, 2008). A sense of insecurity directly affects cognitive

performance; therefore, well-being has precedence over cognitive tasks (Koomen, Van Leeuwen, & van der Leij, 2004, cited in Clement, 2010). Practitioners need to take such research into account when considering the selection of teaching-and-learning activities for their students; building relationships, well-being and engagement can go hand-in-hand with building knowledge and skills.

The cumulative effects of shame and humiliation.

The suffering caused to some groups in society by what Fuller and Gerloff (2008) refer to as "rankism" is about the losing and saving of face (see also Goffman, 1963). This perspective offers a distinctive and accessible interpretation of the problem of inequality. It does not concern economic rank or political hierarchy directly, but dignity and its opposite, humiliation, the term that Fuller and Gerloff use rather than Goffman's (1963) "embarrassment" (p. 1). This focus, as will be suggested below, may help with a problem that probably cannot be understood in strictly economic or political terms: gratuitous and/or interminable conflict. Fuller and Gerloff's (2008) analysis begins with what they call micro-inequalities, the withholding of dignity by one person from another. In life, small incidents may contribute to a person feeling of less worth than others, and small slights add up. If they are frequent enough, one can feel like a nobody; to be slighted consistently is humiliating. Much of Goffman's (1963) work concerns this same issue. One seeks to manage the impression one makes on others in order to maintain one's dignity and, at times, the dignity of others, to avoid embarrassment or humiliation. Goffman is concerned only with face-to-face interaction, but Fuller and Gerloff (2008) extend the dignity/humiliation process to the traditional problem of macro-inequalities between groups. Scheff's (2013) theory maintains that recursive shame becomes dysfunctional and might also lead to issues of mental health. He sees that unresolved work-related conflicts become a kind of psychological poison that drains people of emotional energy, makes them anxious, afraid, ashamed and anxiety-ridden, which in turn generates further serious problems

(cited in Ede & Starrin, 2014). In the context of a stressed higher education student, this pattern is likely to lead to difficulty in forming relationships, then to disengagement and withdrawal, as measures are taken by the student to protect self and self-worth.

A cultural view of shame, embarrassment and humiliation: The particular case for Māori in New Zealand.

The literature has reflected the idea that a particular type of shaming emotion exists which affects Māori in a way that does not have an equivalent for Pākehā and that there is potential for such behaviour to impact teaching-and-learning relationships. Ritchie (1963) writes of a particular type of shamed emotion: whakamā, a Māori word that can mean embarrassed, shy, ashamed, coy, or humiliated. This concept may be an appropriate explanation for behaviours which occur in a number of situations and are otherwise difficult to explain in Pākehā terms. Whakamā is often used in Māori society to refer to feeling "inferior, inadequate, diffident and with self-doubt" in uneasy relationships and social situations "outside the range of ordinary events" (p. 178). Metge (1986) suggests that whakamā can be properly handled or mishandled, and that mishandling contains the risk of whakamā becoming "extremely damaging both to the whakamā person and to the social fabric, especially when it becomes ingrained and chronic. Denied outlet or healing, it can erupt in violence" (p. 148).

Karetu (1989) puts whakamā in a broader societal context when writing about the cultural dislocation experienced by many urban Māori: he suggests that modern Māori are caught in a double bind. They feel whakamā in many Māori situations, because of their disconnection from their own cultural background and traditions, and "at the same time, they are whakamā in relation to Pākehā because of the higher status of Pākehā as a group in New Zealand society and their reputed power and achievements in school, work and public institutions" (p. 122). And further, when they exhibit this whakamā in their relationships with the power figures confronting them, be they teachers, welfare officers, bureaucrats or police, the cultural

mismatch and misinterpretation leads only to more blame and punishment (Karetu, 1989). In the contemporary educational context, these same issues are reflected in the work of Bishop and Berryman (2005), who articulate to teachers how to avoid disrupting beneficial patterns of behaviour, perhaps inciting whakamā, via unintentional cross-cultural miscommunication, and thereby build stronger, more supportive relationships with their learners.

Paterson (1993) also addresses the issue of cultural dislocation for many young Māori and remarks on the invisible mamae (pain) and whakamā they feel at the loss and ignorance of their own culture and mores; a culturally responsive approach would incorporate and attempt to address such feelings. Sachdev (1990) writes of whakamā in the context of a cultural concept that might be interesting to a psychiatrist trying to understand the behaviour of Māori patients; the other significant concepts outlined are those of mana (power, authority, or prestige) and tapu (religious or ceremonial restriction). Sachdev notes that whakamā is an important construct in order to understand the interactions of Māori, particularly in cross-cultural settings; behaviours might be presented that are usually not considered abnormal by the Māori community but may be seen as such by those outside that community; he also notes that exact equivalence for whakamā is not found in Western societies, but that the ideas of "shame," "self-abasement," "feeling inferior, inadequate and with self-doubt," "shyness" and "excessive modesty" all go some way to describing aspects of the concept (Sachdev, 1990, p.434).

Sachdev's (1990) interest in the phenomenon and its possible outcomes is largely clinical, but he makes some observations about the possible causes of the phenomenon that might be interesting to educationalists, and how they might go about forming useful relationships with Māori in their care. He identifies that whakamā "is most clearly evident when a Māori is expected to perform in a Pākehā context which he or she finds alien and threatening" (p. 434). He notes that a common cause of whakamā is the awareness of disadvantaged status, which might be in terms of wealth, knowledge, education or power. "Māori children 'become

whakamā' in the classroom when the Pākehā teacher asks them questions.... In this usage, there is an implication of a feeling of inferiority and an inability to meet the demands of the situation, with subsequent anxiety" (p. 434). The potential for such behaviour to impact teaching-and-learning relationships is clear.

Chapter Summary

This literature review has established that there is no shortage of material relating to students and their various relationships in higher education, and that the preponderance of material lies in the area of teacher–student relationships.

A large body of work underlines the significance, for student retention and success, of the relationship between staff and students, and the value added by time spent with these parties engaging with one another, both formally and informally. Many of the researchers whose work is noted above agree that relationships, especially between staff and students, support the work, engagement and eventual success of students in higher education.

The process of developing the relationships is less clear. Tinto (1993) and Terenzini et al. (1994) emphasise time as being the key component; time spent in both informal and formal contact is the answer to student engagement.

Hagenauer and Volet (2014) point out that what constitutes a relationship of quality between staff and students is hard to pin down; time spent together is posited to be the key, but the question of what sort of time, doing what and in support of what sort of relationship remains unclear. Institutions are admonished to ensure staff are willing and prepared to engage with students; a supportive relationship is the ideal, it seems, but the strategies by which this relationship is to be developed appear much less frequently; advice for ways to build strong relationships in face-to-face environments seems to be hard to garner. Zepke and Leach's (2010) proposals for action seem to be outliers in this regard.

Student-centred learning (e.g., Cornelius-White, 2007) is an approach to teaching and learning built on the notion of care, and Toshalis (2012) locates care strongly at the level of a classroom teacher, but it is an idea that is much less prevalent in the higher education literature generally. Another idea that is very hard to find in the literature is the notion of pedagogical care, one that has been central to my own practice. For me, relationships are at the heart of such a practice; care implies a supportive and authentic relationship between the carer and the cared-for (see Noddings, 1992). A student-centred approach to learning is predicated on understanding the needs of the student(s), on entering into a relationship in which genuine attempts are made to meet these needs.

The idea of staff and students in partnerships for learning is one that is beginning to take hold (e.g., Dvorakova et al., 2017; Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014; Nairne & Thren, 2017), providing a narrative that challenges the student-as-consumer notion that has grown through the years of international neoliberal ideologies. One of the foci in the development of this present study is to ensure the presence and value of student voice; hearing students articulate their views and experiences of relationships and the differences they might or might not make are central to this work. Student experience of what lecturers do and do not do to enhance the relationships for students is an aspect that I hope to be able to underline.

The following chapter, Chapter 3, will examine the methodological underpinning for this study in detail, looking at my research intentions, research questions and how this research sits in the paradigms of research in education.

Chapter 3. Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will describe the researcher's intentions in exploring the topic and the research design. The decisions made about the research design will be explained and justified, and the philosophical underpinnings to the research will be made clear.

Research Intentions

The intent of this study was to investigate what first-year undergraduate students in teacher education say about their experiences and perceptions of relationships. The intention was to hear the views of the students with reference to these relationships; as an educator, I could make assumptions about what students might think or say about relationships and their importance, but the research project sought these ideas directly from the students themselves, particularly at a time when some university structures were being developed in ways that made the establishment and maintenance of individual relationships more difficult. As has been made clear elsewhere in this thesis, my interest in the topic goes hand-in-hand with my career, and I had my preconceptions about what the students might say; the accumulation of my professional experience suggested that relationships between students and their teachers could be powerful forces for motivation and engagement. At the very least, I thought students would be sensitive to staff who seemed inclined to develop relationships that went beyond simple academic contact, and those who were not. The intention was to draw out into the light what students might report about their first year of university study, with a view to understanding the students' perspective. I also wanted to see if different demographic groups reported about their relationships in different ways.

Pragmatism as Underpinning Philosophy

I found my stance aligning closely with pragmatism, a philosophy constructed around the ideas of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James and John Dewey (Gorard, 2004). I needed to be free to select research methods which would provide me with the best answers to my questions. The pragmatic approach is not committed to either quantitative or qualitative methods but rather to the selection of what best suits the research question (Creswell, 2003).

I wanted a quantitative view of the opinions of students, but I also wanted that quantitative data to be illuminated by the voices of the students; I wanted their stories to be attached to the data in such a way as to enable me to explore the people and the histories lying behind the statistics. I wanted to connect the figures with the impacts of them as they played out for real people in all the circumstances of their lives and studies. In response to what I might hear from these interviews, I would then construct a representation of what their stories could convey as generalisations, and develop explanations in accordance with my evidence, bound as it would be in the historical and social context of my study. I accepted that I was looking for a truth or some truths, not *the* truth; I was not seeking to prove the effectiveness of relationships for students, I was seeking to understand them better, and perhaps accordingly to propose some strategies that could lead to the development of better relationships, which pragmatically could enhance students' experience of and success in their education. It has been suggested (e.g., R. B. Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007) that pragmatism is a common underpinning philosophy of the mixed-methods approach, and these things came together in a way that suited the intentions of my study.

Giatsi Clausen, Nicol, and Gill (2010) suggest that there are particular assumptions of pragmatism. Ontologically, pragmatism finds itself between the transcendental realism of positivist/post-positivist paradigms and the relativism of constructionist paradigms in that it

accepts external reality but questions the certainty that we can monitor it. Instead, pragmatism chooses explanations that best produce desired outcomes.

Pragmatists claim that there is an external world independent of our minds but they take seriously the assumption that we are socially and historically situated and we cannot be sure if we can "read the world" (Cherryholmes, 1992, p. 14.). In my work, I wanted to be able to make some "warranted assertions" (Hammond, 2013, p. 608) about the world of the students and their studies, and I could accept that the knowledge that might stem from my study would be "consequential and fallible" (Hammond, 2013, p. 609).

Epistemologically, pragmatism accepts both objective and subjective points of view. It shifts between the dualism of positivism, and the inseparability of the knower and the known in constructionism (Giatsi Clausen et al., 2010). Pragmatists appear to have an agnostic approach to knowledge in that they reject any foundational interpretations (anti-foundationalism). This is again based on the assumption that events and objects have no ultimate or final nature and are subject to multiple descriptions (anti-essentialism). It is therefore a mistake to believe that we can "truly" represent or measure those events or objects (anti-representationalism). Pragmatism meets both positivist and constructionist knowledge claims, in that it accepts an external reality that is very difficult to "pin down" (Cherryholmes, 1994; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). This very much fits with my own view of the world, and in particular my experience of education; strategies that work, and understanding why they work, in classes and lectures are ideas that are indeed very difficult to represent, measure and pin down.

With respect to axiology, pragmatism acknowledges that the values of the researcher play a large role when interpreting the results of an enquiry. Enquiries are neither value-free (positivism/postpositivism) nor entirely value-bound (constructionism). Researchers can

intelligently act on the basis of these values through the process of reflexivity (Cherryholmes, 1994; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

Pragmatism holds that logic is both inductive and deductive, with reasoning and interpretation of findings involving an iterative process, where tentative conclusions are constantly checked for consistency at different phases, by triangulating methods and data (Johnstone, 2004). Again, this fits very much with my views, informed as they have been by my career in education. One of my favourite pieces of writing on the topic comes from John Smyth (1993), who reminds us that "knowledge about teaching is in a tentative and incomplete state" (p. 6). With regard to causality, pragmatism accepts some causal relationships but claims that it is impossible to "pin them down." Beliefs about causality and objectivity are context dependent and may change (Cherryholmes, 1994). In the context of this study, I needed to accept that all of these conditions may pertain.

The Pragmatic Worldview

Pragmatism as a world view arises out of actions, situations and consequences; there is a concern with applications and solutions to problems (Patton, 1990). Instead of focusing on methods, researchers emphasise the research problem and use all approaches available to understand the problem (e.g., Rossman & Wilson, 1985). As a philosophical underpinning for mixed-methods studies, Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), Morgan (2007) and Patton (1990) convey its importance for focusing attention on the research problem in social science research and then using pluralistic approaches to derive knowledge about the problem (Creswell, 2009). Pragmatism is not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality. This applies to mixed-methods research in that inquirers draw liberally from both quantitative and qualitative assumptions when they engage in their research (Creswell, 2009).

Pragmatists agree that research always occurs in social, historical, political and other contexts. In this way, mixed-methods studies may include a postmodern turn, a theoretical lens that is reflective of social-justice and political aims (Creswell, 2009). Thus the pragmatic approach is based on the view that research should always be tailor-made, based on the area being studied and the research question, rather than the epistemological or ontological assumptions by which it is underpinned (Creswell, 2003).

According to Cherryholmes (1992), research that is founded on pragmatic assumptions is not preoccupied with asking questions about laws of nature and what is really "real." Rather, it is devoted to the ways of life we choose and live when we ask the questions we ask. Pragmatic research assumptions are, according to Cherryholmes, based on how we could best approach a topic and what the researcher wants to achieve in terms of politics, values and visions. It is the focus on the consequences of the action. Hammond (2013) points out that "pragmatism offers a view of knowledge as generated in action and reflection on action in order to address particular problems" (p. 606). Morgan (2014) suggests that "pragmatism concentrates on beliefs that are more directly connected to actions" (p. 1051). In this study, a pragmatic approach was taken because it best suited the nature of the research and the intentions of the researcher. As evidenced by the research questions, the intention was to investigate students' experiences and perceptions of relationships, via their responses to a survey and an interview. The findings of the research would necessarily and pragmatically be located in the students' responses.

The Paradigms of Research in Education

Research in the first half of the 20th century was largely quantitative, prior to the evolution of qualitative research around the 1970s, an evolution which took place at least in part as a response to the hegemony of the quantitative convention (Caruth, 2013). Quantitative and qualitative research designs were then utilised in educational research largely independently of

one another, while debate fomented between the adherents of the different paradigmatic positions. Quantitative researchers claimed that qualitative research was difficult to generalise, interpret and duplicate, while qualitative researchers, on the other hand, claimed that quantitative researchers often used irrelevant hypotheses and shallow descriptions (Caruth, 2013). As a result of an acceptance that quantitative and qualitative approaches sat within particular and distinct paradigms, based on different epistemological and ontological assumptions about human nature, the view prevailed that the two approaches could not be used together, and that the researcher must work within one paradigm or another (Davidson & Tolich, 2003).

Justification for a Mixed-Methods Research Design

Mixed-methods research has challenged the view that qualitative and quantitative approaches are mutually exclusive. Traditionally, research methodology assumed that if numbers were used, the philosophy underpinning the research would be positivist and deductive. If, on the other hand, numbers were not used then the research must be interpretivist and holistic, based on multiple perspectives rather than a single "truth" (Gorard, 2004).

Qualitative and quantitative approaches used in conjunction may provide complementary data that together give a more complete picture than using one or other singly (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). One method may give greater depth and provide insights not possible through another, while the other method may provide greater breadth. Together, mixed methods should give results from which to make better inferences (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). Mixed methods seemed to be appropriate for the current project for this reason; the combination of methods provides both breadth and depth, an overview plus a detailed view. This approach would also provide a more complete picture of the data and better answers to the research questions.

R. B. Johnson et al. (2007) position mixed-methods research between the extremes of quantitative and qualitative research, and argue that it is a research strategy that is attempting to respect the wisdom of both of those prior paradigms, while also seeking to provide a workable middle solution for many research problems. Mixed-methods research is an approach that enables the researcher to consider multiple viewpoints and perspectives (R. B. Johnson et al., 2007), and one which also provides the researcher with between-methods triangulation (Denzin, 1978).

Cherryholmes (1994) suggests that pragmatic researchers should be clear in discussing their purposes and wishes. In pragmatism, choices about tools and ways to investigate a topic have to do with the desired outcomes and the type of research question. Therefore, a democratic process that would involve a mixed methodology should actually be the one of choice. Such processes increase the likelihood that a wider rather than a narrower range of meanings would be reviewed and not arbitrarily dismissed due to ignorance or privilege (Cherryholmes, 1992, 1994).

Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) summarise these points by presenting pragmatism to be the best paradigmatic choice for the use of mixed method designs, in that:

- it philosophically embraces the use of the quantitative and qualitative elements within the same enquiry;
- it represents a flexible, applied research philosophy in which "the researcher…studies in the different ways that s/he deems appropriate and uses the results in ways that can bring positive consequences within his/her value system" (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 30).

Triangulation can provide researchers with more confidence in their results, and lead to thicker, richer data, as well as uncovering contradictions (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2007). In this study, as outlined earlier, I wanted the density of the quantitative data, and I was also interested in

exploring the narratives that lay behind those data, to provide a richness and depth to the study that it might otherwise lack.

Research Design

The intent of this study was to investigate what first-year undergraduate students in teacher education say about their experiences and perceptions of relationships. A mixed-methods research design was chosen to produce a nuanced view of the answers to the research questions. Sequential mixed-methods procedures are those in which the researcher seeks to elaborate on or expand on the findings of one method with another method. The rationale for a sequential, three-phase approach, as is the case here, to the research is that the qualitative data is collected in the light of what is found in the first stage of the inquiry, and their subsequent analysis can help to provide a further understanding of the research problem. The qualitative data and their analysis refine and explain those statistical results by examining participants' views in more depth (Creswell et al., 2003; Rossman & Wilson, 1985; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

In the case of this study, it began with a quantitative phase which tested ideas and gathered student responses via hard-copy survey. This phase informed the development of a set of questions for the following qualitative stage which was a more detailed examination of ideas with individual students via semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2009); this pattern is known as an explanatory sequential design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; see Figure 3.1).

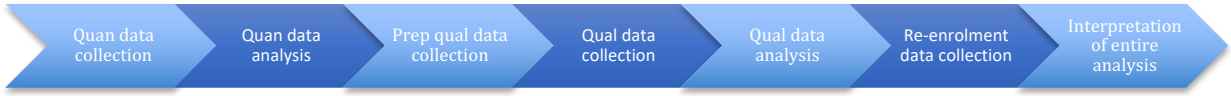

Figure 3.1. Adapted explanatory sequential design (cf Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

It consists in this case of three distinct phases: quantitative, followed by an intermediate stage for considering the nature of the data collected, and how this should inform the inquiries to be made in the following phase; a qualitative phase; then finally (for this research), another quantitative phase (Creswell et al., 2003). In this design, the researcher first collects and analyses the quantitative (numeric) data, in preparation for the next phase. Qualitative (text-based) data from responses to the interviews are collected and analysed next in the sequence and help explain the quantitative results obtained in the first phase. The qualitative phase builds on the quantitative phase, and the two phases are connected in the intermediate stage in this study.

A third, quantitative, stage was included in this study: re-enrolment data were gathered from a student database relating to those students who granted the researcher permission to do so. The purpose in gathering the re-enrolment data was to investigate any differences there may have been in how returned and did-not-return students answered the survey questions, and to look for possible patterns of behaviour in different student groups. The data were gathered only as a yes/no answer, and could only be gathered as re-enrolment data at the same faculty.

The survey.

The decision to gather information via a survey was informed by the desire to have a broad overall snapshot of student responses to the questions posed, to inform the development of the schedule of questions for the interview phase, and to create a backdrop against which individual responses to interview questions could be foregrounded. This approach appeared likely to add both depth and nuance to the research.

Surveys are suitable when the research is concerned with questions regarding self-reported beliefs and behaviours (Neuman & Kreuger, 2003). Likert-type scale questions were deemed appropriate, as they gave respondents the opportunity to express a greater or lesser degree of acceptance of the statement posited. Likert scales are ordinal response scales designed to

measure a specific attitude, value, or personality disposition (Bryman, 2004). A Likert scale, consisting of a series of responses from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* was used in the research project reported here. In constructing a Likert scale, it is recommended that five alternatives be given from which to choose; these alternatives indicate the extent to which respondents agree or disagree with the position espoused in the item (Crano, Brewer, & Lac, 2002). Questions were developed based on findings from research related to teacher–student relationships in general and the research questions in particular (Appendix 1). The survey was not trialled but developed over time through consultation with my doctoral supervisors.

In order to gain a broad overall picture of student teachers' perceptions of the relationships they experienced or were experiencing in their first year of study, survey data were collected from students in their first year of initial teacher education programmes at a university. This was the first, quantitative, phase of this study. Graduate diploma students were not included in the survey on the basis that they had already attained undergraduate degrees and were experienced in the university life; the research was intended to capture the views of those students new to the whole enterprise of university study. The setting aside of the graduate diploma study pathways left seven other groups of students in the following pathways: main campus primary, remote campus primary, Māori medium primary, early childhood, early childhood Pasifika, foundation certificate and physical education. The surveys were administered to groups of students on July 16, 17 and 18, 2012. Permission had been granted to gather the data by the head of school of teacher education practice, which oversaw the practicum courses in which the students were enrolled. The students had come together for briefings for upcoming practicum experiences, conducted by the relevant practicum coordinator for each group (not the researcher) and the surveys were administered at the conclusion of those briefings. Students were invited to stay on after the briefing and complete the survey; students who did not wish to take part were free to either leave the venue or to

remain in place and simply not fill out the survey. In the event, no students chose to leave the venue and the response rate to the surveys was very high; 81% of students returned a survey.

As per the ethics approval for this research, the research assistant explained the nature of and context for the research orally, via a script provided by the researcher; the potential participants received a participant information sheet, a survey and a three-stage consent form, which gave the researcher permission to use the survey data, permission for access to the database to confirm further re-enrolment and permission to contact the student for the purpose of conducting a follow-up interview. Possible risks and benefits associated with participation in the study were outlined via the participant information sheet.

The section of the survey accessing demographic data was designed to gather background information about the participants relevant to the research questions. The intention was to use the demographic data as a lens through which to view the survey data and to look for patterns amongst different groups of students. Therefore, demographic data gathered included responses to questions about gender, ethnicity, and age group. In addition, the campus on which the students were studying, the course in which they were enrolled and their status as a possible first-in-family university student all formed part of the demographic data to be collected.

In all, 340 students responded to the surveys; the total enrolled in all of the courses selected for survey was 405, but not all students were present on the day the surveys were administered; equally, not all students present chose to participate. For participants, confidentiality of all information was assured, but anonymity was not possible for those who consented to be contacted about the interview phase and/or agreed to have their re-enrolment status verified. The students who agreed to be interviewed offered contact information; re-enrolling students were identifiable through their student ID number.

Choice of approach to statistical analysis of survey responses.

Costello and Osborne (2005) note that "exploratory factor analysis is a widely utilised and broadly applied statistical technique in the social sciences" (p. 1) and discuss the applications of principal component analysis (PCA) and exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and how to decide when to use each of these appropriately. They highlight different groups of researchers: those who argue for a severely restricted use of PCA in favour of an EFA method (Bentler & Kano, 1990; Floyd & Widaman, 1995; Ford, MacCallum & Tait, 1986; Gorsuch, 1990; Loehlin, 1990; MacCallum & Tucker, 1991; Mulaik, 1990; Snook & Gorsuch, 1989; Widaman, 1990, 1993); and others who hold to the view either that there is almost no difference between the two, or that PCA is preferable (Arrindell & van der Ende, 1985; Guadagnoli & Velicer, 1988; Schoenmann, 1990; Steiger, 1990; Velicer & Jackson, 1990). Costello and Osborne (2005) themselves argue strongly for the use of EFA. Their argument against PCA in particular is that "it is computed without any regard to underlying structure caused by latent variables, and all of that variance appears in the solution" (Ford et al., 1986, p. 88). The fact that I had created my own survey instrument in the light of my construction of the types of relationships students were likely to experience and comment on (peers, lecturers, institution, family, etc.) meant that my position was one of having an underlying structure present in my survey, hence my position aligned with the one they were postulating, and as a result EFA is the most appropriate method of analysis. Costello and Osborne (2005) also argue that PCA can, under certain conditions, produce inflated values of variance. They point out that "since factor analysis only analyzes shared variance, factor analysis should yield the same solution (all other things being equal) while also avoiding the inflation of estimates of variance accounted for" (p. 2). This provided me with another reason for pursuing EFA as my chosen method of analysis.

Statistical Analysis of Survey Responses

Pursuant to Costello and Osborne's justifications as outlined above, the underlying structure of the relationships in the investigation was explored using EFA via SPSS v25. Maximum likelihood analysis was used to extract the factors, followed by oblique rotation of the factors using Oblimin rotation (delta=0). The number of factors to be retained was guided by two decision rules: Kaiser's criterion (eigenvalues above 1) and inspection of the scree plot, as indicated by Pallant (2007) and Field (2009). EFA using maximum likelihood was conducted on the sample to provide a structure that featured at least two items loading strongly per factor, in accordance with Bollen's (1989) two-indicator rule. Survey item Likert scores were then calculated as a mean score, per respondent, for each factor, and the factor mean scores were compared.

Successive iterations of the EFA process revealed that there were three survey items which did not load against any factor. These were Questions 6, 8 and 13 in the survey. These questions read as follows:

6. I use online groups and networks to support my thinking and learning

8. Sometimes I feel the lectures are more about getting through the course content than making sure we understand it.

13. I find it harder to engage when the lecturer is different every session

The removal of these items from the factor analysis allowed the process to settle into a five-factor pattern, so the decision was taken to proceed with the final factor analysis with these items removed. The descriptive names for the titles of the factors were informed by the areas in which students were thought to form or have significant relationships. These were drawn from the ideas which led to the design of the survey, that is to say, relationships with lecturers, peers, the institution itself and with family and spouses.

Interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the means of data collection for the qualitative phase of this project on the basis that they are well-suited for this purpose, that is, the exploration of perceptions and opinions of respondents. The semi-structured interview format provides the researcher with the freedom and flexibility to pursue answers, clarify thinking and attempt to validate the meaning of the respondents' initial answers (Treece & Treece, 1986). They also allow the discussion of sensitive issues and give time and space for the clarification of answers, and/or the probing for extra information (Barriball & While, 1994). Bullock (2016) notes that qualitative interviews are a good approach for studies that seek to understand the lived experience of participants in complex social situations, such as educational environments. M. J. McIntosh and Morse (2015) point out that the semi-structured interview has the strength of allowing the researcher to elicit pertinent information or clarification by rephrasing questions, in order to convey equivalent meaning to all participants. The researcher may then probe within the responses, with a view to obtaining pertinent and possibly rich data. Such probes may arise from the dialogue, and as such be unscheduled, but might provoke a fuller response from the participant (Berg, 2009; Black, 2005; Denzin, 2017; Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013).

In this explanatory follow-up phase for this research, the experiences and perceptions of relationships were explored with survey participants via semi-structured interviews. These participants were a purposive sample selected from those who gave consent to be contacted for the second phase. The purpose was to interview students from the full range of pathways and qualifications that the faculty offered. An initial group of 10 students were interviewed who responded most promptly to the invitation sent to them. As the interview phase proceeded, invitations were then sent out to additional students purposively selected according to pathway in order to ensure a balance in the interview group which was representative of the surveyed

group and the faculty overall. In the event, all students who were invited and who were available within the time frame were interviewed. A total of 144 students offered to be interviewed; in all, 17 interviews were completed.

Participants who agreed to participate in the second phase of the inquiry were further informed orally by the research assistant to reinforce the details in the participant information sheet about how confidentiality would be undertaken and maintained, via the use of pseudonyms and generic descriptions of the nature of the students' course of study. Possible risks and benefits associated with participation in the study were also outlined via the participant information sheet, prior to recruitment, and repeated prior to the interview. Participants were informed that they would be contacted about their participation in the interviews via the email address that they had offered, but that there would be no advice of non-selection for the interview phase of the inquiry.

A schedule of questions (see Appendix 2), informed by the analysis of the survey data, was developed that would prompt respondents' thinking and answers to clarify aspects of the survey data gathered. The same schedule was used for all interview subjects.

Interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription service. A confidentiality agreement was signed by the transcriber (see Appendix 3). The digital recordings and digital transcriptions were duplicated and stored separately. Transcriptions were made available to participants for checking for accuracy, and to enable the participants to withdraw material they may have disclosed but did not want to be considered in the research. In the event, one student chose to withdraw material which she found to be too personal for the intentions of the research; the conversation had taken her into family history that she felt happy to share with the researcher at the time but she did not wish it to be included in the research.

All interviews were carried out by the researcher. The setting was in the institution, but not in rooms in which classes were held.

Interview data analysis.

The data gathered during the interview were analysed using a thematic analysis approach. Braun, Clarke, Hayfield, and Terry (2019) suggest that thematic analysis offers the opportunity to systematically identify, organise and gain insight into "patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set" (p. 57). It helps the researcher identify what is common to the way a topic is talked about, and then to make sense of these commonalities. The flexibility of thematic analysis allows the researcher to focus on the data in different ways, either looking for meaning across the data set, or examining a particular aspect in depth.

In this instance, the interview transcripts were imported into the NVivo software and coded by the researcher in accordance with themes arising from the material (Braun, V., Clarke, V., Hayfield, N., & Terry, G., 2019). As I have said earlier, thematic analysis was chosen as an analysis method as it helps the researcher identify what is common to the way a topic is talked about, and then to make sense of these commonalities. Clearly the questions used by the interviewer in the semi-structured format of the interview steered the respondents in particular directions, but the answers given, and subsequent comments made, went in different directions, depending on the experiences of the respondent.

An open-coding approach was taken with the transcribed material. The interviews were read on multiple occasions with a view to ascertaining what constituted the highest frequency concepts present in the interview data. The purpose was to decide what themes arising from the interviews could be considered major; that is to say, they were repeated in many students' responses, or they featured frequently in the responses of a single student. Individual student responses were then grouped into those major themes, with subsequent minor themes developing as commonalities in the ideas of the respondents revealed themselves in different

locations in the material. Generally speaking, ideas developed in clusters around the students' contributions congruent with the research intention and research questions and these became the themes of the data.

For example, one of the semi-structured interview questions asked students to talk about what constituted a "good" class for them; in this section, responses ranged across a broad spectrum of characteristics, including the clarity and structure of the lecture, the size of the class, the company of like-minded peers, whether the class featured discussion and interaction and so on. Students were also quite voluble in their accounts of how a lecturer could contribute to a good class, and what the attributes of that person might be. In all of these cases, responses were coded in line with the content of the utterance, and similar ideas were grouped under nodes, using the affordances of the NVivo software.

The gathering and analysis of re-enrolment data.

Finally, I sought permission from the students for access to institutional data on whether the participants re-enrolled for further study at the same faculty. Out of the 340 survey respondents, 243 gave permission to have their re-enrolment checked (71.47% of respondents).

The education faculty student database was accessed from January to March 2013 by a research assistant, seeking re-enrolment information for students who had granted permission for the researcher to do so. Student records were accessed by means of university ID number, and a check was made to see if the student had any course enrolments registered for the 2013 academic year. Only re-enrolments in the same faculty at the same institution could be checked, so data could not be gathered for students who may have continued their studies in a different faculty. It is also a possibility that students continued their studies, but in a different institution; there was no way for this outcome to be known in the context of this study.

Ethical considerations in this research.

Following the acceptance of my research proposal, approval was sought for my project from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee and the Human Participants Ethics Committee of the university which was the site of the research (see Appendix 4).

Permission for the research to be undertaken was sought from the dean of the faculty which was the site of the proposed research (see Appendix 5); permission was granted in May 2012. Permission for the gathering of the survey data was sought and gained from the head of school in which the practicum courses sat (see Appendix 6); it was envisaged that the surveys would be administered at the end of practicum briefings, as these meetings brought whole cohorts of students together outside regular scheduled classes.

The Code of Ethical Conduct (2010) made clear that there were key principles to which my ethics application must attend. These are the ethical issues I identified and addressed in the design and construction of my research project:

- respect for persons and their right to decide not to join the research project;
- minimisation of risk of harm to participants, researcher and the university;
- informed and voluntary written consent to participate;
- respect for privacy and confidentiality, including via the secure storage of consent and research data;
- the avoidance of deception for participants, and conflict of interest as a researcher;
- cultural and social sensitivity (interviewing students about the nature of their feelings about classes and teachers may cause participants a level of discomfort or distress through painful memories);
- the overriding principle of justice.

As to the respect for persons and their right to decide not to join the research project, participation was to be invited at the conclusion of a cohort- or class-based practicum briefing or de-briefing session. All those present were able to participate in completing a survey if they wished. Ideally, students were to complete the survey at that time, but arrangements were made for students to take the survey away for completion, and to return it to a drop-off box near the practicum office on the relevant campus. If students did not wish to complete a survey, they were free not to do so, and either remain in their places or leave the room.

In terms of minimisation of risk of harm to participants, it was noted in the ethics application that there was a risk that, in the process of talking about past learning experiences, students may recall incidents that were uncomfortable, embarrassing or shaming to them. The main campus which was the site for this research has a well-staffed counselling service, available to students free of charge; the office of the Associate Dean (Students) provides another place for students to be supported. Students were to be referred directly and immediately to these services, should the need arise.

In respect of the minimisation of risk of harm to the researcher, it was conceivable that students being interviewed may have reacted to the experience or memory of other experiences in an adverse way that resulted in personal discomfort or abuse for the researcher; in the event, this was not the case. Had it occurred, the student would have been accompanied immediately to the counsellors who worked on site as part of the student health service, and their needs would have been met by a trained professional. There may also have been criticism of the researcher from colleagues, but it appeared to be diminished by open and transparent communication about the intent of the research which was maintained throughout. In the event that this had occurred, I would have anticipated that face-to-face meetings to explain the intent and parameters of the research would have allayed my colleagues' fears.

In terms of minimisation of risk of harm to the university, it was a possibility that there could be a risk of discomfort to the group of colleagues who taught the first-year students participating in the project, if the students were to report a level of dissatisfaction with the way relationships had or had not been developed with staff. In the first instance, students were discouraged from naming any staff. However, should any names have been mentioned, they were removed from transcripts and not used in the thesis or subsequent publications. Students were interviewed individually and asked to respect confidentiality about our interview; this helped prevent the development of a culture of students discussing this research in other environments. Staff were informed that students were expressly instructed not to identify specific staff or courses in their responses to either the survey or in a follow-up interview.

As to informed and voluntary written consent to participate, a complete and detailed participant information sheet was given to potential participants by the research assistant at the time of the initial approach to students. Students were free to complete the survey or return it untouched if they did not want to take part in the research project. The consent form allowed them to select the level of participation they wished to have. All students had the opportunity to read and understand the information before making a decision about completing the survey and signing a consent form.

Respect for privacy and confidentiality was assured throughout the research project, including via the secure storage of consent and research data. Permission was sought to access the student database in the year following the survey and interview, to ascertain the re-enrolment status of the student participants. Students identified themselves on their initial survey form via an official student ID number and all participants were assigned a code known only to the researcher and the research assistant. The second-phase participants were contacted and interviewed individually. In reporting their interview contributions, identities were protected via the use of pseudonyms. They have not been identified by name in any document or

subsequent summary of findings. The official student ID number was only used to gather re-enrolment information from the database, and overall re-enrolment rates are presented as a proportion of initial survey respondents. Surveys were stored in a locked cupboard in the researcher's university office. Digital recordings were made of the student interviews. Transcriptions of these interviews were also stored in a locked cupboard in the researcher's university office; the interviewees were identified only by a code number, then by a pseudonym. Once the transcriptions had been verified by the interviewees, only a single original copy of the digital files was retained.

Consent forms were kept in separate locked storage in the researcher's office. Paper-based data was retained for a period of 5 years. The researcher was responsible for its safe-keeping and its eventual disposal, after shredding, through a secure system of disposal.

There were measures to be taken as to the avoidance of deception for participants, and conflict of interest as a researcher, since the researcher is a lecturer in the faculty from which the student sample was to be drawn. This fact was made explicit in the documentation for students, as was the separation between the researcher and any type of assessment or assignment work relating to the students' ongoing studies in the faculty. A potential ethical issue existed around the prospect of a conflict of interest arising when working with students from my own campus. This was addressed via the strategy of conducting the research in programmes in which I was not working as an educator: my work for the previous years had been exclusively with students in a graduate diploma in secondary teaching course. The students I surveyed and interviewed were exclusively first-year students in undergraduate programmes; as a result, I did not foresee any conflicts of interest arising. My role with these students had been limited to speaking to large-cohort groups about how the faculty used e-portfolios; I played no part in any teaching or assessment of these students.

In respect of cultural and social sensitivity (interviewing students about the nature of their feelings about classes and teachers may cause participants a level of discomfort or distress through painful memories), I sought the advice of qualified colleagues. I discussed the project with Debora Lee and Dr Melinda Webber, who were both advisors to the ethics committee of the faculty in question. In particular, Melinda has qualifications to speak of appropriate tikanga. Her iwi affiliations are Ngāti Whakaue—Te Arawa and Ngāti Kahu, Ngāti Hau—Ngapuhi.

Legitimation: Validity and Reliability in Mixed-Methods Research

In mixed-methods research, the term legitimation is used to measure the overall quality of a study (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). This term is analogous with the ideas of validity and reliability in quantitative research, and trustworthiness, credibility and plausibility in qualitative research. Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) offer a typology of nine different types of legitimation that might apply to mixed-methods research; a brief description of each follows.

Sample integration.

Sample integration legitimation describes the degree to which a mixed-methods researcher makes appropriate conclusions, generalisations, and meta-inferences from mixed samples (the combination of quantitative and qualitative samples); for example, sample-to-population "statistical" generalisations are better with large random samples; "meaning" and experiential statements are better justified with purposive samples studied in depth.

The design of this study, from initial inception, was intended to maximise the opportunity to make generalisations about the experiences of a group of students in an institution, based on a large sample of the student population via a quantitative element, while at the same time providing meaning from in-depth interviews conducted with a purposive sample of students, drawn from amongst the same set in the original sample. However, the aim of the interview data was not to provide material for further generalisations, but to add depth and richness to

the quantitative data, to provide a voice for the actual students whose stories might otherwise go unheard in the research process and to add life and meaning to the scores generated.

Strength maximisation.

Weakness minimisation, more latterly referred to as strength maximisation and limitation minimisation, refers to the extent to which the limitations from one research method or approach are compensated by the strengths from another method or approach; mixed-methods research designs combine quantitative and qualitative methods and approaches, with a view to having non-overlapping weaknesses.

In this study, the danger was that the quantitative data gathered could have the effect of obscuring nuance or contextual subtlety and would offer only a limited ability to capture and understand the social realities of the students behind the data; the individual interviews offered the researcher the opportunity to engage with social and familial realities for students in the context of their initial year of undergraduate study. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed the exploration of topics that the students themselves felt were most germane to their experience of relationships in the context of their tertiary studies. In this way, the stories that sat behind the survey data were able to be fleshed out, in order to make a more complete and more rounded picture.

Sequential legitimation.

Sequential legitimation describes the degree to which a mixed-methods researcher appropriately addresses and/or builds on effects, understandings, knowledge, or findings from earlier qualitative and quantitative phases. As outlined above, this study began with a quantitative survey completed by a high percentage of students enrolled in their first year of multiyear undergraduate programmes. The second phase of this study, a series of qualitative interviews, followed the first; and while a sample schedule of questions had been submitted as part of the ethics approval for the study, the semi-structured nature of the interviews carried

out in the second phase of the study permitted the researcher to explore unanticipated aspects of the data generated in the first phase. Similarly, the third phase of data collection, the re-enrolment data, provided a new lens for revisiting and reviewing the data gathered in the first phase, with a view to uncovering patterns and seeking meta-inferences from the data that might otherwise have been obscured.

Inside–outside legitimation.

Inside–outside legitimation refers to the extent to which the researcher accurately understands, uses, and presents the participants' subjective insider or "native" views (emic) and the researcher's objective outsider view (etic). As I have already outlined in this thesis, my stance as a researcher is inextricably intertwined with my position as an educator who views the world from a progressive, social-justice stance. My professional life in the classroom was one of working alongside students to help ensure their eventual success; my life as a teacher educator is largely the same. But in order to be of most service to the students in my (pedagogical) care, I need to understand their position, their complexities, their prior experience; in the parlance, I need to know where they are coming from. It has been part of my professional practice, then, to see and empathise with the insider point of view.

The challenge for me as a researcher, in the inside–outside realm, is to sufficiently distance myself in order to adopt the view of the outsider. I believe that this has been achieved through the programme of supervision that has accompanied this study; as a PhD project, I have continually been in contact with and seeking advice and guidance from my supervisors and critical friends, who, as active researchers themselves, are in a position to guide me. Part of the rationale for this project sits with my desire to have students treated equitably by the institutions in which they enrol, such that successful outcomes can be attained by all. But in order to achieve this goal, the validity of the research is paramount, and it is my supervision team, as well as my ethics consulting colleagues, who have been able to guide me towards a balance of

my subjective desire to create a better circumstance for the students, and the objective view of creating a rigorous research outcome which will support that goal.

Sociopolitical legitimation.

Sociopolitical legitimation refers to the degree to which a mixed-methods researcher addresses the interests, values, and viewpoints of multiple standpoints and stakeholders in the research process. As I have outlined above, my viewpoint as a researcher and practitioner is informed by my view of the world through a social-justice paradigm; I am seeking equitable outcomes for different stakeholders who hold differing levels of power and influence. Set alongside this desire is my role as a member of the power holders in tertiary education, one with qualifications who is in a position to allow or deny access to others. A research-led high-performing modern university in a neoliberal social and political climate must necessarily make decisions about the allocation of resources to different areas of need, which will impact on students to a greater or lesser degree; class sizes, allocation of staff time to teach vs time to research, for instance, may have an impact on eventual student success. I have myself been caught in the tension between having sufficient time to teach well, and produce outcomes for students, and having time to do the research that will lead to the production of outcomes to fulfil a personal and organisational research agenda. The university is clearly a powerful stakeholder in this part of the process.

Further, I work in the area of qualifications which have a professional element to them, such that some of the content is subject to scrutiny from professional bodies which sit outside the university system, per se. There is a professional, dispositional layer to aspects of the qualification, which, in the words of one of my colleagues, puts teacher educators in the place of guardians of the profession; my work, and that of my colleagues, may have learning outcomes which are dispositionally oriented, rather than content focused.

Finally, in the context of my teaching work, I stand with the students. My role in classes is to facilitate their access to the new learning, to work with them such that they move forward with both professional and content knowledge and attain their academic goals. I see myself as being an assistant to their agency, working with them in an interdependent way until such time as they are ready for their independence. Politically, this can stand me in opposition to the structure of the university, which may want me to ration my classroom time with the students in order that I might be free to pursue other aspects of my work, but as a teacher educator, I feel an obligation not only to support students to their success but to model practices which they themselves might emulate in their future practice; the walk and the talk need to go hand-in-hand.

Multiple validities.

Multiple validities legitimation refers to the incorporation of mixed-validity types (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed) to enhance the quality of inferences (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). Multiple validities legitimation was achieved through the analysis of each method based on their respective paradigmatic traditions. For example, the survey data were validated using procedures consistent with quantitative methods such as factor analysis. Qualitatively, data trustworthiness and credibility were enhanced by member checking or member validation of transcripts, and the use of detailed transcriptions throughout the study (Roulston, 2010). Member checks (also known as member validation) were solicited from the participants by providing them with a copy of their individual interview transcripts to ensure documentation was accurate.

In addition to establishing quantitative validity and qualitative trustworthiness and credibility, the researcher also incorporated mixed legitimation through the integration of findings from different data sources and methods. These integrated findings offered the opportunity to view the research questions from multiple perspectives. Collectively, the mixed-methods approaches

provided a comprehensive examination that otherwise would not have been feasible using each method independently (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006).

Chapter Summary

This chapter has addressed the researcher's intentions in carrying out the study and aligned the study with pragmatism as an underpinning philosophy. Pragmatism suits this study in as much as it epitomises an approach which arises out of actions, situations, and consequences. It has freed me up in my research to understand the problem and answer my research questions, rather than focusing purely on methods.

Mixed methods was chosen as the design for the research, as it would provide the best opportunity for expanding on the findings of the quantitative phase of the research with a subsequent qualitative phase. I settled on an explanatory sequential design (Creswell & Clark, 2007) as a means of arriving at a deeper understanding of the initial research findings.

The data-collection process comprised the administration of surveys and an initial analysis of the survey data. Then semi-structured interviews were completed, followed by the gathering of re-enrolment data for a group of students. EFA was chosen as a strategy for exploring the quantitative data, in an effort to simplify the data set, and by way of giving access to an identification of relationships between variables in the analysis set.

The ethical considerations of the project, given that I have a role as an academic staff member on one of the sites of the research, included respect for persons, minimisation of risk of harm, informed consent, respect for privacy and confidentiality, the avoidance of deception, conflict of interest as a researcher and cultural and social sensitivities. Strategies for addressing these issues were developed.

The strategies employed for ensuring legitimation of this mixed-methods project were legitimation through sample integration, strength maximisation, sequential legitimation, inside–outside legitimation, multiple validities legitimation and sociopolitical legitimation.

Thematic analysis was used as an approach to the qualitative data, as it afforded the opportunity both to analyse meaning across the entire data set, and to focus on one particular aspect or phenomenon found in the data.

The following chapter, Chapter 4, will examine the findings of the first quantitative phase of this study, the student surveys.

Chapter 4. Quantitative Data Results

Introduction

This chapter will present the results of analysis of the data gathered at the first and third data-collection points of the project. First, the quantitative data arising from the survey completed by students in the education faculty as the first data-collection exercise for the research project in the middle of the students' first year of study. The demographic data gathered from the participants will be explored. Factor mean scores arising from the quantitative analysis of the data will be presented using the demographic makeup of the survey sample. The re-enrolment data gathered from the faculty database, as outlined in Chapter 3, will be used as a means of looking for possible variations in students' reporting of relationships.

Participants

The sample for the present study consisted of 422 students enrolled in undergraduate or foundation programmes at a faculty of education. The survey received 340 responses (81%). Students were sampled across two sites and seven separate cohorts, programmes or pathways. There were 276 females (81%), 62 males (18%) and 2 non-declared. A total of 126 students in the sample (37%) indicated they were the first person in their family to go to university.

Demographic data were obtained in the survey process that showed 170 students identified as European/New Zealanders, 50 students identified as Māori, 48 students identified as Pasifika, 24 students identified as Asian, and 48 identified as other. As a point of comparison, Table 4.1 shows the breakdown by ethnicity of enrolments in the faculty, as found in the university's Equity Statistics Report, 2012. A comparison of these figures indicates that the survey respondent population has fewer Asian, Māori, Pākehā and Pasifika students than the overall faculty population, but more students who identify as other minority groups.

Table 4.1

Ethnicity Data as Declared by Students Completing the Survey compared to Overall Faculty Population

	Declared ethnicity of survey population	Faculty population (Equity Statistics Report, 2012)
Asian	7%	14%
Māori	14%	15%
Pākehā	50%	53%
Pasifika	14%	15%
Other	14%	3%

The study specifically sought data from first-year tertiary students, hence the predominant age group is the under-21-year-old (n=177, 52.1%), but age groups were represented throughout the range to over 46, in the proportions shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Age-Group Data of Survey Respondents

Age group	%
<21	52%
21-25	24%
26-30	7%
31-35	6%
36-40	5%
41-45	3%
>45	3%

Measures

As described in Chapter 3, a survey instrument was developed to explore students' relationships in four main areas: with the institution, with lecturing or teaching staff, with peers

and with partners/family. These main areas of relationship formation were decided on in accordance with the literature in the field.

The main body of responses (n=178, 52%), came from students in the undergraduate primary teaching pathway at the faculty's main campus, but data were also collected from students in the physical education pathway (n=42, 13%), students in the primary pathway at a subsidiary or remote campus (n=39, 11%), students in an early-childhood pathway (n=28, 8%), students in a course of foundation studies (n=22, 7%), students in a pathway using Māori language as the medium for instruction (n=20, 6%), and students in an early-childhood pathway with a Pasifika focus (n=11, 3%). Proportionally, these numbers are representative of the distribution of students in these pathways in the overall faculty population. (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3

Respondents by Programme or Pathway Affiliation compared to Overall Faculty Population

Course of study or pathway	%	Faculty population
Main primary	52%	50%
Physical education	12%	13%
Remote campus primary	12%	10%
Early childhood	8%	7%
Foundation Certificate	7%	8%
Māori medium	6%	6%
Pasifika early childhood	3%	5%

Method

The 20 items of the survey were subjected to EFA using maximum likelihood (ML) using SPSS Version 25. Inspection of the correlations matrix revealed the presence of many coefficients of .3 and above. The Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin value was .678, exceeding the recommended value of .6 (H. F. Kaiser, 1970, 1974) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance, supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix.

EFA revealed the presence of five components with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 17.0%, 11.2%, 9.0%, 7.6% and 7.2% of the variance respectively.

It was decided to retain five components for further analysis. The five-component analysis explained a total of 52.4% of the variance. To aid in the interpretation of these components, Oblimin rotation was performed. The rotated solution revealed the presence of a five-factor structure.

Results.

Ongoing ML analyses carried out on the initial 20-item dataset resulted in a clean five-factor 17-item solution that was both theoretically plausible and defensible (Tables 4.4 and 4.5). The factor solution constituted five factors, 17 items, with communalities ranging from .391 to .666, and sample size was 340. In accordance with Hogarty et al. (2005), this most closely resembled the "3k-20p N = 400 wide communality matrix EFA solution" (p. 220). In this case the estimated level of congruence was Θ_K = .99 (excellent). This suggested that the five-factor EFA solution for student perceptions of relationships proposed here would likely generalise very strongly with population parameters.

A two-item factor was present in the analysis, which the literature presents as problematic (e.g., Costello & Osborne, 2005; Pallant, 2007). Nevertheless, the decision was made to accept this factor, as Costello and Osborne (2005) acknowledge it may be possible to accept factors with a reduced item number under certain circumstances. In this case, the mitigating factor is the large data set, with the subject-to-item ratio approaching the gold standard of 20:1. As a comparison, Nunally (1978) recommends a 10:1 ratio, while Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) suggest that five cases per item can be sufficient.

Field (2009) points out that the structure matrix and the pattern matrix are the result of a split of the factor matrix caused by oblique rotation. The pattern matrix contains the factor loadings,

and is the one most often interpreted by researchers, as a result of its simplicity. Field notes, however, that there can be situations in which values in the pattern matrix are suppressed, and in these situations, the structure matrix can provide a useful double-check. Graham, Guthrie, and Thompson (2003) recommend reporting both matrices.

Table 4.4

Five-Factor EFA Solution for Student Relationship Measures

Pattern Matrix[a]

	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
Know who to talk to about challenges	.376				
Find lecturers approachable	.368				
Feel ok about contacting lecturers	.344				
Comfortable about student support	.527				
Lecturers take an interest	.606				
Detailed feedback	.561				
Don't ask for clarification [reversed]		-.637			
Unsure about asking questions [reversed]		-.770			
Sometimes need guidance [reversed]		-.351			
Engage when lecturer knows who I am			.611		
Take more care over my work			.575		
Work in groups in class				.529	
See the same people in class				.580	
Socialise with other students				.472	
Family support me in my study					-.590
Spouse supports me in my study					-.380
Overall feel well-supported	.305				-.555

Extraction method: maximum likelihood.
Rotation method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.
[a.] Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

Table 4.5

Five-Factor EFA Solution for Student Relationship Measures

Structure Matrix	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
Know who to talk to about challenges	.418				
Find lecturers approachable	.443				
Feel ok about contacting lecturers	.410				
Comfortable about student support	.483				
Lecturers take an interest	.604				
Detailed feedback	.549				
Don't ask for clarification [reversed]		-.667			
Unsure about asking questions [reversed]		-.741			
Sometimes need guidance [reversed]		-.303			
Engage when lecturer knows who I am			.624		
Take more care over my work			.595		
Work in groups in class				.544	
See the same people in class				.570	
Socialise with other students				.463	
Family support me in my study					-.610
Spouse supports me in my study					-.359
Overall feel well-supported	.510			.343	-.664

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.
Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

Because of the negative wording of Survey Items 14, 15 and 17, the scores of these items were reverse coded in order that the numeric values generated by the factor means were consistent; strong agreement (which meant a high score) for these items indicated a low sense of confidence; the reverse coding was then employed to create a low score for low confidence, and a high score for a strong sense of confidence.

The groupings generated by the factor analysis matched the theoretical underpinnings of the survey instrument design and the identifying titles for the five factors were arrived at by a broad analysis of the types of questions from the survey that the factor analysis had grouped together. These represented, respectively, relationship with the institution, a classroom confidence

factor, then relationships with the lecturer, with peers and with spouse and family (a support factor).

Individual factor means.

Mean scores were generated from items which loaded together as factors in the EFA (see Table 4.6). These were generated, per respondent, for the factor, and the factor mean scores were compared. In the survey instrument, a score of 1 was always "strongly disagree" and 5 was "strongly agree."

The position of 3 on the Likert scale was labelled as "neutral," meaning neither agree nor disagree. The higher the factor score, then, the more respondents were offering "agree" or "strongly agree" responses.

The factor scores in the following tables and elsewhere were generated from the survey responses; the figures used to represent agree/disagree were summed and averaged to provide a mean score for all responses for all survey items. The scores from different survey items which loaded together as factors in the factor analysis were then themselves summed and averaged to create an overall factor score.

Table 4.6

Mean Scores for the Five Factors Identified by the Factor Analysis

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
F1 Institution	340	2.00	4.83	3.6510	.4990
F2 Confidence	340	1.00	4.00	2.4314	.6263
F3 Lecturers	340	1.00	5.00	3.9824	.6857
F4 Peers	340	2.33	5.00	4.2118	.5330
F5 Support	340	2.00	5.00	4.0343	.6921
Valid N (listwise)	340				

Given that a 5-point Likert scale was used in the survey instrument, the scores with means around 4 for Factors 3, 4 and 5 indicate a positive response from the students in the survey sample towards their relationships with peers, lecturers and in the context of an overall feeling of support in their studies.

In order to check the strength of the response, a pair-wise t-test was run using the factor means generated in each case, comparing them with the neutral Likert-scale score of 3. Table 4.7 shows that the factor scores are different in statistically significant fashion from the neutral position of 3 on the Likert scale for all of the factors.

Table 4.7

Paired Sample T-Tests

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	F1 Institution –Neutral	.65100	.4990	.0271	.5978	.7042	24.054	339	**.000**
Pair 2	F2 Confidence –Neutral	-.5686	.6263	.0340	-.6354	-.5018	-16.742	339	**.000**
Pair 3	F3 Lecturers–Neutral	.9824	.6857	.0372	.9092	1.0555	26.42	339	**.000**
Pair 4	F4 Peers–Neutral	1.2117	.5330	.0289	1.1549	1.2686	41.920	339	**.000**
Pair 5	F5 Support–Neutral	1.0343	.6921	.0375	.9605	1.1081	27.56	339	**.000**

The numbers in this table represent the mean difference in score between the factor scores and the neutral position of 3 on the Likert scale as used in the survey. This is to say that, in broad terms, the averaged factor differs from the neutral 3 score by enough that we could have 95% confidence that, on another day, the response outcome would be the same for this group of students, that they are expressing a definitively positive view in their responses to the survey.

In terms of the overall factor scores, F4 Peers scored, marginally, the highest overall mean, which means the survey items for this factor received the largest number of *agree* and *strongly agree* responses, numbers 4 and 5 on the Likert scale, or the fewest responses at numbers 1 and 2 on the scale. This factor represented the notion of a personal sense of connection to one's peers. Also high were the F3 Lecturers and F5 Support scores, with the F5 Support score slightly higher, although not statistically so; this was an interesting outcome insofar as the research was designed to explore the lecturer relationship. The high F3 Lecturers and F5 Support scores indicated many 4 and 5 responses to the survey items for these factors, which were a sense of connection to the lecturers and an overall sense of support. The lowest score was F2 Confidence, which indicated the feeling of confidence in asking for clarification or direction in the classroom. Table 4.8 demonstrates the outcome of a series of pair-wise t-tests to examine the statistically significant differences between the factor scores. Except for the comparison of F3 Lecturer and F5 Support, these differences were present in all cases;

Table 4.8

Paired Sample T-Tests

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
F4 Peers–F3 Lecturers	.2294	.8095	.0439	.14311	.3158	5.225	339	**.0000**
F4 Peers–F1 Institution	.5608	.6842	.0371	.4878	.6338	15.113	339	**.0000**
F4 Peers–F2 Confidence	1.7804	.8356	.0453	1.6913	1.8695	39.286	339	**.0000**
F4 Peers–F5 Support	.1775	.8278	.0449	.0892	.2658	3.953	339	**.0000**
F3 Lecturers–F1 Institution	.3314	.7833	.0425	.2478	.4149	7.801	339	**.0000**
F3 Lecturers–F2 Confidence	1.5501	1.0022	.0544	1.4441	1.6579	28.535	339	**.0000**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
F3 Lecturers–F5 Support	-.0520	.9153	.0496	-.1496	.0457	-1.047	339	.2960
F1 Institution–F2 Confidence	1.2196	.7556	.0410	1.1390	1.3002	29.762	339	**.0000**
F1 Institution–F5 Support	-.3833	.7523	.0408	-.4636	-.3031	-9.395	339	**.0000**
F2 Confidence –F5 Support	-1.6030	.92750	.0503	-1.7019	-1.5040	-31.870	339	**.0000**

Findings: An examination of the factor scores by demographic groupings.

Using one-way ANOVAs (analysis of variance) with ethnicity, gender, age, family history of tertiary education, course of study and re-enrolment status as the identifying factors, factor scores for student perceptions of relationships were examined. The intention in carrying out these analyses by groupings was to look for data that might reveal differences in how different groups reported their experiences and perceptions of relationships, with a view to checking for possible heightened sensitivities amongst different student groups as to how these types of relationships might be perceived by them. The reason for including non-returning students as a group in their own right was to look for possible patterns amongst groups of students who decided not to carry on with their original course of studies.

By gender, family history and re-enrolment status.

There were no statistically significant differences in student perceptions of relationships with respect to gender, family history of study or re-enrolment status across all factors.

Differences for ethnic groups.

With respect to ethnicity, there were statistically significant differences in relation to how students felt in terms of their F1 Institution score $F(4, 335) = 3.19$, $p = .014$ $\eta 2 = .037$,

F2 Confidence $F(4, 335) = 3.529$, $p = .008$ $\eta 2 = .04$.

F3 Lecturers $F(4, 335) = 2.415$, $p = .049$, $\eta 2 = .038$ and

F5 Support $F(4, 335) = 3.031$, $p = .018$ $\eta 2 = .035$ scores

As shown in Table 4.9, the ANOVA revealed that these statistically significant differences existed.

Table 4.9

ANOVA by Ethnicity

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
F1 Institution	Between Groups	3.097	4	.774	3.190	**.014**
	Within Groups	81.319	335	.243		
	Total	84.416	339			
F2 Confidence	Between Groups	5.376	4	1.344	3.529	**.008**
	Within Groups	127.578	335	.381		
	Total	132.954	339			
F3 Lecturers	Between Groups	4.467	4	1.117	2.415	**.049**
	Within Groups	154.927	335	.462		
	Total	159.394	339			
F4 Peers	Between Groups	1.315	4	.329	1.160	.328
	Within Groups	94.993	335	.284		
	Total	96.308	339			
F5 Support	Between Groups	5.671	4	1.418	3.031	**.018**
	Within Groups	156.707	335	.468		
	Total	162.377	339			

While the ANOVA revealed that statistically significant differences existed, it did not show where these differences between groups were to be found. For this reason, a post-hoc Tukey test was carried out. The post-hoc Tukey makes it plain where statistically significant differences between groups lie. The results of the Tukey post-hoc tests can be seen in the following tables. The item scores that feature at the top of Column 1 and the bottom of Column 2 are statistically significant; item scores which are to be found in both columns have no statistically significant difference.

Table 4.10 locates the statistically significant difference in relation to how students felt in terms of their F1 Institution score between the Asian and Pasifika students. The table indicates that the difference lies between these two groups; the differences between the other groups are not statistically significant.

Table 4.10

F1 Institution Scores by Ethnicity

		Subset for alpha = 0.05	
Ethnicity	N	1	2
Asian	24	3.4931	
other	48	3.5764	3.5764
Pākehā NZ	170	3.6196	3.6196
Māori	50	3.7167	3.7167
Pasifika	48		3.8472
Sig.		.193	.067

As shown in Table 4.10, Pasifika students (M = 3.85, SD =.65) had a higher F1 Institution score than Asian students (M = 3.5, SD =.46).

Table 4.11 locates the statistically significant difference in relation to how students felt in terms of their F2 Confidence score between the Asian and Māori students. The table indicates that the difference lies between these two groups; the differences between the other groups are not statistically significant.

Table 4.11

F2 Confidence Scores by Ethnicity

		Subset for alpha = 0.05	
Ethnicity	N	1	2
Asian	24	2.1667	
Pasifika	48	2.2292	2.2292
other	48	2.4028	2.4028
Pākehā NZ	170	2.4902	2.4902

Māori	50		2.5800
Sig.		.091	**.053**

As shown in Table 4.11, Māori students (M = 2.58, SD =.65) had a higher F2 Confidence score than Asian students (M = 2.16, SD =.59).

Table 4.12 locates the statistically significant difference in relation to how students felt in terms of their F3 Lecturer score between the Māori students and those of other ethnicity. The table indicates that the difference lies between these two groups; the differences between the other groups are not statistically significant.

Table 4.12

F3 Lecturer Scores by Ethnicity

		Subset for alpha = 0.05	
Ethnicity	N	1	2
Māori	50	3.7800	
Pasifika	48	3.9063	3.9063
Pākehā NZ	170	3.9971	3.9971
Asian	24	4.0417	4.0417
other	48		4.1875
Sig.		.352	.279

As shown in Table 4.12, students of other ethnicity (M = 4.19, SD =.68) had a higher F3 Lecturer score than Māori students (M = 3.78, SD =.78).

Table 4.13 locates the statistically significant difference in relation to how students felt in terms of their F5 Support score between the Asian students and those of Pasifika and other ethnicity. The table indicates that the difference lies between these two groups; the differences between the other groups are not statistically significant.

Table 4.13

F5 Support Scores by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05

		1	2
Asian	24	3.6528	
Māori	50	4.0000	4.0000
Pākehā NZ	170	4.0255	4.0255
Pasifika	48		4.0903
other	48		4.2361
Sig.		.071	.466

As shown in Table 4.13, students of other ethnicity (M = 4.24, SD =.64) and Pasifika students (M = 4.09, SD =.72) had higher F5 Support scores than Asian students (M = 3.65, SD =.67).

Age-group differences.

With respect to age groupings, an ANOVA procedure showed that there were statistically significant differences in relation to how students felt about peer relationships (Factor 4), $F(6, 332) = 3.374$, $p = .003$, $\eta 2 = .01$. Table 4.14 shows the results of the ANOVA.

Table 4.14

ANOVA of All Factor Scores by Age Group

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
F1 Institution	Between Groups	1.670	6	.278	1.119	.351
	Within Groups	82.624	332	.249		
	Total	84.294	338			
F2 Confidence	Between Groups	3.934	6	.656	1.692	.122
	Within Groups	128.696	332	.388		
	Total	132.630	338			
F3 Lecturers	Between Groups	.344	6	.057	.121	.994
	Within Groups	158.082	332	.476		
	Total	158.426	338			
F4 Peers	Between Groups	5.518	6	.920	3.374	**.003**
	Within Groups	90.493	332	.273		
	Total	96.010	338			
F5 Support	Between Groups	1.629	6	.271	.564	.759
	Within Groups	159.814	332	.481		
	Total	161.442	338			

A post-hoc Tukey test to examine the differences in groups showed that 41–45-year-old students (M = 3.81, SD = .69) had a lower F4 Peer score than did 26–30-year-old students (M = 4.32, SD = .51), as indicated by Table 4.15.

Table 4.15

F4 Peer Scores by Age Group

		Subset for alpha = 0.05	
Age	N	1	2
41–45	12	3.8056	
46+	9	3.9259	3.9259
31–35	19	3.9649	3.9649
36–40	18	4.0741	4.0741
21–25	81	4.2016	4.2016
<20	177	4.2881	4.2881
26–30	23		4.3188
Sig.		.066	.231

By programme or course of study.

With respect to course of study, there were statistically significant differences in relation to how students felt in terms of their perception of relationships with the Institution (Factor 1), $F(6, 333) = 4.005$, $p = .001$, $\eta 2 = .07$. Table 4.16 shows the outcome of ANOVA.

Table 4.16

ANOVA of All Factor Scores by Course of Study

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
F1 Institution	Between Groups	5.682	6	.947	4.005	**.001**
	Within Groups	78.734	333	.236		
	Total	84.416	339			
F2 Confidence	Between Groups	3.608	6	.601	1.548	.162
	Within Groups	129.346	333	.388		
	Total	132.954	339			
F3 Lecturers	Between Groups	5.512	6	.919	1.988	.067
	Within Groups	153.882	333	.462		
	Total	159.394	339			
F4 Peers	Between Groups	1.521	6	.254	.891	.502
	Within Groups	94.787	333	.285		
	Total	96.308	339			
F5 Support	Between Groups	.310	6	.052	.106	.996
	Within Groups	162.068	333	.487		
	Total	162.377	339			

Table 4.17 locates the statistically significant differences between students in different courses of study in relation to how students felt in terms of their perception of F1 Institution. These differences are to be found between the scores of students in the main campus primary pathway ($M = 3.56$, $SD = .44$) and the Māori-medium pathway ($M = 3.98$, $SD = .40$), as well as the Pasifika early-childhood pathway ($M = 3.98$, $SD = .52$).

Table 4.17

F1 Institution by Course of Study

		Subset for alpha = 0.05	
Student's course	N	1	2
Main campus primary	178	3.5655	
Physical education	42	3.6389	3.6389
Main campus early childhood	28	3.6548	3.6548
Remote campus primary	39	3.6709	3.6709
Foundation Certificate	22	3.8561	3.8561
Māori medium primary	20		3.9833
Pasifika early childhood	11		3.9848
Sig.		.341	.153

The exclusion of the Foundation Certificate students.

In January of 2013, the year following the administration of the survey, in accordance with the approved ethics application for this research, the records of those students who had granted consent were checked for re-enrolment in a course of study at the faculty. At this point, the Foundation Certificate students were excluded from the data, bringing the number down from 340 to 318. The reasoning behind this decision was that these students' courses were not necessarily leading to a course of study inside the faculty; they may well have enrolled for further university study, but in another faculty of the university, which would not be apparent from the faculty records. Including that group of students may have made the early departure figures misleading, as those students who went to another faculty for further study would appear to have departed from their studies altogether, whereas in fact they could have continued with their studies.

An examination of the data provided by non-returning students.

As outlined above, the records of those students who had granted consent were checked for re-enrolment in a course of study at the faculty in January 2013. Access to student re-enrolment data is shown in Table 4.18.

Table 4.18

Consent to Gather Re-Enrolment Data

	Frequency	Percent
invalid or no ID	9	3
returning	226	71
not returning	17	5
no consent to access	66	21
Total	318	100.0

Access to re-enrolment data was possible for 243 students: 17/243 or 7% did not re-enrol for further study at the faculty in the year following their first year of enrolment, as shown in Table 4.19.

Table 4.19

Re-Enrolling Students

	Frequency	Percent
returning	226	93
not returning	17	7
Total	243	100.0

Viewing the Returning and Non-Returning Student Data by Factor Scores

A comparison of the factor scores obtained by the groups of returning and non-returning students was conducted, as can be seen in Table 4.20. This was carried out with the Foundation Certificate students' data having been removed for the reasons outlined above. The intention behind carrying out this analysis was to look for differences in scores derived by the different groups of students (returning and non-returning), based on the premise that one of the many

factors contributing to a decision not to return to study could have been a negative experience of relationships in the first year.

Table 4.20

Factor Scores by Re-Enrolment Status

Re-enrolment		F1 Institution	F2 Confidence	F3 Lecturers	F4 Peers	F5 Support
yes	Mean	3.6497	2.4410	4.0000	4.2478	4.0855
	N	226	226	226	226	226
	Std. Dev	.49723	.65975	.71957	.53385	.68534
no	Mean	3.6667	2.3725	3.8824	4.0784	3.8431
	N	17	17	17	17	17
	Std. Dev	.60668	.64423	.60025	.59546	.91377

The factor scores obtained by these two groups match one another closely, except in the areas of F4 Peers and F5 Support, where the scores of the non-returning students can be seen to be lower than those of the returning students. However, further testing of these mean scores by means of independent samples t-test revealed the differences not to be statistically significant.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined the data gathered in the course of this project in a number of ways. The development of the survey instrument was undertaken by the researcher in consultation with supervisors, but not trialled. The procedure for administering the survey was, with permission, to extend a session at which students were already present, and to invite their participation in the survey process, and potentially in the interview phase as well. Following the gathering and collating of the survey data, a process of factor analysis was undertaken to make sense of the data, and to look for commonalities to be presented as factors, and the results presented a five-factor EFA solution, which created the framework for considering the data

beyond the initial analysis. For verification, this structure was tested against a PCA structure, and few differences were noted.

The survey items which loaded together as factors have been explained, and the different factor scores demonstrated for, respectively, F1 Institution, F2 Confidence, F3 Lecturer, F4 Peer and F5 Support. The highest factor scores were to be found in the F4 Peer, F5 Support and F3 Lecturer scores, with the lowest for the F2 Confidence.

By means of an ANOVA analysis, these factor scores have then been explored for similarities and differences in the light of the demographic data gathered at the time of the administration of the survey. Statistically significant differences in factor scores for ethnicity, course of study and age groupings were found and examined. Differences were located between Asian and Māori students in relation to how students felt in terms of their F2 Confidence. Differences in F4 Peer scores were found between students in the 21–25-year-old group and those in the 41–45-year-old group. Differences were found between students in different courses of study in relation to how they felt in terms of their perception of relationships with the institution, the F1 Institution score. Students from both the Māori-medium pathway and the Pasifika early-childhood pathway generated F1 Institution scores that were higher than those of the students in the main campus primary pathway. No statistically significant differences in factor scores were found when the data were examined by gender, first-in-family status or by re-enrolment status.

The following chapter, Chapter 5, will consider the findings of the qualitative part of this study: the one-on-one interviews carried out with students during or at the conclusion of their second semester of study in the faculty.

Chapter 5. Findings—Interview Data Analysis

Introduction

In the context of the first, survey phase of this sequential explanatory project, respondents were invited to come to an interview for the second phase. The participant information sheet for the survey component asked students for permission to contact them about the interview, and 144 (42%) of the survey respondents gave such permission.

Interview participants were sought in two phases, the first via a general invitation to which there were 10 self-selecting respondents, and the second round aimed at creating a sample that reflected the makeup of the survey sample overall. This second round sought to fill the gaps in student representation, when comparing the overall survey population with the interviewed group—for instance, there were no male students in the initial group of 10 who offered to come forward, there were no students from the physical education programme, and there were no school leavers.

Eventually, 17 semi-structured interviews were completed with student teachers; this constitutes 5% of all students who completed surveys. Their responses to the interview questions have been attributed via pseudonyms in the chapter.

The following Table 5.1 shows the makeup of the interview sample.

Table 5.1

Interview Participants by Demographic Data

Demographic							
Age	<21	21-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46+
	6	6	1	1	1	1	1
Ethnicity	Pākehā NZ		Māori		Asian	Other	
	9		4		2	2	

Demographic			
Campus	Main English medium 13	Main Māori medium 3	Subsidiary [English medium only avail.] 1
Course of study	Primary 14	Foundation Cert 2	BPE 1
Sector	Primary 14	ECE 2	Secondary 1
Gender	Female 13	Male 4	
First generation	Yes 11	No 6	
Status for the following year	Returning 14	Non-returning 3	

The most frequently occurring interview participant can be characterised as a first-generation, female, Pākehā New Zealander aged under 26, who is studying in the main primary pathway on the faculty's main campus and who re-enrolled for a second year of study.

Interview participants and whole sample: Demographics.

The demographic statistics for interview participants show that they diverge from the whole survey-response group in the following ways:

- Under-21-year-olds make up 55% of the whole group, but 35% of the interviewed group.
- 21–25-year-olds make up 24% of the whole group, but 35% of the interviewed group.
- First-generation students make up 37% of the whole group, but 65% of the interviewed group.
- Māori students make up 15% of the whole sample, but 23.5% of the interviewed group.
- Pasifika students make up 14% of the whole group, but none came to an interview.
- Remote campus students make up 12% of the whole sample, but 6% of the interviewed group.

- Physical education students make up 12% of the whole sample, but 6% of the interviewed group.
- Non-returning students make up 8% of the whole sample, but 18% of the interviewed group.

Table 5.2 and Figure 5.1 show that the scores of the smaller group are representative of the cohort as a whole; the scores do not diverge substantially at any point. The interviewees are slightly higher in their Factor 1 Institution score and slightly lower in their Factor 4 Peers score, but these differences are not significant.

Table 5.2

Survey Factor Scores for the Interview Participants and the Whole Sample

	Factor 1 Institution	Factor 2 Confidence	Factor 3 Lecturer	Factor 4 Peers	Factor 5 Support
interviewees	3.81	2.37	3.31	3.84	4.02
all surveyed	3.66	2.42	3.28	4.05	4.13

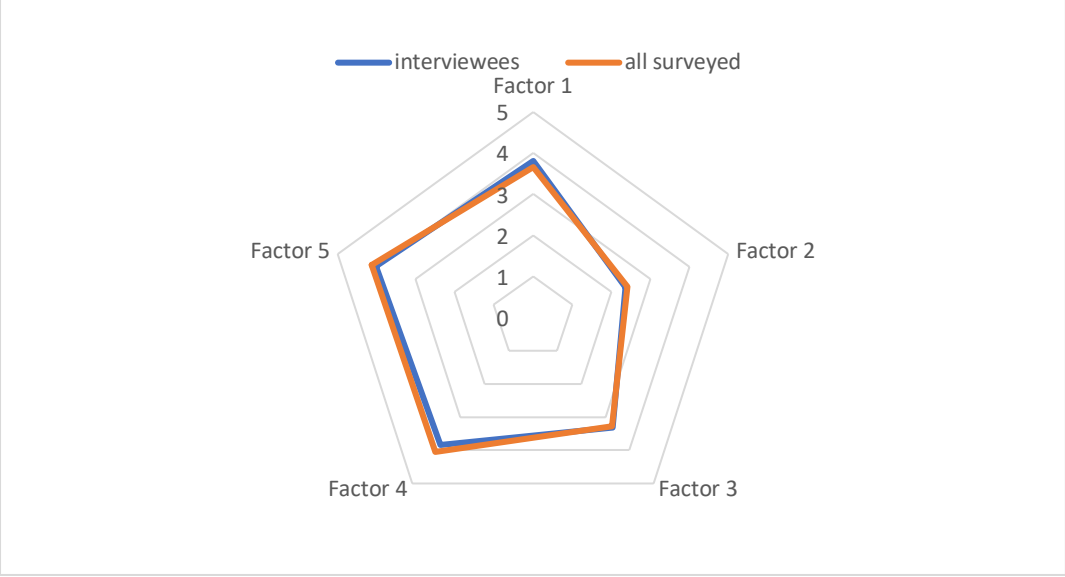

Figure 5.1. A plot of the mean-factor scores for interview participants against the whole survey-response group.

Themes Emerging from the Student Interviews

Relationships with peers.

The students interviewed were clear that peer relationships were an important part of their university experience. It was a recurrent theme across many parts of the semi-structured interviews carried out; students talked about the value of study groups structured for them by their lecturers, of more informal study groups that simply arose out of conversations with others from their classes, and of the importance of the links with other students in their classes. They spoke of the value in having conversations about their learning, about assignment and assessment work they were asked to do, and the clarity that might come from hearing other points of view—how others might frame the same learning in a different way.

This section will examine different aspects of peer relationships which arose from the interview data. These are: group-sized classes, a sense of group belonging, social alignment with peers, the downsides of group membership, and the idea of the competitive student.

Peers and group-sized classes.

Students talked specifically about the interpersonal opportunities provided by a class, rather than a mass lecture. From the interviewed sample came 21 comments about class size in the context of questions about "good" classes. Many experienced these classes as tutorials in flat-floored classrooms in groups of 25–30, as opposed to the lectures which could be held in large lecture theatres with student numbers in excess of 200. They were clear that, for many of them, working in consistent groups over time, with students whose names they came to know and with whom they might establish friendships, was a significant element in their learning. They did not offer class size as a proxy for good peer relationships, but were clear that the range of activities undertaken in the tutorial-sized groups provided them the opportunity to form stronger relationships both with their peers and with lecturers, as we shall see later. Ten interviewees talked about the opportunity for discussion and interaction, four talked about the

significance of the company of others, and four talked about the presence of like-minded peers as being significant in the creation of a good class.

> [I am] more comfortable [in a tutorial] and I know in that class you know everyone's names and you just kind of, it's just a different atmosphere. (Julia, 22-year-old Asian, returning-student interview)

Richard developed the idea of the small class and the affordances for a different mode of learning.

> I enjoyed the smaller tutorials of 30 or 40 people rather than the big lectures of 200 people, because in the lectures there wasn't really, we had chances to ask questions but that wasn't, there was no small group discussion either and so yeah there was a little bit of just following the slides I found sometimes in the bigger lectures, so definitely enjoyed the tutorials more. (Richard, 27-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Three students reported that the group-sized classes were the more likely environment in which they would experience teaching-and-learning activities (TLAs) that replicated those to be found in their future school classrooms; they were often asked to engage in model TLAs, and discuss them with their peers, and in this way, they felt their learning was both enhanced and deepened about the content in question.

> If it was maths, then we'd do maths activities and see like this is suitable for this age group and we'd do this and see how is it suitable and why….I think it's a lot easier to understand rather than just giving you a text book and be like "read it" or "memorise it," you know. (Silvia, 20-year-old Asian, returning-student interview)

Students were able to articulate that they felt their learning changed when they were in the company of people whom they knew and could relate to. Some were honest enough to say that it wasn't all about the learning, and that they valued time spent with friends.

> I'd definitely say a balance between actually learning something, which is always good, and a bit of time to chat with the people at your group and discuss things in the sessions. I like having that discussion factor when you hear everyone else's opinions as well. Yeah having friends in it (Rosemary, 20-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Tilly acknowledged that the opportunity to go off-task and engage in some social interaction was an attraction for her.

> And this is going to sound cliché but it is, it's because you're more close-knit and the lecturer they do know you on a first name basis and working with other people as well. You don't get to do that in the lecture and I don't like sitting quiet for that long, I want to chit-chat so I quite enjoy the tutorial groups. (Tilly, 20-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Three students interviewed had begun their courses of study in other faculties, where large-venue lectures were used almost exclusively, and commented on the differences they perceived. Their comments tended towards the idea that smaller groups allowed more contact between peers, and between students and the lecturer, and that these relationships were positive for their learning.

> It's kind of like a personal, like one level, at the same time where you have 30 other people, but it's just smaller, you know, where your teachers can concentrate on little groups rather than a big hall. (Julia, 22-year-old Asian, returning-student interview)

John also acknowledged the different mode of learning that took place in his tutorials.

> I think the tutorials were better. Obviously smaller classes, you can actually get a bit of feedback, you put your hand up a bit more. I think it's easier… more comfortable [in a tutorial] and I know in that class you know everyone's names and you just kind of, it's just a different atmosphere. (John, 23-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Peers and the group: A sense of belonging.

Students reported on the benefits they perceived in belonging to a study group. They reported on the benefits of conversations with peers about either the content or the assignment work, and how their learning could be enhanced in this way, and how relating to a group could make study more enjoyable.

> When we were studying for exams that's all we did was small group, studying in small groups using a whiteboard in a study room in the library, that sort of thing so that was definitely beneficial for me…. I definitely enjoyed conversation with peers about essay topics. (Richard, 27-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Brenda also found that talking to peers about the material and getting clarification from them was very helpful to her learning.

> We had study groups towards the end of each course, and I found that really helpful cause some people know the work more than you and they can explain things really well…. when you are hearing another student explain it, they might use a different set of words that might help you more…. I found study groups really helpful, and then there are a few friends of mine who I would quite often discuss a few things if we were a bit confused on it. But yeah, I found that probably the best. (Brenda, 19-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Ian found that the contact with his classmates made study more engaging for him, and he gave more priority to time spent on campus.

> Second semester sort of opened up a lot more for me, you know, I found that I would be sticking up after classes to talk with friends, maybe go over what we had been doing, do some independent study maybe in the library. I would always find some more ways to spend my time here. (Ian, 20-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Some groups were formally set up and assigned by their lecturers; others grew rather more informally out of relationships which developed via social contacts with peers in their classes.

> It was both [formal and informal] really, I think the key thing with a study group whether it's formal or informal if you're going to go and study you've got to make sure it's going to be studying not just recreation... Someone told me that at the start of my year, get into a group where people know how to have fun and have a good time but also when it's time to knuckle in, really knuckle in. So yeah, it's more about who you're with rather than what you're studying. (Richard, 27-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Even students who self-identified as being competent and confident in working as individuals made positive comments about working with a group; these peer relationships contributed to an overall sense of satisfaction with their work and motivated them to spend more time on task.

> I am quite a capable independent learner. If you give me a task, I will be fine doing my own research and doing my own thing. But, like I said, I definitely find it's more compelling, more interesting if I am being stimulated in that way to given tasks, given discussion, taking notes with others and interacting and sharing stuff like that because there's a lot of feedback from not only the lecturers but the other students as well and that's where you come to get the broader idea. I frequently find myself now staying after a class or lecture to talk to my friends, discuss how they are going with it, share our information, what we are doing. So always comparing assignments or whatever. (Ian, 20-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Finally, John found satisfaction in forming a group with others who had, like himself, not yet formed a group; the fact that they all seemed to have had similar experiences facilitated the development of their relationships.

> We started studying together in second semester was when we started to be a bit more serious. I think we all have the same feel because we've all not come straight from school.… we just found each other. We reckon we're the misfits, the mismatched… we're the ones that never really were part of a group for various reasons. (John, 23-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Peers and social alignment: "Time of life," sense of purpose.

The interview sample of students matched the whole survey sample very closely in respect of age groupings; 76% were in the up-to-25 group. It was interesting, therefore, to hear different comments and perspectives about relating to peers who were at a similar time of life, with a similar sense of purpose, and the challenges when that alignment was not found. "Attitudes," "outcomes" and "frame of mind" were expressions used to describe indicators of whether or not a group was suitable to work with.

> Yeah [I worked] largely with people that I'd met at uni…we have the same attitude, I guess we study in the same way, similar way, interested in the same outcomes. (Richard, 27-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

It was clear that groups could form on the basis of age grouping. Patricia commented on the balance of younger and older students in her programme, and how that could affect the possibility of building strong relationships to support the affiliation to the learning.

> In our group they are more older, say older people... I enjoy certain people's company…there are pockets of people and you are either in the pocket or you are not. (Patricia, 42-year-old other ethnicity, returning-student interview)

Age grouping differences were readily highlighted as a reason for not finding alignment with peers. Younger students seemed to find it confronting to be dealing with mature students with concerns far from their own; mature students like Teresa became irritated with what they

characterised as the younger students' focus on socialising and chat—this inhibited her inclination to develop strong relationships with them.

> Some people in my class, well everyone is there to study but it shows more sometimes than others,… that would be the younger ones who haven't adjusted well, not well, but haven't adjusted to the university life where they're there for a bigger purpose rather than just talking about the weekend. (Teresa, 38-year-old Māori, returning-student interview)

Age grouping differences were also a surprise to some students. As a younger person, Silvia was struck by the range of ages in her course, as her previous experience of the university, in another, larger faculty on the main campus, was that students were much like her—school leavers with few responsibilities. Silvia could see that the "time of life" meant different perspectives and concerns, and might inhibit the formation of relationships:

> You know, age gaps as well because I think there are a lot of mature students in this course which is really different from [other faculty] again.…but most people are really nice, but it's just really weird, "I have to go and pick up my kids" or stuff like that so you're kind of on a different time of life really. (Silvia, 20-year-old Asian, returning-student interview)

Peers: The downsides of the group.

Groups have the potential to develop an exclusive membership. As a mature student, Katherine spoke of a hurtful experience. When her own allocated study group became dysfunctional, Katherine tried to join a study group with already-established relationships but was refused. (She was responding to a question about feeling support from other students.)

> Not all the time and not all of them. I mean it's a selfish world. It's a selfish world studying…. I am just coming out of a situation now where I asked help of a group, a study group and they actually said no. They had all these reasons why and they are fast

> and they had been together all year. So I kind of understood all that, but it still hurt…It still wasn't a thing to do to an older woman. So I've managed to… picked myself up and gone on to find another group which I am studying with today. (Katherine, 60-year-old Māori, returning-student interview)

Relationships inside groups could develop around common ethnicities, which made entry difficult for others who may have been in an ethnic minority. Patricia had this experience.

> There are not many [ethnicity] actually in the [cohort] group. And people tend to stick to their own [culture]…Initially I had trouble breaking into, just I think finding a steady…, or just finding where I belong, you see. But now more or less settled, more or less settled. (Patricia, 42-year-old, other ethnicity, returning-student interview)

Te Aroha reported that, while she would have appreciated the support of group of students to study with, she did not want to be put in a position of obligation that she could not fulfil because of her other commitments, so she avoided becoming part of a group on that basis.

> Because I didn't want to let anybody else down, like my peers. I was invited to their study groups, but it was just hard to balance it, so I just preferred not to go in there. (Te Aroha, 25-year-old Māori, returning-student interview)

Tilly acknowledged that, despite the overall enjoyment strong peer relationships could bring, there were moments when she did not want the kind of input some members of her group had to offer:

> We have a Facebook group that we go on but I ended up blocking it because it was people just "oh gosh it's midnight and I haven't even started my assignment, who can help." Oh, I don't want to be looking at that, yeah. Or people once you've written about a question and you know you're right and they suddenly say "no that's not what you do." You don't want to see that the day before you're going to hand it in.… you start to

question yourself and I didn't enjoy that. (Tilly, 20-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Relationships with peers: The competitive student.

Amongst the students interviewed were four who acknowledged a competitive streak in themselves. They agree they are motivated to score high grades by the idea that they might do better than their peers; they held back some information about sources and readings on the basis that they wanted to retain a competitive edge over their classmates. Others were explicit about the sense of social motivation they experienced. Glenda agreed that she was motivated by the possibility of scoring good grades for herself, but that she also paid attention to the grades others were getting:

> and other people, other people's grades as well. So for example if I get an A minus I could be very happy but then if someone that usually gets the same or lower than me gets an A I will be disappointed. Especially if I felt like I did well, you know, but yeah, high grades, I've got to do well. (Glenda, 19-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Silvia was happy to engage with other students via web-based forums but could see that there were levels of support some students needed that she thought were beyond what they should be asking.

> I have [learning management system] for [subject]. Didn't really maybe use it to its full potential but occasional chats on there, discussions about, we have weekly assignments, stuff like that yeah… You see other people's questions. We also have a group on Facebook,… so anyone from the faculty, people even from [other campus] that are in part of that as well. It gets a bit annoying sometimes with people asking stuff that is just pure common sense but it's kind of like "let me Google that for you." Yeah, I guess they were really struggling. (Silvia, 20-year-old Asian, returning-student interview)

Tilly found that, as she experienced her own success, she began to share resources and ideas with her peers in study group in a more strategic way.

> We would organise that—to meet in the library and we'd just have sort of a big group and work on one section of the assignment or basically just ask each other questions and it was mostly on referencing in our first year. We'd sort of get our lists together and "what have you used" and "yeah that's a good one" and "this is not a good one." Yeah, we would compare a lot of our work and I like, because after my first-year assignments, I thought "actually I'm doing quite well, I don't want to actually share everything with you" so I sort of started to share some things that was broad but I did start keeping lots of ideas to myself which I found it was beneficial because even though they're my really good friends, I still want to do better than them in the end. (Tilly, 20-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Tilly's interview fell at the end of the academic year, and she was in the process of reviewing her learning approach in the light of her first-year experience; she was clear that she enjoyed the support of working in groups, but was also keen on the feeling of personal, individual success.

> Exactly that, we're sharing assignments, where it never got to that point because we would always do the actual assignments apart but we would always after the class sort of thing, what type of things should we be putting in and what pages shall we be looking at because obviously as first years as well we're really nervous about...so we just, yeah we did a lot of working together which I think this year I might do less of, not because I didn't enjoy it but because I'm more confident and I do want to do, I know that I can do well now and I don't want that to slip or share too much but I would definitely work with others. I love doing that, but I think when I go home, sort of get the majority of it done and keep that to myself … which I started doing towards the end. "Have you

started studying," "oh yeah" kind of which everyone does and then "oh no I haven't started" but they have… so I think I started to do that more at the end and I think I'll sort of keep a lot of things to myself but I do love working in groups. (Tilly, 20-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Relationships with lecturers.

Students talked specifically about the role of the lecturer in a good class. There were 38 separate comments made by 26 students (clearly some students commented more than once) about lecturer factors in the quality of the experience for the students. Words were used such as approachable, caring, supportive, engaged, open, honest and enthusiastic.

This section will explore the aspects of lecturer relationships which relate to engagement, relevance and connection, going beyond PowerPoint, and "breaking it down."

Lecturers and engagement, relevance and connection.

Students were sensitive to the differences they perceived in their lecturers who were engaged in the task of teaching, and those they felt were not engaged in the same way. Some were aware that, in a faculty of education, in the act of preparing their students to teach, the lecturers needed to model best practice, or at least, to implement the classroom strategies they themselves recommended. Students who spoke of lecturers developing relationships with or engaging with their students were acknowledging that this practice drew the students closer to the person, but also closer to the content of the course—students found it easier to engage with someone who was demonstrating engagement than with a dispassionate person. The personal relationship seemed to have the effect of creating a stronger intellectual one.

I think it was the fact that they actually took the time to get to know us and it would even be asking questions at certain people because they knew that that's what you were strong at and that's what they teach us to do in the classroom and make people feel special because they know a lot about that subject… and I feel like that happened a lot

> with certain lecturers and other lecturers couldn't even remember your name. (Tilly, 20-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Silvia, who had begun her university studies in another faculty, appreciated the opportunity to at least get to know some lecturers on a personal level:

> I think coming from, especially coming from [other faculty] where your lecture was like 2,000 people and you hardly even get to know the lecturer anyway but whereas here they kind of become more personal like you know you've got more tutorials, it was a big change for me. I wasn't quite used to it because you never ever approach the lecturer, or I never did in [other faculty] anyway,… it was a lot more email communication and stuff like that. (Silvia, 20-year-old Asian, returning-student interview)

Gertrude noticed in her cohort group a reciprocity of engagement in operation. She felt lecturers who engaged in closer personal relationships with the students had the additional effect of drawing the students into a closer relationship with the content, thereby enhancing their learning. When the lecturer was engaged, so too was the group. And the opposite was also true.

> You can definitely tell when our girls aren't engaged because like the teacher will ask a question and we just sit there and like well what's your answer. (Gertrude, 21-year-old Pākehā, first-generation, returning-student interview)

Students notice the difference when there is little effort to engage them via instructive TLAs:

> I did a few [subject] papers when I was in at [other] campus and it was kind of just sit in the classroom, do your worksheet kind of type thing. It was a question and answer. ...you felt like you know you were kind of kicked to the side and "just do your stuff." … here I feel like we actually do hands-on activities and I think it's more beneficial. (Silvia, 20-year-old Asian, returning-student interview)

Students seem to want to sense that engagement is reciprocal:

> I think what makes a good class for us is that if we really participated in a discussion. Like we've had some teachers who we've had such a good relationship with that the girls can be so honest on all sorts of different matters. Like in [subject], our tutor in that in the first semester she was just fantastic. She really connected with us, got us to talk about you know things from our own lives. (Gertrude, 21-year-old Pākehā, first-generation, returning-student interview)

Conversely, students articulate a sense of dissatisfaction when they note that classes or lecturers are not meeting their needs as social beings in a learning environment. Staff also need to be aware of students' levels of sensitivity towards staff engagement:

> The person at the front of the room maybe isn't engaged with the material, is just kind of... just a bit distracted and just kind of reads the notes maybe? Like we're just, "until they've finished this, it's cool. [We'll] do the hour and it's finished" and I think that's a shame. It can happen but if it happens too often, I just think that that person is not really taking it seriously. (John, 23-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Students were highly attuned to the degree of connection to their specific learning needs and wanted their sector to be well-represented in generic lecture formats. They could easily be disengaged by what they saw as a lack of relevance in the material, or the absence of material specifically aimed at them:

> Our history lecture was extremely primary-school based. We got one slide for the whole semester on ECE, one slide. To be honest it more makes me turn round and go well if they think ECE and history only [amounts] to one slide, am I really going to use that in my practice? Is it something that I really need? Which is unfortunate.…and I think that … like if someone was to take an attendance at those mass lectures of ECE students, they'd definitely be down from other lectures. (Gertrude, 21-year-old Pākehā, first-generation, returning-student interview)

Beyond PowerPoint.

Students were clear that they were not engaged by a lecture or lecturer relying too heavily on a PowerPoint presentation, especially if what happened was that text-heavy slides were simply narrated to the class. Students expected the lecture to contain more than just a recital of the content material and wanted the lecturer to enact a connection to the material, to facilitate the learning in an active way.

> When they've just got a little bit of notes and the lecturer just reads what the PowerPoint says then it's just kind of pointless. Because if they put them up on [learning management system] we could just take the PowerPoint and just go home. (Lindsay, 21-year-old Pākehā, non-returning-student interview)

Richard made it clear that he wanted more from a class or a lecturer than just an articulation of the content.

> Not just going through a bunch of slides and regurgitating what was on the board but actually going through each point and explaining it, made it a good class for me… if it's just regurgitating what's on the board then I don't get as much out of it. (Richard, 27-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Rosemary felt the same way; it was not enough for her to hear a lecturer recite what students could already read; she wanted the lecturer to connect the learning to the students.

> Some of the lecturers were very in themselves very boring, no experience, just kind of droned on the whole time just you know reading off the slides whereas I found it a lot better when they just talk themselves… you could just read the slide at home…[they] didn't really add any more to it. (Rosemary, 20-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Eight students reported different aspects of the lecture venue and format that impinged on their ability to keep up with the material and the learning. They reported that their sense of comfort

in asking questions and getting clarification from lecturers was reduced in larger format sessions. It also seemed that the large numbers caused lecturers to be less engaging at a personal level—the relationships with students were enacted in a different way in the larger forum. It appeared, too, that these more distant interpersonal relationships could have distancing effect on the connection to the learning.

> If they sit there and flick through their PowerPoint and don't really have like the conversation or don't really interact with what is happening on the PowerPoint, then I'm not going to pay attention at all. If I feel like they're just sitting there and clicking through so that we can read all the information ourselves, then I'm not going to be paying attention. (Tonya, 21-year-old Māori, Foundation Certificate student interview)

Glenda also found that different aspects of lectures could be quite disengaging.

> I feel if I am just sitting there, sometimes I switch off. I don't want to. I am like "oh my goodness, get back into it." It's just… I just feel like I am sitting there, literally just physically getting lectured to. I struggle to pay attention to for 2 hours. Two hours is a long time for someone just to be talking to you. (Glenda, 19-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

"Breaking it down."

Conversely, students showed great appreciation for those lecturers who worked hard at making sure students understood the material and enabling students to make sense of it for themselves via discussion or activities. The theme of "breaking it down" was a strong one in the student narrative about these lecturers, and Te Aroha talked about how she felt this approach built her confidence as a student and enabled her to move forward successfully.

> He just gets us to link our own lives to what they are trying to deliver. That's how I kind of think I've passed….He breaks every single part down for you, and we let him know if it's too easy and he'll just skip it. … We like it how he breaks it down, cause

> it is quite challenging at times…. he gets us to do group work and we've all got to explain how we think and how we interpret it. And he never says we're wrong. He just goes mmmm, and then we know, yeah, we are way off track. But he never says that's a wrong answer. Yeah, that's why I feel confident. (Te Aroha, 25-year-old Māori, returning-student interview)

In this regard, there felt to be an overlap between the relationship with the lecturer and the relationship with the content, which we shall examine in the next section. The strength of this lecturer, in Te Aroha's eyes, seemed to be his ability to act as a guide, someone who assisted in access to the understanding of the content—a bridge or a conduit to the material.

Relationships with the content: The transactional student.

Five students in the interviewed group were clear that, although they appreciated the relationships they could build around their learning, it was the material and the learning that mattered most to them. Provided they could clearly see the structure and the content of a lecture, they would be happy with that.

> I found that really helpful when the lecturers laid out what they wanted and what it meant for us, I found that … the most helpful for me. (Brenda, 19-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

> The sessions I really learnt the most from were the ones that sort of gave you the clear information, discussed what you will be learning, why and then just really dug into the facts. (Ian, 20-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Some comments seemed to reflect a surface approach to the learning, driven by extrinsic goals. The focus for the learning was the examination success that would follow as an outcome:

> I like clear and concise information, notes for us to take down. I think that's really important because when it comes to studying for exams, if you have nothing there, you don't know what to study off. …I'd rather have a PowerPoint and then the lecturer adds

> stuff to it so we can write it down as well. (Silvia, 20-year-old Asian, returning-student interview)

Tonya was clear that learning new things was an important part of a good class experience for her; she sought a connection to the content material involved in the class, but had a mastery approach to her learning, and seemed to get great pleasure from the learning process itself, for its own sake. Her motivation for learning seemed to be at a different level from others who spoke about the content:

> I do like learning things, and that's why I liked social sciences and stuff, because those are the subjects where I feel like I learn constantly. Like I feel like I am actively learning new things. I'm not just going over things I know. I like reading all the new stuff and I like going away with new knowledge. I really like going away with new knowledge. (Tonya, 21-year-old Māori, Foundation Certificate student interview)

Teresa was very focused on the course structure and content of the lecture, and less on the person taking the class or lecture.

> Just what the content is, for me…. because I know that's going to affect the final outcome, not necessarily the person in front although the person in front if they have really good knowledge in a subject, you can tell who has or they're an expert in their field and that's good. (Teresa, 38-year-old Māori, returning-student interview)

Ian and Lindsay wanted to have the relevance of the material made clear, in such a way that they could see the connections to the rest of the course.

> Well when you walk away from a class and you go "wow, that's useful information," that's a good class. (Lindsay, 21-year-old Pākehā, non-returning-student interview)

Ian was struggling in some situations to see the relevance of some of the course material.

> I feel like sometimes there were classes where they would sit you down and they just belt out fact after fact after fact and they are always using, you know, weird acronyms

> to help you remember or strange examples from text books from 50 years ago or whatever, and the information is solid, it's not bad, it's there to help you learn, but it's so sort of distant or detached that it doesn't really feel like it's cohesive to what you are doing at the moment…it's not that it's entirely disparate, it's just that it sort of feels like it's not entirely relevant or essential to what you are doing. (Ian, 20-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Some students spoke about the challenge of matching the content to the audience—too easy, too hard and too much were all factors in making the material and the lecture hard to relate to, causing a lack of engagement.

> It was one of my least favourite lectures and I think in the big lectures people didn't really seem to pay attention and it all got out of hand and every single lecture seemed to be like that and I just didn't really enjoy going because I didn't feel I was going to get anything out of it...it was to do with the delivery of it as well as what was in the paper…I just found it really repetitive, very repetitive and sort of obvious, that if I hadn't gone to any of the lectures I could still answer the questions. (Tilly, 20-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Rosemary reiterated the challenges of dealing with the volume of content in some courses.

> Some of them [had] too much content especially the [subject] paper that we did, that was very overwhelming… all those lectures. (Rosemary, 20-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Relationship with self: Learning to learn.

Students acknowledged that part of the learning they had done in the course of the year was meta-learning—learning how to learn in the context of the university. (Interviews were mostly carried out in the second semester, with some falling at the end of the academic year.) Students were not questioned about it directly, but were asked about their approach to study, and how

they "did" university. In particular, they were asked about doing blocks of study time on campus.

> I try to use the time in between classes to do, yeah catch up on readings or do whatever work is needed. Doesn't always happen, but I have learnt as like the year went on that that is a really good time to utilise (Rosemary, 20-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview).

> Previous years I've kind of been very slack about my studies, you know, and I mean I've got to a point where I am getting older and I need to fit it in and get out and do some work. So I'm trying to, every time when an assignment is due, like a few weeks in advance I will start it. It's something that you have to get into a habit of doing. It took me so long to actually get myself into that habit of doing it early. I find I'm…not mucking around anymore. (Julia, 22-year-old Asian, returning-student interview)

Richard found that both time and immediacy were important to his understanding of the work most recently covered.

> I found that if I was after a class, if I was learning about something and we had a reading to do and I had some spare time on my hands I would stay and do the reading afterwards, rather than leave it: have a little break but then get back into it and actually get it because if you don't get on to it then and there the next day you have more readings to do and it just builds up. (Richard, 27-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Rosemary found that simple time-on-task was the answer for her:

> I had a good semester last year, the second semester better than the first….Yeah, more time in front of the books. (Rosemary, 20-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

John acknowledged that he had suffered from an excess of confidence early on, and that the shock of gaining marks that didn't match his expectations had helped him engage with his studies.

> I mean I found the concept quite easy, to be quite honest I didn't go to all the classes and stuff, I just... It wasn't overly challenging and so to get my marks back when I've been kind of talking to people about how yeah it's easy and stuff and people just, you lose a lot of I don't have the correct word for this, but kind of respect….I needed to prove to myself that I'm actually understanding the course and that I will be a good teacher when I finish so that motivated me a lot. (John, 23-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Julia found that altering her mode of being a student was actually a way of reducing her stress about success and failure.

> Last year and the year before, my marks were kind of like, oh as long as I pass. But this year I am more, I am aiming at higher because I see it as if you do really well in your assignments and stuff before your exams, you don't have to worry too much, you don't have to stress too much about "oh my gosh, I might fail," you know. Yeah, so I mean that's what I do. I just make sure that my assignments and everything are pretty good, yeah. (Julia, 22-year-old Asian, returning-student interview)

Relationships with family.

Students talked about the significance of family relationships in different contexts.

There were those for whom a strong family relationship formed part of the support they experienced in their university studies—how others were working (and paying) to make sure that the students had every chance of success. Others talked about day-to-day obligations to family that hindered their studies; they articulated the need to clear space for their student lives as separate from their family lives, and how these two forces could be in tension.

Several students talked about family and family relationships in the context of goals and expectations, both personal and external. Some found that there was a hovering expectation of success, not clearly or frequently articulated, but present nonetheless. Others were aware that

their academic career was going to be significant beyond the marks and grades they might achieve, or the career that might open up for them; perhaps they were taking up a delayed opportunity, but there was more at stake than the qualification itself, there existed the notion of forging a path, and setting an example for others to follow.

Family as a factor in completion of study.

Julia was open about the various external pressures she felt to succeed. Initially, she felt there was a pressure because she was being granted an opportunity that had not been available to her parents.

> My mum is actually really smart, so it is hard to compete with that. But because she wasn't like wealthy to be able to do that so she didn't get to go to university in [country of origin]. (Julia, 22-year-old Asian, returning-student interview)

She was also sensitive to a growing social pressure arising from her feelings about the successes of her peers.

> It's so depressing to see on Facebook and stuff when all your friends are graduating with caps and everything and you've got a few more years to go, so yeah that's kind of motivation for me to really push myself and finish it off. (Julia, 22-year-old Asian, returning-student interview)

Further, she was aware that there was a need to match other family members of her own generation.

> I'm an only child, so that's even worse…. I am not competing with my brothers, I am competing with my cousins.…Yeah, especially family, I mean they will just go oh, you know. They like to gloat…basically, you have to be good, demonstrate that you are as good and smart as other people. (Julia, 22-year-old Asian, returning-student interview)

Finally, she also acknowledged a cultural element to the external pressure.

> To be honest, I think it's more of the fact that my parents, my parents push me quite a lot. It's not, I don't know, for me, [ethnicity] people, like all my family and stuff, you need to go to university. If you don't go to university you kind of are looked at you are not smart enough, you know. And I do understand the fact that also if you do have a degree it's easier to get jobs and stuff. It's really hard to find a job with no qualifications or anything, you know. So I mean I do understand that is also a big part of it, but it is a part of why my parents push me quite a lot to do a good degree and finish it….So there is a strong family motivation...there's a cultural element to that too I think. I think that, like, it would be hard to say, like if I went back to [country of origin] and people asked me, oh what are you doing, and if you say I don't go to university, you get looked down on. (Julia, 22-year-old Asian, returning-student interview)

Barbara also talked about family influences on her studies.

> Probably I'm the first one to go to university and so mum always pushed me to do my best and I'm glad she did because she didn't really do any like university studies and it's something she really regrets…she said she wants me to do the very best, but this is what she regretted. (Barbara, 19-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Glenda acknowledged that being first-in-family and family funding for study brought its own pressures.

> I'm the first one in my whole family to finish school and go to uni, so I don't know, I mean I was always…Yeah, it was always talked about at school. School put a lot of pressure on us, they kind of expected us to go into uni. So yeah, but I don't know…I think she's really happy to see that I am happy at uni and she's like cool that kind of makes me want to go to uni, kind of makes me want to do something. And then wider like grandparents and stuff are always interested to see how I am going. My Poppy actually is paying for my degree, because I am the first one in the family. He always

> said to all his kids, all his grandkids, if you go to university I will pay for you because I want you to do well in your life, so yeah, he's really good…Definitely gives more of a sense of commitment and expectation, cause obviously someone else is putting in thousands and thousands of dollars towards me, so I want to do well, not just for myself, but for him, to show him I can do this. (Glenda, 19-year-old Pākehā, returning-student interview)

Gertrude expressed strong feelings about what her place and role in the family meant to her.

> I'm the youngest of four in my family and I've definitely been the most privileged and so I know the worth of a dollar so I know exactly how much each semester is costing me and I'm not going to waste a bloody dollar of it you know. (Gertrude, 21-year-old Pākehā, first-generation, returning-student interview)

She was very clear about the responsibility and the sense of connection to family and whānau, and that the significance of the learning enterprise went well beyond herself.

> I think that's why I took the 2 years out of any education because I wanted to be sure of what I wanted to do. I didn't just want to go to university and do you know a general business degree or something like that because the way I see it at the end of the day it's a lot of money that you're handing over and especially like my parents aren't able to help me with this, so it's going to, it's the biggest loan I've ever taken out and it bloody scares me every time they send me an invoice for it. So yeah, also, yeah so I know that I need to pass because I'm spending all this money on it. I've committed myself to it but I also, like I said, being the youngest I've been the most fortunate so there's a certain amount of pressure on me to succeed because my siblings haven't…it's almost like I've wasted the opportunities given to me. And that's a pressure put on, that I put on myself. It's actually not put on by my parents at all. ...I feel like I've got my whole whānau

> behind me, all lined up [saying] "come on." (Gertrude, 21-year-old Pākehā, first-generation, returning-student interview)

Katherine's story contained family elements as well, and her focus was on family yet to come, as well as those who had gone before.

> It's kind of a legacy, a large legacy…[Grandchildren] have to have a role model these days. Too many are going through life not knowing who to aspire to or, or you know, who is there. I certainly didn't have anyone to, so I would like them to know that there are lots of people, family members that they can look to as you know...But it is, it's nice. By this lady. No it is, it is quite significant. And I've never heard anyone outside my family say that [I am a trail-blazer], so thank you. (Katherine, 60-year-old Māori, returning-student interview).

Chapter Summary

This chapter has addressed the nature of the qualitative data revealed in the student interviews which followed the gathering of survey questionnaire data. The nature and purpose of the interview data was expressly to allow the student voice to be heard, to illuminate and exemplify some of the data arising from the survey questionnaires, and this notion of student voice has been honoured through this chapter.

In respect of relationships with peers, the interviewees made many comments about how smaller class sizes allowed more opportunity for the kind of engaging activities, sometimes in groups, that corresponded with their ideas of a good class. They responded well to working with and forming relationships with peers, and having the time to concretise their learning through talk. They reported favourably on the ideas of forming groups which enhanced an overall sense of belonging to the enterprise of study. They acknowledged the importance of finding peers who were of the same mind as them in their approach to studies. Age groupings

were also important; older students did not want the purely social contact that younger students appeared to enjoy. Some competitive students agreed that relationships with peers could be an opportunity to feel motivated by staying ahead of them.

Students spoke clearly and articulately about the role of the lecturer in establishing and maintaining a good class. Students valued the important roles lecturers could play in connecting with students, helping engage students in the work and in making it relevant for them. Breaking it down was a phrase that students used repeatedly; a good lecturer should help students make meaning by recontextualising or recapitulating or reframing work such that the students have an opportunity to grasp it from multiple perspectives.

Having said that, there were also students who simply wanted to engage with the content; they wanted the material that was relevant, that would help them pass the assignment and pass the course, and little else mattered. They had a very transactional view of the teaching-and-learning process.

Interviewed students acknowledged that some of the best learning they had done was about themselves, as learners and as people, and they commented that they had needed to change some of their usual patterns of behaviour and study in order to meet the demands of the new environment.

Family played an important part in the lives of this mostly young student sample, both as day-to-day financial support and as motivation to continue and complete a course of study. Mature students were perhaps more cognisant of their studies as an opportunity than their younger peers, and the oldest interviewee, a first-generation student, saw her role as one of laying a path for others in her family to follow.

The subsequent chapter, Chapter 6, will look at the findings of this research overall and discuss a set of propositions about students' relationships which arise from those findings.

Chapter 6. Discussion

Chapter Preamble

The aim of this research was to consider students' experiences and perceptions of relationships. The argument I intend to construct proposes that relationships are indeed important for the students surveyed and interviewed. I suggest that relationships in their many forms are in fact glue that helps students adhere to their studies and encourages them to return for further study. I propose to construct an argument based on the following findings:

- Students expressed a sense of connection to their student peers, by way of contact in and out-of-class time, face-to-face and online. The strength and significance of the peer relationship is an aspect of this research that contributes to the overall understanding of student relationships in tertiary study.
- Students acknowledged a sense of connection to their lecturer(s) as individuals and could discriminate between those who were interested in and engaged with students, and those who were not.
- Students acknowledged a sense of connection to the institution, both via lecturers and through an understanding of the availability of central support services.
- For some students, a very important relationship at university is with the curricular content of their courses.

I will make the argument that each of these aspects of relationships arising from this research project represents an important strand or element that binds students to their course of study and learning, and makes a contribution to their overall sense of belonging at the institution. In three places in this chapter, I include sections which focus on an individual student, with a view to illustrating the particular point about relationships under discussion. My intention is to provide a richer view of the proposition under discussion, and to show how it connects to the

data from the qualitative part of this research. I have provided the statistical survey results for each of the students, to indicate how their responses fitted with the responses of other students interviewed, and with the full range of survey responses received.

Proposition 1: Peer Relationships Play a Powerful Role in Binding Students to Their Learning

The findings in this research project were unexpected (for the researcher) in one particular aspect: the importance of peer relationships to the students in this study. This research had its origins in an exploration of the importance of the teacher–student relationship, and indeed, this was acknowledged throughout the study as a strong component in how students made sense of and progress in their studies. I wanted to examine the nature of the role that an attentive practitioner can have in ensuring student engagement and success, and I wanted to know if students themselves were sensitive to this phenomenon. As we have seen in earlier chapters, in addition to students reporting favourably in both surveys and interviews about the importance of relationships with their lecturers, the highest factor score in the quantitative findings was generated by items in the survey relating to relationships with peers.

Peer relationships and the good class.

It was a feature of the quantitative findings that students rated peer relationships and interactions highly. The peer-factor mean was the highest of the five mean-factor scores and the difference between the peer-factor score and the other factors was statistically significant, as outlined in Table 4.8. As to the qualitative findings, interviewed students returned repeatedly to the idea of the presence of and interactions with their peers as elements that contributed to a good class—here many such comments were made by interview participants, with four of them focusing on the presence of their peers and another four commenting on the importance of working with like-minded others. Students also commented on the support that could be offered by peers via conversations about class work, assignment or examination preparation with

individuals or groups; they saw different types of benefit accruing from such affiliations. This research contends that these relationships with like-minded peers, in formal and informal study groups, both inside and outside classroom settings, have an important role to play in the overall outcomes for students: not only are there material benefits, such as shared resources or shared understandings of tasks or of learning, there is also the benefit of an increased sense of belonging. Students in this study appear to be reinforcing Freeman et al. (2007), who find students' sense of belonging can be enhanced via modes of instruction that focus on student participation and interaction with classmates. Their work also suggests that peer groups have a role to play both in adjustment to university life and in furthering cognitive development. Julia's (interviewed student) comment echoed this in the interview when she spoke of her experience of the comfort and different atmosphere in a tutorial class where people knew one another's name.

Osterman (2000) notes that a sense of belonging contributes to raised levels of intrinsic motivation and a range of more positive attitudes and interactions in students, as well as an increase in engagement. Tilly (interviewed student) underlined this with a comment about working in more close-knit way with students and lecturers she knew by name. Sollitto (2013) finds that strong inter-peer relationships at college and a sense of classroom connectedness support a greater sense of familiarity and engagement with the expectations and content of the class. Students in the present study appeared to confirm this view of the importance of relationships with their peers and, while they may not speak of greater cognitive development, their comments about the satisfactions of being associated with a course-related peer group make me think that they are experiencing those benefits.

There is an emergent notion of community that arises from such participation in peer-related activities, and I argue that the outcome of this sense of belonging is an increased sense of integration into the enterprise of study. I also argue that the belongingness created within the

group has a positive effect on the students' overall perception of connectedness with their studies. Such an idea is far from new, and has been tested over time; for example, Astin's (1984) ideas about student involvement find that particular levels of activity and contact with peers are connected to student persistence. Chickering and Gamson (1987) write that the principles for good practice in undergraduate education should include the opportunity for students to work collaboratively, as working with others can both deepen understanding and increase involvement in learning. Colvin (2007) asserts that peers are often considered a more powerful influence in undergraduate education than advisors and instructors and identifies a series of studies which point this out. Hausmann et al. (2007) report that developing a sense of belonging via student involvement and perceived integration is important to college persistence. Sidelinger (2011) makes the observation that student relationships, student-to-student connectedness in his terms, are associated positively with educational processes and outcomes, via affective learning, cognitive learning and self-regulated learning. The data drawn from the present study would bear out these findings and validate them for the New Zealand context: students surveyed and interviewed here were clear that there was much to be gained for them from a connection with their peers and that such connections drew them closer to their studies and made it a more pleasurable and engaging exercise.

As a coda to the positive side of peer relationships, it is important to note that some students related their experience of the downside of peer relationships. Katherine spoke of the hurt she felt when a study group did not work out for her, effectively rejecting her. Te Aroha was open to the idea of working with a group outside of class, but her family and work commitments prevented her doing so, and she did not want to let any of her peers down.

Proposition 2: The Relationship With the Lecturer Plays a Part in Binding Students to Their Learning

I have already declared myself in this thesis as having had an initial interest in my research topic as a result of my lifetime of work as a classroom practitioner; I wanted to investigate my research questions, to find more about the student–teacher relationship and whether it could cause students to overcome challenges and sustain their study efforts in the face of obstacles that might otherwise cause them to disengage.

The faculty in which the research was undertaken has a mix of large and small classes, and I also wanted to know if students were sensitive to the outcomes of the kinds of TLAs that were possible in the smaller classes, and the kinds of connections that were made possible in these classes, peer to peer and student to lecturer. I was interested to find whether this had an impact on their integration into study, and the overall sense of connectedness or belonging they might have experienced. To develop the idea of relationships "gluing" students into their studies, I believe there is evidence from the findings derived from my study that the lecturer has a role to play in that process, and that students are indeed sensitive to the lecturers' efforts and engagement in the learning enterprise. As discussed in Chapter 4, the factor score generated for lecturer relationships was 3.97. which indicated a strong level of agreement for the statements "It makes a difference to my connection to a course when the lecturer knows who I am" and "I take more care over my work when I know the lecturer notices my progress." Students seemed to be acknowledging the value of a consistent relationship with the person at the front of the room.

The teaching-and-learning affordances of smaller groups were commented on, too. Students in this study were able to articulate the difference between simply having content presented to them in a lecture format, and having a lecturer lead them through hands-on activities that enhanced their learning. Students found it easier to ask questions for clarification, and to

improve their understanding via conversations and discussions in these smaller groups, with lecturers whom they saw consistently, week after week. Breaking it down was a recurrent phrase in this data set; the role of the lecturer to interpret and help students make sense of the material was a key component of the teacher–student relationship for many. Students were readily able to comment on different lecturer behaviours that they found engaging, interesting and motivating. Conversely, in large classes, students commented that lecturers seemed to switch into a different mode of teaching, more like a public address, which impeded the development of interpersonal relationships and seemed to have a distancing effect for the students. They then came to rely on tutorials for the function of breaking it down as mentioned above, which helped them turn the content into understanding and knowledge.

This finding matches what can be widely found in the literature. Kuh et al.'s (2006) review of the student success literature detailed "instructor" qualities that matter to students and their success. These included preparation and organisation, clarity, availability and helpfulness, and concern for and rapport with students. Kuh et al. drew on the work of Angelo and Cross (1993) and Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) to cite that teacher knowledgeability, enthusiasm and encouragement are all qualities of a good teacher, as is their readiness to interact with students outside the class (Kuh et al., 2006).

Other such results are to be found in the literature. In Zepke and Leach's (2010) study, more than 90% of all respondents thought teacher influence had high importance for their engagement. All subpopulations in the data agreed, and no subpopulation rated teacher influence of little importance. They find that all Māori, Pasifika and older students put teacher influence into the high-importance category.

Lundberg and Schreiner (2004) cite Astin's (1993) assertion that the most productive gains for student outcomes are to be made as a result of interactions between peers and faculty around

relationships that have educational meaning. They also note that the work of Hu and Kuh (2002) and Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) provide support for the value of such relationships.

There is some evidence in the literature that the success of lower performing students is more reliant on relationships of quality with lecturers. Kuh et al.'s (2006) review of the student success literature includes the comment that groups of students who enter university with lower scores appear to benefit more than their high-scoring counterparts from personal relationships of high quality, a supportive environment and experiences with diverse groups of students; the benefits are noted both in terms of engagement and learning outcomes. The Gallup Purdue Index Report (2014) notes that, if they have had a professor who cares about them as a person, makes them excited about learning, and encourages them to pursue their chosen course of study, the odds of graduates being engaged at work more than double, as do their odds of thriving in their well-being. The reasons for the early departure of students in the present study will be many and varied, of course, but perhaps lesser quality relationships with lecturers is one of a complex set of factors and is all the more relevant for those students who come to higher education from a less strong academic background. Te Aroha (interviewed student) was clear in her attribution of her academic success to the skilled tutor "who broke it all down" for the class, helped them to understand, and would not move on until he was sure of their comprehension. Again, this finding speaks to the research questions that inquired about an overall sense of support for students from relationships with their lecturers.

The qualitative section of this inquiry certainly sheds light on how the students saw the affordances provided by the smaller classes and the closer contact with their lecturers. Students made comment about the advantages of lecturers knowing students on a first name basis, the ability of the lecturer to focus on smaller groups of students, and provide feedback to students. They also were able to comment on how the closer personal relationship with some lecturers had the effect of drawing the students into a closer engagement with the content material of the

course; an engaged lecturer had the effect of creating a greater reciprocal level of student engagement. Students pointed out that the reverse of this could be true, too, that a sense of going through the motions from the lecturer had the effect of diminishing the engagement of the students. Research into the current environment for academic promotions in research-led institutions prioritises research and research outputs (see Parker, 2008; Probert, 2013; Subbaye & Vithal, 2017), and one wonders if some staff are going through the motions with their teaching, allowing it to become content-driven and neglecting to engage students via relationships along the way. A reminder of the nature of effective teaching practices in tertiary education may serve to support both staff and students and help build positive relationships.

An illustrative case: Te Aroha.

Te Aroha's Factor 3 Lecturer score was the second highest in the interview sample. Her Classroom Confidence score was second lowest (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1

Comparison of Te Aroha's Factor Scores with Those of Other Students

Factor scores					
	Factor 1 Institution	Factor 2 Classroom Confidence	Factor 3 Lecturer	Factor 4 Peers	Factor 5 Support
Te Aroha	4.67	2.00	4.00	3.25	3.00
interviewees	3.81	2.37	3.31	3.84	4.02
all surveyed	3.66	2.42	3.28	4.05	4.13

Te Aroha is a 25-year-old solo mother of mixed heritage with two primary-school-aged children who is in her first year of study in the Māori-medium pathway towards a primary teaching qualification. She left school when she was 15, and now, aged 25, has found it difficult to re-enter a course of academic study. She identifies that some of lecturers, other students and student-support people were key in helping her make the transition back into study.

Geographically, she is isolated from other students in her course, and as a result has had difficulty integrating into study-support groups. Her obligation to leave the campus to attend to the needs of her children has also made it difficult to establish herself with her student peers.

Te Aroha feels that she is not strong in English-language-based subjects. Her schooling was done in a total-immersion Māori-language environment, from her later primary-school years on. The most challenging parts of her learning as a student teacher are the English-teaching part of her course, and when she finds herself in a large, English-language lecture.

In the large lectures (up to 200 students), she describes herself as "lost," with the lecture material going "straight over my head"—"sometimes I can't understand a word they are saying." The lectures she describes as being like presentations that are just "delivered." Some students ask questions, but she does not see the lecture environment as being conducive to that.

Te Aroha prefers the tutorial-sized classes she shares with her peers in the Māori-language pathway (around 25 students) which better suit her ability to connect both with the material and with the lecturer taking the class. She describes her regard for one tutor in particular, who helps the students make sense of the material by "breaking it down," and getting students to engage with it at an individual, personal level. He ensures complete understanding and offers explanations from different points of view until he is sure the students have arrived at a shared understanding of the material. Te Aroha attributes her success to the work of this tutor, his approach and his ability to connect with the students and the content: "that's how I've passed, I reckon."

The significance of personal teaching relationships for Māori students.

Te Aroha's story provides a particular insight into the position of traditionally underrepresented groups in higher education. In the current context of the massification of higher education, and the value of successful outcomes for all student groups, it seems particularly important to focus

on previously underrepresented students and ways in which to ensure the successful completion of their tertiary qualifications. There are documented ways of working successfully with Māori students with a focus on whakawhānaungatanga,[11] ako[12] and manaakitanga[13] (see Gordon, 2018; Richards, 2017). There are strategies that may aid us in overcoming particular challenges by creating a match between expectations and outcomes via a culturally responsive pedagogy of relations (see Bishop, 2008).

In Chapter 4, we saw that different ethnic groups had significantly different scores across four of the five factors (Table 4.9); one such statistically significant difference was found in the Factor 3 Lecturer scores for students of Māori and other ethnicities (Table 4.12). Another was found in the Factor 2 Confidence scores for students of Asian and Māori ethnicities (Table 4.11). The quantitative data showed that different ethnic groups of students responded to the survey items in different ways.

In the qualitative stage of this research, some of the students in the present study were clear that the conditions and circumstances provided for their university work varied widely: Te Aroha said of her teacher in tutorial-sized classes that he "just gets us to link our own lives to what they are trying to deliver," and that this really supported her learning—but she also said that in the lectures the information "just flew past her" and she retained almost none of it. Part of students' struggles with lectures is about the level of academic language being encountered for the first time, but praise for the work of tutors may be a reflection of other elements at play—they are sensing the care and support being provided, via engagement with students, but there are other aspects of teaching that support learning. An underlying reason that students

[11] *Whakawhānaungatanga*—process of establishing relationships, relating well to others.
[12] *Ako*—can mean learn, study, instruct, teach, or advise, depending on the context in which it is used. It presents the mutuality of teaching and learning, encapsulated in the one word. Bishop et al. (2007) emphasise the interactive dialogic relationship aspect of ako in their definition, as part of a practice to support effective teaching interactions.
[13] *Manaakitanga*—hospitality, kindness, generosity, support—the process of showing respect, generosity and care for others.

find this environment so secure and so different from lectures may be linked to elements of a culturally responsive pedagogy. Students' reflections on experiences may be linked to concepts from Māori educational theory, which I will explore in more detail.

Te Aroha's interview made it clear that for her, when she was in a class with a skilful tutor, she was engaged in a process of teaching and learning via interaction with peers and the tutor, who insisted on dialogue and conversation, the articulation of ideas and concepts, and the establishment of a shared understanding. She was both present and agentic in this process; she was able to bring all her prior learning, was acknowledged for her contributions, and could construct new meaning in a collaborative way with a group of peers. The presence in the group of the individual is significant, as is the presence of all the others; these people, together, made up the group and contributed to each other's eventual understandings. Through this process, students experience both ako and whānaungatanga[14] (Bishop & Berryman, 2009).

Again, we can see here the significance of reciprocity, of relationships and kinships, and the importance of interaction. Looking at Māori students' perception of the two teaching-and-learning environments which they experience most often in their studies, we can see that the tutorial group represents whānaungatanga more closely than the lecture. Some students also expressed the reciprocal nature of their expectations and obligations around whānaungatanga when they talked about their experience of study groups which formed outside their classes. Te Aroha wanted to be a member of such a group, but her need to not let other group members down meant that she did not join; to take advantage for herself and not be able to reciprocate would have been culturally inappropriate for her.

[14] *Whānaungatanga*—relationship, kinship, sense of family connection—a relationship through shared experiences and working together which provides people with a sense of belonging. It develops as a result of kinship rights and obligations, which also serve to strengthen each member of the kin group. It also extends to others to whom one develops a close familial, friendship or reciprocal relationship.

Bishop, Ladwig, and Berryman (2014) explore the conditions brought about by a high presence in classrooms of whānaungatanga. The presence of this element in observed classrooms in the Te Kotahitanga[15] project saw an increasing level of engagement and, at the highest levels, sets the conditions for high levels of discursive practice, which is identified as one of the elements of effective teaching. If the presence of whānaungatanga is positively correlated as an element that supports positive relationships and effective teaching, then the preconditions for success and engagement by Māori students may well be present only infrequently in their usual university course of study. Even for the Māori-medium students, the experiences of their smaller sized tutorials are balanced against their placement into the large classes of the mainstream for core parts of their courses.

If the conditions that support whānaungatanga may be seen as culturally positive, acknowledging and supporting mana,[16] then the absence of those conditions could be seen as problematic for Māori. Smith (2011) writes that "Māori people have created their own choices in education: they are exercising choice and 'voting with their feet'; this withdrawal strategy is entirely appropriate when put in a cultural framework of mana, whakamā,[17] whakaiti[18]" (p. 81). If a natural response to such a threat is indeed withdrawal (Smith, 2011), then perhaps, unwittingly, higher education is itself creating the circumstances in which Māori students are more likely to withdraw than to risk even the possibility of cultural affronts being presented to them.

[15] *Kotahitanga*—unity, togetherness, solidarity, collective action. Te Kotahitanga became the name of a research and professional development programme for teachers in New Zealand schools, aimed at supporting teachers to improve Māori students' learning and achievement, and enabling teachers to create a culturally responsive context for learning which is responsive to evidence of student performance and understandings.
[16] *Mana*—prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, spiritual power, charisma.
[17] *Whakamā*—shame, embarrassment.
[18] *Whakaiti*— ridicule, mockery, scorn, disapproval.

An additional challenge may be presented to Māori students by conventional university practice around large-class teaching. Academic work (see Clarke, Macfarlane, & Macfarlane, 2018; Mead & Grove, 2004) has underlined the importance of greeting others in Māori culture; it is an opportunity for the showing of respect and setting the tone for interaction, through language and demeanour; appropriateness is key. Introductions in Māori culture rely on the lineage and heritage and place of the individual in the context of the meeting; this allows personal connections to be made along lines of whānau, hapu and iwi, and relationships to be initiated or rekindled. Western university studies set all this to one side as the demands of massified education push in the direction of economies of scale, and rely on the individual to make meaning from online resources, a revolving roster of teaching personnel and large class numbers, especially at the undergraduate level. How does the Māori student's culture count in this environment? Without the at-home support, or the cultural capital in the family of success at the tertiary level, and in an environment which expects the individual to submit his or her learning needs to the greater good of the mass lecture, it is easy to see how someone who culturally expects to be acknowledged for his or her connection to family, place and heritage comes to feel like a person in the wrong place, struggling to make sense of an unfamiliar institution and its protocols and procedures. Researchers (see Mayeda, Keil, Dutton, & Ofamo'Oni, 2014; Wikaire et al., 2017) have found that even students who are high performers in the academic sense struggle to make space for themselves amongst majority-group students, who might express surprise at their achievement, or wrongly attribute their success to support services provided to specific ethnic groups. Experiencing such behaviour makes it all the more difficult for Māori students to feel properly attached to the institution.

My experience alerts me to the possibility that Māori students, who are culturally accustomed to introducing themselves in new situations via pepeha[19] that link them to their significant

[19] Pepeha—set form of words, formulaic expression, way of introducing oneself and one's genealogy.

places, family, and elders, might feel lost, unacknowledged and insignificant in some of the situations into which first-year higher education students are placed. The lectures in which Te Aroha just saw the words “fly past” may be just such a situation; the context is an impersonal one, of large numbers, of a time-limited context for examining a set body of content, with little space or place for personal acknowledgement or relationships. Māori students’ sense of disconnection in the lecture theatre may be a cultural response to this environment; there is no reciprocity, there is no point at which they are involved in a group activity with a sense of collaboration or belonging or shared responsibility for a determined outcome. There is not even any acknowledgement of their presence as individuals. On the other hand, when Te Aroha describes the excellent practice of her tutor, she may be touching as much on his cultural sensitivity as his pedagogy. This skilful tutor carefully navigates around any possibility of bringing about a sense of whakamā in his students; instead, he steers them towards the thinking that will be most helpful in their learning, leaving their dignity as learners intact. The students still know they are off track, and need to reframe their thinking, but it is done in a way that causes no shame, no dislocation and no offence to the learners, keeping their mana safe, and helping build positive relationships between lecturer and student (Bishop & Berryman, 2009).

That students arrive with certain cultural expectations was made clear by Katerina, who was returning to study and keen to do all that she could to make it a success, and she was aware that her standing as the most mature person in the group might have both risks and rewards. As we saw in the previous chapter, she expressed her surprise at the lack of support she perceived from other students.

When an initial study group became dysfunctional, this student approached another group of students, and was refused permission to join them. Her reaction was a sadness that her expectation of manaakitanga was not fulfilled. Culturally, she expected that she should be treated differently because of her age and standing; she was expecting to be treated as a kuia,

a respected elder female, and that wasn't what happened for her. She also spoke with surprise about how little care and support, manaakitanga, she witnessed amongst the students in her class. Her expectation was that a set of reciprocal, supportive relationships would be established amongst them, and she was disappointed when this did not happen.

How to bring about a better match between what students expect, and what the university offers? I would argue that a culturally responsive pedagogy of relations is what is required; the massification (Teichler, 1998) of tertiary education means that the world has changed for universities, as it has for many sectors via globalisation and the information age, and universities need to address the change in their practices. Outside the New Zealand context, the phenomenon has been pithily expressed this way: "students function more effectively when they feel respected and valued and function poorly when they feel disrespected or marginalized" (Stipek, 2006, p. 46).

New Zealand health organisations publish documents articulating what they see as culturally responsive practices, for the safety of practitioners and patients alike: one such document is produced by the Central Health Organisation (2015), a not-for-profit, charitable trust, that provides primary healthcare services to the MidCentral DHB population. This document makes clear that the use of introductions and mihimihi[20] are a significant component in making meaningful connections with Māori whānau, and will aid the practitioner in building relationships and establishing the basis for good communication. The time invested in the early part of the relationship will bring benefits later on, as the stronger connection aids further communication. Reciprocity is key; the practitioner must do the same kind of sharing of background and connections as the client.

[20] Mihimihi—speech of greeting, tribute—introductory speeches at the beginning of a gathering. The focus of mihimihi is on the living and peaceful interrelationships.

We need to implement strategies to enable this advice to be enacted in the education sector, in such a way that Māori students feel stronger, more positive relationships with the education professionals charged with their care and support, the eventual outcome being greater numbers of successful students and graduates (see Theodore et al., 2017).

Proposition 3: The Evidence About Institutional Relationships is Mixed

As we saw in Chapter 4, students in the survey rated their institutional relationship at a mean of 3.65, the second lowest of all mean scores for this sample. (The lowest score was a measure of classroom confidence; in the light of the fact that the surveyed population were first-year students, this low confidence score was not surprising.) The factor-analysis process drew together, for the institutional factor, questions from the survey which inquired about students knowing who to talk to about challenges, feeling lecturers were approachable and took an interest in students, and feeling comfortable about contacting the formalised student-support services available on campus. While not being statistically significant, the most positive results in this factor came from non-returning students, female students, first-generation students, and Māori-medium students, who were in a small cohort-type course with culturally aligned lecturers. The lowest scores came from male students, older students, returning students and Asian students; there were statistically significant differences in the responses of Asian students and Pākehā students to some of the items included in this factor score. The institutional relationship factor score was no different between returning and non-returning students, an unexpected outcome in the light of their future decision not to continue their studies, and one which suggests more scrutiny be placed on the reasons for the departure of this group.

When I first examined the data from my third data-collection point, about students who are at higher risk of early departure, I shared some of my findings with a colleague who had a role in higher education as an associate dean in support of students. I spoke to her about the particular groups at risk of not returning to complete their studies—the male students, the Māori students

in particular, and talked also of their results in the institutional part of the survey: that many of them asserted a high level of classroom confidence, and stated that they knew what support mechanisms the university had to offer and how to access them. At this point my colleague interrupted me and said "Yes, but they don't use them," which completed my sentence for me. She already knew what I was going to tell her—that there are some groups of students on campus who intellectually understand that there is support available, but who struggle to seek it out when they genuinely need it.

Longwell-Grice and Longwell-Grice (2008) have written about exactly the phenomenon of struggling students not seeking help:

> The fact that the students in this study made frequent reference to their faculty supports Tinto's contention that faculty relationships matter to students. This then is the crux of the issue: we know that faculty interaction is invaluable to student retention, and we know that first-generation, working-class students are at substantial risk for dropping out; therefore, how do we get these students to overcome their reluctance and/or fear to seek out their faculty? (p. 416)

It also falls into line with research (e.g., Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002; Lease, 2004; Palmer, Davis, & Hilton, 2009; Perin, 2018) that suggests that underprepared students are less likely to seek out emotional or academic help, and do not take advantage of resources and assistance provided by the institution when they are struggling.

I have posited elsewhere in this thesis that I believe cultural factors are at play between the institution and its student body. The anomaly of non-returning students knowing about student-support mechanisms and possibly failing to use them makes me wonder if, again, there is a cultural mismatch between what the institution thinks students need and what would actually work for the students at risk of early departure. When they were interviewed, students who spoke of challenges with their studies spoke of their support coming from other students, either

in face-to-face groups that were formed either formally or informally, or via access to online groups of students; no one spoke of going to the faculty's student-support network and getting academic or social help in that way. Perhaps another office door and yet another new relationship requiring personal disclosure constitute too much of a barrier to a person already feeling out-of-sorts about their learning outcomes, and blaming themselves for failing, thereby buying into the narrative of their own failure. Such students may also be responding to what Steele (1997) calls stereotype threat, adding the extra layer of complexity that sees them undermined by their fears of reinforcing the very stereotype that successful study completion may help them escape.

A further view of the different student groups can be provided by the classroom confidence factor score for each group—in this case, Māori students expressed the highest level of classroom confidence with a mean score of 2.58 (the overall mean for this factor was 2.42); Asian students generated the lowest mean score at 2.16. So the Māori students in this survey declared that they had fewer issues asking questions in class and felt better supported overall in their studies. These results, too, seem contradictory, but I wonder if we might look at the frame of mind of the traditionally underrepresented students as being much more binary than that of the traditional student groups. That is to say, the vulnerable students can feel all is going well, they are accepted and successful, or that this is not the place for them, with very little middle ground between those two positions. It may also be the case that these students have a naïve and misplaced belief that all is going well for them; a possible lack of the cultural capital of tertiary education makes them feel they are being successful in their studies when in fact they are not.

Under these circumstances, it is possible that underrepresented minority groups might not use student-support systems in the way their mainstream counterparts do—this line of thinking is supported by the student experience at a Californian university reported on by Boyce (2013).

The retention rates and overall student success for underrepresented minority students at the university were dramatically improved when foundational programmes and a complete system of academic advising were put in place to address the perceived needs of students on arrival at the university, not delayed until they were needed. Academic-support programmes addressed perceptions of difficulty in programmes, put staff and students in close contact, created a climate of pedagogical care, and had the overall effect of improving the student experience of university, such that rates of retention improved. Similarly, Snyder, Sloane, Dunk, and Wiles (2016) found the introduction of peer-led teaching teams to support underrepresented minority students beginning academic work in science, technology and mathematics subjects was an effective strategy to reduce failure and student withdrawal. In the language of a commonly used cliché about health outcomes, this would constitute the fence at the top of the cliff, while the more common approach—the student-support offices—might be seen as the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. There may be all sorts of reasons why, for underrepresented minority students, the ambulance approach is not one that can bring about success for them.

Perhaps it is the case that students have gone beyond a tipping point by the time it appears to them that support is needed; the students have already acquired a body of evidence about themselves and their chances for success that is hard to refute. Already, some of the acknowledged preconditions for academic success may have gone missing. Tinto (2010) points to Fleming's (1981) study that documents how "the absence of social support for students of colour on a predominantly white campus undermines the emotional energies students have to devote to the task of enduring what is perceived to be a hostile climate" (p. 64). The emotional energy required for students from underrepresented groups to sustain themselves at a university may be beyond the comprehension of those of us who have not had the experience.

Many of the Māori students in the present study work together as a Māori-language medium cohort, sometimes attending lectures with the whole cohort of students at their year-level but

sometimes tutored as a small group. Te Aroha, a mixed-race Māori student, spoke of lectures in which the words just flew by her, and nominated her tutorial leader, also Māori, as the person responsible for her passing her courses, as he was the one who could break it down for the students, and put the learning in context for them. Māori students in this study had the highest Factor 2 Confidence score of all ethnicities in the sample; perhaps that is due to the work of their diligent tutor, but also to their sense of belonging and the support created by the small language and culturally focused group to which they belonged.

Tinto (2010) also points out the benefits of support programmes that focus on the first year, in particular the first semester and the classes of that semester. The importance is the focus on helping students succeed in that semester, and a subsequent positive effect on students' sense of self-efficacy, reduction in stress, and an increase in the likelihood of subsequent success. Those students who enter universities academically underprepared are those most at risk here, along with many underrepresented and first-generation college students, especially those from low-income backgrounds. For these students, Tinto tells us, developing a belief in their capacity to succeed is critical to their success, as is acquiring a cognitive map of how to succeed in college; this in part is what Rendon (1994) means by the "importance of validation for the success of underserved students" (p. 64).

In terms of the institutional measures to support students in their initial integration into the life of the campus, it appears that the faculty in which the present study was sited is doing reasonably well, with the mean factors of both returning and non-returning students being very similar; the key differences between groups of students may lie in their engagement with these support mechanisms, but the findings from this research don't reveal that. A further investigation is needed to explore the extent to which at-risk students make use of the support provided by the faculty. Zepke et al. (2006) propose relatively straightforward measures such as making students feel valued, fairly treated and safe, and making sure the institutional culture

was one in which diverse students could feel their needs were being met. In the interview stage of this study, students talked about the sense of pleasure they felt in achieving the formation of a successful group, which supported their studies; they derived pleasure and satisfaction from the mixed social and academic aspects of these groups. Airini et al. (2008) proposes the rethinking and redefining of student support to create an interwoven mix of academic and pastoral elements that serve to ensure success for students. This speaks to thinking behind the research question that inquired about the impact relationships might have on their inclination to persist with their studies.

Proposition 4: Relationships with the Content Bind Students to Their Learning

When the idea of relationships was considered at the design stage of this project, the paradigm was one of relationships with people; the project was conceptualised in terms of the people who might support a student in the enterprise of higher education study. Beyond that, information was sought about relationships with the institution more broadly, a sense of connection to the university as a whole, via mechanisms of support or aid. The survey questionnaire explored those possible relationships in a range of spheres.

An unanticipated response was drawn from students at the time of the interviews, when it became clear that for some their most significant relationship was with the content, the material to be studied that was going to see them attain their qualification and move on. The number of students who felt this way was not large, but it was a clear line of thought for those who suggested it. This thesis has tentatively described them as “transactional” students, as they appear to regard their university study as a transaction or an exchange of goods and services—they enrol, pay the fees, come to class, their lecturers provide them with the content they will need to pass the courses successfully, all is well. One such student said at interview that in her view it was the material (and presumably her mastery of it) that would dictate the final outcome of the course, not the person who presented it. Another student who had taken very large

courses in a different faculty of the university made the point that, while she appreciated the enhanced accessibility of the teaching staff in her new environment, she really still just wanted access to the material, and to get on with it. These students portray a content-focused approach to their studies, and, while they acknowledge the human relationships around them, these appear secondary to their relationship with the content material of their courses, which they prioritise as being the key ingredient to their future success.

While some teachers could doubt that content can be held in a relationship with students, there is a growing literature that suggests that inanimate objects can be members of an animate network. Actor network theory for example, contains not merely people, but also objects and organisations. Latour (2005) argues that everything in the social and natural worlds exists in constantly shifting networks of relationships and that nothing exists outside those relationships. While this theory has been subject to critique, as with almost all theories, it is established and regarded as legitimate. In the context of this research, this is an important insight into how widely relationships can reach.

Some older students had a "get on with it" approach to their studies, too—some of them articulated quite clearly that university was not a social club for them, and they were here to get on with the work. This informed their approach to study and who they chose to be close to in their classes; a close focus on the content was what they felt was going to bring them success.

An illustrative case: Teresa.

Teresa's Factor 3 score (connection to lecturers) was the second lowest in the interview sample. Her other factor scores were all in the top 3 (see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2

Comparison of Teresa's Factor Scores with Those of Other Students

Factor Scores	Factor 1 Institution	Factor 2 Classroom Confidence	Factor 3 Lecturer	Factor 4 Peers	Factor 5 Support
Teresa	4.17	3.00	2.75	4.25	5.00
interviewees	3.81	2.37	3.31	3.84	4.02
all surveyed	3.66	2.42	3.28	4.05	4.13

At the time of the interview, Teresa was in the second semester of her first year of study. She is a 38-year-old Māori student. She came to her studies following a year in the Māori language foundation course in 2011—until she attempted to enrol in the mainstream primary programme, she was unaware that the Māori-medium pathway existed. As a result, Teresa spent an extra year in the foundation course to help raise her language skills to a level appropriate for going forward into the Māori-language pathway for the degree. She regards this as time well spent though, a fair exchange for gaining the exact qualification she wants.

For Teresa, the relationship with the person at the front of the room is secondary to achieving the short- and long-term outcomes of getting to grips with the content, understanding it well enough to create effective assignment responses, and pass the courses and increase her tally of credits towards her degree qualification.

To this end, Teresa comes to the campus every day, even those when she might not have lectures; and sometimes meets with a study group to clarify ideas about the work. The notion of study groups was introduced to the students and supported by the programme leadership, but their formation and conduct appears to have become informal. Teresa comments that the students in her study group "are the same as me," meaning mature and with a clear focus on studying the content, rather than socialising. Her group creates agendas for their meetings, and this creates focused discussion and activity.

Teresa likes classes where the content is structured and organised, and the lecturer is confident and expert. She does not like surprises. She enjoys leaving a class where she feels she has been introduced to new material and is already gaining a sense of mastery of it. In classes, she is likely to sit with students who share her approach, and steer clear of those for whom university also provides a social focus—she describes these people as mostly younger ones who have not yet attained a clear view of the larger purpose of their education.

An illustrative case: Silvia.

Silvia's Factor 3 Lecturer score is the lowest of the interviewed sample. Her Factor 2 Confidence score is second lowest (see Table 6.3).

Table 6.3

A Comparison of Silvia's Factor Scores with Those of Other Students

Factor Scores	Factor 1 Institution	Factor 2 Classroom Confidence	Factor 3 Lecturer	Factor 4 Peers	Factor 5 Support
Silvia	3.67	1.67	2.50	4.00	4.67
interviewees	3.81	2.37	3.31	3.84	4.02
all surveyed	3.66	2.42	3.28	4.05	4.13

Silvia is a 20-year-old Asian student in the main primary pathway on the main campus. She has had a year of university study in another faculty before coming to education. Silvia acknowledges a cultural aspect in her decision to pursue a course of university study that relates to her family's expectations of her.

When asked about a good class, Silvia immediately responds about the content: "Like, clear and concise information, notes for us to take down. I think that's really important because when it comes to studying for exams; if you have nothing there, you don't know what to study off." She likes to download lecture notes and PowerPoints from the university learning management

system and add her notes to it during the course of a lecture. She says she can become frustrated with poorly structured or overwhelming content though, and these things can act as a barrier to her learning; she wants to get to the content as expeditiously as possible, as that is the relationship which she values the most.

She enjoys the variety of TLAs she encounters in the tutorials in her new environment: “here I feel like we actually do hands-on activities and I think it’s more beneficial.” She finds these activities engage her more closely with the learning and the content, and contrasts this approach with some of the classes she experienced in her previous faculty, which did not always encourage or support a high level of engagement: “it was kind of just sit in the classroom, do your worksheet kind of type thing. It was a question and answer…you felt you were…kicked to the side and just do your stuff.” She says her current lecturers have a lot more time for students than her previous ones did, which again makes her feel like they are paying more thorough attention to her learning.

Even though she enjoys the increased intimacy, the group work and the blend of theory and practice in her new faculty, Silvia acknowledges that she is not sensitive to the lecturer relationship; in essence, provided the content of a class is clear and well-structured, she can be happy with that.

In addition to student preference for different approaches to teaching and learning, as for Teresa, there may also be a cultural element at play here; students responses appeared to be patterned differently in different ethnic groups. Like Silvia, the other interviewed students who most clearly articulated a relationship with the content were of Asian ethnicity. As we have already seen, the factor scores for Asian students presented some unexpected results: at 3.65, they scored the lowest in the family-support factor; this score was statistically different from the other ethnic groups in the survey. Asian students also have the lowest factor scores in the

areas of peer connectedness, institutional connectedness, confidence in the classroom and overall support—in short, in four of the five factors. The conundrum, though, is that Asian students were the ethnic group in this research who were least likely to give up on their studies; the rate of return was 100%. This was despite them, overall, reporting the lowest score in four of the five factors.

This emergent finding came as a surprise, and the notion of a relationship which foregrounded content was not the focus of my thinking in the development of the research questions. However, it is to be found in the literature; Nelson, Kift and Clarke (2012) write of a transition pedagogy that includes a "new conceptualisation about curriculum not only with a view to social equity but also to assure high academic quality" (p. 138). They write of the significant role played by learning "situated in an inclusive and intentional curriculum" which they feel "may be the key to first and subsequent year student success and engagement" (p. 122). The authors articulate six principles and strategies used in their implementation to fulfil a "transition pedagogy concept" (p. 131), amongst which is the principle of design. This principle underlines the significance of assessment for learning as a key component in the curriculum design framework and aligns with policy which allocates the responsibility for student engagement and success to all staff. Assured access to content, and learning support sessions embedded within core aspects of courses in the early part of their delivery, are seen as integral to aiding the successful transition of first-year students into the tertiary environment.

Wallin and Aarsand (2019) find that student–student dialogues which arise around the focus of a research theme are central to the students' experiences of higher education, and for their development as students and researchers; the focus on research, they find, "allows meaningful interactions and development of expertise across students' mediated cultures, the culture of the classroom, and academic development" (p. 79).

Proposition 5: There Exists a Complex Ecology of Student Needs

It seems to me that one of the ways to account for the differing student experiences reported here is to frame the needs of students from different backgrounds coming into higher education in a manner similar to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model.

Bronfenbrenner suggests that, as individuals, we are all situated in a nested ecological system that affects us in different ways, from an immediate and personal level (via family, for instance) to a more distant but powerful political and cultural level (by policy decided at the governmental level, for instance). An ecological model of student needs might see the personal and family level of needs accounted for by supportive family relationships, with financial security and dispositional support for the student's chosen course of study. Bronfenbrenner would place these relationships at the level of the microsystem. Immediate interactions and connections with the institution of the site of further study would be part of the mesosystem. The need to understand the value of education as a whole, and in particular the significance of higher education, is at the macro level.

The reason this model struck me as being appropriate to represent the students in the present study is that the interviews demonstrated the broad range of educational and family backgrounds that the students came from, and the broad range of purposes and intentions with which they came to the institution. In his theory in its original form, Bronfenbrenner suggests that, in order to understand human development, the entire ecological system in which the person grows needs to be taken into account. This system has its own socially organised subsystems which support and guide the growth and development of the individual, and these subsystems interact both with each other and the individual in diverse and complex ways. This unlimited range of influences on and from the developing individual can help us account for the variety and unpredictability of students and their specific educational needs in the tertiary environment.

In respect of the broad range of potential higher education students, experience indicates that many have already built a solid platform for further study by attaining, for instance, the cultural capital required to navigate enrolling in a course of study, and understanding the requisites of their courses; this fulfils a need, and places the students in a position to move forward successfully. We have seen, for instance, the disparity in proportions of first-generation students between Asian (19%) and Māori students (52%) and might posit that this plays a part in the Asian students' return rate of 100%.

At the other end of the range of experiences, it may also be salient at this point to return to Schreiner et al.'s (2011) research which examines the outcomes for high-risk students (which includes students who are first in their family to attend post-secondary education). The researchers find that first-generation students graduate at only one-third the rate of students whose parents have college degrees; addressing the varied needs that students may have on arrival in puzzling (to them) institutions may go some way towards ensuring success for students across a variety of backgrounds and expectations.

We should recall, too, Roos's (2012) finding that students in an at-risk group which received academic advising were retained at a 62% higher rate than those students who received no such support. Institutions must be sure to make available the range of resources that differing students may need, in anticipation of the support required to ensure a successful completion to a programme of study. If they do not, there is a risk that advantage amongst families familiar with the requirements and demands of higher education will continue to accumulate, to the detriment of those groups and members of a society that do not already understand the languages and codes of such an undertaking.

In short, the more that can be done to meet the complexity and variety of needs of individual students, be they academic, social or emotional, the greater chance there is for those students

to build positive learning relationships and go forward successfully in their studies (see Brines, 2017; Fu & Cheng, 2017; S. Jones, Sutcliffe, Bragg, & Harris, 2016; McLeskey, Rosenberg, & Westling, 2017; Wimpenny & Savin-Baden, 2013.)

Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined a set of discussion points arising from the research, and I have presented my research findings as a series of propositions.

The first proposition is that peer relationships play a role in binding students to their learning. Students reported enthusiastically and favourably about their study groups, both formal and informal, and how being part of a group of peers engaged them. They were clear that their definition of a good class involved working on TLAs with their peers, they enjoyed seeing the same faces and working closely with people whom they got to know well over time.

The second proposition is that relationships with lecturers play a role in creating an environment that can sustain students in their studies, beyond their grasp of the academic content. Interviewed students acknowledged the value of a consistent relationship with the person at the front of the room, and were highly sensitive to the sense of engagement portrayed by their lecturers and found that it was replicated by the classes themselves; classes would engage more with an engaging, sharing person, and hold back from someone who looked as if they were going through the motions.

The third proposition is that the evidence about relationships with institutions is mixed. Institutions have cultures of their own, and these cultures, as students interact with them, can create circumstances which make it easier or more difficult for some groups of students to access and sustain their studies. Bourdieu's (1977) notion of cultural capital is very much at play here; students who understand how institutions work, their expectations, limitations, rules and codes, are in a stronger position to build positive learning relationships, and go on to make

sense and success of their studies. Such students may come from families with a history of tertiary education, and the cultural capital of this experience stands them in good stead.

The fourth proposition regards the role of relationships with the content, and how content and completion engage and motivate some students. It may be that this research found students at a time in their studies when they were still applying a school-like approach to their work; that is to say, that they felt they were to be assessed on their recall and application of the content of their courses, and their approach was to focus exclusively on that as an outcome. Perhaps over time, given the nature of the professional aspect of their programmes of learning in a faculty of education, they will modify this approach.

The final proposition is that a complex ecology of student needs is at play. Students will have different types of needs to be fulfilled in various ways and by various agents and actors before they can move to successful completion of their studies; some will require a network of supportive and positive relationships focused on their learning success in order to thrive. Some will arrive in a full state of readiness for academic work, while others will need to progress through the fulfilment of a range of needs in order to arrive at that same state. An understanding of these needs could help institutions to facilitate the process of developing their students for success in their studies.

The following chapter, Chapter 7, will conclude this thesis by considering the research in a broad context. It will consider the original aims of the research, acknowledge the limitations of the study that has been done, and consider the implications of the research findings for future practice.

Chapter 7. Conclusion and Implications

Introduction

This chapter looks back at the research project in its entirety, considers the findings from the research, highlights the contribution of this thesis to the literature on the topic, and posits possible ways forward for individuals and institutions.

As I wrote in Chapter 3, I was not seeking to prove the effectiveness of relationships for students, I was seeking to understand them better, and perhaps accordingly to propose some strategies that could lead to the development of better relationships, which pragmatically could enhance students' experience of and success in their education.

Meeting the Aims of the Research

The intention of this thesis was to examine students' experiences and perceptions of relationships as part of their first year of university study. The research questions were as follows:

> RQ1. What do first-year undergraduate students in teacher education say about their experiences and perceptions of relationships?
>
> RQ2. What types of relationships do these students regard as important?
>
> RQ3. What do different demographic groups report on their experiences and perceptions of relationships?

My finding in terms of the first research question is that students have a good deal to say about the relationships they experience and are perceptive of differences in them. They are indeed sensitive to the relationships around them; they are conscious of the presence of strong and supportive relationships in an environment and they notice the difference in engagement when those they are in contact with do or do not favour the development of such relationships.

In terms of the second research question, students reported strongly that their relationships with their lecturers were important, and those with their peers even more so. Additionally, students overall reported a strong sense of support around them for their studies, which is perhaps a reflection of the idea of a complex set of relationships which support students. This played out in different ways for different groups. For example, Asian students were the ethnic group who reported the lowest overall sense of support yet had a return to study rate of 100%, an outcome that would bear further scrutiny.

An unexpected outcome of this research was to identify some students whose need for a relationship is largely focused on the content of their courses. Such students may be aware of the affordances of possible relationships on offer with staff and peers, but by and large they dismiss these in favour of course content, and find their success through achievement in assessment tasks. They are not antisocial as such, but do not find the need to establish strong person-to-person relationships with either their peers or lecturing staff; getting the material, understanding the content and moving forward is their goal. Part of my original thinking was that students in a faculty of education might be more carefully attuned to the nature of classroom relationships they experienced, given that this was to be central to their future careers. This idea may have been premature; in the development of these largely first-year students, an awareness of their future role in the classroom is only nascent, and their understanding of the centrality of relationships may in fact be no better developed than students in any other faculty. Perhaps those students anxious to get straight to the course content are a reflection of that phenomenon.

In respect of the third research question, differences were found in the way different groups of students responded to the survey questions that led to the factor scores; different ethnic groups responded in different ways, as did members of smaller cohorts in different parts of the survey. Overall, though, few statistically different results were found, providing a consistency of

outcome across much of the data. It is true that some students arrive better equipped better than others, and that different groups perceive the relationships they develop as part of the new institution in different ways. In this study, differences of ethnicity and university background in the family seemed particularly relevant. The effect of the cultural capital acquired by continuing-generation students from their families' experiences of tertiary education cannot be underestimated. It may also be that some of the at-risk factors can be mediated by strong human relationships and connections; we have seen how the experience of some (but not all) cohort groups works against the trend.

Limitations of the Research

This study has supported and extended findings of similar research conducted around the world, inasmuch as relationships have been acknowledged to be important for students making the transition into higher education. In the local context, there are insights to be gained, particularly in the area of peer relationships, and in the examination of what might constitute a quality relationship between a student and a staff member. There is also the phenomenon of the students for whom the prime relationship is with the content of their courses, rather than the people involved.

However, in considering the findings of this study, it must be acknowledged that this research was limited both in scope and context. The data were drawn from students in programmes and on campuses belonging to only one faculty in one institution in one academic year; the researcher chose to focus on first-year students. These students reported on their perceptions of relationships via a questionnaire at the beginning of their second semester of academic study; the interviewed students were either completing or had already completed their second semester. In some cases, a group of students (for instance, from a particular course or study pathway) was present or represented in only small numbers, which makes it difficult to generalise the results for all students or all faculties. Additionally, the data representing the

views of these students relies on 340 surveys, affecting the drawing of conclusions about statistically significant differences between demographic groups in the data. The faculty in question has a high proportion of female students (81%), which may have the effect of giving the findings a particular view. For all of these reasons, there are issues with generalising these findings to other faculties or institutions. Nevertheless, this research has its story to tell about student perceptions of relationships and their effect.

The use of the survey questionnaire was a helpful way of gathering a large amount of broad-brush data. In this case, the questionnaire received an excellent response rate, and very few item answers were incorrectly filled out. The questionnaires highlighted trends and attitudes of the participants and provided data which helped inform the interview stage of the inquiry, in which answers were developed and elaborated on by the interview participants. However, there are limitations in the study to be found in the low numbers of students, especially in some of the smaller subsets within the data, where students were grouped into programme cohorts. This may have had an effect on the ability to identify statistically significant differences.

As outlined above, the use of the survey questionnaire was helpful insofar as it gave an opportunity to gather data very quickly. However, my current view of some of the items in the questionnaire is that they were not best designed to help illuminate the issues underlying the research; they broached the topic but did not focus sufficiently closely on the information that could have helped this inquiry. For example, more detailed questions about the nature of interactions between students inside and outside the classroom may have been helpful. It may have been useful to know more about students' online activities as related to their studies. A question which asked about the students' use of university-provided support mechanisms may have been instructive, as opposed to simply asking about their knowledge of them.

The format of the semi-structured interviews may have limited the information made available to the researcher; the interview was a one-off occasion, with little time for a relationship of trust to form between the interviewer and interviewee (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The subject under discussion sometimes led the interviewee to make comments about the professional practice of some staff members who worked on the same campus as the interviewer; this may have placed a restriction on how much information and what type of information about strong or less strong relationships could be disclosed in the course of the interview. A high level of trust was required on the part of the interviewee in order to accept that absolute confidentiality would be assured, and there was little time for such trust to be built.

Future Directions

It would be interesting to revisit the idea of relationships between staff and students, and students themselves, in a longitudinal way, and to assess the merits of different interventions that institutions could usefully implement. Would altering staff–student ratios, for instance, make a difference to student perception of relationships via notions of belonging? Research across a variety of different institutions would be informative; there are many different types of workspaces and "classes," for want of a better word, that students encounter in the modern tertiary environment; knowing more about how students construct the usefulness and supportiveness of different environments would help institutions with their decisions about how best to support student success.

Other elements to be investigated, as already signalled, would be the differences in outcomes for different cultural groups. Is there a cultural explanation for the persistence of Asian students? Is there a particular element that makes Māori students especially vulnerable to early departure? Do departing students return to their studies later in life? What do departing students nominate as their reasons for leaving their studies prior to completion? If they were questioned

about it, would they pinpoint the strength or weakness (or indeed absence) of relationships as playing a significant role, or would other factors be more important?

Contribution to the Research and Knowledge About Student–Teacher Relationships

Much of what this research has established aligns with student–teacher relationship research that has gone before. Positive, supportive relationships are good for students; they help cement the place of student in their academic studies. Relationships with staff, both formal and informal, work to develop a sense of belonging in students that may help them develop an inclination to persist with their studies. Relationships with peers can have the same effect, inasmuch as students find these connections positive, affirming and reassuring.

The notion of students seeking relationships with the content is where this research makes an obvious contribution to the knowledge base. There are students who, for a variety of reasons, arrive at the level of tertiary study ready to get to grips with the content, and that is the relationship that they regard as most important, even though they are aware of other relationships on offer, as it were. This research proposes that students' relationship needs are many and various and form a complex ecology of sociophysical needs.

Many students have already built a solid platform for further study by gaining the type of knowledge and skills which will put them in a position to move forward successfully. These students may have few other relationship needs; they may largely proceed to a successful conclusion to their studies. Other students may need to develop supportive institutional relationships to help them make sense of an unfamiliar environment; these relationships may work to mediate the risk of failure and/or early departure.

This latter group of students may well arrive with much trepidation, uncertain of their place and standing in an alien community, needing the assurances, reassurances and affirmations of

trusted elders; they may also need help decoding and understanding the arcane practices of a peculiar institution to which they are not in the least accustomed and for which they have not been well prepared. There may be some handholding along the way, in the figurative sense, until such time as these students learn enough to be able to stand by themselves, take their first academic steps and begin to walk. The learning they need to do is not of academic content, but the cultural values of tertiary study, the unspoken protocols of how to be a successful university student.

For the former group, whom I have also described as transactional students, the role of the lecturer is not to engage them in some kind of affirming, supportive relationship that establishes that they have come to the right place at the right time for their study, and to assure them that they will persevere and succeed, perhaps even against some odds. Rather, it is to articulate the content, assist in the learning, provide the assessment regime and appropriate feedback, and then to stand aside and let the students engage with the material. These students are pleased to meet cheerful, like-minded people along the way, they are pleased to study in groups and get to know others in their classes (provided the others don't get better grades). But the relationship they seek, and the one that is currently most important to them, is with the content; at this stage of their development, what they want is their content to take away, and to learn, to have and to hold. In respect of my reading of the literature, the existence of such a category of students is a new finding and would support further research.

Implications for Institutions

At the institutional level, there is much work that could be done. It is not sufficient for tertiary institutions to allow the futures of students to be simply in the hands of lecturers and teachers who may or may not have a social-justice agenda, and who may or may not feel strongly about addressing established past and possible future inequalities via creating relationship networks with and for students, with a view to enhancing outcomes for all students.

The point at which new staff are inducted into an institution would be an excellent time for professional development in matters of classroom practice, pedagogy and building positive relationships. The curriculum of university study needs to be as broadly inclusive as possible; we need to develop elements of classroom practice that will support that idea. Newly appointed academic staff may benefit from a course of induction and/or professional development which causes them to consider a range of classroom strategies and to develop a strong notion of their own pedagogy which focuses on positive student relationships. The idea of practising in a student-centred way may be new to many who have experienced quite different pedagogies in their past. Encouraging new (and existing) staff to build their practice around meeting the needs of our students, in the broadest sense, may have huge dividends for learning outcomes and student satisfaction. Staff need to practise in such a way that supports the building of a network of relationships with and for students, so that they feel securely attached to the enterprise of their learning.

Similarly, there is a case to be made for institutions to build the primacy of students into the understanding of the roles carried out by general or support staff; institutions are nothing without their student populations and there are many ways in which staff can contribute to or impede a sense of belonging on the part of students. The use of TLAs in classes and tutorials that put students working in groups, for example. Shared online spaces and collaborative projects are low-key strategies for getting students to know one another. Making sure students know how to navigate their way into and around the institution, both literally and figuratively, at the beginning of their courses, ensuring uncertain students know how to ask for help or further information. Spending time in class, articulating the structure, learning outcomes and assessments of the course supports the learning of all students. Welcoming communication from students in person or online can be a simple strategy that attaches students to their classes and teachers.

Iacovino and James (2016) make the point that there is more to success in studies than enrolment and academic skills, and point to work that connects low retention to both academic unpreparedness and poor social adjustment (see also Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Jensen, 2011; Lee & Barnes, 2015). In recent years, scholars have extended Tinto's (1993) theory by including a discussion of cultural integration, looking to value academic and social integration while simultaneously allowing students to maintain their cultural identity (Jensen, 2011; Museus & Quaye, 2009). As a strategy, they contend that universities must recognise the importance of creating educational settings and spaces that provide students access to the cultural capital of the broad range of cultural and demographic groups represented in student populations, so that all students may have meaningful intergroup interactions. Group-based activities in class, with the focus on a text or activity with a shared outcome, can be a very low-stakes strategy for beginning interclass relationships. Studies have demonstrated that access to spaces where students can celebrate their cultural identity improves student satisfaction and persistence, particularly at predominantly white institutions (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Museus, 2008). In the New Zealand context, Webber (2018) writes that her research has shown that there is a strong relationship between Māori identity and the educational outcomes of Māori students. "The underpinning assertion is that a positive sense of Māori identity, experienced as cultural competence, academic efficacy and cultural pride, can improve the educational outcomes of Māori by ameliorating their negative experiences at school" (p. 1). On arrival at a tertiary institution following a career of academic study at a secondary school, what signals are Māori students likely to receive that their cultural identity is accepted, welcomed and valued? Some of the experiences articulated by students of colour in the *I, Too, Am Auckland* documentary (Tesiram et al., 2015) suggest that the opposite is more likely to be true. Any welcoming ceremony or strategy that an institution could incorporate into its practice would be of benefit to all students; powhiri are excellent ceremonies for welcoming whole cohorts;

class-by-class strategies can include interactions between lecturers and students that set studies aside for a moment, and cause engagement with the personal side of the students' character, building relationships and beginning the process of "gluing them" in for the course ahead. While some students point out that the content is their focus, institutions could make a declaration that beginning students in their first classes in any semester will not be engaging with the content, but will be engaging with one another and their lecturers before the study *per se* begins, in order to create a climate for learning via the building of positive relationships. Institutions could develop their own version of "A Letter to My Teacher" (Appendix 7), which provides the opportunity for personal communication from the student to the lecturer, with a view to understanding what challenges might lie ahead, and what kind of support a student might need in order to be successful. Such communication supports the development of positive learning relationships. Any written, oral or online activity that helps lecturers and tutors understand the complex nature of the person that is the student coming to class will have the effect of making all students feel they are welcome, accepted and in the right place for their studies.

If these messages are received or perceived by particular students of an underrepresented group in higher education, are they also received by others? Do all students outside the dominant group get messages that could be taken to mean that they are not the right candidates for success in this new and challenging environment? Institutions need to be sure that their practices, signals and cues are supportive of the broadest range of students; one of the strategies to support this is for individual staff members to practise in such a way that networks of relationships with staff and peers form around students so that they feel supported as part of the institution, in both the general and specific sense. Strategies for welcoming students, gluing them to their classmates, their classes and the coursework at the beginning of their studies will be helpful

here. Enquiring into students' study histories, offering opportunities for students to speak back, and generally getting to know the learners will all be useful parts of practice to develop.

Final Remarks

I am an optimist. I believe in a better future, and I believe that education helps us get there. I believe there are opportunities for institutions and individuals to take actions that, person by person and family by family, have the potential to change the world, a microscopic amount at a time. I wish to stand with people who see the same opportunity, and who are prepared to enact their vision daily, forming supportive relationships with students, standing with them until they can stand for themselves. It is in the spirit of those ideals that I complete this thesis.

E kore te tōtara e tū noa i te pārae, engari me tū i te wao nui a Tāne.

The tōtara does not stand alone in open country, rather it stands in the great forest of Tāne.

Appendix 1 Student Teacher Questionnaire

STUDENT TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Student ID No.:

How do relationships affect student outcomes?

Student Teacher Questionnaire

Researcher: Brian Marsh

Thank you very much for agreeing to complete this questionnaire.

Please attempt to answer all questions but you may choose not to answer some.

SECTION A: Questionnaire

[please tick, cross, highlight or fill the circle of your choice]

1. It makes a difference to my connection to a course when the lecturer knows who I am

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

2. I have classes where I work with others in groups

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

3. I have classes where I see the same people and get to know them

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

4. I know who to talk to on campus about any challenges I'm having

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

5. I find my lecturers approachable and easy to talk to

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

6. I use on-line groups and networks to support my thinking and learning

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

7. I feel ok about contacting my lecturers to ask about assignments and late extensions

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

8. Sometimes I feel the lectures are more about getting through the course content than making sure we understand it.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

9. I take more care over my work when I know the lecturer notices my progress

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

10. I would feel comfortable about using one of the Student Support services [Academic support, Education Student Centre, Health Centre, Language support, Library, etc]

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

11. I feel that my lecturers take an interest in my progress as a student

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

12. I socialise with other students in my course outside of scheduled class-time

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

13. I find it harder to engage when the lecturer is different every session

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

14. I don’t always ask the lecturer when I need some clarification

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

15. Sometimes I need guidance about what to do next to make more progress

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

16. I get detailed feedback about my assignment work which helps me do better next time

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

17. I feel unsure about asking questions in front of other people

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

18. I feel my family [parents, siblings] support me in my study

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

19. I feel my partner/spouse/significant other supports me in my study

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

20. Overall I have felt well-supported in my first year of university study

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

SECTION B: Demographic details

Please circle your answer

Course of study: B. Ed. / B.P.E. / Foundation **Gender:** F / M

Age: <20 21–25 26–30 31–35 36–40 41–45 46–55 56+

Ethnic identification [circle whichever may apply]:

Asian / Māori / Pākehā NZ / Pasifika

Or specify an alternative: _____

Family history in education *[circle whichever may apply]:*

I am / am not the first person in my family to go to university

SECTION C: Contact details for the follow-up interview

Please tick the box and provide details, or leave blank, as appropriate

☐

Yes, I agree to be contacted for the follow-up interview.

Please contact me using the details I have included below.

E-mail address: _____

Phone number(s): _____

Please now fill in the consent form on the following page

CONSENT FORM: Interview

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
TE KUPENGA O TE MĀTAURANGA

(This consent form will be kept for a period of five years)

Student Teacher Participant

Title: How do relationships affect student outcomes?

Researcher: Brian Marsh
School of xxxxx
Faculty of Education
The University of xxxxxxx
(xx) xxx xxxx ext xxxxx; b.marsh@xxxxxxxxxx.ac.nz.

- I have read and understood the explanation of this research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.
- I understand that the length of time required for the interview is 30-45 minutes.
- I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and I can have my information withdrawn up until 30 September 2012.
- I understand that my decision to participate or not participate in this project will in no way influence my grades for any course, nor my relationships with any academic staff in the Faculty of Education.
- I understand that a system of numeric coding will protect my identity.
- I understand that all data will be stored in a safe place and destroyed after five years, following Massey University Human Participants Ethics Committee guidelines.
- I understand that the findings will be used anonymously for publications and conference presentations.

Tick boxes as appropriate:

☐ Part 1: Yes, I have completed the questionnaire part of the research.

☐ Part 2: Yes, I give permission for the research assistant to access the student database ONLY to find whether I have re-enrolled to continue my studies in 2013.

☐ Part 3: Yes, I agree to be contacted to participate in the follow-up interview part of the research. I understand that this means my participation cannot be anonymous, but that my identity and data will be confidential to the researcher and research assistant.

Signed: _____ Date:_____

Name: _____Student ID:_____

[For admin purposes]: Research code number: S _____

Contact details

E-mail address:_____

Mobile no.:_____

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 12/11. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8729, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa

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Appendix 2 The Interview Schedule

1. Confirm enrolment and programme data

2. A recap of the beginning of the university year: what factors enabled or hindered getting started in a university course of study?

3. An exploration of the classes the interviewee enjoys, or considers “good” classes; further questions about the qualities and characteristics of these classes.

4. An exploration of the classes that are deemed less good or less enjoyable; the what and why of these classes.

5. An exploration of the interviewee’s approach to study; how does this person “do” university? What approach does s/he take? What counts as success?

6. An exploration of the interviewee’s motivation for university study in general: why is s/he here? What are the personal goals & aspirations?

7. An exploration of the interviewee’s circumstances outside of university: how is s/he supported both financially and holistically? What are the circumstances?

8. What did you understand by a “3” on the questionnaire?

Appendix 3 Transcriber's Confidentiality Agreement

Project Title: How do relationships affect student outcomes?

TRANSCRIBER'S CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I (Full Name - printed) agree to transcribe the recordings provided to me.

I agree to keep confidential all the information provided to me.

I will not make any copies of the transcripts or keep any record of them, other than those required for the project.

Signature: ..... Date: .....

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 12/11. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8729, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix 4—Ethics Approval

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

5 June 2012

Brian Marsh
1/1602 Great North Road
Waterview
AUCKLAND 1026

Dear Brian

Re: HEC: Southern B Application – 12/11
How do relationships affect student outcomes?

Thank you for your letter received 10 May 2012.

On behalf of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B I am pleased to advise you that the ethics of your application are now approved. Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Dr Nathan Matthews, Chair
Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B

cc Dr Linda Leach
School of Educational Studies
PN900

A/Prof Nick Zepke
School of Educational Studies
PN900

Prof Howard Lee, HoS
School of Educational Studies
PN900

Dr Peter Rawlins
School of Curriculum & Pedagogy
PN900

Dr Alison Kearney, HoS
School of Curriculum & Pedagogy
PN900

Mrs Roseanne MacGillivray
Graduate School of Education
PN900

Massey University Human Ethics Committee
Accredited by the Health Research Council
Research Ethics, Research and Enterprise
Massey University, Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand T 06 951 6841; 06 951 6840
E humanethics@massey.ac.nz; animalethics@massey.ac.nz; gtc@massey.ac.nz www.massey.ac.nz

Appendix 5—Research Information Sheets to Faculty Staff

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

Dean of the Faculty of Education

Title: How do relationships affect student outcomes?
Researcher: Brian Marsh
School of xxxxx
Faculty of Education
The University of xxxxxxx
(0x) xxx xxxx ext xxxxx b.marsh@xxxxxxxxxx.ac.nz.

Dear xxxxx

I am requesting your permission to embark on a research project to examine student and staff relationships in the Faculty of Education.

The aim of the research project is to seek information on the extent to which relationships between students and their lecturers / teachers and other students may help or hinder academic progress, and have an effect on inclination to persist with study.

This project has a focus on the teaching and learning experiences first-year students have in multi-year programmes. It is designed to gather information about the nature of those experiences, with a view to supporting high-quality teaching and support programmes for students in the future. Findings will also be published in order to contribute to research literature in this field.

The participants are all the first-year student teachers who are enrolled in a multi-year course at the Faculty of Education. Their participation in the research project will involve them in either one or all three parts of a three-stage process. First, they will be invited to complete a quantitative and qualitative questionnaire that focuses on the students' experiences with different models of teaching and learning in the range of courses during the first part of their first year.

If they agree to participate in the second part of the process, they will be invited to an interview with the researcher to explore the background to the answers they have made on their questionnaire. This part of the process is no longer anonymous, but their answers will remain

confidential, and their identity will not be revealed in any summary of the findings or further publication. Finally, I wish to access the student database to check on enrolments for all participating students in the semester following the questionnaire.

The research will be conducted ethically, in accordance with the ethics policies of both Massey University and the University of xxxxxxxxx.

Participation in this research is voluntary. Participating, or not, will in no way influence students' course grades nor their academic relationships with faculty staff. No one in an academic power relationship with students will have access to any data in which they could be identified. Should they not want to complete the questionnaire, they will continue with other practicum debrief activities and hand in the blank questionnaire form when requested to do so by the research administrator. Students willing to but not able to complete a questionnaire at that time will be able to take one away and return it to a drop-box.

The names of participants or the name of the Faculty will be not be used in any written publication or report from the research. However, it may be possible to identify the Faculty and the University based on such information as the numbers of participants and the courses they are enrolled in.

I hope that you will look on my request to embark on this research project favourably. In particular I request:

- permission to conduct this research following a practicum debrief,
- later access to information regarding re-enrolments, held in the student database.

I attach a consent form and ask that you return it to me by 2 May 2012.
Thank you
Brian Marsh
Researcher

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 12/11. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8729, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

CONSENT FORM

(This consent form will be kept for a period of six years)

Dean of the Faculty of Education

Title: How do relationships affect student outcomes

- I have read and understood the explanation of this research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.
- I consent to the research being undertaken in the Faculty by the named researcher in the manner outlined to me.
- I understand that it may be possible to identify the Faculty and the University in any research publication.

Signed ……..

Date.. ……..

Dean

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 12/11. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8729, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

Deputy Dean, Director of Teacher Education

Title: How do relationships affect student outcomes?

Researcher: Brian Marsh

School of xxxxx

Faculty of Education

The University of xxxxxxx

(0x) xxx xxxx ext xxxxx; b.marsh@xxxxxxxxxx.ac.nz.

Dear xxxx

I am writing to advise you about a research project I am embarking on to examine student and staff relationships in the Faculty of Education.

The aim of the research project is to seek information on the extent to which relationships between students and their lecturers / teachers may help or hinder academic progress, and have an effect on inclination to persist with study.

This project has a focus on the teaching and learning experiences first-year students have in multi-year programmes. It is designed to gather information about the nature of those experiences, with a view to supporting high-quality teaching and support programmes for students in the future. Findings will also be published in order to contribute to research literature in this field.

The participants are all the first-year student teachers who are enrolled in a multi-year course at the Faculty of Education. Their participation in the research project will involve them in either one or all three parts of a three-stage process. First, they will complete a quantitative and qualitative questionnaire that focuses on the students' experiences with different models of teaching and learning in the range of courses during the first part of their first year. The questionnaire will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Once completed, they will

place the completed questionnaire in the box provided by the research administrator. Should they not want to complete the questionnaire, they will continue with other practicum debrief activities and hand in the blank questionnaire form when requested to do so by the research administrator. Students willing to but not able to complete a questionnaire at that time will be able to take one away and return it to a drop-box.

If they agree to participate in the second part of the process, they will be invited to an interview with the researcher to explore the background to the answers they have made on their questionnaire. This part of the process is no longer anonymous, but their answers will remain confidential, and their identity will not be revealed in any summary of the findings or further publication.

Finally, I will access the student database to check on enrolments for all participating students in the semester following the questionnaire.

The research will be conducted ethically, in accordance with the ethics policies of both Massey University and the University of xxxxxxxxxx.

Participation in this research is voluntary. Participating, or not, will in no way influence students' course grades nor their academic relationships with faculty staff. No one in an academic power relationship with students will have access to any data in which they could be identified.

The names of participants or the name of the Faculty will be not be used in any written publication or report from the research. However, it may be possible to identify the Faculty and the University based on such information as the numbers of participants and the courses they are enrolled in.

Thank you

Brian Marsh

Researcher

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 12/11. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8729, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

Programme Leader BEd (Teaching)

Title: How do relationships affect student outcomes?

Researcher: Brian Marsh
School of xxxxx
Faculty of Education
The University of xxxxxxx
(0x) xxx xxxx ext xxxxx; b.marsh@xxxxxxxxxx.ac.nz.

Dear xxx

I am writing to advise you about a research project I am embarking on to examine student and staff relationships in the Faculty of Education.

The aim of the research project is to seek information on the extent to which relationships between students and their lecturers / teachers may help or hinder academic progress, and have an effect on inclination to persist with study.

This project has a focus on the teaching and learning experiences first-year students have in multi-year programmes. It is designed to gather information about the nature of those experiences, with a view to supporting high-quality teaching and support programmes for students in the future. Findings will also be published in order to contribute to research literature in this field.

The participants are all the first-year student teachers who are enrolled in a multi-year course at the Faculty of Education. Their participation in the research project will involve them in either one or all three parts of a three-stage process. First, they will complete a quantitative and qualitative questionnaire that focuses on the students' experiences with different models of teaching and learning in the range of courses during the first part of their first year. The questionnaire will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Once completed, they will place the completed questionnaire in the box provided by the research administrator. Should they not want to complete the questionnaire, they will continue with other practicum debrief activities and hand in the blank questionnaire form when requested to do so by the research

administrator. Students willing to but not able to complete a questionnaire at that time will be able to take one away and return it to a drop-box.

If they agree to participate in the second part of the process, they will be invited to an interview with the researcher to explore the background to the answers they have made on their questionnaire. This part of the process is no longer anonymous, but their answers will remain confidential, and their identity will not be revealed in any summary of the findings or further publication.

Finally, I will access the student database to check on enrolments for all participating students in the semester following the questionnaire.

The research will be conducted ethically, in accordance with the ethics policies of both Massey University and the University of xxxxxxxx.

Participation in this research is voluntary. Participating, or not, will in no way influence students' course grades nor their academic relationships with faculty staff. No one in an academic power relationship with students will have access to any data in which they could be identified.

The names of participants or the name of the Faculty will be not be used in any written publication or report from the research. However, it may be possible to identify the Faculty and the University based on such information as the numbers of participants and the courses they are enrolled in.

Thank you

Brian Marsh

Researcher

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 12/11. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8729, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

Programme Leader BPE

Title: How do relationships affect student outcomes?

Researcher: Brian Marsh
School of xxxxx
Faculty of Education
The University of xxxxxxx
(0x) xxx xxxx ext xxxxx; b.marsh@xxxxxxxxxx.ac.nz.

Dear xxxxx

I am writing to advise you about a research project I am embarking on to examine student and staff relationships in the Faculty of Education.

The aim of the research project is to seek information on the extent to which relationships between students and their lecturers / teachers may help or hinder academic progress, and have an effect on inclination to persist with study.

This project has a focus on the teaching and learning experiences first-year students have in multi-year programmes. It is designed to gather information about the nature of those experiences, with a view to supporting high-quality teaching and support programmes for students in the future. Findings will also be published in order to contribute to research literature in this field.

The participants are all the first-year student teachers who are enrolled in a multi-year course at the Faculty of Education. Their participation in the research project will involve them in either one or all three parts of a three-stage process. First, they will complete a quantitative and qualitative questionnaire that focuses on the students' experiences with different models of teaching and learning in the range of courses during the first part of their first year. The questionnaire will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Once completed, they will place the completed questionnaire in the box provided by the research administrator. Should they not want to complete the questionnaire, they will continue with other practicum debrief activities and hand in the blank questionnaire form when requested to do so by the research

administrator. Students willing to but not able to complete a questionnaire at that time will be able to take one away and return it to a drop-box.

If they agree to participate in the second part of the process, they will be invited to an interview with the researcher to explore the background to the answers they have made on their questionnaire. This part of the process is no longer anonymous, but their answers will remain confidential, and their identity will not be revealed in any summary of the findings or further publication.

Finally, I will access the student database to check on enrolments for all participating students in the semester following the questionnaire.

The research will be conducted ethically, in accordance with the ethics policies of both Massey University and the University of xxxxxxxx.

Participation in this research is voluntary. Participating, or not, will in no way influence students' course grades nor their academic relationships with faculty staff. No one in an academic power relationship with students will have access to any data in which they could be identified.

The names of participants or the name of the Faculty will be not be used in any written publication or report from the research. However, it may be possible to identify the Faculty and the University based on such information as the numbers of participants and the courses they are enrolled in.

Thank you

Brian Marsh

Researcher

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 12/11. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8729, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

Programme Leader Foundation Certificate

Title: How do relationships affect student outcomes?

Researcher: Brian Marsh
School of xxxxx
Faculty of Education
The University of xxxxxxx
(0x) xxx xxxx ext xxxxx; b.marsh@xxxxxxxxxx.ac.nz.

Dear xxxxxxx

I am writing to advise you about a research project I am embarking on to examine student and staff relationships in the Faculty of Education.

The aim of the research project is to seek information on the extent to which relationships between students and their lecturers / teachers may help or hinder academic progress, and have an effect on inclination to persist with study.

This project has a focus on the teaching and learning experiences first-year students have in multi-year programmes. It is designed to gather information about the nature of those experiences, with a view to supporting high-quality teaching and support programmes for students in the future. Findings will also be published in order to contribute to research literature in this field.

The participants are all the first-year student teachers who are enrolled in a multi-year course at the Faculty of Education. Their participation in the research project will involve them in either one or all three parts of a three-stage process. First, they will complete a quantitative and qualitative questionnaire that focuses on the students' experiences with different models of teaching and learning in the range of courses during the first part of their first year. The questionnaire will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Once completed, they will place the completed questionnaire in the box provided by the research administrator. Should they not want to complete the questionnaire, they will continue with other practicum debrief activities and hand in the blank questionnaire form when requested to do so by the research

administrator. Students willing to but not able to complete a questionnaire at that time will be able to take one away and return it to a drop-box.

If they agree to participate in the second part of the process, they will be invited to an interview with the researcher to explore the background to the answers they have made on their questionnaire. This part of the process is no longer anonymous, but their answers will remain confidential, and their identity will not be revealed in any summary of the findings or further publication.

Finally, I will access the student database to check on enrolments for all participating students in the semester following the questionnaire.
The research will be conducted ethically, in accordance with the ethics policies of both Massey University and the University of xxxxxxxx.

Participation in this research is voluntary. Participating, or not, will in no way influence students' course grades nor their academic relationships with faculty staff. No one in an academic power relationship with students will have access to any data in which they could be identified.
The names of participants or the name of the Faculty will be not be used in any written publication or report from the research. However, it may be possible to identify the Faculty and the University based on such information as the numbers of participants and the courses they are enrolled in.
Thank you
Brian Marsh

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 12/11. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8729, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Student Teacher

Title: How do relationships affect student outcomes?

Researcher: Brian Marsh

School of xxxxx

Faculty of Education

The University of xxxxxxx

Kia ora tatou.

My name is Brian Marsh, and I am a Teacher Education lecturer on the xxxx Campus. I am also undertaking a programme of doctoral study, and am collecting data for my research project. The aim of my project is:

To seek information on the extent to which relationships between students and their lecturers / teachers may help or hinder academic progress, and have an effect on inclination to persist with study.

You are invited to participate in this project.

This project has a focus on the teaching and learning experiences first-year students have in multi-year programmes. It is designed to gather information about the nature of those experiences, with a view to supporting high-quality teaching and support programmes for students in the future. Findings will also be published in order to contribute to research literature in this field.

The participants are all the first-year student teachers who are enrolled in a multi-year course at the Faculty of Education.

Your participation in the research project will involve you in either one or two parts of a two-stage process. First, you will complete a questionnaire that focuses on your experiences with different models of teaching and learning in the range of courses during the first part of this year. The questionnaire will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Once completed, you will place the completed questionnaire in the box provided by the research administrator. At all stages of the process, your answers will be kept confidential within the research team.

If you agree to participate in the second part of the process, you will be invited to an interview with the researcher to explore the background to the answers you have made on your questionnaire. This part of the process cannot be anonymous, but as with all data you provide, your answers will remain confidential, and your identity will not be revealed in any summary of the findings or further publication.

Finally, I will access the student database to find whether you have re-enrolled to continue your studies in 2013.

If you decide to participate, you will still be able to withdraw your data without explanation up until 30 September 2012. Only numeric codes will be used for the purposes of linking your data with interviews, ensuring confidentiality in the analysis and reporting of results. All consent forms will be kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's university office.

All data will be kept in locked cupboards in the researcher's university office for a period of five years and destroyed after five years. All consent forms will be kept separately in locked storage in the supervisor's office.

Participation in this research is voluntary. Participating, or not, will in no way influence your course grades nor your academic relationships with faculty staff. No one in an academic power relationship with you will have access to any data in which you could be identified. Should you not want to complete the questionnaire, please continue with other practicum debrief activities and hand in the blank questionnaire form when requested to do so by the research administrator. If you would like to complete it, but don't have time right now, take it with you and return it to the labelled drop-box outside the Practicum Office in xxxxx.

The names of participants or the name of the Faculty will be not be used in any written publication or report from the research. However, it is likely that it will be possible to identify the Faculty and the University.

If you would like further information about this research project please contact me, Brian Marsh, on ph. 623 8899 extn. 48580 or email me at b.marsh@xxxxxx.ac.nz.

Thank you

Brian Marsh

Researcher

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 12/11. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8729, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

Number: S

CONSENT FORM: Interview

(This consent form will be kept for a period of five years)

Student Teacher
Title: How do relationships affect student outcomes?
Researcher: Brian Marsh
School of xxxxx
Faculty of Education
The University of xxxxxxx

- I have read and understood the explanation of this research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.
- I understand that the length of time required for the interview is 30-45 minutes.
- I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and I can have my information withdrawn up until 30 September 2012.
- I understand that my decision to participate or not participate in this project will in no way influence my grades for any course, nor my relationships with any academics in the Faculty of Education.
- I understand that a system of numeric coding will protect my identity.
- I understand that all data will be stored in a safe place and destroyed after six years following Massey University Human Participants Ethics Committee guidelines.
- I understand that the findings will be used anonymously for publications and conference presentations.

Part 1: I have completed the questionnaire part of the research.

Part 2: I agree to be contacted to participate in follow-up interview part of the research. I understand that this means my participation cannot be anonymous, but that my identity and data will be confidential to the researcher and research assistant.

Part 3: I give permission for the research assistant to access the student database ONLY to find whether I have re-enrolled to continue my studies in 2013.

Signed: Date:

Name: Student ID:

Contact details (eg cell-phone, email):

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 12/11. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8729, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix 6 Student Participation Information Sheet

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
TE KUPENGA O TE MĀTAURANGA

How do relationships affect student outcomes?

STUDENT PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Kia ora tatou.

My name is Brian Marsh, and I am a teacher education lecturer on the Xxxxx Campus. I am beginning a research project towards a PhD, and am collecting data for my study.

I am inviting you to participate in this project.

What is the study about?

The aim of this project is to find out how relationships between students, their lecturers / teachers and others may help or hinder academic progress, and have an effect on inclination to persist with study.

What are the benefits of the research?

This project has a focus on first-year students' teaching and learning experiences. It is intended to gather information about the nature of those experiences, so that students can be better supported in academic success in the future. The research findings will also be published in order to contribute to research literature in this field.

Who are the participants in the study?

The participants I am inviting are all first-year student teachers who are enrolled in a multi-year course at the Faculty of Education.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will first be asked to fill in a questionnaire about some of your teaching and learning experiences at university so far. The questionnaire will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Once you have finished the questionnaire, it will go in the box provided by the research administrator. At all stages of the process, your answers will be kept confidential within the research team.

If you agree to participate in the second part of the process, you will be invited to an interview with the researcher to find out more about the answers you have made on your questionnaire. The interview will take around 45 minutes. Your answers will be confidential, and your identity will not be revealed in any summary of the findings or further publication.

[There will be 10-12 students interviewed for this part of the study, and you will be informed about whether you have been selected or not.]

Finally, with your permission, a research assistant will access the student database **ONLY** to find whether you have re-enrolled to continue your studies in 2013.

What will happen to the answers I give?

If you decide to participate, you will still be able to withdraw your data without explanation up until 30 September 2012. Only numeric codes will be used for the purposes of linking your data with interviews, ensuring confidentiality in the analysis and reporting of results. All consent forms will be kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's university office.

All data will be kept in locked cupboards in the researcher's university office for a period of five years and destroyed after five years. All consent forms will be kept separately in locked storage in the supervisor's office.

At the conclusion of the study, you will be sent an electronic copy of a written summary of the findings.

REMEMBER: You do not have to take part in this study.

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation.

Completion and return of the questionnaire implies consent. You have the right to decline to answer any particular question

If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study (until Sept 30th 2012);
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview, if you proceed to that part of the study.
- Participating in this research, or not, will in no way influence your course grades nor your academic relationships with faculty staff. No one in an academic power relationship with you will have access to any data in which you could be identified.
- If you don't want to complete the questionnaire, please continue with other practicum debrief activities and hand in the blank questionnaire form when requested to do so by the research administrator.
- If you would like to complete it, but don't have time right now, take it with you and return it to the labelled drop-box outside the Practicum Office in xxxx.

The names of participants or the name of the Faculty will be not be used in any written publication or report from the research. However, it is likely that it will be possible to identify the Faculty and the University.

If, after the research interview, you wish to discuss it with anyone, the Faculty offers an on-campus counselling service. The Counselling Centre is located in R Block (Rooms R120, R131 and R131A) on the ground floor adjacent to the Health Centre. You can call the receptionist at the Student Health Centre (Ph 623 8889) to make an appointment. (Receptionist available Monday – Friday, 9am – 3pm during school term time).

Who are the researchers, and how can they be contacted?

The main researcher is Brian Marsh, who is a teacher education lecturer on the xxxxxx Campus.

Brian Marsh, ph (xx)xxxxxxx, ext xxxxx, *b.marsh@xxxxxxxx.ac.nz* Office xxxxx

This research is part of a doctoral study, under the supervision of three lecturers from Massey University. The supervisors are:

Dr Linda Leach, School of Educational Studies, College of Education, Massey University; ph (06) 356 9099 ext 8831, *L.J.Leach@massey.ac.nz*,

Associate Professor Nick Zepke, School of Educational Studies, College of Education, Massey University; ph (06) 356 9099 ext 8663, *N.Zepke@massey.ac.nz*,

Dr Peter Rawlins, School of Curriculum and Pedagogy, College of Education, Massey University; ph (06) 356 9099 ext 8855, *P.Rawlins@massey.ac.nz*

Please feel free to contact the researchers at any time about this study.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 12/11. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Acting Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8729, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz

Appendix 7 A Letter to My Teacher

A Letter to my Teacher

March 2020

Hi Brian,

My name is _____

and I am in your Educ 105/105G class.

My main course of study is:

My other subjects for 2020 are:

I also have interests in:

My secondary school study was done at:

This semester, I am really looking forward to:

Something that might get in the way of my progress this year is:

I might need a bit of help with:

But I know that I already have strengths in:

References

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