

# The benefits of participating in a culturally translated youth mentoring program and service-learning experience for Aotearoa New Zealand mentors

Kelsey L. Deane  | Pat Bullen  | Rachel Williamson-Dean | Kiri Wilder 

Faculty of Education & Social Work,  
University of Auckland, Auckland,  
New Zealand

## Correspondence

Kelsey L. Deane, Faculty of Education &  
Social Work, University of Auckland, Private  
Bag 92601, Auckland 1150, New Zealand.  
Email: [k.deane@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:k.deane@auckland.ac.nz)

## Present address

Rachel Williamson-Dean, St Cuthbert's  
College, Auckland, New Zealand.

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## Abstract

The aim of this article is to demonstrate “mentoring through service-learning” models can be powerful avenues to support the development of emerging adult practitioners, and are scalable to new global contexts when careful attention is paid to the local culture and evidence-based principles for mentoring and service-learning. The study presents outcome findings for mentors who participated in Campus Connections Aotearoa, a culturally translated version of a US-based service-learning experience and therapeutic youth mentoring program implemented in New Zealand, based on a mixed-method, pre-post evaluation survey involving 62 ethnically diverse mentors (81% female). A large, significant increase in mentoring self-efficacy and small to moderate significant increases for attunement to others, sociability and leadership, and problem-solving and perspective-taking were found. Open-ended survey responses revealed self-reported changes in both personal and professional growth. The discussion highlights the importance of theory and evidence-driven design decisions and an intensive evidence-informed training curriculum for mentoring-based service-learning programs.

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**KEYWORDS**

evidence-based practice, mentor outcomes, New Zealand, program evaluation, service-learning, youth mentoring

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Youth mentoring programs that are embedded in university service-learning courses have the potential for dual impact on two groups of young people: the youth who participate as mentees and the emerging adults who provide the mentoring while gaining course credit. The existing evidence on the effectiveness of youth mentoring predominantly focuses on outcomes for mentees but attention to mentor experiences and outcomes is warranted (Peskin, 2011), particularly when the mentors are young people themselves and in the midst of developing their professional identities. Mentors whose perspectives change and skills develop as a result of their service-learning experience can create widespread ripple effects outside of the program context if they go on to apply their learning in future youth-focused practice.

Grounded in experiential learning, service-learning gives learners the opportunity to enhance conceptual and theoretical knowledge through practice-based experience, benefiting both the learner and community. Service-learning has become a popular teaching and learning strategy within higher education (Salam et al., 2019) to promote civic mindedness and civic engagement (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010) as well as personal and professional development. Empirical evidence indicates that service-learning experiences can be effective in producing a range of personal and social outcomes. For example, students participating in service-learning have reported positive gains in academic performance, attitudes toward learning and self, social skills and civic engagement compared to controls (Celio et al., 2011). Others report that service-learning experiences have a lasting positive effect on self-efficacy, community involvement and civic involvement (Knapp et al., 2010).

Over the past 20 years, there has been an increasing interest in service-learning within the context of youth mentoring. Youth mentoring service-learning is acknowledged to be one important way universities can invest in local communities (Slaughter-Defoe, 2010), and due to their peer-like appeal, university student mentors can be an important resource and role models for youth. University student mentors may also help alleviate current workforce and resource shortages in education and mental health services for youth (McQuillin et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, the “mentoring through service-learning” model comes with risks for both mentees and mentors. University-aged mentors have been found to be less effective than older volunteers (Grossman et al., 2012). In addition, to fit with tertiary teaching timetables, youth mentoring service-learning programs are more likely to be time-limited, resulting in shorter relationships than the year-long length that has been associated with improved outcomes for young people (Grossman et al., 2012). Mentoring young people who exhibit highly challenging behavior has also been associated with psychological costs for mentors (Faith et al., 2011). That stated, the benefits of youth mentoring service-learning can outweigh the risk when risks are mitigated through training, screening and adherence to evidence-based practices. Dissemination of service-learning models and specific practices pertaining to these implementation aspects can therefore provide important insights for risk mitigation.

## 2 | CAMPUS CONNECTIONS AS A SUCCESSFUL SERVICE-LEARNING MODEL FOR YOUTH MENTORING

An example of a youth mentoring service-learning model that uses evidence-based practices to mitigate risk and has demonstrable evidence of its effectiveness for both mentors and mentees is the Campus Connections service-learning and therapeutic youth mentoring model. Campus Connections is an evidence-informed mentoring program based on a model

developed by youth development and family therapy experts at Colorado State University in the United States. The original Campus Connections program was developed to proactively support young people who were exhibiting challenging behaviors and contending with serious life challenges in Fort Collins, Colorado, while concurrently addressing a call for greater integration, collaboration and resource-sharing between the university and the local community.

Campus Connections consists of three distinct but interconnected areas of practice (one-to-one mentoring, prosocial activities and on-site therapy in the moment) based on the integration of best practice evidence from the fields of Positive Youth Development, youth mentoring, family therapy and service-learning (Weiler et al., 2013). The program is delivered on the university's campus to a cohort of mentors and mentees who meet for four hours each week over the course of a university semester (12–15 weeks). One-to-one mentoring dyads work within small groups called mentor families. Each family group is supported by a more experienced student called a mentor coach. Each session follows a consistent purposeful structure that includes time to connect, working towards mentees' academic or other individualized goals, sharing a meal and engaging in mentee-selected prosocial activities. Two student "therapists" who are enrolled in a postgraduate therapy program are actively involved in supervising the Campus Connections mentoring community and offer brief therapy sessions to the young people at any point during the 4-hour delivery if mentors or mentees raise mental health or behavioral concerns that would benefit from support that is outside the scope of the mentor role. After mentees depart, the therapists facilitate a group debrief with the full mentoring community to celebrate successes observed over the course of a session and to create opportunity for mentors to obtain advice about practice challenges. Program staff are also available on-site or on-call to provide an extra layer of supervision and support.

The innovative structure of the one-to-one mentoring, prosocial group-based and therapeutic components that create the tiered mentoring community distinguishes the Campus Connections model from traditional mentoring programs. This makes Campus Connections suitable for young people who exhibit high levels of risk behavior and are often excluded from traditional youth development opportunities. This is because the integration of the program components reduces the risks associated with each component were they to be delivered on their own. For instance, studies have found that mentors who are matched with youth who exhibit high risk behaviors or live in a high risk environment grapple with more complex relationship challenges (Herrera et al., 2013) and this can compromise their mentoring self-efficacy (Faith et al., 2011). Accordingly they require more intense monitoring, training and support (Faith et al., 2011; Herrera et al., 2013). Group-based programs that bring young people with antisocial tendencies together increases the risk of peer contagion, whereby peer influences contribute to an increase rather than a decrease in the participants' antisocial attitudes and behaviors. However, strengths-based approaches that promote prosocial norms and modeling, a clear structure and close supervision can mitigate peer contagion risks (Dodge et al., 2006). Finally, marginalized young people often face difficulty in accessing youth-friendly therapeutic support due to a range of barriers including stigma, lack of confidence and finances (Brown et al., 2016). Embedding opportunities to access therapeutic support within the milieu of a free-of-charge youth development program is intentionally designed to reduce these barriers.

The learning components of the Campus Connections service-learning experience for the university student mentors also explicitly draw on Godfrey et al.'s (2005) "4 R" service-learning best practices (Weiler et al., 2013), namely Reality, Reflection, Reciprocity and Responsibility. Reality focuses on direct application of rigorous scholarly content to real-world situations and issues. Reflection emphasizes opportunities that support students to cogitate on the impact of their learning and service on themselves and those they are serving. Reciprocity points to the importance of experiences that are mutually beneficial for students and service recipients, and Responsibility refers to the cultivation of professionalism and ethics that supports students to connect current learning experiences with future intentions of citizenship.

Researchers at Colorado State University continue to conduct research with Campus Connections mentors and mentees to evaluate the effectiveness of the model. Quantitative and qualitative evidence from several evaluation studies (Haddock et al., 2013; Weiler et al., 2013; Weiler et al., 2014, 2015) demonstrates Campus Connection's effectiveness across a range of outcomes for both youth mentees and university-aged mentors.

### 3 | TRANSLATING EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS TO DIFFERENT CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Scaling up tried and tested evidence-based programs, such as Campus Connections, to increase their reach and impact through translation to other contexts is the primary purpose of the global evidence-based movement and, due to an increasing evidence-base, interest in youth mentoring has expanded globally. However, effects from such efforts are rarely replicated, often because of misalignment between the values and needs of communities in the originating and new program contexts (Bullen et al., 2020). For example, Brady and Curtin (2012) posit the challenges associated with initially implementing Big Brothers Big Sisters in Ireland stemmed from a lack of local cultural consultation. In their comparative study of youth mentoring programs in the United States (US) and Europe, Preston et al. (2019) demonstrate how local contexts influence program conception and implementation. Their findings showed that in the United States mentors tended to be working adults and programs focus on risk mitigation and unidirectional benefits for mentees, while in Europe mentors tended to be college students or older youth and focused on inclusion to better support the needs of refugee and migrant youth and bidirectional benefits for both mentors and mentees. Findings from research in one context may not generalize to other cultural contexts, and there is need for more cross-cultural youth mentoring research (Preston et al., 2019). In Aotearoa New Zealand, where the current study is based, similar concerns have been raised by researchers about the cultural fit of imported programs to the Aotearoa New Zealand context (Bullen et al., 2020). Accordingly, translated programs need to be re-evaluated to determine effectiveness in each new delivery context.

### 4 | THE CURRENT STUDY

The focus of this study was to investigate attitude and skill development outcomes for university students who participated in a culturally translated version of the US-based Campus Connections service-learning experience and therapeutic youth mentoring program. The translated version, called Campus Connections Aotearoa, was developed for the Aotearoa New Zealand context. In doing so, the aim was to demonstrate that program effects can be replicated in contexts vastly different to that where the program was originally designed if implementation maintains fidelity to the core evidence-based program features and careful attention is paid to needs within the local cultural context.

Although the Campus Connections model has two target beneficiary groups (the youth who receive therapeutic mentoring and the university students who provide the mentoring), this study focuses exclusively on the outcomes for the university student mentors because mentor outcomes are relatively understudied compared to mentee outcomes and, as noted, youth mentoring service-learning experiences can have a profound impact on the personal and professional development of young practitioners if they are carefully designed. The implications of a singular focus on mentors is addressed in the discussion.

#### 4.1 | The Campus Connections Aotearoa program model

Campus Connections Aotearoa is the first international site for delivery of the Campus Connections model and was established by the first two authors following consultation with representatives from the youth development sector in Aotearoa New Zealand that revealed a significant gap in mentoring and youth development service provision for young people who had been excluded from mainstream education. Further consideration of Aotearoa New Zealand's unique cultural context was also needed given its constitutional foundation and the ethnic profile of young people involved in alternative education.

Despite a treaty agreement that formalized a co-governance partnership between the British Crown and indigenous Māori in 1840, decades of colonization processes resulted in the dispossession of lands, disruption of community connections and ways of living and institutionalization of Māori into British models of schooling, employment and healthcare. As a result, Māori are over-represented in a raft of negative national statistics relating to education, employment, health and wellbeing (Reid et al., 2014). This includes the majority of young people in alternative education, who have been marginalized from the mainstream education system due to their struggle to succeed in traditional settings. Since the beginning of a Māori cultural renaissance in the late 1960s and 1970s, greater attention has been paid to redressing the inequities created by colonization and adherence to the principles of the treaty partnership. For Campus Connections Aotearoa, this meant a cultural consultation was undertaken with Māori elders, young people and their whānau (family) and staff within the alternative education sector to better understand what kinds of principles and processes could be embedded within the program model to ensure cultural responsiveness and safety before launching the pilot program (see Ualesi, 2021 for details).

The cultural translation process resulted in a program design that embeds traditional Māori cultural values and protocols. For instance, a cultural welcome ceremony, use of traditional prayer to open and close sessions, and increased visibility of Māori culture through language, song use and cultural activities are embedded in the program. This is intended to demonstrate visible appreciation of Māori culture and to create opportunities to affirm positive ethnic identities, a recognized ingredient for young Māori people's educational success (Webber & Macfarlane, 2020). For the university students, this supports an intention to build capability in culturally responsive youth-focused professional practice, which in Aotearoa New Zealand's social and community sectors, requires understanding of Te Ao Māori [the Māori world].

Otherwise, Campus Connections Aotearoa remains faithful to the sequenced structure and the three integrated components (one-to-one mentoring within small groups, prosocial activities and therapeutic support) of the original Campus Connections model. University student mentors apply to participate as mentors or counselors in the program as part of their enrollment in a university-based undergraduate or postgraduate course. After a vetting process involving an interview and referee checks, places are confirmed and students are later assigned to a mentor, community mentor, mentor coach or counselor role based on interest, expertise and mentoring match characteristics.

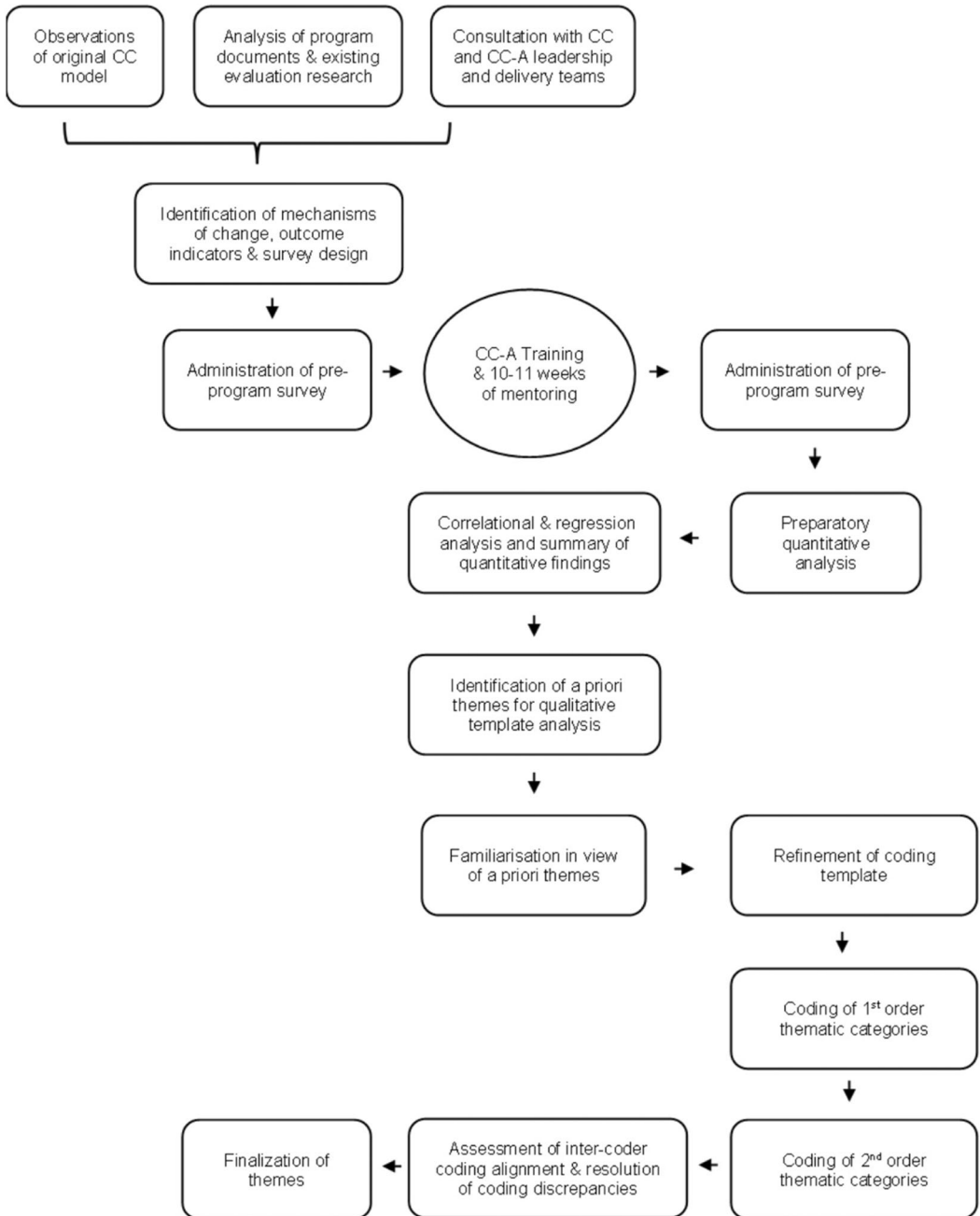
Regardless of role, all mentors (one-to-one, coach or community) complete two full days of training before meeting the youth mentees. Mentoring sessions then occur over 10 or 11 weeks of the university semester. Each week before the youth arrive, mentors engage with theory and research and discuss or practice applications of principles or skills relevant to the scholarly content of the course. Topics covered during the training and weekly lectures are generally aligned with the Campus Connections courses at Colorado State University and include the philosophy and principles of Positive Youth Development, developmental relationships, and motivational interviewing. There is also an emphasis on understanding the needs of young people within the Aotearoa New Zealand alternative education context, critical race theory and culturally responsive mentoring practice, building their own and their mentees' self-efficacy, peer dynamics (including how to mitigate peer contagion), and specific communication and support strategies associated with attunement, trauma-informed sensory modulation techniques, and positive relationship closure. Mentors are supported to reflect on the integration of classroom learning content and their practice experiences through the post-session group debriefs, weekly journal entries and through assessed mid-program practice review meetings.

## 5 | METHODS

### 5.1 | Design

The sampling frame consisted of all Campus Connections Aotearoa mentors (inclusive of those in coach and community mentor roles) who were enrolled in a Campus Connections Aotearoa course and participated in the program at the University of Auckland between 2017 (the inaugural cohort) and 2019.

A theory-driven quasi-experimental and mixed-methods survey design was used to address the research questions and specific hypotheses. See Figure 1 for an overview of the research design, implementation and analysis process. Discussions about the program theory of change with the Campus Connections founders and program staff at Colorado State University and amongst staff involved in developing the culturally translated



**FIGURE 1** Overview of the study design, implementation, and analytic process. CC, Campus Connections; CC-A, Campus Connections Aotearoa.

Aotearoa New Zealand model, along with program observations and a review of existing evaluation research on the original Campus Connections model indicated the mechanisms of change thought to be driving desired changes for students and the proximal outcomes presumed to arise from their engagement in the service-learning and program experience. The mechanisms of change include (1) the integration of structured experiential learning where relevant theories are discussed in class each week, then directly applied to practice with young people, and practice consequences are authentic and immediate (*reality principle*); (2) the group-based format, which is structured into a tiered mentoring community where novice mentors can easily seek and receive timely advice and support, including role-modeling from peers and from more experienced practitioners before, during and after each mentoring session to grow their own practice skills and to better serve their mentees (*reciprocity principle*); (3) explicit opportunities for reflection on their experiences and their developing practice in relation to relevant academic research through end-of-session journaling exercises, course assessments, and small and large group debriefs where effective strategies are highlighted and space is created to collaboratively problem-solve about specific challenges (*reflection principle*); and (4) high expectations of professionalism and commitment that are consistently conveyed, along with hope that students will link their Campus Connections Aotearoa learning to their practice in the future (*responsibility principle*). As noted above, and like the original Campus Connections model, the Campus Connections Aotearoa experience attempts to capitalize on the 4 R best practices for service-learning (Godfrey et al., 2005). Together these program features are designed to create a collaborative environment that supports both direct and vicarious mastery experiences to increase the students' self-efficacy for working with marginalized young people, their interpersonal competence, reflective practice skills and future career directions.

Review of the quantitative and qualitative findings from published Campus Connections evaluation studies in view of the theoretical mechanisms of change and the training content emphasized in the Campus Connections Aotearoa courses resulted in the selection of measures that would enable some degree of comparison with positive effects previously found with Campus Connections mentors with respect to civic skills, mentoring self-efficacy and mentor attunement (a set of communication skills that facilitate relational connection) for use in pre- to post-program assessments. An open-ended question about the most significant impact the Campus Connections Aotearoa service-learning experience had on mentors created an opportunity to assess other unmeasured outcomes.

The study was guided by the following research question: (1) Will outcomes for Campus Connections Aotearoa mentors align with the positive effects found with the original program model? For the quantitative analyses, the hypothesis was that mentors would report significant increases in civic skills, mentoring self-efficacy and attunement from the beginning to the end of the program.

Because inclusion of a comparison group of university students not participating in Campus Connections Aotearoa was not feasible due to pragmatic constraints, the potential confounding influences of several covariates were also assessed to strengthen counterfactual claims. Associations between baseline and end-of-program outcome variables and gender, age, prior experience working with youth, dosage and mentor role were explored to ascertain if these variables were likely to be moderating any pre-to-post-program differences in the outcome variables given previous studies have found gender, prior professional experience (Raposa et al., 2019) and dosage (Grossman et al., 2012) can influence effects. The researchers also considered other likely factors that could potentially be driving changes in mentoring efficacy beliefs, interpersonal and problem-solving skills over the same four-month period Campus Connections Aotearoa mentors were involved with the program. Because students enrolled in practice-based academic programs would more likely be involved in other courses that focus on similar knowledge and skill development, mentor enrollment in a practice versus nonpractice based programs was also considered a potential covariate.

## 5.2 | Procedure

Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee before recruiting participants. To mitigate the potential conflict of interest associated with the first and second



authors' roles as academic teaching staff of the service-learning courses and lead evaluators of Campus Connections Aotearoa, the program's Case Manager (fourth author) presented the opportunity to participate in the research to all eligible student participants during class time at the beginning of the first training session. Consent was obtained from interested students who were then provided with a unique research ID and completed the online (Qualtrics-administered) baseline questionnaire. Any student who was absent on the initial training day received an email invitation to participate in the research and could complete the questionnaire online at a time of their convenience after providing written consent. No incentives to participate were provided.

Towards the end of the program (typically 1 week before the final graduation session), the Case Manager emailed the link to the end of program survey and research IDs to each participant. Participants completed the end of program survey between 1 week prior and 1 month following program completion.

## 5.3 | Measures

### 5.3.1 | Mentor background characteristics

Campus Connections Aotearoa collects demographic information as part of the mentor application process. Applicants provide open text responses to confirm their gender and ethnic identity, date of birth and academic program. Mentor attendance is also recorded each week and used as a measure of program dosage. For the current study, the program administrative data was used to code gender as 0 = Male, 1 = Female (no gender diverse individuals participated in the research). Ethnic identity was coded using the New Zealand government's Level 1 Ethnic Group codes of 1 = European, 2 = Māori, 3 = Pacific Peoples, 4 = Asian, 5 = Middle Eastern/Latin American/African, and 6 = Other Ethnicity. Single/combo coding for ethnicity is reported on, thus multiethnic individuals are identified using a combined category and only counted once. Date of birth was used to derive age at program start and academic program data determined practice based (e.g., Social Work, Human Services) versus non-practice based (e.g., Arts, Science) qualifications. Mentor role was coded as a binary variable (One-to-One Mentor = 1 or Not = 0). The baseline questionnaire asked about previous youth work experience (coded as 0 = No or 1 = Yes).

### 5.3.2 | Outcome measures

*Self-Efficacy for Mentoring* was measured using the mentoring self-efficacy scale previously published in Boat et al. (2019). The 6-item scale is an adapted version of a job self-efficacy scale modified to assess Campus Connections mentors' self-efficacy to perform their role in Campus Connections well. Example items include "I have all the skills needed to perform my role as a Campus Connections Mentor/Mentor Coach very well". Response options were provided on a 10-point Likert scale (1 = Disagree to 10 = Agree). Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on the current sample resulted in a 4-item measure for use in subsequent analysis.

*Attunement to Others* was measured using Pryce and Deane's (2019) Generalized Attunement Scale. Six of the 7 items from the scale that assess relational communication skills, including the ability to self-regulate during interactions with others, collaborate in decision-making and respond flexibly to another person's needs were included (one original item was accidentally omitted from the questionnaire). An example item is "In your interactions with others, how often do you try to learn more about their concern before offering a solution?" Respondents were asked to report on the frequency with which they engage in specific attunement behaviors on a 7-point Likert scale (0 = Never to 6 = Always). EFA supported the 6-item, one-factor structure.

The *Interpersonal and Problem-Solving Skills and Leadership Skills* scales used in Weiler et al.'s (2013) evaluation of Campus Connections mentor outcomes were also selected from Moely et al.'s (2002) Civic Attitudes and Skills



questionnaire to assess outcomes relevant to Campus Connections Aotearoa mentors both with and without explicit leadership roles. The interpersonal and problem-solving scale includes 12 items. Examples being "I can listen to other people's opinions" and "I can work co-operatively with a group of people". The leadership skills scale includes 5 items, such as "I have the ability to lead a group of people". Campus Connections Aotearoa mentors provided responses on a 10-point Likert scale (1 = Disagree to 10 = Agree). EFA resulted in a theoretically interpretable two-factor solution. This included a 4-item Sociability and Leadership factor that included one leadership item ("I am a good leader") and 3 items relating to getting along, making friends and communicating well with others. The second factor included 6 items that reflected a combination of Problem-Solving and Perspective-Taking items focused on empathic understanding of another's position and logical analysis of problems.

Composite mean scores were created for each factor at each time point. Chronbach's  $\alpha$  for all measures are included in Table 1. The online Supporting Information provide a detailed overview of all preparatory analyses. In addition to the scales described above, an open-ended question was added to the end-of-program questionnaire for the 2018 and 2019 cohorts and asked mentors "Looking back over the past three months, what do you think is the most significant change you have noticed in yourself as a result of your participation in Campus Connections Aotearoa?". Responses were provided in an open-text box.

## 5.4 | Sample characteristics

Missing values analysis indicated that the minor amount of missing data (4.8% from baseline and 8.1% from end of program) could be considered missing at random (see online Supporting Information). Missing values were therefore imputed and data from a complete sample of 62 Campus Connections Aotearoa mentors, mentor coaches and community mentors could be used in further analyses. The 62 participants represented 88.57% of the eligible Campus Connections Aotearoa "mentor" population.

The research sample included 50 females (81%) and 12 males (19%) with a mean age of 25.50 years (SD = 6.52); 58.10% were 24 years or under and considered "youth" according to the New Zealand Ministry for Youth Development. Almost a third (32.30%) identified as being of European descent, a similar proportion (29.00%) identified as a Pacific Peoples, 21.00% as Asian (including Indian), 1.60% as Māori, 4.80% as Middle Eastern, Latin American or African, and 11.30% identified with more than one ethnicity (4 as Māori/European, 2 as Pacific Peoples/European and 1 as Māori/Pacific Peoples/European).

With respect to program cohort, 29% were enrolled in 2017, 34% in 2018, and 37% in 2019 with 75% enrolled in a bachelor-level program (26 from Social Work, 11 Human Services, 6 Arts, 2 Science, 1 Conjoint Arts/Science, and 1 Study Abroad). The 25% remaining postgraduate students were enrolled in Counseling (7), Education (3), Psychology (1), and Social and Community Leadership (1) programs. The majority (77%) were assigned to one-to-one mentor roles whereas 11% participated as "Mentor Coaches" and another 11% as "Community Mentors." Approximately one-third (32%) had no previous experience working with youth and 63% reported they had. Three were missing data for this variable.

## 5.5 | Analysis

Assessment of the bivariate correlations between the mentor background characteristics (i.e., gender, age, prior youth work experience, role, attendance rate, and practice-based nature of their academic program) and the baseline and end of program outcome measures served to identify if any characteristics were likely to have a confounding influence and needed to be included as covariates in the analysis of program effects. Table 1 demonstrates that none were significantly related to any of the baseline or end of program outcome measures. Accordingly, analysis proceeded without adjusting for covariates. Repeated measures *t*-tests were then conducted

**TABLE 1** Bivariate correlations between study variables.

Variable	$\alpha$	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
11. Gender	-	-													
22. Age	-	0.07	-												
33. Program	-	0.00	0.61	-											
44. Role	-	0.07	-0.11	0.17	-										
55. Experience	-	0.16	-0.23 <sup>a</sup>	0.09	-0.06	-									
66. Attendance	-	0.19	-0.15	-0.01	-0.00	0.03	-								
77. Efficacy0	0.78	0.23 <sup>a</sup>	-0.09	-0.17	-0.01	0.16	-0.16	-							
88. Efficacy12	0.88	0.08	-0.03	-0.08	-0.02	-0.07	-0.05	0.66***	-						
99. Attune0	0.83	-0.03	0.05	0.05	-0.05	-0.01	0.08	0.26*	0.39**	-					
110. Attune12	0.84	-0.00	0.09	0.04	-0.10	-0.09	0.06	0.33*	0.46***	0.58***	-				
111. SocLead0	0.87	0.14	0.02	-0.01	0.14	0.00	0.00	0.64***	0.50***	0.33*	0.34**	-			
112. SocLead12	0.88	0.05	0.03	0.01	0.19	-0.10	-0.10	0.60***	0.78***	0.35**	0.46***	0.66***	-		
113. ProbPersp0	0.84	0.10	0.09	0.01	-0.01	-0.06	-0.06	0.36**	0.40**	0.54***	0.65***	0.42***	0.44***	-	
114. ProbPers12	0.87	0.06	0.17	0.09	0.06	-0.09	-0.09	0.32*	0.54***	0.58***	0.77***	0.32*	0.55***	0.78***	-

Abbreviations:  $\alpha$ , Chronbach's alpha; Attendance, Program Attendance Rate (%); Attune0, Baseline Attunement; Attune12, End of Program Attunement; Experience, Youth Work Experience Yes or No; Efficacy0, Baseline Mentoring Self-Efficacy; Efficacy12, End of Program Mentoring Self-Efficacy; ProbPersp0, Baseline Problem-Solving & Perspective-Taking; ProbPersp12, End of Program Problem Solving & Perspective-Taking; Program, Practice or Non-Practice-based Academic Program; Role, One-to-one Mentor or Other; SocLead0, Baseline Sociability & Leadership; SocLead12, End of Program Sociability & Leadership.

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

independently for each outcome and a Bonferroni correction ( $p = 0.05/4 = 0.01$ ) was used to correct for the multiple comparisons. Cohen's  $d$  effect sizes using the square root of the average variance for the baseline and end-of-program measures are reported.

Thirty-nine open-ended responses provided by mentors from the 2018 and 2019 cohorts to the question about the most significant change they experienced as a result of their participation in Campus Connections Aotearoa were analyzed using template analysis. Template analysis is considered a codebook approach to thematic analysis where a priori themes can guide the initial engagement with the data, the preliminary codebook is developed after familiarization with the data set, and refinements can continue throughout the coding process (Brooks et al., 2015). The codes established in the codebook are used as a template, which is applied during the coding process to the full data set to determine the data segments that cluster under each code and the relationships between different codes. The prevalence of themes may be quantified in template analysis to highlight major and minor thematic patterns and supporting quotes provide additional details about the phenomenon under investigation.

A priori themes based on Campus Connections mentor outcomes identified in Weiler et al.'s (2014) qualitative study were used to guide the initial familiarization stage of the template analysis process. The a priori thematic categories included: (1) Personal Growth (improvements in self-concept constructs, motivation, learning and skill development with respect to their personal development as people, not as working professionals); (2) Interpersonal Skills (such as communicating, empathizing, problem-solving and relationship building); (3) Academic Success (relating to retention and academic performance); (4) Citizenship (regarding community involvement and civic-mindedness); and (5) Professional Development (referring to comments about professionalism, future planning, increased practice knowledge and reflective practice).

Three coders (first three authors) each independently engaged in familiarization in view of the a priori themes and then met to further develop the coding template. Their initial insights indicated a hierarchical order to the responses where mentors commented on benefits that were either explicitly connected to a professional role or context or not, thus (1) Professional Practice and (2) Personal Growth were identified as 1st order thematic categories, where a personal growth code was attached to any data segment that was not explicitly about a professional role or work context. Within each of these higher order categories, the a priori themes were modified to fit better with the current data and responses were seen to fit best within (a) Self-Concept (relating to the development self/identity constructs such as self-awareness, esteem and efficacy); (b) Skills (relating to interpersonal competence, leadership and reflective practice); (c) Knowledge (referring to content, deeper understanding, general insights or learning mentioned independently of a practice application); (d) Attitude (referring to a change in beliefs, perspective, or a cognitive orientation, including a civic focus) or (e) Belonging (relating to connectedness with others) outcomes. There was no evidence of Academic Success as a salient benefit of Campus Connections Aotearoa, and although a few comments suggested civic-mindedness, these were determined to be better placed under the Attitude coding category. The coding guidelines clarified that multiple codes could be applied to a response if it included different data segments; however, only one code could be applied to a single data segment.

The two first authors applied the coding template to the full data set, first coding responses against the first order thematic categories, then the second order categories and discrepancies between their codes were then identified. For the 1st order codes, 6 of 39 responses (15%) were discrepant. The numerous categories that could be applied to responses with multiple data segments resulted in 53 codes independently applied by both the first coder and the second coder. There were 15 instances of discrepancy (28%) for the 2nd order categories. All discrepancies were discussed and resolved by the two coders agreeing on final consistent codes for each response. The first author then organized all of the relevant data extracts in a matrix by each 2nd order category, and reviewed the extracts and specific codes associated with each response within each category to identify themes that captured the patterns of meaning within and between the categories. The themes are italicized in the results section below.

## 6 | RESULTS

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for the baseline and end of program outcome measures, along with  $t$  values demonstrating the significance of the effects, and Cohen's  $d$  effect sizes. The descriptive trends illustrate higher mean scores at the end of the program compared to the beginning for all outcomes of interest. The  $t$  values and 95% Confidence Intervals for the paired differences confirm significant increases in mentoring self-efficacy, attunement to others, sociability and leadership and problem-solving and perspective-taking, on average, for Campus Connections Aotearoa mentors. Effect sizes demonstrate a large effect for mentoring self-efficacy and small to moderate effects for attunement (0.34), sociability and leadership (0.38), and problem-solving and perspective-taking (0.44).

With regard to the mentor reports of the most significant changes they experienced from participating in Campus Connections Aotearoa, all but two of the 39 respondents provided interpretable responses that indicated one or more positive impacts of the experience. The coders identified more than half (56%) of the respondents comments as relating to professional practice, 23% included similar benefits but did not connect these specifically to a professional context, so they were coded as personal growth, and 15% provided responses categorized as benefits relating to both professional practice and personal growth.

Within the 2nd order coding categories across both professional practice and personal growth, responses indicated the most salient gains were skill-based (48.72%) or related to self-concept (46.15%). Changes in attitude were noted by 23.08% and 15.38% remarked on knowledge gains. Two (5.13%) spoke about an increased sense of belonging. Many experienced multiple benefits and they were closely interlinked as demonstrated through themes described next.

In line with the prevalence of thematic categories presented above, a primary theme identified across the data set was *Campus Connections Aotearoa promotes relational competence, self-regulation and reflective practice skills*. Some mentors wrote about general relationship-building skills (e.g., "I have noticed that I listen to others differently, to hear their stories and experiences and I have seen how empowering i.e....") and many remarked on skill-sets such as mindful self-regulation and cue reading that provide the foundation for attuned communication (Gilkerson & Pryce, 2021). For instance, one mentor indicated "I think that the biggest change I have noticed in myself is that I now find myself often stopping to reflect on how I feel before reacting to situations. I also find that I often try to attune myself to others around me and match their energy levels."

Another theme identified in the data was *Campus Connections Aotearoa mentors gain deeper self-awareness and increased confidence to practice effectively with youth* as a result of their service-learning experience. One mentor noted:

Over the past 12 weeks, I came to realise that I have a serious lack of confidence in myself. Also, I learned that I struggle working with people who tend to externalize their problems because I'm a

**TABLE 2** Means, standard deviations,  $t$ -values, paired difference scores and effects sizes for the outcomes of interest.

Outcomes	$n$	Baseline mean (SD)	End of program mean (SD)	$df$	$t$	Paired difference [95% confidence interval]	$d$
Mentoring self-efficacy	62	7.06 (1.48)	8.28 (1.23)	61	-8.36***	-1.22 [-1.51, -0.93]	-0.90
Attunement to others	62	4.79 (0.71)	5.01 (0.60)	61	-2.85**	-0.22 [-0.37, -0.10]	-0.34
Sociability and leadership	62	8.09 (1.28)	8.55 (1.16)	61	-3.63***	-0.46 [-0.72, -0.21]	-0.38
Problem-solving and perspective-taking	62	8.34 (0.97)	8.73 (0.85)	61	-5.08***	-0.40 [-0.55, -0.24]	-0.44

\*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

person who internalise problems. Such realisations were the biggest changes for me...But now, even though I'm still an imperfect person, I have gained more confidence in my practice.

Another commented "I have become more self-aware, we learn about it in classes but the practical use of stopping and thinking about what I am doing/how my actions affect society...has become a lot stronger through practice."

The latter quotes point to classroom learning and an attitudinal shift. Related to this, a more minor theme identified the *knowledge obtained through the service-learning experience promotes the increased confidence and competence to effectively support young people in formal roles*. For example, a mentor reflected:

I was pretty naïve coming into Campus Connections thinking it would be pretty easy—I was very wrong. There's so much to know before being a decent mentor. I've learnt a lot and it's been great being able to learn something and then having the chance to put it into practice every week.

And also, for a minority, the service-learning experience made salient a change in attitude or perspective, such as how they can impact society (as noted above) or increased open-mindedness. For a couple, they made a point to note the impact on their sense of belonging, as reflected by this mentor "I now feel like I am part of a family."

## 7 | DISCUSSION

Campus Connections is a therapeutic youth mentoring program and university service-learning experience that, despite its time-limited nature, has consistently produced personal and professional gains for the university students involved at the original development site in the midwestern US. The growing interest in scaling up the Campus Connections model and implementing it across multiple sites is therefore understandable; however, past studies show considerable difficulties in replicating the effects of evidence-based models when translated to new contexts (Bullen et al., 2020). The aim of this mixed-method survey study was to ascertain if positive mentor effects found with the original Campus Connections model would also be found for a culturally translated version of the model, Campus Connections Aotearoa, implemented at the first international site in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In support of the hypothesis for the quantitative pre-to-post-program measures, significant improvements were found for mentoring self-efficacy, civic skills associated with sociability and leadership and problem-solving and perspective-taking, and attunement to others. Although the researchers selected a subset of the same measures used in Weiler et al.'s (2013) investigation of civic attitudes and skills for Campus Connections mentors, the subscales did not function as expected, meaning the outcomes are not directly comparable. Nevertheless, gains in interpersonal, problem-solving and perspective-taking skills are evidenced in both samples, and the effect sizes are larger for the Campus Connections Aotearoa compared to the Campus Connections sample. There is a similar pattern for self-efficacy. Weiler et al. (2013) measured community service self-efficacy and found a small but significant increase for Campus Connections mentors and the current study findings demonstrate a large and significant increase in mentoring self-efficacy for Campus Connections Aotearoa mentors. The larger comparative effect may be due to differences in the specificity of measurement. Because self-efficacy beliefs are domain specific, self-efficacy measures have more predictive power when they directly relate to the phenomenon under investigation (Bandura, 1997), so it makes theoretical sense that experiences of mentoring would influence changes in self-efficacy for mentoring more strongly than self-efficacy for more general community service.

Attunement is a communication process involving a set of relational micro-skills that facilitate connection and the sense that a support recipient feels known and valued by the support provider (Gilkerson & Pryce, 2021).

Attunement falls under the broad banner of interpersonal skills, but the skills are more complex to enact and require greater intentionality compared to the sociability and perspective-taking items captured in the other measures. For instance, to attune to another, one needs to read their verbal and nonverbal cues, engage in empathic inquiry, flexibly adjust plans and responses to meet their needs, and collaborate in decision-making (Gilkinson & Pryce, 2021). The Campus Connections Aotearoa training curriculum focuses explicitly on building these skills thus the significant increase in this outcome is affirming. The slightly smaller effect size, compared to the other effects, is understandable because it can take more time to build competency in more complex skill-sets.

It is notable that, when asked to comment on the most significant changes they experienced as a result of their service-learning experience, mentors signaled a positive impact either for personal growth generally, or in the context of their current or future professional practice. These findings also provide further evidence to support the pre-to-post-program quantitative findings, particularly with respect to the development of general interpersonal and relational practice skills (including attunement), as well as increased confidence in their practice. The mentors' responses also revealed benefits regarding knowledge gains from classroom learning, shifts in attitude and, for a couple, belongingness outcomes that all resonate with the experiences of Campus Connections mentors in the United States (Haddock et al., 2013; Weiler et al., 2014).

Nevertheless, there are also differences between the outcome findings across the two sites that should be noted. Some mentors in Weiler et al.'s (2014) study indicated that their service-learning experience with Campus Connections influenced their academic motivation and retention intentions. Beyond knowledge gains relevant to their professional practice, academic performance or retention were not outcomes the current Campus Connections Aotearoa mentor sample regarded as the most significant. For Campus Connections Aotearoa, student performance in the course is largely assessed in relation to professional practice skills. Honing professional practice skills is therefore inherently linked to academic success in the course and what the students are directed to focus on. With regard to retention, the difference may be due to the number of opportunities Campus Connections Aotearoa mentors have to engage with the program at the University of Auckland and the point at which the opportunity falls within their academic programs. At Colorado State University, students can enroll in a Campus Connections service-learning course early in their undergraduate journey, and they can re-enroll in a higher-level course with different learning outcomes that connect to the same service-learning experience. There is only one undergraduate service-learning course connected to the Campus Connections Aotearoa program and it is offered to students in their last or penultimate year of study. Drop-out risks reduce substantially in the latter years of a student's academic program; therefore the influence of Campus Connections Aotearoa on mentor retention intentions is likely to be less than for Campus Connections at Colorado State University.

With regard to civic attitudes and engagement, a few Campus Connections Aotearoa mentors commented on the impact of the experience with respect to shifting their views about young people at-risk and about the impact of their actions on society. This is in line with both Haddock et al. (2013) and Weiler et al.'s (2014) findings; however, Campus Connections Aotearoa mentors did not comment on future voluntarism intentions. There are large cultural differences between the US and Aotearoa New Zealand that may help to explain this difference. Service to others and to community is a deep cultural value and a way of being for Māori and Pacific (and possibly other) non-Western cultures, not something done for course credit. Unlike Western constructions of voluntarism, it can be hard for people from other cultures to identify what they do so naturally as "volunteering" (Wilson, 2001). It is just part of who they are. This connects to the fact that, in the current (predominantly non-White) sample, approximately 80% of the mentors were enrolled in a practice-based academic program associated with a helping profession. Their professional goals are tied to pursuing a vocation that is service-oriented and many are committed to such professions because they want to contribute meaningfully to their own communities. This suggests they are civically oriented to begin with. Thus, their comments about the experience supporting their professional practice should not be interpreted as disconnected from a broader civic orientation.

## 7.1 | Implications for practice

The theory of change helps to elucidate the ingredients of the Campus Connections model that makes it effective for very different groups of mentors situated in different cultural contexts. It suggests that, for mentors, designing the mentoring experience to align with evidence-based practices for service-learning will enhance the likelihood of impact. This includes authentic, consequential experiential learning that brings to light the reality of the impact students can have on others; activities that support reflection on the reciprocal impact the experience has on themselves; and discussion about learning transfer to their areas of their lives outside of the program context, including for their future professional practice. In addition, the consistent and tiered structured of the mentoring community that enables continued monitoring and supervision and knowledge and skill progression through easy access to practice feedback and both peer-like and expert role models are features designed to enhance self-efficacy beliefs and practice competencies. Embedding this structure within a course that provides an ongoing, evidence-informed training curriculum fits with recommendations for programs serving young people who are contending with complex personal and life challenges (Faith et al., 2011).

Yet, fidelity to a model without attention to the local context will likely throw up challenges that can compromise cross-cultural implementation. A needs analysis and consultation with community stakeholders may underscore additional principles and processes that need to be considered to meet the genuine needs of the local community. Developing a collaborative theory of change with stakeholders can be a useful process in terms of supporting program translation efforts because it can facilitate communication of a shared understanding of the program theory and guide evaluation decisions (Deane, Dutton et al., 2020).

## 7.2 | Study limitations and future research

Although the theory of change guided the evaluation of mentor outcomes, this study did not empirically test the links in the theory of change; therefore, it is not clear which of the evidence-informed principles, processes and practices embedded in the Campus Connections Aotearoa service-learning experience are the most important drivers of mentor outcomes. There is a growing process-focused research base on the original Campus Connections model that continues to uncover important mediators and moderators of mentor and mentee outcomes (see Boat et al., 2019 and Maples et al., 2022 for examples). Ongoing review of this evidence will help to advance understanding of how to produce effective youth mentoring-based service-learning experiences for tertiary students and future research on Campus Connections Aotearoa's implementation could test process-to-outcome links to validate the Campus Connections Aotearoa theory of change for mentors.

The lack of a comparison group (randomized or otherwise) in this study also limits claims that the Campus Connections Aotearoa experience caused the changes in mentor outcomes over the 4-month measurement period. Nevertheless, the assessment of potential moderators and counterfactual confounds in the analysis, along with the supporting qualitative evidence, strengthens the claims. On the other hand, social desirability bias and post-program euphoria may have played a role in the positive reports from mentors at the end of the program, especially given the dual roles the researchers had as teaching and program staff. This needs to be considered, along with any biases associated with self-reported data. The research team have begun collecting 1-year post-program evidence of mentor outcomes, including occupational status and self-reported longer-term impacts on personal growth and professional practice with new Campus Connections Aotearoa mentor cohorts. This will help to address some of the potential bias in the end-of-program effects, ascertain if the effects are sustained, and if the professional practice gains translate to continued study or employment in a helping profession.

Nevertheless, the follow-up study will not address the limitations associated with common method bias and exclusive use of self-reported data. This shortcoming is not restricted to this study. Over-reliance on self-report methods is germane in the youth mentoring research and the field would benefit from greater diversification of



methods (Pryce et al., 2021). Complex multisource and multimethod studies require significant investment. There is also value in using self-reports when measures are focused on self-perceptions of one's own growth and development, as was the case in this research.

An additional limitation was the small sample size, which compromised opportunities to conduct more robust analysis (e.g., structural equation modeling) due to reduced statistical power. The sample size and gender profile (biased toward female mentor experiences) also restricts what can be concluded about the generalizability of the effects. At the same time, the sample included almost the entirety of the Campus Connections Aotearoa mentor population reducing the need to rely on statistical inferences. Further, the general replicability of effects from an ethnically diverse sample (almost 70% identifying as an ethnic minority) in Aotearoa New Zealand and White majority mentor samples based in the United States speaks to the external validity of the model's effectiveness. Overall, the consistency of effects found between this study and previous investigations of the original Campus Connections model is promising in terms of establishing its cross-cultural effectiveness. Further studies in different cultural contexts is needed for further validation.

Critically, this study does not provide a holistic view of the model's effectiveness. The picture is incomplete without a focus on the other target group—the mentees. It would be unethical to deliver a youth mentoring service-learning program if benefits were only derived by mentors. As noted earlier, the Campus Connections model has dual beneficiaries. Existing evidence based on the US model indicates Campus Connections can shift maladaptive mentee attitudes and behaviors (Weiler et al., 2015) and preliminary evidence from Campus Connections Aotearoa also indicates that the mentees who attend regularly feel more positive about their ethnic identity and increase their self-efficacy, empathy towards others and perceptions of peer support (Deane, Bullen et al., 2020). Research with a larger mentee sample is needed to draw firmer conclusions. Inclusion of mentee outcomes was a focus of the larger evaluation project in which this study sits, but they were not the focus of this article. In addition, supporting young people with complex needs requires a unique skill-set and ongoing supervision if mentors are to make a difference. Programs like Campus Connections and Campus Connections Aotearoa provide extensive training pre-program and ongoing training and supervision during delivery to help enhance program efficacy for both mentors and mentees. The findings from the current study indicate mentors are developing the skills needed to support mentee growth.

## 8 | CONCLUSION

Outcomes for mentors are less studied than those for youth mentees, but are important to consider when mentors are aspiring professionals whose service-learning experiences can be transformative for their future civic engagement and their professional practice. The Campus Connections youth mentoring through service-learning model has been successful in facilitating the personal growth and development of professional competencies for tertiary student mentors in the United States. This study demonstrates promising evidence of its cross-cultural effectiveness, given the positive effects found for a diverse range of mentors based at the first international implementation site in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Successful translation of the program model was likely driven by extensive consultation and consideration of the local cultural context along with the model's evidence-based mechanisms of change, which were uncovered through a theory of change development process. For the Campus Connections service-learning model, the critical ingredients for success included adherence to the "4 Rs" of effective service-learning, a structured, supportive and supervised mentoring community, an intensive and ongoing training curriculum that extended learning beyond the classroom and the program, and careful consideration of the local cultural context. Although future research should seek to empirically validate the process to outcome links in the Campus Connections Aotearoa theory of change, the insights about the critical principles, processes and practices and the program translation process are offered to

others interested in creating transformative youth mentoring service-learning experiences for student mentors in the tertiary context.

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## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST STATEMENT

All authors were involved in the delivery of the Campus Connections Aotearoa as program staff. K. L. D. and P. B. are members of the Campus Connections Aotearoa governance board, teach the service-learning courses connected to the program and oversee all program operations.

## TRANSPARENT PEER REVIEW

The peer review history for this article is available at <https://publons.com/publon/10.1002/jcop.23005>

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data set analyzed for the current study is not publicly available but is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

## ORCID

Kelsey L. Deane  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1388-1834>

Pat Bullen  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6494-3698>

Kiri Wilder  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1995-8687>

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## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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